

## The Love that Never Really Dies Chapter No 221

“Huh?” Sasha stared at her dumbly.

Wait, I agreed to go with Brandon?

I guess I did? I can't even remember. Alright then. Since he's helped me in the past, this is just me returning the favor.

Sasha nodded absent-mindedly. “Mm, Sebastian's father asked me to go as well.”

“Ah, I see. I'll inform Mr. Hayes about this-”

“No, no, it's fine. I-I-I'll tell him myself. Don't worry and just go back to work.” Sasha immediately turned the housemaid down, then got up from the ground and went back in.

Wendy was at a loss for words.

Forget it. Since Mr. Hayes Sr. asked her to go, then I guess I don't have to tell his son about this.

Wendy decided to just let it be.

...

It was slightly past nine when Sebastian returned from work.

Because it was year end, there were lots of matters to settle at the company. Hence, he had been coming back at this hour for quite a long time.

However, when he came home that night, the petite figure who would usually be huddled on the sofa watching TV in the living room was nowhere in sight. The first floor of the enormous villa returned to being desolate once again.

“Mr. Hayes, welcome back.”

“Mm, where are they?”

While changing his shoes, Sebastian asked the housemaid with a frown on his face.

Wendy hurriedly explained, “They should be asleep. After dinner tonight, Ms. Wand took the children upstairs very early. What would you like to eat, Mr. Hayes? I’ll make it for you.”

Mr. Hayes probably wants to eat something. Lately, when he comes home late every day and sees that Ms. Wand isn’t asleep yet, he’d ask her to make something for him to eat.

Yet he rejected Wendy’s offer.

“It’s fine. Go to sleep.”

With that, he climbed the stairs.

Wendy didn’t insist and went back to sleep.

Approximately twenty minutes later, Sebastian walked out of the master bedroom on the third floor after putting down his notebook and changing into a set of casual wear.

He strolled along the corridor and unclasped the watch encircling his wrist, stuffing it into the pocket of his pants. Then he languidly descended the dimly lit stairway.

He didn't expect the children to sleep so early and wanted to see them before calling it a night.

Upon reaching the second floor, he went to Ian's room first.

He opened the door and peeked in to see that the little figure on the bed was indeed sound asleep. Then he closed the door with a soft click.

After that, he went to check on Matteo and Vivian.

As usual, Matteo loved kicking his blanket away, which was befitting of his lively and mischievous temperament. Sebastian covered him with the blanket again and turned the temperature higher before going out.

As for Vivian, Sebastian didn't go into her room.

Instead, he bypassed it and went to the room furthest in the back—Sasha's room.

As soon as the door creaked open, a rustling noise could be heard coming from the bedroom. Sebastian's brows shot toward his hairline and he immediately spotted the woman frantically clicking off her phone screen.

Asleep, huh?

His lips curled up in amusement, and he reached out to flip on the light switch.

Sasha, who was about to pretend to sleep, was dumbfounded.

All she could do was watch the man walk in with wide eyes. Her cheeks were flushed with embarrassment as though she had been caught red-handed doing something indecent.

“Weren’t you sleeping? Why were you looking at your phone in the dark?  
Are you avoiding me again?”

Sebastian casually stuffed his hands into his pockets, wearing a laid-back expression on his face.

However, his question caused Sasha’s heart to lurch in her chest.

“No, I-I-I was about to sleep, but then I received a message on WhatsApp.”

“Who’s it from?”

Sasha gulped nervously before squeaking out a name. “Willow.”

Willow?

Sebastian raised a brow and strode over.

What’s he doing?

Taken aback, Sasha hurriedly scrambled up into a sitting position.

“What are you doing?”

“Give me your phone!”

“What?”

Before she could react, his hand shot out with lightning speed. With a start, she realized he had already snatched her phone out of her hand.

Sasha was at a loss.

“Password,” Sebastian demanded.

Sasha's brows knitted into a frown.

What the hell is wrong with him? Is he seriously going to check my phone?

How dare he? Who does he think he is?

Though resentful and dissatisfied, she didn't dare to grab her phone back. In the end, her shoulders slumped with resignation as she recited her phone password, "182930."

"What kind of password is this?" he taunted while keying in the digits.

Sasha was already upset that he was checking her phone. The moment she heard the sarcasm in his tone, she retorted indignantly, "It's the triplet's time of birth. What do you know?"

It was Sebastian's turn to become speechless.

Finally, he clamped his mouth shut and started to look through her phone.

Soon, he discovered that there were quite a number of apps on this old phone of hers, but all of them were for the children's use. For example, Recipes for Children was often used for Ian's sake. Next was Himalaya Listening Book for Matteo, Children's Stories for Vivian and many more.

The apps almost filled the entire screen, and WhatsApp was the only app relevant to Sasha herself.

Does this woman live only for her children?

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Sebastian felt indescribable emotions surge in his chest. He had initially planned to interrogate her, but after seeing all these apps, he had completely lost the interest.

In the end, he tapped into her WhatsApp.

“Why did Willow text you? She’s here already?”

“Huh?”

Sasha snapped her head up and stole a glance at her own phone. Seeing that he was looking at her conversation with Willow, she nodded. “Yeah. She’s here.”

“Why did she text you?”

“Oh, nothing much. We were just chatting.”

“Just chatting? Then what’s up with all the gowns? Where are you two going? Are you hiding something from me?”

He had actually scrolled through the whole conversation Sasha had with Willow. Upon reaching the top, he saw the photos of various custom-tailored gowns Willow had sent.

His handsome face instantly became several shades darker.

Indeed, two women coming together equals bad news. I should’ve thrown this Willow woman to the sharks that day and gotten rid of her once and for all!

