

# THE DAY I KISSED AN OLDER MAN

## Chapter 1271



Tommy thought it was Annie who came since she would often drop by from time to time. Thus, he was surprised when he opened the door and saw Sophia instead.

Sophia, however, was not surprised at seeing Tommy there. She knew Jeremy had arranged for him to be there.

“Tommy. I’ve come to visit Corinne. Is she in?”

Tommy looked at her in surprise and with slight wariness. He was afraid that something bad would happen again if they let the two women meet. After all, they did not start on the right foot during their first meeting.

“Yes, she’s in. But may I know what’s the purpose of your visit?”

“I came to see how she’s doing and...to invite her to my birthday party,” said Sophia honestly.

Aaron looked like he was in a dilemma. “Well... Uh...”

Knowing what Tommy was worrying about, Sophia flashed a smile at him and assured him, “Don’t worry, I’ve already told Jeremy I’m going to invite Corinne, and he’s okay with it.”

“Oh, I see. In that case, can you wait in the living room while I let Miss Corinne know you’re here? She might be resting though, so don’t have your hopes up.”

Sophia shook her head. "It's okay. Don't wake her up if she's resting. I can wait here for as long as it takes. It's not like I have anything better to do, anyway."

Tommy was grateful for Sophia's understanding. He quickly went to knock on Corinne's door.

She was not sleeping but scrolling through her phone to shop for baby's clothing. The baby was about to be due soon, and she had many things she needed to prepare.

She got up to open the door when she heard the knock on the door.

"Miss Corinne, Miss Sophia has come to visit you," said Tommy respectfully.

Corinne yawned. "Tell her I'm not home."

"Uh... She already knows you're home and is waiting in the living room for you," replied Tommy embarrassedly.

Corinne really did not care. She was about to close the door when Sophia walked over with a smile and greeted her, "Hey, Corinne."

A look of annoyance flashed through Corinne's face. 'So rude of her to step out of the living room when she's only a guest.'

"Hey, Sophia. What's up?" asked Corinne with a superficial smile.

Sophia stopped in front of her and, within earshot of Tommy, said apologetically, "I want to apologize for the misunderstanding yesterday and also invite you to my birthday party tomorrow night."

She took out a beautiful invitation from her bag and handed it to Corinne. "You can bring your friends, too! The more the merrier!"

Corinne accepted the invitation and gave it a cursory glance before saying, “Miss Sophia, do you seriously think I can attend a birthday party with the condition I’m in?”

Sophia looked at Corinne’s protruding belly. “Of course you can!” she said confidently. “You can drink juice instead of alcohol. I heard pregnant mothers can get even more sensitive if they stay at home all

the time, so you should come out more, Corinne. It’ll be good for both your body and mind if you hang out and talk with some friends.”

Corinne smiled politely and gave her back the invitation. “Thank you for thinking of me, but I’m too lazy and have no interest in joining pointless social events.”

Sophia quickly grabbed her hand and said ‘sincerely’, “You must come, Corinne! I don’t have any friends here, so I really, really hope we can be friends. Can you please take some pity on me and just come?”

Corinne pulled back her hand and shook it as though trying to get some dust off.

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“Miss Sophia, it doesn’t seem like you’re being sincere. I can’t help but feel like you’re forcing me to go. It’s as if I’ll look like a total b\*tch if I don’t go.”

Sophia was so shocked by Corinne’s words that she did not know what to say.

Thus, she passed the invitation to Tommy before turning back to say to her, “Corinne, I was sincere when I said I wanted to invite you, but I must’ve been too much in a rush to get you to agree. I’m sorry if I said anything to upset you. I’ll leave the invitation with Tommy so you can come if you change your mind. Jeremy’s friends will be at the party too. I’ll be off, then. Goodbye.”

After that, she turned around and kindly reminded Tommy, “Tommy, do your best to take care of Corinne for Jeremy, okay?”

“Will do, Miss Sophia,” said Tommy with a nod.

Sophia smiled and walked toward the entrance.

