

The Day I Kissed An Older Man By Cher the Cherished

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'Does she think she can do whatever she wants here, just because she's Corinne's sister?' thought the two servants.

However, they had been trained, regardless of the situation, not to show their displeasure to guests, so the two of them respectfully led the Carew's into the mansion.

Sherlyn had been to the mansion's grounds before with Corinne, but this was her first time stepping into the mansion, so she was looking curiously at everything around her.

However, she did not seem all too happy when she came to the inner courtyard.

With the air of the woman of the household, she crossed her arms haughtily and looked down her nose at the inner courtyard's design. Then, shaking her head, she said, "This mansion isn't that bad, but can we do something about the old -fashioned design? I don't like this kind of Victorian-era style of decoration. We need to do some revamping once I move in.

"And that old pine tree over there has grown too big. It's blocking the sunlight from filtering into the mansion. We'll need to cut it down in the future. The marble floor tiles on the ground will need to be removed too so we can put some high- grade turf of the same quality as the golf course and plant my favorite flower-roses, of course. After all, only a garden that befits a European royal castle will be suitable for my status as a celebrity!

"And oh, those rustic potted plants over there must also be thrown away, or it'll affect the overall appearance of the garden."

Lilliana nodded to everything Sherlyn said. "You're right, Sherlyn. I also think the yard is too plain. It'll be a pity if we don't do something about it."

The two servants who were leading the way exchanged glances with each other. They were both annoyed and speechless, wondering what was wrong with Corinne's family. How could they think about renovating the mansion's grounds as if they owned the place?

To Sherlyn and Lilliana, it might just be some plain old yard, but to the Holdens, every plant and tree there was a treasure. The 100-year-old pine tree, for example, had been in the family longer than Jeremy had been alive. Then, there were all the rustic potted plants which were all of Greg's favorites. He spent countless hours, effort, and money to make sure they were all taken care of.

It was obvious to the servants Sherlyn and Lilliana had no idea just how rare some of the orchids in the yard were. The

orchids, which were the apples in Greg's eyes, were even harder to get than gold, and they lived an even more pampered life than some humans in this world! The servants were sure Sherlyn and Lilliana would not live to see another day if they threw the orchids away.

Bowen waited for Sherlyn, Marvin, and Lilliana in the hall, and he immediately walked up to them with a kind smile as soon as he saw the three of them entering.

"Mister Carew, Missus Carew, and Miss Carew, welcome! Ma'am will come down to see you as soon as she finishes washing up."

Sherlyn glared at him and said, "You're that old man who spoke to us through the intercom, right?"

Bowen's smile immediately froze. He did not expect Corinne to be so rude to him, not when he had treated them so politely. However, he decided to let it go. He was trained as a

professional butler, after all.

His smile maintained as he said, “Yes, I’m the butler of this household. You may call me Bowen.”

Sherlyn looked him up and down and scoffed. “It’s time to change the butler, too! He’s too old!”

Bowen was stunned, and a frown appeared on his head. ‘My, this young lady is so rude!’

However, no matter how unhappy he was, he kept up his

professionalism and politely said, “Might I invite the three of you to co-“]

He did not even have the chance to finish his sentence before the Carews swaggered into the living room and sat on the sofa as if they were in their home.

In all his years of serving the Holden family, Bowen never met such brazen guests. Even the dignitaries and influential members of other prominent families would not dare to act indecently in the mansion.

‘Well, I guess I’ve seen everything now,’ thought Bowen.

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The two servants who led the Carews in approached Bowen and asked meaningfully, “Mister Hoover, are they truly Ma’am’s family? Why do they act so differently than her?”

“Yeah. They seem to think the mansion belongs to them instead of them just being guests. Just now, they even said they’re going to revamp the whole yard! They wanted to have the old pine tree cut down and for Mister Greg’s precious orchids to be thrown out!”

Bowen frowned, not understanding why the Carews behaved like that. “That’s enough coming from you two. The two of you would do well to remember they’re Ma’am’s family. Instead of gossiping here, you should go make a pot of coffee and ask the

kitchen to prepare some fruits and snacks for them. Remember: only the utmost respect for her family. We wouldn't want them to have a bad impression of their first visit here."

"Yes, Mister Hoover," chorused the two servants in unison, and the two of them went to the kitchen.

Sherlyn leaned languidly against the expensive fabric sofa, thinking how much more comfortable that sofa was than the one in their home. It was so comfortable that she nearly dozed off. However, she did not like the style. Sure, it looked expensive, but it was too old-fashioned for her taste.

She sat up and put on the air of the woman of the household again as she looked around the interior of the mansion. Her

eyebrows never once wrinkled in dissatisfaction as she complained with a sigh, "I don't like anything in this mansion at all! Everything is so old-fashioned. I do wish they had something more contemporary,"

Lilliana, who sat beside her, smiled and said coaxingly, "Hey there now. You'll be the woman of the household once you

move in here. Then, you can decorate the place however you want! I'm sure Jeremy will follow through with anything you want if you just ask him."

After she thought about it, Sherlyn agreed with what her mother said.

Jeremy's perfect, handsome face suddenly appeared in her mind, making her heart throb with longing. 'Oh, he's the most good-looking man I've ever seen in my life. Even if he's not the heir of the Holden family, I'd still be willing to marry him, and the two of us will live the most passionate love story ever!'