Sasha’s heart pounded against her chest when she saw his expression.

This “Willow” was not Willow at all, but was in fact, Brandon. After he went back, he kept pestering her on her WhatsApp.

Hence, she had no choice but to reply him.

Fortunately, she had the foresight to save his name as “Willow” in her phone as a precaution against the man living under the same roof as her.

“N-No, I’m not. It’s just that she’s finally back, so s-she said she wants me to go to a p-party or something,” Sasha stammered out an explanation.

Sebastian became even more displeased by this. “A party? You’re a mother now. Stop mingling with promiscuous women like her.”

Sasha failed to formulate a response.

How is Willow a promiscuous woman? She’s a respectable lady, not to mention a top student who majored in Human Resource.

Sasha had the urge to defend her friend.

Luckily, Sebastian said nothing else besides that. He tapped on the screen twice, but before she could figure out what he was doing, he passed the phone back to her.

Sasha accepted it and glanced at the screen, but strangely found nothing out of the ordinary.

“Alright, it’s late now. Go to sleep.”

Sebastian prepared to leave.

Sasha put her phone down and hummed a response. “Why did you come downstairs? Are you hungry? Didn’t Wendy make supper for you?”

Abruptly thinking about this, she casually asked as she lay down in bed again.

But Sebastian stiffened at her question. “No. I came to check on the kids.”

“The kids?”

Sasha pulled the blanket over her and blinked in confusion. “But they’re not sleeping in here tonight. They’re in their own rooms.”

It was obvious they weren’t sleeping with her.

Because this room was carpeted, they would take off their shoes before coming in. Hence, if they were here, their shoes would be outside the door.

However, Sebastian seemed to have neglected this fact.

He swiveled around impatiently and strode toward the door.

Faced with his peculiar reaction, Sasha was speechless.

Something came over her suddenly, causing her mouth to have a mind of its own. “Sebastian, will you be attending your aunt’s birthday party?”

“What?” Sebastian stopped just shy of the door. “The birthday party? Didn’t I already tell you I won’t be going?”

“You won’t?”

Sasha was unnerved, torn between believing him and believing Brandon.

Sebastian turned around and perceived the despondent look on her face. His chiseled brows drew into a frown, but he held back his temper to ask, “Why? You wanna go?”

Sasha immediately shook her head. “No, I don’t!”

Sebastian’s expression eased slightly. “Mm, you better not join this kind of occasion. It’s nothing special anyway. Rather than troubling yourself, it’s better you stay home and take care of the kids.”

Sebastian was speaking from his heart.

He didn’t think it was a good idea for Sasha to attend the Emmanuel family’s party. Their two families got into a conflict not too long ago and he knew his aunt well. She was a narrow-minded and unforgiving person. Sasha would only end up getting the short end of the stick if she attended.

Unbeknownst to him, Sasha interpreted his words differently.

Why is he so against me going? Is it because he doesn’t want me to spoil things for him and his lover at the party?

Hah...

Sasha withdrew her gaze and didn’t speak anymore.

It was a sleepless night for her.

A few days later, the Emmanuel family’s party finally came.

Sasha was waiting in Royal Court One. After receiving a WhatsApp message from Brandon, she grabbed her bag and went to the kitchen. “Wendy, I’m going out to buy some New Year goods today.”

Of course, Wendy did not suspect a thing.

She nodded readily. “Sure, sure. I’ll take care of the children at home. It’s about time you went out and relaxed for a bit.”

“Thanks, Wendy.”

Sasha smiled and swiftly left.

As soon as she left Frontier Bay, she spotted an ostentatious blue Lamborghini. Right then, the person inside the car was poking his head out and checking his surroundings.

“Sasha! You’re finally here. Hurry up, hurry up! We gotta go now.”

It was Brandon.

Upon seeing Sasha, he frantically waved her over.

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After both of them set off, Brandon, who had been waiting for a long time, started complaining.

“Seriously? It’s my mom’s birthday. Why can you only leave after that ex-husband of yours leaves? Don’t tell me you’re inferior to him just because you’re a nanny?”

Sasha stayed silent.

Of course, the reason she came out so late was because she didn't want Sebastian to find out that she would be attending the party as well.

However, this pretty boy managed to hit a nerve in her.

Nanny...

Sasha's mouth tightened at the corners and she refused to speak.

Her silence made Brandon realize that he had said something wrong again. Hence, he quickly changed the subject. "Alright, alright. Let's not talk about this anymore. I'll take you to do your makeup and get dressed."

"Makeup?" This drew Sasha's attention. "Why do I have to wear makeup? Is it really necessary?"

"Of course. You must know, that mayor's daughter my mom introduced to me isn't just a run-of-a-mill woman. If you don't outshine her, I don't think I'll be able to escape my mom's plans."

As Brandon drove, he stated his reasons for doing so with a disgruntled look on his face.

However, it only served to make Sasha even more speechless.

Is there something wrong with this guy's brain? Does he actually think I'd be able to outshine the mayor's daughter by just putting on some makeup? Is he blind?

"Brandon, if that's the case, I suggest you pick a new candidate to be your fake girlfriend."

“Why?”

“Because there’s obviously something wrong with your eyes. How can I compete with a socialite? I’m already old and dull. I’m a mother of three, for God’s sake! Meanwhile, she’s in the prime of her youth. So tell me, just how do you think I can outshine her?”

Sasha looked at him as if he should be put in a mental home.

Brandon froze under her gaze.

His eyes were fixated on the rearview mirror, and his mouth was slightly agape. For a long time, no words came.

Is there a misunderstanding between this woman and her own face?

Has she never looked into the mirror?