Tommy did not see her off as he was worried that Corinne would be upset by him doing that. Not knowing what to do, he simply stood with the invitation in his hand.

“Miss Corinne, forgive me for saying this, but I think you’ve misunderstood Mister Jeremy and Miss Sophia’s relationship. They’re just friends. Miss Sophia has grown up abroad where the people there are more open-minded, so that’s why her behavior might sometimes be frowned upon here. But she’s really not that bad of a person. They met each other when they studied abroad.”

Corinne smiled mockingly. “Just friends? Would a man get legally married to someone who’s just a friend?”

Tommy was dumbstruck. “So you knew about that! There’s an explanation for that though—”

“You don’t have to explain anything to me. Whatever it is, I have no interest in knowing the reason now,” interrupted Corinne. After that, she went back into her room and shut the door loudly, leaving Tommy to sigh helplessly.

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Corinne continued to shop online for baby's clothing. However, she could not get rid of her annoyance even when she saw the cute baby clothing.

'No matter what the reason or whether there's really nothing going on between them, it doesn't change the fact he lied to me,' thought Corinne, and she did not want to spend the rest of her life with a liar.

When Xante and Aaron came back from work, they saw the invitation Sophia left. Annie and Sunny also dropped in for a visit, so the four of them started discussing why Sophia would invite Corinne to her birthday party.

"I know who Sophia is. She was Uncle Jeremy's university schoolmate. I heard she did Uncle Jeremy a big favor, which was why he considered her as a friend. I can guarantee nothing is going on between them!" said Annie.

Sunny scoffed. "How can you guarantee that? It's not like you were there when they studied abroad. Do you know Jeremy treats Sophia better than he treats Corinne? My guess is she's his first love!"

Annie glared at Sunny. "Stop saying nonsense like that! Uncle Jeremy's first love is Corinne! He's not a player, alright?!"

Sunny's lips twitched. "Oh, please. He's so handsome that women have been throwing themselves at him since his university days. Do you seriously think he'd be able to resist them all the time? He's a man, so he's bound to slip up sometime!"

Annie put her hands on her hips. "Hmph! So what if the women threw themselves at him? You speak as if you've experienced it before. Did you slip up too? Is that why you insisted Uncle Jeremy wouldn't be able to resist either?"

"Nonsense! You better not spread rumors about me!" Sunny quickly turned to look at Xante. He was worried she would misunderstand him, but she was

actually scrolling through her phone. It seemed like she was not listening to their conversation at all.

Annie rolled her eyes. “I can’t spread rumors about you, but you can spread rumors about Uncle Jeremy? You better watch what you say, or I’m going to tell Lucas that you’ve been harassing girls at your school!”

Sunny’s face turned red. “Why you!”

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## Chapter 1273



Aaron smiled and said, “That’s enough out of you two. From the way I see it, this invitation is more like a declaration of war against the boss.”

Both Annie and Sunny looked at him with confusion. “Declaration of war?”

“Yeah! I mean, Jeremy’s the one throwing the party for Miss Sophia, right? So she’s showing off to the boss. It’s her way of indirectly letting the boss know how good Jeremy is to her that he’s willing to throw a party for her.”

Annie and Sunny exchanged glances with each other. Suddenly, everything started to make sense to them.

At that moment, Tommy—unable to stand there and do nothing anymore—walked over to them to defend Jeremy.

“Please don’t get the wrong idea. Mister Jeremy is just helping out Miss Sophia by inviting some of his friends to the party. As for the party itself,

everything is paid for by Miss Sophia herself. Mister Jeremy isn't the one throwing her the party."

Aaron, Annie, and Sunny looked up at him. Xante, too, shifted her attention from her phone to Tommy.

Annie was the first to speak. "Hmph! Why would Uncle Jeremy invite his friends to the party if they're really just friends? Doesn't he know that his status is different from others? I mean, it'd be so easy for other people to misunderstand the whole situation if he did that. No wonder Corinne got mad at him."

Tommy was speechless.