However, Sherlyn could not help but feel angry at Corinne for stealing Jeremy away from her. 'I wonder if they had slept together. If she has, then I'm going to make sure she regrets it – for the rest of her life!!'

At that moment, the maid came in with some refreshments. Marvin accepted the cup of coffee from her, took a sip as if he was a coffee connoisseur, and then said, "What coffee is this? Why does it taste so weak?"

"This is the best Black Ivory coffee money can buy. The taste is a tad on the lighter side. I can make you another coffee if you prefer something stronger," said the maid.

Black Ivory coffee was the most famous coffee in the world. This was Marvin's first taste of it, so he did not know what was

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good or what was bad. He cleared his throat out of

embarrassment, waved his hand, and said, "No, it's fine. I'll make do with this one. By the way, where is Corinne? What's taking her so long to come down?"

The maid did not know how to answer him, so she said nothing.

Bowen immediately came over. He smiled politely and said, "Mister Carew, Ma'am is still dressing up. She'll come down when she's ready. Please have some fruit while you wait for her."

Marvin frowned. "Does she think she's the queen now that she has married into this family?"

"How dare she put on airs with us?!"

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Sherlyn stood up angrily. "Yeah! Is Corinne trying to make a big entrance? How dare she let us wait when we, her family, have come to visit her? She's probably guilt-ridden to face us. Well, I guess I just have to go upstairs and drag her down myself!"

She then impatiently got up from the sofa and started to make her way to the stairs. Bowen frowned and immediately signaled with his eyes to the servant beside him to stop her.

The servant blocked Sherlyn's path, which enraged her. "Get out of the way! Why are you stopping me?" she asked arrogantly.

He remained standing where he was, not moving an inch.

Bowen walked over to Sherlyn and said, "I'm sorry, Miss Carew, but only the residents of this house can go upstairs. As a guest, you need to remain downstairs. I do hope you can understand."

Sherlyn obviously did not agree with him. "How dare you stop me? I'm not a guest at all! Don't you all know I'm the rightful wife of "

"Sherlyn, why are you making all this fuss in the morning?" interjected Corinne from the top of the stairs. This

immediately got Sherlyn's attention.

She looked up and frowned as she saw Corinne smiling carefreely at her from the second-floor railing. She hated how beautiful the bare-faced Corinne looked even though secretly she wished she was just as beautiful as her. How she wished

she could scratch that pretty face of hers!

Corinne was dressed in simple pajamas that looked casual and comfortable. It was obvious she had just woken up. 'Didn't that old butler say that Corinne was washing up? Was she lying? She looked like she had just woken up! Maybe that's why it took her so long to come down. What does she take us for?!' thought Sherlyn.

The more Sherlyn thought about it, the more angrier she got. She wanted nothing more than to go upstairs and rip her a new one. However, Bowen and the servant held their ground and kept her from going upstairs.

Sherlyn could not get through them at all. Annoyed, she gritted her teeth, raised her chin proudly, and haughtily said, "Do you servants know who I am? How dare you block my

way? I'll give you three seconds to get out of here, and if you don't, I'll make sure there will be hell to pay!"

Bowen was not angry at her, but he was evidently less polite toward her. "Miss Carew, I know you're Corinne's sister and our honored guest, but it doesn't mean that you don't have to follow the etiquette in this house. Let me remind you again that only residents of this house can go upstairs, and no one can go up there unless Mister Jeremy gives his permission."

Sherlyn was livid. She pointed angrily at Corinne and shouted, "You say no one can go up there? Then, tell me, what is she doing up there?!"

"She's the madam of this house and Mister Jeremy's wife. That makes her the residence of this house," explained Bowen helplessly.

Sherlyn's finger, the one aimed at Corinne, quivered out of

rage. "She's not your ma'am! I am! I was the one who was

supposed to marry Jeremy, and I've come here today to take back what's mine!"

Bowen was stunned. 'What?!

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Sherlyn smiled smugly

when she saw how shocked Bowen was. "That's right. It's exactly as I've said. I'm the rightful Missus Holden, the woman that all you servants should listen to!"

Bowen had been in all kinds of situations in his life, and he cultivated the skill to stay calm under fire. However, at that moment, he could not help but laugh out loud at the

supremely confident Sherlyn. His laughter set off a chain reaction, and the other servants standing there burst into laughter as well.

Sherlyn was made very uncomfortable by them laughing at her. She glared at them and snapped, "Hey! What are you all laughing at? I'm telling the truth!"

Bowen then forced back his laughter and cleared his throat; he returned to his usual professional self. "I do apologize for laughing, Miss Carew, but it seems like you're still in dreamland. Might I suggest that you take a nap in any of the rooms of your choosing on the second floor?"

"Why you..." Sherlyn felt humiliated by Bowen. She wanted to retort but could not come up with anything worthy. "Hmph! I don't have the time nor the energy to explain the situation to all you stupid servants. Just you wait. I'll make sure each of you comes to regret how you treated me today!"

Bowen and the other servants were not worried. Instead, they looked at Sherlyn with eyes full of pity as though she was mentally unwell.

Sherlyn gritted her teeth angrily and glared at Corinne, who was watching her being humiliated by the servants from the third floor. Since Sherlyn could not frighten the servant, she decided to change her target to Corinne.

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"What the hell are you looking at, Corinne? Get your *ss down here now! You've made us wait long enough!"

Corinne covered her mouth and yawned. Then, she walked down the stairs as though she had all the time in the world. Bowen, you may step out of the room with the other servants. Leave me to take care of my 'family' by myself."