Thereafter, Brandon was adamant to make her realize what a beauty she was.

He floored the accelerator and the Lamborghini sped along the road. It didn’t take long before the two of them arrived in the city center and meet up with Brandon’s personal makeup artist.

“Prep her.”

“Will do, Mr. Emmanuel!”

The makeup artist’s eyes instantly lit up upon seeing Sasha’s face.

A woman’s beauty and elegance was subjective. However, makeup artists had the most say in this aspect because they relied on this to make a living.

Half an hour later, Sasha emerged and shocked everyone with her stunning beauty.

“Good heavens! Who is this? She’s too gorgeous to be true!”

“Yeah. She’s even more beautiful compared to the number one beauty in the entertainment industry! Where did she come from? Is she a newcomer in the showbiz?”

“I think so. Brandon Emmanuel brought her here.”

When someone among the crowd mentioned Brandon’s name, everyone was instantly filled with jealousy and admiration.

Meanwhile, Brandon had unwittingly fallen into a trance as he stared at her, his jaw going slack.

Sasha was indeed beautiful.

But her beauty wasn’t the kind that gave an overly strong impact at first glance. It was more like a finely crafted piece of rare jewelry. She exuded an inherent elegance and nobility. Her delicate features may look ordinary without makeup, but now everything was enhanced to perfection, mesmerizing anyone and everyone who laid eyes on her.

By just standing there, she managed to steal everyone’s breath away.

Sebastian must be blind. How could he fail to notice such a rare gem when it’s right before his eyes? Instead, he picked up a piece of shit?

Spellbound, Brandon’s treacherous heart thumped violently against his chest.

“Brandon?”

“Huh?”

Brandon finally snapped out of his daze and awkwardly recomposed himself.

Sasha did not seem to notice the effect she had on everyone around her. On the contrary, she felt very uncomfortable in the white tube maxi dress. It was too grand and exposing, nothing like the clothes she was used to wearing.

“Can I not wear this, Brandon?”

“Why not? It looks great on you. Trust me, for my plan to pull through, this is exactly how you should be dressed. Sasha, the fate on the next half of my life rests on your shoulders. After we succeed, I’ll give you another million. How about that?”

Brandon quickly dissuaded her from changing her dress, even going so far as to increase the price.

Sasha furrowed her brows in response.

It wasn’t the increase in compensation that swayed her. The hatred and disgust on his face when he talked about the mayor’s daughter reminded her of herself back then.

Yeah. Who’d want to marry someone he or she doesn’t like?

In the end, Sasha agreed to wear this dress and attend the party with Brandon.

Meanwhile, Xandra had returned from abroad and just arrived at the hotel with her aunt, Kelly, after dolling herself up.

“Aunt Kelly, do you know if Sebastian’s coming?”

“It doesn’t matter. What’s important is that his father invited you. As long as you show up, everyone will know that you’re the daughter-in-law whom the Hayes acknowledges. Understand?” Kelly replied.

A smile appeared on her heavily made-up face as she glanced at the birthday gift that was worth millions.

“Though, I wonder if Sasha will be attending today.”

Upon hearing her aunt’s question, Xandra’s red-painted lips curved into an evil smile and she said with certainty, “Oh, she will.”

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How was Xandra so certain?

It was simple, really. Xandra was acquainted with Brandon, and she knew for a fact that among the Hayes, he was the only one who was close to Sasha.

As long as Brandon found himself in a particularly difficult situation, Sasha would definitely come.

“Your intel from before was wrong. Brandon doesn’t like the mayor’s daughter at all. It’s actually Matilda’s wish, and the birthday party today is just a front. It’s in fact a blind date for Brandon and that woman.”

“Really?”

Kelly was surprised.

Xandra nodded and looked at the book in her hand. “Mm, so if Brandon wants to oppose this marriage, he will definitely find someone to act as his shield, and Sasha is undoubtedly the most suitable candidate.”

As expected of someone who had mingled in the upper-class circles for five years, Xandra was well-versed in the workings of upper-class people.

Kelly broke into an approving smile. “Not bad. Since this is the case, our plan can be implemented perfectly today.”

“Mm, all the arrangements are in place. Don’t worry, I’ll let Sebastian see for himself just what kind of person she is and make sure that starting from today, she will never set foot in Frontier Bay again!”

As Xandra held the book in her hand, she stroked the words on the page with her red nails, her mouth arching into an insidious and resentful smile.

Yes. Today, I’ll make sure that b\*tch crawls back to her grave!

Coming back from the dead was a mistake, dear Sasha.

Holding their respective birthday gifts, the two women entered the hotel in high spirits.

Brandon and Sasha were held up by the latter’s makeup and hairdo. Hence, they arrived at the hotel an hour later.

This was a five-star hotel under the Hayes Corporation and its lobby could accommodate up to thousands. Upon reaching the hotel lobby, Brandon and Sasha found that most of the guests had already arrived. At

that moment, the place was bustling with life as everyone chatted merrily.

It seemed like this was a large-scale birthday party.

Sasha hesitated by the entrance.

“Sasha, maybe you should wear this?”

Sensing her uncertainty, Brandon hesitated for a moment before taking something out.

“Wear what?”

Sasha’s gaze fell on the item in he had magically conjured up. “A mask?”

“Yeah. It’s completely normal for girls to wear masks at parties like this. People used to always do this in the past.” Brandon racked his brains for an explanation, hoping that this woman wouldn’t suspect anything.

However, a smart woman like Sasha immediately understood his meaning when he took out the mask.

Do I really need to lower myself like that?

Even at a place like this, I have to hide my face from him?