"Annie's right! Women love to get jealous for nothing! But the fact that Jeremy doesn't know how to keep his boundaries with another woman and to help her out by inviting his friends to her party... Well, I can't say I blame Corinne for ignoring him. He should learn from me. I haven't spoken to any other girls in my school since I got together with Xante. A man should always draw a line without being asked."

Xante's lips twitched. "You do know I don't care whether you speak with other girls, right?"

"I'd still do it even if you don't care," said Sunny arrogantly. "That's the perk of being my girlfriend!"

Xante could not stand it anymore so she stood up and said, "Please excuse me while I go check up on the boss."

After that, she quickly left the living room.

Sunny lifted his chin proudly. "There she goes again. She must be too shy to admit it."

Annie rolled her eyes at him.

Aaron smiled and took a sip of his coffee before raising an eyebrow and saying to Tommy, "So would Jeremy be going to Miss Sophia's birthday party too?"

Tommy nodded. "He would at least drop in for a bit."

Aaron laughed mockingly. "You know what I hate about him? It's that he pretends to be this loyal and loving guy on the surface while he keeps having an affair behind the boss' back."

Tommy frowned. "No! I can attest to the fact that Mister Jeremy isn't that kind of person. He rarely interacts with other women, and the only reason he's nice to Miss Sophia is because she did a huge favor for him in the past!"

"And what's this huge favor I keep hearing about?" asked Aaron with a curious smile.

"I can't tell," replied Aaron seriously.

Aaron chuckled softly. "That just makes everything sound even fishier. Go tell Jeremy to spend the rest of his life with Miss Sophia and leave the boss alone! And you, stop coming to our home. It's getting really annoying!"

Tommy was speechless.

Update of by Cher the Cherished

## Chapter 1274



Annie could not bring herself to defend Jeremy anymore.



“Tommy, you should stop defending Uncle Jeremy. The more you try to explain, the more it sounds like you’re trying to help him cover up something. Plus, what could he possibly be so busy with that he didn’t even come to visit Corinne once in the past few days? Even I have to side with Corinne on this! Hmph!”

Tommy was speechless. ‘Poor Mister Jeremy... He does have his reason...’

Annie did not want to talk to him or the other two guys in the room anymore, so she went to Corinne’s room. Xante was still inside talking to her.

“Corinne, have you decided whether you’re going to the party?” asked Annie as she sat in front of them.

Corinne looked up lazily and asked, “What party?”

Annie frowned. “Sophia’s birthday party, of course!”

“Oh, I forgot all about it. Why should I go to some stranger’s birthday party?”

“But she gave you the invitation, so how can you not go?” asked Annie frustratedly.

“There’s no law saying I must go to a party just because I’ve been invited,” said Corinne nonchalantly.

Annie turned to Xante. “Xante, would you go if you were in Corinne’s situation?”

Xante pushed up her gold-rimmed glasses. “I would go if I’m available.”

“Why?” asked Annie curiously.

“I mean, it’s not like I have anything better to do and... Who knows? I might meet a hot guy and have a fling with him.”

“Uh... Okay...”

Xante’s reasoning, though somewhat offbeat, was still a reasoning after all.

“What’s this talk about having a fling?” asked Sunny with a frown as he walked into the room.

Xante immediately got a headache when she saw Sunny. She instinctively massaged her temples as she said, “You can’t come into a girl’s room without permission!”

“Xante, were you talking about having a fling? Why would you want to have a fling when you already have me?” he asked stubbornly.

Xante looked at him. “I was just talking nonsense.”

Sunny widened his eyes in anger, making him look imposing yet childish at the same time. “Don’t ever talk nonsense like that again! Having a fling is no joking matter!”

The pain in Xante’s head became even more pronounced. “Go wait in my room first. I’ll explain everything to you later.”

Sunny was pleasantly surprised that Xante would ask him to wait in her room. His mood instantly lightened as he lifted his chin proudly and said, “Don’t keep me waiting, you hear?”

Xante sighed as she watched Sunny strode out of the hurry. After that, she turned back to Corinne and said seriously, “By the way, Boss, there’s something I’ve forgotten to tell you.”