Bowen was a little worried. "Umm..."

He did not like the look of the Carews. Plus, it did not seem like they were close to Corinne, and he was worried she would not be able to handle them. In other words, he was afraid that the Carews would bully her.

Corinne could tell what Bowen was thinking. She gave him a reassuring smile and said, "Don't worry. They won't eat me."

“Alright, then,” said Bowen with a nod. In the end, he

respected her decision. He led the other servants outside and ordered a few maids to stand by in the living room.

With all the pesky people out of the way, Sherlyn immediately walked up to Corinne. She raised her hand high up, intending to slap Corinne to make her pay for her insolence. However, Corinne, possibly having guessed what she had in mind, grabbed Sherlyn’s wrist.

“Now now, you don’t want to hit me when we haven’t seen each other for such a long time. Besides, aren’t you worried that no one would want to marry you if they ever saw this side

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of you?” said Corinne with a raised eyebrow.

Tried as she did, Sherlyn just could not shake off Corinne’s

grip, which only seemed to fuel her anger. Deep down in her heart, she did not care what Corinne thought of her, but the latter part of what she said seemed to have triggered something in her.

Sherlyn was in the Holdens’ estate after all. What would

happen if Jeremy got wind of how she acted? His unfavorable impression of her might cause their marriage to sour, so it was better for her to maintain a ladylike demeanor.

Thus, she decided to

let Corinne go this time since there would be plenty of opportunities to make her pay later.

Sherlyn pulled back her hand and gave it a few shakes as though she was disgusted by Corinne’s touch. “Dad is waiting in the living room for you. He has something to ask you, so you better get your *ss over there!”

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Corinne nodded and walked leisurely toward the living room.

“Mister Carew, Missus Carew, it’s been a while,” greeted Corinne with a faint polite smile.

‘Did she just call me

Mister Carew?’ thought Marvin with a frown. Then, out loud, he asked, “What did you just call me, you ungrateful child?”

Corinne sat on an armchair that was

quite a distance away from where the Carews sat. She took a deliberate sip of the Blue Mountain Coffee that the maid passed her before looking up and saying, “What’s wrong with calling you Mister Carew? Isn’t that your surname after all?”

After finding out she had no blood relation to Marvin at

all, Corinne could not, and would not, call him ‘Dad’ anymore. He was not her biological father, and he was not the one who brought her up either. No, a person like him who threw her away to the countryside did not deserve to be called a father.

Marvin glared at Corinne, who he found more irksome as the minutes ticked by. He scoffed and lectured her, “Corinne Carew, you shouldn’t disown your father just because you’re married to a wealthy man now. Besides, you know very well just how you came to be Missus Holden!”

Corinne raised her eyebrow while her eyes trembled with anxiety. “You seem like you know very well how I came to be Missus Holden too, Mister Carew.”

Before Marvin could say anything, Sherlyn cut in angrily, “**Not** only does **he** know, but Mom and I know, **too!** Corinne, no

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secret can be kept hidden forever in this world, so I highly

suggest that you drop the act and come clean with your crime. That way, I might find it in my heart to show you mercy, step- sister.”

Corinne chuckled. “You, show me mercy? Sherlyn, pray tell, did I do something wrong to you again that you’d need to come to my house to show me mercy?”

The words ‘my house’ was like a thorn that stabbed Sherlyn’s heart. She felt as if someone had taken possession of her belongings. “Your house? Just how shameless can you be, Corinne? You know very well this is obviously my house!” she said angrily.

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Lilliana leaned gently against Marvin and said softly, Corinne, I advise you to come clean while Sherlyn is still willing to show you mercy. We all know that you took Sherlyn’s place to marry into the Holden family, so there’s no use hiding it from us anymore. Now, be a good girl and kneel. Apologize to your father and sister.”

Corinne narrowed her eyes. “How did you all know about that?”

Her question sounded like a confession to the Carews, which angered Marvin even more than ever. He pointed at her and snarled, “Corinne Carew, I didn’t raise you to be a shameless daughter! Have you no morals? How can you steal your sister’s husband? Did you know you turned us into a laughingstock within our circle of family and friends? If I knew what was going to happen, I shouldn’t have brought you back from the countryside!”

Corinne found what Marvin said a little funny because it was

through her stellar exam result that she was about to come to New Capital City to study university with a full scholarship. Marvin did not do anything. Besides, he kept emphasizing that he was the one who brought her up, but did he?

Corinne understood their purpose for visiting her after she saw how Sherlyn kept making trouble for Bowen. It was just that...she did not know how they found out that she had become Missus Holden.

“Why aren’t you saying anything? Could it be that you’re wracked with guilt now that your crime has been exposed?” sneered Sherlyn when she saw how silent Corinne was.

Corinne sighed and lowered her head as though she had no right to face them. “Since you all know what happened...I guess the only question is...how do you all plan to punish me?”

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The fact that Corinne lowered her head seemed to have made Sherlyn haughtier. “How do we plan to punish you? Well, that depends on my mood and how sincere you are in apologizing to us.”

At that moment, Lilliana sighed helplessly and gently persuaded her daughter, “Forget it, Sherlyn. Corinne is your sister after all, so you shouldn’t punish her.”