Sasha’s lips curled into a bitter smile. “It’s fine. Sebastian’s father invited me here anyway. Let’s go say hi to him now.”

With that, she lifted her dress slightly and walked into the hotel.

Brandon was dumbstruck.

Well, why didn't she start with that? I wouldn't have brought this stupid mask for her if I knew. That damned woman. And to think that I was worried she'd feel awkward if we bumped into her ex-husband.

Though slightly indignant, Brandon quickly moved to catch up with her.

Perhaps it was because of Sasha's eye-catching appearance and the noble aura she was emanating, she turned heads the moment she entered.

"Who is this? She's so beautiful."

"I don't know. Maybe she's the daughter of some rich family?"

Everyone's eyes were riveted on her. Because of her unworldly beauty, they instantly surmised that she was an heiress here to attend the party.

There were many socialites present in the lobby and their faces had turned unsightly when they heard the whispers traveling through the crowd. As they stared at Sasha, jealousy, disbelief, and displeasure were sprawled across their faces.

Due to the Hayes family's influence, everyone who was anyone attended the party.

Most of the women came hoping to get themselves a rich husband, while the men hoped to find themselves a wife with a strong background. Sasha's arrival was no doubt a tremendous blow to the women.

As for the men, their eyes instantly lit up at the sight of such a stunning beauty.

Before they could make their move, Brandon appeared behind her. Suddenly, shocked gasps filled the lobby.

“Isn’t that the youngest son of the Emmanuel family? Did he come with that girl?”

“Yeah, that’s him. Do you think there’s something going on between them?”

“Could she be... his girlfriend?”

As soon as someone vocalized this possibility, the entire lobby broke into an animated discussion.

Staring at the two of them, everyone displayed shock and disbelief on their faces.

Upon noticing the gossip revolving around them, Brandon thought to hell with it and lengthened his stride to reach Sasha. “Why are you walking so fast, Sasha? Wait up,” he called out in a whiny tone.

Is this guy acting cute with me?

Goosebumps formed all over Sasha’s body just then, and the lobby erupted into a boisterous uproar. Samantha Dunn, who was currently in the center of the lobby, was already alerted to the situation.

Her family held the reins in Avenport, and she was the girl Brandon had mentioned to Sasha.

Brandon has a girlfriend?

Samantha’s pretty face turned purple with rage, especially when she saw Sasha. The latter’s appearance and aura were both superior to hers, which made her even more jealous.

“Dad, what are the Emmanuels trying to do? Brandon already has a girlfriend. Why did they come to us?”

She immediately went to her father and complained.

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Samantha’s father was chatting happily with Matilda at that moment. When his daughter stormed over to express her displeasure, he was taken aback. “Girlfriend? Mrs. Emmanuel, your youngest son already has a girlfriend?”

In a split second, the atmosphere turned heavy with tension.

Matilda hurriedly denied, “No, no. Please, don’t misunderstand, Mr. Dunn. My youngest son doesn’t have a girlfriend.”

“Then who is she? They’re all saying that she’s his girlfriend!”

Samantha raised her hand to point at Sasha, who was only a short distance away.

Matilda looked at where she was pointing and fell silent.

She was momentarily stunned as she stared at the woman, who managed to make all the other young ladies pale in comparison. However, she failed to recognize that woman as Sasha.

Her skin was fair as snow, and her lips red as blood. Not to mention she had ethereal features that were neither too sharp nor too soft. To sum it

up, she was naturally noble and elegant, so much so that Matilda couldn't take her eyes off her.

Who is she ?

Matilda stared blankly at her for quite some time.

In fact, Matilda knew who Sasha was.

Back then, she was rather furious when Sasha married into the Hayes family because she originally planned to introduce her distant niece to Sebastian, but Sasha had foiled her plans.

Hence, Matilda often visited the Hayes to throw insults at Sasha.

The Sasha back then was meek and had a low self-esteem. She was also pregnant at that time. and thus, never had the time to care about her appearance. She looked quite dreadful during that year.

That was why Matilda couldn't recognize the current Sasha.

"I'm here, Mom."

When Brandon saw the dazed look on his mother's face, he cheerfully walked over to greet her.

Matilda finally came back to her senses. Pinning Sasha with a razor-sharp gaze, she snapped at her son, "Who is she? Why did you bring her?"

Words failed Brandon.

Before he could formulate a response, Sasha beat him to it. "Mrs. Emmanuel, I'm Sasha. Don't you remember me?"

Her voice was soft and had a soothing effect, but it was shockingly hostile as well.

Sasha ?

This woman is Sasha Wand ?

Matilda instantly flew into a rage. “It’s you! Why are you here? Who allowed you to come?”

She was so angry she forgot about her agreement with Kelly.

Sasha, however, remained calm and composed. Seeing how furious she was, all she did was reply expressionlessly, “Mr. Hayes Sr. invited me. Why? Am I not welcome here, Mrs. Emmanuel?”

Her words created a ripple effect through the crowd, and the entire lobby descended into pandemonium.

“She was invited by Mr. Hayes?”

“My goodness! Who exactly is she? Why did he invite her himself? What kind of status does she hold?”

Everyone was shell-shocked as they gaped at Sasha, unable to believe their ears.

Matilda was no exception.

Frederick invited her ?

But then again, Frederick has always adored this little b\*tch. The reason she could marry into the family and become Mrs. Hayes was because he insisted on it.

Yes. I shouldn't be surprised at all that Frederick invited her today.

Matilda suppressed the anger threatening to overwhelm her.

"Mom, don't be mad." Brandon drew his words out. "Sasha's no longer affiliated with the Hayes. She's my friend now, so I brought her over."

Matilda kept silent.