Corinne raised an eyebrow. “What?”

“The owner of Heartland Hotel is an art collector, and he has collected many world-renowned paintings over the years. Among them is a self-portrait of Nellie Nymphaea which has never been made public before. That’s about to change because it’ll be displayed in an upcoming exhibition.”

Corinne’s expression immediately became focused. “How trustworthy is this piece of information?”

“A hundred percent trustworthy! All the paintings are from his private collection. Not many outsiders had seen it. But, lately, the hotel he owns has run into some operational problems and isn’t making money as it used to. To attract more high-end customers, he recently released the news that he’ll display his private collection in the banquet room for any guest that holds a party there to make it more interesting.”

It had been a long time since Corinne saw any of her mother’s paintings on the market. What made it even more attractive this time was the painting displayed would be a self-portrait of her mother.

‘What would Mom’s self-portrait look like? How old was she when she drew her self-portrait?’ wondered Corinne. She really wanted to know the answers and see the painting with her own eyes. ‘But why does the name of the hotel sound so familiar? If I remember correctly, I saw the name somewhere today...’

After thinking it over, Corinne suddenly narrowed her eyes. “Did you just say Heartland Hotel? Isn’t that the place where Sophia is throwing her birthday party?”

Xante pushed up her gold-rimmed glasses. “Yes, exactly.”

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## Chapter 1275



“So I’ll be able to see Nellie Nymphaea’s painting at Sophia’s birthday party tomorrow?” asked Corinne.

Xante nodded. "If everything goes to plan, then yes."

Corinne's interest was instantly piqued. "Where's the invitation?"

Annie snapped out of her trance and quickly went to get the invitation for her. "Here's the invitation, Corinne."

Corinne took the invitation and clutched it tightly. "I've decided I'm going to the birthday party."

Xante had expected that, so she was not surprised at all. "If that's the case, I'll get someone to make a custom tailor dress for you."

Corinne nodded.

Xante immediately went out to arrange Corinne's dress. There was no time to lose since the birthday party would be happening the following night.

Annie watched dazedly as Xante left the room. After that, she moved closer to Corinne and asked curiously, "Corinne, why did you suddenly change your mind?"

Corinne frowned at her. "Mind your own business, Annie."

"Oh, come on, don't be like that... Who's Nellie Nymphaea? Is she an artist you really like?"

"Why are you asking so many questions? Are you planning to relay what you find out to your uncle?"

Annie chuckled and said sheepishly, "Nope! I'm just curious why you suddenly changed your mind. After all, you didn't have an ounce of interest in the part just a few moments ago."

Corinne smiled and said sarcastically, "Aren't we humans just fickle animals? Well now, time for you to head back home. You don't need to come so often, too."

“Oh... Okay...” Annie walked out of the room sadly. She did not manage to get the answer she wanted in the end. After thinking about it, she decided to text Jeremy.

[Uncle Jeremy! Corinne seems like she really likes this painter called Nellie Nymphaea. You know what to do, right?]

However, she received no reply from Jeremy.

The night of Sophia’s birthday party swiftly came.

Corinne changed into her custom-tailored dress and put on some light makeup. She actually found the dress uncomfortable since she was eight months pregnant and had gotten a little fatter than before. However, it would be even more uncomfortable for her if she attracted unwanted attention by wearing something unsuitable for the party.

Her dress was pink and made of real silk, showing off her tanned skin. She looked endearing in that dress. She did not really do anything to her hair as she decided a simple updo hairstyle would do.

Two cars were waiting for her when she got down from her apartment. One was arranged by Xante and the other by Jeremy with Tommy acting as the driver. Not wasting time deciding, Corinne walked toward the car Xante hired for her, but Tommy stopped her mid-way.

“Miss Corinne, please get into my car. Mister Jeremy insisted for me to drive you there,” he said.

Corinne frowned. “Why should I get into your car? We’re going in the same direction, so why can’t I go in the other car?”