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She turned toward Corinne and said with mock compassion, Corinne, Sherlyn could never return to the peak of her career because you took her place as Missus Holden for so long. But it’s okay, we won’t ask you to compensate her for the loss ‘ cause we’ll just put it down as you being young and stupid. However, you’ll need to give back the title of Missus Holden to Sherlyn, so it’ll be great if you can just pack up your things and leave her without a fuss. Of course, you’ll need to promise us you’ll never show your face here again and stop coming in between Jeremy and Sherlyn. I guarantee you we’ll let bygones be bygones if you just do as I said.”

“But, Mom...that’s going too easy on her!” whined Sherlyn.

Lilliana gave her a look and lectured her, “Sherlyn, Corinne is your sister. Even if you’re not doing it for her, you should do it for your father’s sake.”

From the look Lilliana gave Sherlyn, the latter understood that her mother wanted her to be patient. It was more important to get rid of Corinne from the Holdens’ estate because there would be plenty of time later to punish her.

Thus, Sherlyn did not insist. She rolled her eyes at Corinne and said nothing for she had made up her mind to let Lilliana

handle everything.

Marvin looked at his kind wife, and he felt both touched and heartbroken. There was also a little guilt mixed in for wrongly blaming her in the past. He held her hand, sighed, and said, "Lilliana, I'm sorry what I've put you and Sherlyn through. I know what Corinne did was horrible, but thank you for showing mercy to this ungrateful child of mine for my sake."

"Oh Marvin, there's no need to thank us! We're family after all!" said Lilliana gently. However, anyone there—except for Marvin and Sherlyn—could tell she was only putting up an act.

The guilt in Marvin's heart acted as fuel to his anger. He glared at the irksome Corinne and shouted angrily, "You ungrateful child! What are you waiting for? You should thank your Aunt Lilliana for being so magnanimous! Let me tell you

something: You better not screw this up. Otherwise, no matter how much she's willing to forgive you, I'll make sure you get your just punishment!"

Corinne got up from the sofa and bowed sincerely. "Thank you, Aunt Lilliana, for being so magnanimous. I'm so grateful that you're willing to let the matter slide and give me a chance to turn over a new leaf. Thank you so much! Don't you worry, I know what I did wrong, and I'll move out right away."

Marvin, Lilliana, and Sherlyn were stunned by Corinne's apology.

Lilliana thought that Corinne would never leave the place without a fight. Why would anyone, when she used every trick possible to secure her place as Missus Holden in the first.

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place? Therefore, it would be more understandable if Corinne had to be dragged out of the house kicking and screaming.

Lilliana truthfully preferred

for that to happen as she would be able to show Marvin just how kind she was compared to the evil Corinne. That was why she did not know how to react when Corinne agreed to move out of the house obediently.

Corinne slowly raised her head when she did not hear anything from the three of them. “Huh? Why are you all looking at me like that? Are you not happy that I’ve agreed to move out? If that’s the case, how about I stay here with Sherlyn so that I can take care of her to atone for my sins?” she asked innocently.

Sherlyn

was the first to react. “Hmph! I don’t need you to take care of me, Corinne. You better not think of pulling any tricks on me. You have to move out no matter what, but before you do that, you have to explain to Jeremy what happened. Don’t you dare gloss over any facts!”

Corinne nodded and said, “Yes, of course. But Jeremy is still working right now, and it would

be rude of me to bother him when he’s so busy. I’ll wait until he gets home from work and then explain everything to him then.”

“What? You’re going to wait for him to come home?” Sherlyn frowned unhappily. She wished for nothing more than for Corinne to move out at that moment. Even the thought of it brought joy to her heart.

“Then... Do you want me to call him now? Though, I should tell you that he doesn’t like it when people bother him while he’s working. He might take his anger out of me and all of you when he’s home if the call pulls him out of work,” said

Corinne sadly.

Sherlyn instinctively exchanged a glance with Lilliana, and the two of them started to have some hesitations.

After thinking about it, Sherlyn angrily grumbled, “Fine! We’ll wait for him to come home, but you need to go pack your

things now so that you can leave after you've explained everything to him."

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"Okay, sure!" said Corinne without missing a beat.

After that, she ordered the confused maid who stood next to her to gather Bowen and the rest of the servants. The maid immediately snapped out of her trance, nodded, and did as she was ordered. Not long after, Bowen and the rest of the servants gathered in the living room.

"Let me introduce you all to my sister, Sherlyn. She's the

woman Jeremy wanted to marry in the first place, so that makes her the real Missus. The other two next to her are her parents or, in other words, the in-laws of the Holden family," Corinne said solemnly.

Bowen and the rest of the servants were all shocked, and they could not help but wonder if Corinne was pulling a prank on them. However, when they saw her sincere expression, she did not look like she was joking.

"Now that this is done, you'll do well to serve the new Missus. - As for me, I'll be going upstairs to pack my things so that the real Missus Holden can move in."

Sherlyn felt vindicated by Corinne's introduction of her to the lowly servants who, moments ago, did not know who she was. She thought that Bowen and the two servants who led her in must be quaking in their boots when they found out who she

was.

Bowen was super confused. He chased up the stairs and said to Corinne, "Ma'am, what exactly is going on?"

Corinne waved her hand to tell him to stop following her. "

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Bowen, the only thing you need to do now is make sure they're well taken care of. As for the rest of the matter, we'll wait until Jeremy comes home."

"Yes, Ma'am," said Bowen worriedly.