"That's right, Mrs. Emmanuel. I was initially worried that you might be angry and never thought of coming, but since Brandon asked as well, I decided to come. This is your birthday gift. Just take it as an apology for matters of the past."

Sasha proved to be forbearing. After Brandon spoke on her behalf, she courteously apologized to the older woman and passed the gift in her hand to her.

Matilda said nothing.

When she heard "no longer affiliated with the Hayes", she finally remembered her conversation with Kelly the other day. Hence, she kept her temper in check for now.

"Alright. If that's the case, you're a guest just like everyone else. Entertain your guest well, Brandon."

"Sure!" Overjoyed, Brandon readily agreed.

Afterward, he led Sasha away from the lobby and went to the hall on the second floor.

As they were making their way upstairs, Sasha felt things were going too smoothly. Recalling the way Matilda had mistreated her in the past, she

couldn't help but say, "Your mother's temper doesn't seem as bad before."

Brandon rubbed the back of his head and asked, "Really? Maybe that's what aging does to someone."

The two chatted like this and soon arrived at the beautifully decorated banquet hall.

"Go on in. My uncle and some other relatives are all inside." Brandon pushed the double doors open.

Sasha stepped into the hall.

Indeed, his relatives were all present. Sasha easily found Frederick, who was sitting inside whilst surrounded by members of the Hayes and the Emmanuel family.

The whole family was here.

Brandon walked in as well, but after taking two steps, he realized that the woman beside him had fallen behind.

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"Sasha?" He tilted his head at her in puzzlement.

However, Sasha had gone silent as she stood by the door. Her legs were frozen to the spot and there seemed to be a storm brewing in her pretty eyes as they stayed fixated on two particular people inside the hall.

That's Xandra!

She's really here. Xandra was wearing an expensive and exquisite gown, paired with jewelry that Sasha had never even seen before.

She was obediently standing beside Frederick right then, pouring him some tea with a flattering smile on her face.

"Mr. Hayes, allow me to pour you some tea. I just brought it back from Jetrouina. Try it."

After brewing the tea, Xandra politely offered it to him. Anyone who witnessed this would no doubt praise her for being a sensible and well-behaved lady.

Frederick, who was chatting with his family members, turned toward her. Then he reached out to accept the teacup in her hand. "Let the other elders try some as well."

"Alright, Mr. Hayes."

Xandra beamed at his suggestion.

She started brewing more tea and poured them into cups before serving them to all the Hayes and the Emmanuels, buttering them up as she went.

Sasha took an unsteady step backward.

As she watched this scene, her heart felt as though it had been stabbed, and her vision turned blurry suddenly.

"Sasha? Are you okay? What's wrong?" Brandon rushed to her side to support her.

However, Sasha had already retreated into herself. There was a buzzing sound in her ears as disappointment and sadness spread through her veins.

All she felt was a suffocating coldness and as though her heart was being carved right out of her chest.

Why?

Has Mr. Hayes abandoned me too? Is it because I'm no longer his daughter-in-law that he doesn't see me as his family anymore?

But he promised he would treat me like a daughter after Mom and Dad left. He promised.

Sasha had never been so heartbroken.

This pain was completely different from being hurt by his son. She had always understood that Sebastian wasn't obligated to give her what she yearned for.

Hence, she could still accept the outcome.

Whenever he hurt her, she would already be mentally prepared and could handle whatever he sent her way.

However, after witnessing this exchange, she was about to fall apart at the seams.

Why is he doing this to me?

Did I really do something wrong? Didn't he promise to treat me like his own daughter? Why is he being so nice to this woman just after agreeing to let me divorce his son?

He used to love the tea I brewed for him, but now she has taken my place.

Tears rolled down Sasha's face. Without even saying hello, she turned around and walked away in despair.

"Where are you going, Sasha?"

Brandon immediately went after her.

What the two of them didn't know was that the woman inside had long since spotted them. Right then, a triumphant smirk formed on her lips.

Did you really think you could win, Sasha? In your dreams!

...

At Hayes Corporation.

Sebastian had been busy with company matters all morning. As the big boss, naturally, he had to review the year-end statistical reports of every department.

Finally having a moment to himself, he was about to drink some water when his phone rang.

"Hello?"

"Daddy, Mommy has gone out for a long time."

It was Ian. Though his words were short and concise, Sebastian detected a trace of anxiousness in his voice.

She went out? Where did she go?

Sebastian frowned and patiently reassured his son. "Did she go out to do something? Have you asked Ms. Dolivo?"

“Yes, but Matteo said that something’s wrong with Mommy.”

Sebastian was quiet for a while.

Before he could speak, a rustling sound drifted over the phone and soon came another child’s voice.

“Daddy, there’s definitely something wrong with Mommy. You have to find her quickly. I checked already. Her GPS tracker shows that she’s in the city’s east. There aren’t any supermarkets or malls in the east, only hotels and high-end residential areas. Why would Mommy go there?”

Sebastian remained silent.

“Also, Daddy. I hacked into Mommy’s phone and found that she has been texting someone with the number 1 30XXXXXX for the past two days. I also saw that Mommy has a meeting with him today!”

Matteo spoke very quickly. After relaying his discoveries, his short and chubby fingers flew across the tablet in his hand.

Sebastian felt his phone vibrate and lowered it from his ear. Then he saw that a WhatsApp screenshot and a GPS tracker location had been sent to his phone.

Sebastian was bereft of speech.

He didn’t know how to react to his son’s otherworldly abilities, so he decided to click on what was sent to him instead.

At first glance, he noticed that the WhatsApp screenshot was a rather familiar chat history.

“Isn’t this the chat history with Ms. Fischer?”