“Mister Jeremy is worried that it won’t be as safe for you to go in other people’s car as you’d be in mine since you’re pregnant and all. After all, it’s better to be safe than sorry.”

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## Chapter 1276



‘Heh! I was right. All he cares about is the baby in my belly. He’s worried something bad will happen to the kid. What a worrywart!’ thought Corinne.

As the baby’s mother, Corinne would never let anything bad happen or let Jeremy have anything to do with him or her.

Corinne walked around Tommy, but he quickly ran up and stopped her again. “Miss Corinne...”

“Get lost!” roared Corinne impatiently.

It was only then Tommy backed away in fright, allowing her to get into the car Xante arranged for her.

However, Tommy was not about to give up that easily. He ran up to the driver’s side of the car and said something to the driver. The next second, Corinne saw the driver get out of the car to let him in.

Corinne was speechless. At that point, she was too lazy to deal with Tommy, so she let him have his way. ‘Who cares who the driver is? As long as I get to the party safely.’

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Soon, the car stopped at the entrance of Heartland Hotel. The valet respectfully opened the car door and helped Corinne out of the car.

Tommy got out of the car too and handed the keys to the valet before quickly following Corinne into the hotel.

Corinne had to walk slowly because of her baby bum, so Tommy walked slowly alongside her as though afraid she would suddenly slip and fall.

The party was already in full swing by the time Corinne arrived. However, she paid no attention to the guests and instead focused her eyes on the paintings on the wall to look for Nellie Nymphaea's painting.

"Corinne!" someone called out her name

Knowing it was Sophia, Corinne did not bother to turn to her. Instead, she kept her eyes trained on the walls.

Sophia walked up to her with a smile. "Hey, Corinne! So glad you could make it! I knew you wouldn't have the heart to turn me down."

Corinne simply smiled at her and said nothing. 'I didn't come here for you. I came here for my mother's painting! I must say, though, Sophia's good at pretending she's happy to see me here.'

Sophia looked at Tommy, who was behind Corinne, before looking to the left and to the right. "Corinne, didn't Jeremy come with you?"

'What an interesting and laughable question. Why would she, his legally married wife, ask me, an outsider, where her husband is?' thought Corinne mockingly.

Corinne smiled and said, "How would I know whether he has come or not? You should call him yourself if you want to know where he is."

Sophia's brilliant smile never faltered. "You're right! I'll do that in a minute!"

"Miss Sophia, there's no need to call Mister Jeremy. He's busy right now, so he'll come later," explained Tommy.

“Oh, I see,” said Sophia with a nod. “If that’s the case, shall we go meet some of our mutual friends, Corinne?”

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## Chapter 1277



‘Mutual friends? Since when do we have mutual friends?’ wondered Corinne.

“You know what, it’s fine, Miss Sophia. You should hang out with your other guests. I can just walk around by myself.”

However, Sophia did not want to let her go. “No, that won’t do. You shouldn’t stay on your feet for too long since you’re pregnant. Come, let’s sit over there and I’ll get the waiter to get you something to eat and drink.”

As much as Corinne did not like Sophia, she thought it would be rude to keep turning her down on her birthday. She had no choice but to follow her to where she pointed.

Sophia brought her over to the VIP area where three men were already sitting on the sofa.

Zeke, with a glass in his hand, was regaling Gerald and Jason with a funny story but stopped when he saw Sophia and Corinne coming over.

He narrowed his eyes and said sarcastically, “Well, well! If it isn’t the woman who dumped Jeremy and ran away with his baby.”

Corinne glanced at him and said nothing.



Gerald was surprised to see her there, too. He gave her a customary nod as a greeting.

As for Jason, he smiled mischievously the moment he saw Corinne.

“Corinne, I trust that you know each other already. Why don’t you take a seat here? I’ll get the waiter to bring you something to eat,” said Sophia.

Not feeling awkward at the slightest, Corinne sat on an empty sofa.

“Guys, please take care of Corinne for me while I go greet the other guests,” said Sophia with a smile to Zeke and the others.

Zeke smirked and raised his glass. “Sure thing! This’ll be a perfect opportunity to catch up with each other. After all, it’s been a while since we last saw you, right, Corinne?”