After that, Sherlyn waited impatiently for Corinne to finish packing her things, but the latter never came down. She was about to go upstairs to see what she was doing when Bowen stopped her at the foot of the stairs. "I'm sorry, but you cannot go up."

Sherlyn glared at him and said, "You stupid old man! How dare you stop me when Corinne told you who I am?!"

Bowen was not moved. "Sorry, but we still need to wait for Mister Jeremy to come home and confirm you are who you say you are."

'This old man isn't only stupid but stubborn as well! The rest of the servants have obviously become more respectful toward me!' thought Sherlyn as she gritted her teeth. She then rolled her eyes and said condescendingly to him, "Fine! I won't go up now, but mark my words, I'll be able to go up very soon! In the meantime, my parents are hungry, so go tell the kitchen to make something for us. Remind them to use only the most expensive ingredients. If we find out they didn't, well... I'll tell Jeremy once he's home, and he'll surely punish you all!"

It took all of Bowen's willpower for him to stay calm.

He wished nothing more than to chase out the rude Carews of the house, but Corinne told him to treat them well. Thus, he nodded politely and said, "Yes, I understand. I'll make sure the food is up to your satisfaction."

The Carews had comfortably settled into the mansion by the time Jeremy got back home in the evening. Marvin had taken off his shoes and was snoring on the sofa. Lilliana was watching the television while doing her nails. Sherlyn was eating the expensive desserts that the chef had made while criticizing them, "Where in the world did you get this c

hef? He doesn't seem like he knows how to make good desserts. The chocolate mouss
e isn't sweet at all. Jeremy needs to fire him and hire a new one later!"

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Jeremy stood at the entrance, and because the television was turned on too loudly, he n
oticed something was different at home the moment he walked through the door. He sq
uinted at the three strangers sitting in the living room, and that caused his handsome ey
es to darken with alarm immediately.

The two maids greeted him as usual. One of them helped him out of his suit jacket while
the other bent to help him wear his house slippers. Jeremy took out his jacket and pass
ed it to one of the maids, but he did not put on the house slippers.

"Who are those people in the living room?" he asked in that deep voice of his.

The maid exchanged
confused looks with one another, and one of them answered helplessly, "Mister Jeremy,
they're Ma'am's family, but they..."

The maid found herself unable to continue as she did not know how to tell him that Cori
nne had introduced the 'new Missus. Holden' to them. It was too complicated to the exte
nt that

they, the servants, had no idea what happened.

"Well, go on. 'But'
what?" Jeremy asked impatiently, not liking the maid's hesitancy one bit.

The maid felt pressured, and this made it even harder for her to go on. She was just thin
king about how to explain the situation to Jeremy without making him angry when Bowe
n came just in time to save her.

"Mister Jeremy, you're back! The guests in the living room are the parents and
sister of Ma'am. They dropped by this

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morning to visit her,” said Bowen.

‘They’re the little rascal’s family?’ thought Jeremy. His long legs carried him out of the entrance and toward the living room, his eyes not as hostile as before. Before, he did not care about Corinne’s family because their marriage was fake, but that changed. He wanted to continue the marriage with her, so he thought he should treat her family well to show that he respected them and Corinne.

“Where is she?” Jeremy asked. At the word ‘she’, his usual cold tone became softer.

Bowen’s expression changed at the mention of Corinne. “Umm ... Ma’am is in her room, packing her things. She said that she needed to make room for her sister.”

‘Packing her things?’ Jeremy frowned. ‘What’s going on? I thought everything was going great between us. What’s she upset about this time?’

Bowen started to explain to Jeremy everything that happened today when Sherlyn- who wanted to go to the bathroom after having finished her desserts got up from the sofa and saw the impossible -to-miss and impossible -to-take-her-eyes-off handsome Jeremy, who stood at the living room entrance.

Her eyes lit up, and she greeted him excitedly, “Jeremy, you’re back!”

Bowen was only halfway through explaining what happened today and had not gotten to the key points yet. Therefore, Jeremy had not gotten the full picture of the situation, so it was understandable of him to treat Corinne’s family with the utmost respect.

Jeremy nodded slightly at Sherlyn, who walked toward him,

and said, “Hello. Welcome.”

A lukewarm 'hello' and 'welcome' was a rare thing to come **out** from the noble Jeremy's mouth.

Sherlyn's heart thumped excitedly in her chest. She was

delighted and thought

that Jeremy must have had a good impression of her. Why else would he act so politely toward her?

The fact that the cold, aloof Jeremy would welcome her was proof that she was the one he wanted to marry in the first

place. Besides, Anya did tell her yesterday that Jeremy had fallen in love with her after seeing her in a movie she starred in and that was why he arranged for his men to bring the

engagement gifts to her house.

Then, Corinne came in

between them. The people on Jeremy's side must have thought Corinne was Sherlyn because as

sisters, they somewhat looked alike. Even though Sherlyn did not think so, it must be so to others.

'Also, that b*tch Corinne rarely goes out with makeup on her face. Jeremy must've thought that's how I look without makeup, and that's how he mixed me up with her. Well, I don't blame him. A busy man like him can't possibly remember a face he only saw once on the screen, and that's how Corinne had the chance to replace me. I can't believe she pretended to be me for the past two months. Argh! How dare she steal my man from me?!' thought Sherlyn with gritted teeth.

However, she forced herself to calm down

by telling herself it was not the time to be cursing Corinne. The most important

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thing for her to do was to make a good impression on Jeremy.