“Ms. Fischer ? How’s that possible ? She’s still in Clear. If she came here, she would definitely have visited us by now, but we haven’t seen her so far. How can it be Ms. Fischer.”

Matteo immediately shot down that possibility.

Sebastian narrowed his eyes and finally sensed something amiss.

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Hence, he immediately opened the location, finally verifying his suspicions. The GPS showed the hotel under Hayes Corporation which was located in the city’s east. And at that moment, the Emmanuels were hosting a birthday party there!

This damned woman. She wouldn’t have gone there, would she ?

His face darkened and he ended the call before standing up to leave.

“Mr. Hayes ? Are you going out ?” Luke had coincidentally come in with a document in hand. Surprise was written all over his face when he saw his boss leaving.

Sebastian couldn’t be bothered explaining to him though.

He only pointed at the desk, motioning for Luke to leave the document there. Shrouded in a layer of frost, he grabbed his car keys and took large strides out of his office.

Luke was slightly baffled.

What's going on? Why did he leave all of a sudden?

And his vibe earlier gave me the chills.

Luke shuddered a little before placing the document on the desk and exiting the office.

As soon as he came out, he found that the employees outside had powered on their computers and were watching the recently announced news on the Emmanuel family's birthday party, which was currently the talk of the town.

"Wow! The Emmamuels are really something. They even invited the media to their party."

"It's not that surprising. The Emmamuels are associated with Hayes Corporation anyway. Even Mr. Hayes Sr. is at the party, so of course it's big news. Just look, all the bigwigs are there."

One of the employees pointed out, hitting the nail right on the head.

The others echoed their agreements and continued watching the live broadcast. Luke took a glimpse at one of their computer screens and said, "Seriously? Our president isn't even there, so there's nothing worth reporting."

"True. Our president is the real deal. If he attended, he'd definitely be making the headlines every minute. Why is the media there anyway? What's there to report about?"

"Maybe they thought Mr. Hayes would be attending? Hahaha!"

Joyous laughter reverberated through the office.

Indeed, the attendance of the city's big figures at the Emmanuel family's party alone would not be enough to invite the media over for a live broadcast, even if Frederick was there.

Oddly, after settling into their seats in the banquet hall, the guests found that the big LED screen was broadcasting the very party they were attending.

Matilda asked, "Who invited them? It's just a party. Why were the media invited?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe it was Uncle Frederick? I mean, it's your birthday, so it's normal to get the media over," Philip answered.

Completely oblivious to the truth, the Emmanuels gave all the credit to Frederick.

Since they assumed it to be Frederick's doing, no one continued pursuing the matter. Hence, after the party began, the hall was filled with lively chatter and joyous laughter; it was a vibrant scene.

Sasha came back just then with her emotions already under control and went over to greet Frederick.

Just as she expected, although Frederick greeted her with his usual bright smile and waved her over to sit at his table, she noticed he did not ask Xandra, who was sitting beside him, to move aside.

Her fears had come true.

Thus, she endured the pain and sorrow in her heart. "It's alright. I'll sit at Brandon's table."

“What? No, this won’t do. Sasha, come over and sit here, so that the two of you can have a good chat.” Xandra hurriedly stood up.

Sasha couldn’t deny that her acting skills were top-notch. Even at a time like this, she could put on such a gentle and virtuous facade.

Sasha forced a big-hearted smile onto her face as the Hayes and the Emmanuels at the main table showed displeasure.

“It’s fine, sit. Take good care of Mr. Hayes. He can’t eat many things at his current age, especially cold things as they can cause physical discomfort.”

In response, Xandra feigned awkwardness.

Meanwhile, Frederick’s expression changed subtly and his body turned stiff.

He noticed that the child who had called him Frederick all these years had changed her form of address to ‘Mr. Hayes’.

Sasha and Brandon walked away to sit at the table furthest away from the main table.

“Do you wanna go home, Sasha?”

“What?”

Holding a fork with a dazed expression, she whipped her head up at his question.

Brandon became even more guilt-ridden just then.

He never thought that he would bring her so much pain today. Seeing her pale complexion and vacant eyes, he felt as though his heart had been pierced by a thousand needles.

“I’m sorry, I never should’ve brought you here.” Brandon lowered his head, his handsome featured lined with regret.

Only then did Sasha understand where this was coming from. After recomposing herself, she forked up a large drumstick and placed it on his plate.

“It’s okay. This was something I had to face eventually.”

“But...”

Brandon was going to blame himself again, but glancing at the woman beside him, he decided to steer the topic away instead. “Then, do you wanna... go rest for a bit?”

“Rest?”

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“Mm, the party isn’t going to be over anytime soon. If you wanna wait until after Mr. Hayes leaves, I’m afraid there’s still a long time to go, so you might as well go upstairs to rest.”

Knowing that Sasha’s pride wouldn’t allow her to run away like a coward, Brandon was considerate enough to make this offer.

In the end, she agreed. “Okay.”

Two minutes later, both of them left the banquet hall together.

Brandon was initially going to check into a room upstairs for Sasha to rest, but when they passed by the hotel's garden, she suddenly paused in her stride.

With a pallid complexion, she pointed at a bench near the lake, motioning that she wanted to sit there.

"It's really windy outside. Wait here while I get you a coat."

"Mm..."

Sasha nodded compliantly and allowed Brandon to guide her to the bench.

It really was windy.

However, she could hardly feel anything, let alone the wintry blasts on her skin. Only fatigue and emptiness were left, making her feel as though all someone had sucked the strength out of her and her soul had left her body.

Mom, why is life so tiring?

Sasha gazed up at the sky just as someone spotted her and called out, "Sasha Wand? Are you Sasha Wand?"