Corinne continued to ignore him.

“Alright, thanks! I feel so much better knowing you guys will take care of her. I’ll be going over there, then,” said Sophia. She gave Corinne a parting glance before she left with a smile.

Zeke immediately scooted over to where Corinne was sitting with the glass of wine still in his hand. He narrowed his eyes at her and asked, “Looks like the baby’s gonna be due soon. Exactly when will you be giving birth?”

Jason planned to sit beside Corinne too but was not as fast as Zeke, so he had no choice but to subtly sit back down. “Zeke, stop teasing her!”

Zeke looked at him. “I’m just asking her when’s the due date. It’s not like I’m asking her anything rude. Tsk! Why are you so protective of her?”

Jason simply smiled and said, “It’s everyone’s responsibility to take care of pregnant mothers.”

Zeke chuckled softly. “Oh, please. I think it’ll be more accurate to say that you have a crush on her. You better not let Jeremy find out, or you’re definitely going to get it!”

Jason continued smiling, but his eyes subtly darkened.

Zeke did not realize he had said something rude, so he turned around and smirked at Corinne. “I’ve really got to hand it to you, Corinne. I can’t believe you have the guts to dump Jeremy twice!”

Corinne accepted a glass of juice from a waiter. She then stirred the juice with the straw. Raising an eyebrow, she warned, “Please watch what you’re saying, Mister Zeke. I didn’t dump Jeremy.”

“You didn’t dump him? Then why did you run away in secret?” asked Zeke with great interest.

“I didn’t run away in secret either. I left the mansion in broad daylight.”

“Fine, say you left the mansion in broad daylight, but why? Why did you do that? Why would you throw away your chance of being the wife of a rich and powerful man?”

Corinne smiled. “What’s so good about being the wife of a rich and powerful man?”

Zeke smiled, too. “What’s good about that? I think it’ll be more accurate to say what’s not good about being the wife of a rich and powerful man! Do you know how many women want to marry Jeremy?”

Corinne scoffed. “You sound like you want to be his wife too! I’m pretty sure he’ll make your wish come true if you just tell him. After all, you guys have been friends for so long.”

Zeke's smile froze. After that, he covered his chest and said, "You must be joking! I'm straight, okay?! No way am I going to marry him even if he wants to!"

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Suddenly, a cold voice came from behind them. "What are you guys talking about?"

Everyone turned toward the voice and saw Jeremy walking steadily toward them.

Zeke smiled and quickly said, "Jeremy, you're finally here! We were just joking around with Corinne."

Gerald glanced at Zeke. "He said he doesn't want to marry you, but he doesn't mind screwing you after a drink or two."

Jeremy frowned and looked at Zeke in disgust.

Zeke chuckled awkwardly before glaring at Gerald while getting up from the sofa to let Jeremy take his place.

"Gerald, why did you do me dirty like that? I didn't say the last sentence at all!" complained Zeke.

"You didn't say that, but we all know you were thinking about it," said Gerald expressionlessly.

“You’re a real \*sshole, you know that, Gerald?” asked Zeke as he sat back down beside him.

Even though Zeke vacated his previous seat so that Jeremy could sit down next to Corinne, Jeremy chose to sit on an armchair that was a little bit further away instead.

It was nothing aggressive, but somehow it caused the temperature in the room to suddenly drop. Zeke and Gerald exchanged glances with each other.

At that moment, Jason stood up with a smile and went to sit beside Corinne. He took away the glass of cold juice in her hand and said softly, “You shouldn’t drink anything cold. I’ll get the waiter to get you a cup of warm milk later.”

Corinne nodded and thanked him.

She completely ignored Jeremy from the moment he arrived. She did not want to look at him as she feared that doing so would spoil her mood. The reason she came to the party was to find her mother’s self-portrait, not to have a chat with the guys there.

‘Oh my god, they’re so annoying. Why do I have to be here?’ thought Corinne.