She flicked her carefully groomed hair in a way she thought was charming and attractive. “Jeremy, we met each other in Lunar Century Manor before,” she chirped. “Do you remember?”

Jeremy glanced at her face and replied, “Yes, I think so.”

Sherlyn beamed at him. ‘I knew it! It only makes sense he’d remember me. I was the one he fell in love with, so he’ll surely fall in love with me again now that we’ve reunited. I must’ve made a lasting impression on him then!’ she thought.

In the living room, Lilliana quickly poked the sleeping Marvin and whispered to him that Jeremy had returned. Marvin was in the middle of a good dream, but he immediately woke up and sat up straight on the sofa when he heard Jeremy was home.

He looked toward where Lilliana was pointing and saw Sherlyn talking to a tall and elegant man. Everything about him looked so perfect, it was as though he was carved from marble. Even a middle-aged man like Marvin could not help but marvel at the fact that a handsome man such as Jeremy existed in this world.

“The songs singing praises of him are true! The heir of the Holden family isn’t only talented but handsome as well!’ thought Marvin. ‘And this talented, handsome man is going to be my future son-in-law!’

Marvin tidied himself up and puffed his chest. Then, he linked arms with Lilliana and proudly walked to where Jeremy was.

“Jeremy, our son-in-law, you’re back! We’ve been waiting here the whole day for you,” said Marvin.

Jeremy raised an eyebrow and looked at Marvin with a pair of

emotionless eyes. He nodded politely at him and respectfully said, "Nice to meet you, Uncle. I'm looking forward to listening to what you have to teach me about life."

Marvin immediately felt like he was going to burst with joy. He became so cocky that his nose was about to touch the ceiling. 'Good god, I can't believe the heir of the Holden family wants me to teach him about life! Those relatives of mine who laughed at me during the wedding won't dare to laugh at me anymore now I'm the father-in-law to Jeremy, the heir to the prestigious Holden family! Even he had to treat me with respect and listen to what I had to teach him about life!'

Marvin was sure that his life was about to change for the better as he had Jeremy's support. He could not wait to move around in the upper-class society!

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Marvin looked up at Jeremy, who was a good head taller than him, and decided to follow his lead in playing the part of the wise, old elder. He nodded admiringly and loftily said, "What a good son-in-law you are! I'm sure we'll get along just fine."

Lilliana smiled and said, "Jeremy, you must be tired from work. As your mother, I'll be more than happy to cook you some of my signature dishes later."

Bowen, who stood beside them, frowned unhappily. For a moment, he thought he heard wrong.

'Did Missus Carew really call herself Mister Jeremy's mother? She shouldn't do that even if she's his mother-in-law. I do not like them. They have no boundaries and no manners.'

Jeremy narrowed his eyes, and there was no hint of emotions on his face. He raised his head at Bowen and said, "Please make sure Corinne's parents are well taken care of while I go upstairs to check on her."

"Yes, Mister Jeremy," replied Bowen.

“Jeremy, wait! I want to go upstairs to look for Corinne, too!” said Sherlyn as she chased after Jeremy and deliberately got close to his tall, strong body. She wanted to prove to Bowen that she would be able to go up since Jeremy was back. ‘Let’s see if that stupid old man would dare to stop me this time!’

She was also worried that Corinne would shamelessly seduce Jeremy into bed if they were left alone in the room together.

Jeremy stopped in his tracks and looked unkindly at her. There was coldness in his eyes as he said, “I’m afraid that won’t do.

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Why don’t you wait in the living room for us? I’ll bring her down right away.”

Sherlyn was stunned. ‘What? Why...’

She did not expect that she would be shot down like that. ‘Didn’t Jeremy welcome me just now?’

Bowen—who witnessed everything that happened—could not help but think she deserved it. ‘She’s one delusional woman, alright. I wonder what makes her think that Mister Jeremy cares about her. Doesn’t she know that Mister Jeremy

wouldn’t even be talking to her if not for the fact that she’s Ma’am’s sister? Calling her delusional is the understatement of the century.’

However, Sherlyn was not about to give up that easily. She leaned seductively toward Jeremy and said, “Oh, come on, Jeremy. I just want to follow you upstairs to check on my little sister. I’m sure that’s no big deal.”

She made to grab Jeremy’s arm, but he moved away from her, not giving her a chance to touch him. “What are you doing?” he asked with darkened eyes.

Sherlyn was shocked that in return for her warmth, all she received from Jeremy was his anger. She did not know what to do. “Um... I.....”

'What's going on? All the men I've seduced in the past would gladly accept me with open arms. Why is Jeremy so cold toward me?' she wondered.

At that moment, Corinne's languid voice came from upstairs. "Mister, you came back just in time!"

Jeremy looked toward the source of the sound, and his cold

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"An explanation is in order."

Jeremy narrowed his eyes. His gaze was focused solely on

Corinne, and he did not even bother to look at Sherlyn's shy expression. He stretched out his big hand, took the suitcase from Corinne, and handed it to Bowen, who stood beside him.

He then asked, "What's all this fuss about?"

As Jeremy asked that question, he placed his arms around Corinne's waist and pulled her into his arms, as if worried that she might leave for real.

Corinne felt that it was a little inappropriate for him to hug her in front of other people, so she pushed his chest to try and break free. Alas, she could not do so, and she could only shrug helplessly as she spread his arms and began explaining.