Huh?

Hearing someone call her name, Sasha subconsciously straightened and looked toward the source of the voice.

A young man in a black suit had come to the garden at some point. He walked over upon catching sight of Sasha, looking pleasantly surprised.

“Yes, I’m Sasha Wand. And you are?”

“Oh wow, Ms. Wand! Don’t you remember me? I’m Dr. Kaye’s student, and that makes you my senior.” The man quickly took out a work ID and handed it to Sasha.

Dr. Kaye’s student?

Sasha pondered for a moment as she tried to recall anything about this man.

But because her time with Dr. Kaye wasn’t that long, she had no recollection of this self-proclaimed junior of hers. However, since he mentioned Dr. Kaye, she still offered him a polite nod.

“It’s nice to meet you. Is there something you need?”

“Well, not exactly. Dr. Kaye passed this psychology book to me before she left. She said that I had to find you and give it to you no matter what.”

The young man took out a book just then.

Sasha was taken aback.

“Before she left?” Her mind zoomed in on these three particular words and surprise was written on her face. “Dr. Kaye left? Where did she go?”

Sasha was quite emotionally attached to this doctor. First, she was her mother’s good friend.

Second, she had helped Sasha a great deal previously, saving her and the triplets as well as arranging for her to flee abroad with two of her children while keeping it a secret.

Dr. Kaye was someone she would be forever indebted to.

Hence, the man's words brought a pang to her heart.

“Yes, she was transferred to another province, but she said that if you miss her, you can call or visit her any time.”

“Really?”

“Of course. You've always been Dr. Kaye's beloved student. Otherwise, she wouldn't have asked me to give you this book. I've been looking everywhere for you, you know? Luckily, I attended this birthday party with my family today and chanced upon you.”

The man had been strangely enthusiastic the moment he appeared. When he spoke about chancing upon Sasha, he became even more animated, revealing a row of white teeth as he grinned.

Seeing this, Sasha could only gratefully accept the book from his hand.

“Thank you. I really appreciate it.”

“It's no problem at all. Dr. Kaye said that this book is very important. It contains the treatment for hereditary schizophrenia which you've been searching for. You read more about it in there.”

Silence ensued.

For a good few seconds, Sasha searched her mind, trying to remember whether she had told Dr. Kaye about this before.

Did I really ask her about the treatment for schizophrenia ?

“Ms. Wand, may I ask ? Who’s the patient with this disease ?”

“What ?”

“I mean, the patient with hereditary schizophrenia. Dr. Kaye said that it’s someone very important to you and that you’ve been searching for a cure all these years. Can you tell me who it is ? I majored in psychology and even studied abroad before. This is a rare disease. Perhaps I may be of help to you.”

The man stated his question clearly this time and seemed to be genuinely concerned.

Sasha’s heart missed a beat.

He majored in psychology ? And even studied abroad ?

For some inexplicable reason, as she looked into the man’s eyes, the encouragement and concern swirling in them seemed to call to her like a siren’s song. All of sudden, she was hit with a strong impulse to reveal the secret she was burdened with for such a long time.

Perhaps it’s really time I shared this secret with someone; this secret that has haunted me for so many years.

I dedicated the first half of my life in pursue of an answer, but I always hit a dead end. I really need someone to help me now.

Someone who’s well-versed in this specific area. Yes, I need it.

Sasha parted her lips to speak.

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Unbeknownst to her, she was currently being projected on the LED screen in the banquet hall. Suddenly, the sound system was abruptly increased in volume, overpowering the noisy chatter in the hall.

“Can you really help him?”

“Of course, as long as you tell me who he is and describe his symptoms to me. You know, schizophrenia caused by genetic mutation is the hardest disease to treat in the world right now, and I’ve put a lot of time and effort in studying it.”

On the screen, the young man who was standing in the garden by the lake spoke in a clear voice.

As soon as he finished speaking, Frederick’s expression changed drastically, and the cup in his hand fell to the table with a clang.

“Mr. Hayes, are you alright?” Xandra cried out and moved to check on him.

However, Frederick shoved her aside and bolted up from his seat, roaring angrily at the screen, “Who’s doing this? Turn it off! Turn it off now!”

He was so furious that the veins on his neck were bulging.

The banquet hall instantly spiraled into mayhem. Everyone looked at a hysterical Frederick with confusion sprawled across their faces, wondering what in the world was happening.

Matilda was as puzzled as everyone else.

Sebastian arrived right then. After alighting the car, he rushed to the banquet hall just in time to see this chaotic scene, and the video displayed on the LED screen.

“His symptoms... His symptoms are terrifying. When they act up, he’ll become very violent, as if he wants to destroy everything. He’ll also create a different personality for himself—a very rare manifestation—and he will use that personality to do whatever he wants, like...”

On the screen, Sasha finally trusted the man and was slowly disclosing the secret she had buried in her heart for over ten years.

As if someone had hit the pause button, the banquet hall abruptly fell into a pin-drop silence. Even the air particles seemed to have frozen in place.

In an instant, all the blood drained from Sebastian’s face. His eyes had gone wide as this scene unexpectedly jogged a memory which was filled with blood and violence.

His expression turned monstrous.

Sasha Wand!

“N-No. That’s not right. I remember now. I’ve never... never told Dr. Kaye about this. W-Who are you exactly?”

Just as the woman on the screen was going to tell the man everything, she stopped suddenly, looking like someone who was jolted awake and trapped in an internal struggle.

She’s refusing to continue speaking and is starting to question who I am ?

The man was taken aback, probably stunned that she became clear-headed. Hence, he immediately stepped forward before she could react, making sure to capture her eyes with his own.