Zeke walked over to Jeremy to pass him a glass of wine. “What’s the matter? You two haven’t made up yet?”

Jeremy did not look at anyone. He accepted the glass of wine from Zeke and took a sip after clinking it against Zeke’s glass. No one talked after that.

Corinne could feel a relentless gaze on her, and it made her feel very uncomfortable. Not able to stand it anymore, she asked Jason, “Do you know where I can find the restroom?”

“It’s over there. Shall I accompany you?” replied Jason with a smile while pointing in a particular direction.

“No, thanks.” Corinne got up and slowly walked toward the restroom. She had no need to go. As a matter of fact, she was just using that as an excuse to get away from the group. At the same time, she could look around for her mother’s self-portrait.

Jason looked worriedly at Corinne. He got up to follow her a few seconds later, but he had not even taken a step before Jeremy stopped him.

“Jason.”

Jason paused and turned back to smile at him. “Yes, Jeremy? How can I help you?”

Jeremy narrowed his eyes, and after a long while, he finally said, “Nothing.”

Peeved, Jason said nothing. He turned back around to look at Corinne, but she was already gone. He looked around for her, but all he could see were the other guests milling about. Thus, he had no choice but to sit back down.

Jeremy’s expression remained impassive. No one knew what he was thinking about. Suddenly, he gulped down his wine and stood up.

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## Chapter 1279



“Jeremy, where are you going? We haven’t even had a good chat yet,” said Zeke.

“I’m going out to make a call,” replied Jeremy indifferently.

“Tsk! Gerald, don’t you think Jeremy should make up with Corinne by now? I mean, she can’t have it easy with that pregnant belly of hers!” said Zeke.

Gerald glanced at him and said, “Mind your own business, Zeke.”

Zeke scoffed and turned to Jason, who was drinking his wine. “By the way, Jason. You look like you really care about Corinne. Are you close with her? How come I didn’t know that?”

Jason smiled. “Oh, didn’t I tell you guys? We go way back. I knew her even before I knew she was together with Jeremy.”

Zeke was a little taken aback. He could not help but think Jason was hinting something, so he and Gerald exchanged glances with each other as they came to a tacit understanding.

Jason downed his wine and placed the empty glass on the table. “I’m going out to make a call too.”

Zeke was speechless. He shook his head as he watched Gerald leave. “I don’t think either Jeremy or Jason are going out to make a call. What do you think, Gerald?”

Gerald swirled his whisky. “Yeah, probably not.”

Zeke smiled. “They probably went to look for Corinne.”

Gerald chose to stay silent.

Corinne did not go to the restroom. Instead, she walked along the walls to take a closer look at each of the paintings displayed.

The paintings were indeed famous, but there was no self-portrait of Corinne’s mother. ‘Maybe the owner of the hotel doesn’t think Mom’s painting is famous enough to be displayed here?’ she thought. ‘Ugh, what a waste of my time!’

Her mood was definitely spoiled then, but hearing Sophia calling her the next second put her in an even worse mood.

“Corinne, what are you doing here alone? Why didn’t you stay with Zee and the rest of the guys?” asked Sophia with a smile as she walked over to her.

‘Did she really just call Zeke ‘Zee’? Even Gerald and the others won’t call him that! Don’t tell me she really thinks she’s one of the guys and gave Zeke a nickname because of that...’ thought Corinne.

“Oh, um. I’m looking for the restroom,” said Corinne.

Sophia’s gaze flickered. “The restroom isn’t this way. Corinne, are you looking for something? I’ve noticed you’ve been looking here and there ever since you came in. Why don’t you tell me what you’re looking for so I can help you look?”

Corinne shook her head. “It’s nothing. I was bored, so I thought I’d check out the paintings.”

Sophia gazed deeply at her as though she wanted to see right through her soul. Suddenly, she smiled and said, “I see. The owner of the hotel specially brought out his private collection to add a little fun to my birthday party. All of the paintings are the real thing! You should take a good look at them while you can. After all, I don’t think you ever had the chance to come into such close contact with these famous paintings in the past, right?”