"Well, it all started when you went to the Carews to fetch your bride, which you were supposed to do by going through the main entrance. However, you went through the back door and brought me away! Now that this secret has been exposed and they found out that you picked up the wrong person that day, Sherlyn came to settle scores with me and demanded that I return the position of Missus Holden to her. My only choice now is to move away!"

Sherlyn frowned at Corinne's blunt way of putting things and secretly shot her an unhappy look before following on from where Corinne left off.

“My sister is right. The woman you were supposed to marry in the beginning was me. It’s due to my sister’s penchant for

troublemaking and taking advantage of other people that led to the present misunderstanding!

“I came to meet her today because I felt she’s an ignorant girl who has never seen the world because of her countryside upbringing. I was concerned that it’d only embarrass the Holdens if she were allowed to keep staying here, and I believe it’s best that she and I switch places as it’ll be more fitting of our respective status.”

Jeremy listened and glanced suspiciously at Sherlyn. At that moment, he finally understood why Corinne’s family showed up uninvited that day. The polite expression that he had disappeared in an instant.

Rather than looking at Sherlyn, he gazed down at the girl in his arms and asked unhappily, “Why did you have to make a fuss when they’re the ones who are causing trouble?”

Corinne pouted. “I didn’t make a fuss! You just married the wrong person! She’s the one you should have married, and she even wore a wedding dress to wait for you at their home that day!”

Jeremy’s expression sank. “Enough with that nonsense.”

Despite his anger, he did not speak too harshly to Corinne but instead toned his anger down and talked to her as if he was instructing a child. He wanted her to know just how serious the matter was, but at the same time, he was afraid that he

would scare her a little too much.

Corinne frowned and seemed a little upset.

He did not seem interested to know whether he had chosen the wrong person and merely asked her softly, “What did you

eat today?"

The sudden appearance of several uninvited guests who came to stir trouble that day made him wonder if Corinne had eaten her meals.

Corinne replied truthfully, "I ate a ham sandwich this morning and some pasta at noon. I haven't had dinner yet."

After meeting the Carews in the morning, she spent the rest of the day upstairs. Bowen had her brunch delivered to her room, and she was quite full from the food.

Jeremy seemed relieved that she had eaten, and his expression softened slightly. "I see. What would you like for dinner then?"

Sherlyn stared from the side as Jeremy gave her the cold shoulder while speaking to Corinne in a very gentle and accommodating manner. She became irate when she saw Corinne was receiving the tender, loving care that should have belonged to her.

When she finally could not stand it anymore, she had a sudden thought and suggested, "Mister Jeremy, I think we should let Corinne leave while it's still early. If you let her stay for

dinner, it'll be unsafe for her to bring her luggage when it's too late."

Jeremy looked at Sherlyn coldly and said, "If she leaves, you'll be sent away all the same."

Sherlyn was stunned, feeling her ego take a hit. "W-why? Didn't you fall for me once before, Mister Jeremy? You can't let Corinne bewitch you! She might look like a good person, but she's one of the vilest schemers ever! She's the best at pretending to be innocent and playing the victim!"

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Lilliana was also a little anxious as she said, "My dear son-in-law, you need to listen to your mother-in-law when she says. you've made a terrible mistake. The one you intended to marry is Sherlyn, not Corinne!"

Marvin had his 'I-am-your-father-in-law' attitude all the same and spoke authoritatively, "Listen to me, my son-in-law! You were supposed to marry my eldest daughter, Sherlyn, and you chose my younger daughter, Corinne, by mistake on the wedding day! This is a misunderstanding that we must correct!"

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Jeremy heard on numerous occasions that Corinne had a hard life in the past, but he never thought that they would treat her so terribly. As if having a stepmother and stepsister who treated her like that was bad enough, even her father did not seem to show any care for her.

Jeremy looked down at the indifferent little girl in his arms and felt his heart tense up. He could not imagine how much suffering she had to go through in the Carews as a child to be able to act so indifferently in such a situation.

After listening to the Carews' ludicrous statements, a cynical smirk appeared on the corner of his lips. "Why should you switch places with her? The woman I wanted to marry has always been Corinne, not anyone else."

Sherlyn did not believe it one bit. She felt that it was Corinne's sweet talk and interference that made Jeremy confused.

"Mister Jeremy, how can Corinne be the woman you intended to marry? You can't believe a thing she says because she'll say all sorts of sweet words to win you over! The person you wanted to marry was me! I even received the engagement ring you sent me! Look!"

As she said that, she raised her hand to show him the diamond ring she had placed on her ring finger.

Jeremy looked at Sherlyn's moderately -large diamond ring and had the most insipid and expressionless face ever.

Then, his rough palm reached out to grab Corinne's small hand. He stroked her slender ring finger until, finally, his

rough fingertip landed on the diamond ring. Then, he held her hand up and waved it in front of the Carews.

"Sorry, but this is the Holdens' special engagement ring. I've never seen yours before."

Sherlyn frowned and was a little confused. Back then, the

person sent by the Holdens to give the dowry told his mother that a certain 'Miss Carew' had already accepted the diamond ring from Jeremy. During that period, a diamond ring was also sent anonymously to her.

'Who else could the sender be if it wasn't Jeremy? How could something so coincidental happen? It had to be Jeremy who wanted to marry me!'

Sherlyn was already becoming a little psychotic, and after thinking for a moment, she pointed at Corinne and insisted, "I know what happened! It was her! She stole the ring and switched it while I wasn't paying attention! That's how she managed to trick you of your trust and take my place!"