“Ms. Wand, perhaps you have too much on your mind and your memory is failing you. You said so yourself that back then, you asked Dr. Kaye about this matter, right?”

“I... I...”

Sasha backed away, feeling a terrifying force worming into mind to dig out the secrets hidden there.

Hypnosis!

This man is using hypnosis on me!

Being a doctor herself, Sasha realized what was happening. Suddenly, fear was born from what little consciousness she still possessed.

“S-Stay away from me! W-Who are you?”

“Be good now. This isn’t what we’re talking about. Tell me, who is that person? Who?”

Who?

Who? Who?

Imprisoned by his gaze, Sasha struggled hard to free herself from his influence. Like a devil whispering into her ear, his voice broke through her defenses and urged her to say the name.

No. I won’t say it!

I won't, even if it costs me my life!

Sasha bit down hard on her tongue, the sudden sharp pain pulling her back to her senses ever so slightly. "Get away from me! Get away!"

She violently shoved him away and staggered to her feet, wanting to escape from that place even as her head screamed in protest.

When the man saw that she could still resist him, a sneer formed on his lips. In the next second, he caught up and grabbed her arm, dragging her back toward him.

Their eyes met once again.

But this time, he came so close to her that their eyes were mere inches apart.

"Not bad, Sasha. I guess being a doctor makes a difference, huh? But you're no match for me. I told you I'm a psychologist. No one can fight against my hypnosis."

Sasha felt her world spin. With the taste of blood in her mouth, her consciousness started to waver again.

It turns out that this is all a conspiracy.

Someone had already planned for my downfall today.

Using every shred of willpower she had, Sasha pulled off the hair accessory pinned to the crown of her head with a shaky hand. "Is... that... so? Then today... let's see if I win, or you lose!"

With that, she stabbed the sharp accessory into her forehead.

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All he saw was a splash of crimson. Before he could process what was going on, the woman in his grasp went limp and fell over.

He froze, unable to comprehend strength of such caliber.

Not only that, she was vicious, too. Sasha targeted an acupoint, which allowed her to break free of his hypnosis. However, unbeknownst to her, this acupoint was also her Achilles' heel.

"Sasha." Sebastian appeared as she collapsed.

He replayed the moment in shock. In a flurry of movement, he was on his knees, heaving Sasha up from the pool of her own blood.

"Sasha, can you hear me? Wake up!" Sebastian gasped, fighting his raggedy breath to form words. His greatest fear was becoming a reality. He called her name over and over again, with each passing repetition diminishing in hope.

Sasha was unresponsive to his pleading. She lay in his arms, blood still spewing unrestrainedly from the gash on her left temple.

"You will be fine." Sebastian fought back his tears. "Nothing will happen to you. Nothing!"

He carried her out of the door to head to a hospital. As she swayed in the motion of his stride, Sasha's delicate rhinestone hairpiece fell from her wound and shattered in the pool of blood.

In an instant, the metal which was tinged with blood stabbed him in the eye. He stumbled in shock. Broken images flashed before his mind's eye.

Sebastian gasped at the pain in his head, as though a long-forgotten memory was being forcefully reopened. He staggered and fell to his knees.

“It was you! The man she was referring to was you!”

The psychologist did not move. He stood paralyzed at the realization that his deception was no longer effective.

“It was a genetic defect that caused schizophrenia. Of course it would be different from him. The lie you told yourself about your split personality; didn't he do the same thing? Was it blood? A knife? Are you... a murderer?”

He was unafraid, having already given up all hope of escaping.

However, seeing Sebastian on his knees, he stepped forward slowly, with a joyous and maniacal glint in his eyes, like Columbus had when he beheld the New World for the first time.

As soon as he was close enough, Sebastian looked up to face him. The psychologist recoiled from the intensity of Sebastian's pain.

Before he had time to react, the latter reached out with a bloody hand and grabbed hold of his neck. A crack like a gunshot reverberated throughout the room and the man was dead before he hit the floor.

Oh, the horror was unspeakable!

The guests who witnessed the scene gasped in shock.

Only Frederick remained calm. He surveyed the scene for an instant before deciding to send Sasha to the hospital.

After dismissing the crowd, he ambled over to his son, who was still on his knees.

“Sebastian.”

Sebastian did not seem to hear his father’s voice. His handsome features were void of life as he stared at his hands caked in Sasha’s blood.

“It is already done. No one will ever discover your secret,” Frederick told his son.

It did more harm than good. Sebastian jumped at the mention of the word “secret” and glared at his father malevolently.

“No one will ever know?” Sebastian repeated. “Doesn’t the whole city know by now? I told you before. You should have killed me. What’s the good of keeping me in this world?”

“Sebastian, wake up!” Frederick was furious. “You’re not living for yourself. If you think of yourself as broken and guilty, perhaps you should carry on living for those who bore the transgressions of your sins. You owe it to them to live on! They traded their lives for yours!”

The harshness of his voice forced Sebastian to look his father full in the face. He was looking quite deranged; the paleness matched the shock of white hair.

His eyes, however, were bloodshot.

Yes, I’m tired of living. Everybody in this cursed household is.

They did everything they could to hide the truth so I could lead a normal life. Everybody in this house gave up their hearts and souls.

“I know that you’re in shock today because of the girl.” Frederick took a deep breath. “But have you thought about it? She gave her life to protect your secret. Why do you have to blame yourself? Shouldn’t you be trying even harder to protect her from now on?”

It had to be said, even if he knew his son did not want to hear it at this time.

True enough, it did the trick. Sebastian’s bloodshot eyes widened in comprehension, having renewed his purpose once again.