Corinne smiled. She chose not to explain herself and instead said, “You’re right. This is a rare opportunity. I should thank you for giving me this opportunity, Miss Sophia. You’ve really opened up a whole new world for me.”

Sophia smiled back at her. “Oh, don’t say that, Corinne. I know you didn’t exactly grow up in the best environment, but you should know that it isn’t your

fault. I promise I'll take you to more fancy places in the future once we've become friends."

"Then let me thank you in advance. Can I go back to viewing the paintings now?" asked Corinne with a smile.

"Of course," replied Sophia with a nod.

"Why are you still blocking my way? Move aside now so I can view these rare and famous paintings," said Corinne rudely.

Sophia's face froze for a second before she smiled again. "Oops. Sorry, my bad. I didn't know I was blocking your way. I'm willing to get out of your way. Can you do the same for me?"

Update of by Cher the Cherished

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Corinne found what Sophia said laughable. "You want me to get out of your way too? Since when was I ever in your way?"

Sophia leaned in and whispered conspiratorially, "I don't mean it in the physical sense but in the romantic sense."

Corinne's eyes turned cold. She found what Sophia said so absurd that she almost laughed. "What does your love life have to do with me?"

Sophia was about to answer when she spotted someone appear behind Corinne. "Jason, what are you doing here?" she asked with a smile.



Jason glanced at Corinne before smiling at Sophia. "I went out to make a call just now. What are you two girls talking about?"

Sophia looked at Jason and then at Corinne as realization hit her. Her grin became even wider as she said, "Corinne has taken an interest in the paintings displayed in this room, so I came to walk with her since I don't think she should be left alone in her condition. But I have to entertain the other guests soon, so can you please stay with her, Jason?"

Jason smiled. "Of course. Leave her to me."

A wicked glint flashed across Sophia's eyes. "Okay, I'll leave you two to it, then. Catch you later."

After that, she started mingling with the crowd.

Jason turned back to look at Corinne after he made sure Sophia was nowhere to be seen. "Didn't you say you wanted to go to the restroom? Why are you here alone instead?"

"Can't I take a look around after I've been to the restroom? Must I go back and be talked about by you guys as if I'm in some sort of freakshow?"

Jason smiled and shrugged. "Hey, that's not fair. I didn't join in their conversation when they were talking about you."

Corinne did not find Jason as annoying as usual. After all, she felt rather indebted to him.

"Let me guess, you can't stand them either?"

"Yeah, I guess you can say that," replied Jason with a smile.

Corinne nodded. "It was easy to tell."

Jason smiled and looked down at her shoes. 'Oh, good. She's wearing flats instead of high heels. She'll suffer the whole night if she does.'

“You wanted to check out the paintings, right? Come on. I’ll go with you,” said Jason, gesturing with his chin for her to walk in front of him.

Corinne frowned and said a little unhappily, “You don’t have to come with me. There are too many people here, and it’ll start a gossip if they see you walking with me. I’ll be fine by myself, so you should join your friends instead.”

“Let them gossip about us! I don’t care. Your presence will help me keep the other women at bay,” said Jason.

“But I care! I don’t want to be the talk of the town for tonight.”

Jason smiled. “Oh, stop being such a worrywart. Everybody’s having too much fun to notice us. Let’s go. It’s best if I stay with you. After all, it won’t be a laughing matter should you slip and fall in your condition.”

Corinne turned to look around. Jason was right. Everybody was having too much fun to even look at them. Sophia had spared no expense for the party as she even hired the hottest rock band at that time to liven up the atmosphere.

Knowing Jason, Corinne knew he would not leave no matter what she said. Thus, she decided to let him accompany her while she walked around the venue.

Jason was very thoughtful. He would steer her away gently when he saw someone was about to bump into her. However, what they did not know was somewhere on top of the stairs, Jeremy was watching them with icy eyes.

Sophia passed Jeremy a glass of cocktail. “Jeremy, is Corinne close with Jason? They look like they’re getting on well with each other.”

Jeremy narrowed his eyes. “What makes you think that?”

About -