Jeremy's eyes became gloomier, and he was disgusted at her as he said coldly, "The ring that Corinne is wearing is unique to the Holdens. It was forged using platinum and several other special materials, making it impossible to take off without a special liquid lubricant. How would she have stolen it from you if you couldn't have taken it off when you put it on?"

Sherlyn could not have factored that into consideration, and she immediately felt dumbfounded.

"But... H-h-how..."

Jeremy took Corinne's hand and caressed it like the most precious thing. "Besides, I put this ring on her when we got

engaged. Now, do you still think I'd mistake someone else for the person I wanted to marry?"

Sherlyn was astonished. 'Engaged? Jeremy was engaged to Corinne?!

She had her mind set on not believing a word of what Jeremy said and shook her head vigorously. "No! That can't be! Mister Jeremy, why would a man with such noble status as you fall in love with a country girl like Corinne? A popular actress like me is obviously much more suited to become your wife!"

Jeremy cocked his eyebrow and looked emotionlessly at her. "I wonder where you got the impression that I'd ever fall in love with you."

"Uh..."

Sherlyn lost her confidence, but she remained a little

dissatisfied. "If you can fall for a country girl like Corinne, why would you look down on someone like me? I don't understand how I'm worse than Corinne."

"Pffttt! Hahaha!" someone laughed.

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The person who burst out cackling was neither Corinne nor Jeremy, but Bowen, who had failed to hold himself back at that moment. Despite his old age, that was the first time he had ever seen such an ordinary-looking yet incredibly self-confident woman.

It was truly an eye-opener!

Bowen cleared his throat in embarrassment, suppressed his out-of-character laugh, and said, "Ahem. My apologies, sir. I'll go check if dinner is ready for you and the missus..."

He then excused himself solemnly.

Jeremy narrowed his eyes and glanced icily at Sherlyn. “In what aspect do you think you’re better than my wife? Your character? Your intelligence, maybe? Or perhaps your image? Is there anything about you that can compare to even a single strand of my wife’s hair?”

His words severely hurt Sherlyn’s self-esteem, and although she also knew that Corinne was frustratingly good-looking, she believed herself to be quite attractive as well. Otherwise, she would not have been able to enter the entertainment industry and become a star.

‘Why does Jeremy look down on me?! Corinne has such bad taste in clothing and always looks poor, so what’s so good. about her?’

Lilliana could not stand seeing Sherlyn being wronged, so she walked up to them and said, “Why aren’t you admitting to your actions? You sent someone to our house to deliver the

dowry and inform us that you wanted to marry our daughter, which was why we organized a huge feast! In the end, you

never showed up that day, and our family was turned into a laughing stock by all our relatives and friends. You’re the one to blame for that!”

Jeremy raised his cold black eyes, and looked at the middle – aged woman who earlier self-professed as being his ‘mother- in-law’.

“The Carews don’t just have one daughter, do they? Haven’t you ever considered that my dowry was meant for your youngest daughter from the very beginning?”

Lilliana was startled and speechless. When they mentioned’ daughter of the Carews’, the first person to pop up in her mind was her biological daughter-Sherlyn. She never would have thought that it would be the country girl-Corinne.

Jeremy gently held Corinne’s shoulder while she was in hist embrace. He raised his hand and used his long fingers to tuck the lock of stray hair behind her ear.

Then, he said, "You ought to know that the only reason you can set foot on these tiles under your feet is because you're my wife's family! You'll lose that privilege if you keep treating my wife like this. She's better off without a family like yours."

He then called out to Bowen, "See them off, Bowen!"

Bowen duly came out of the kitchen and beckoned some of the servants to help him 'see them off'. Lilliana immediately panicked when she saw that, and immediately changed her attitude. "Mister Jeremy, you misunderstood us. Let's take it easy and talk..."

The Holdens' servants had endured their behavior for an

entire day, and they were not going to give the Carews another chance to speak since Jeremy had already instructed the

servants to see them off!

After being dragged away by the servants, Sherlyn came back to her senses and yelled begrudgingly, "Corinne deceived you, Mister Jeremy! I'm your bride! Me! Not her!"

Marvin took the opportunity to break free and turned around to run back to Jeremy.

He no longer dared to act all high and mighty and said with a smile on his face, "Mister Jeremy, I'm still your father-in-law regardless of which one of my daughters marries you. That will not change!"

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A hint of coldness flashed across Jeremy's eyes as he heard Marvin's fickle remark.

'How can someone like him be worthy of being a father?! Just what sort of family environment did Corinne grow up in?'

Jeremy narrowed his eyes frigidly and said, "First of all, you need to live up to your position as a father to my wife, and then I'll show you respect and accept you as my

father-in-law. You've been incompetent in your role as a father to Corinne, so to me, you're not even worth being treated as a human."

Marvin felt intense pressure and guilt, still wanting to argue with Jeremy. However, as soon as he met the cold eyes of his son-in-law', he suddenly felt an unprecedented fear and his words were stuck in his throat. His son-in-law's attitude toward him had changed completely compared to before.

When they met for the first time, the handsome and imposing young man still showed hints of respect and courtesy toward him, but all he could see in Jeremy's eyes then was an abyssal coldness and a threat of danger.

That was when Marvin fully understood that he was nothing in front of that man. What little courtesy that he received from Jeremy was credited in large part due to his younger daughter, Corinne. Without her, he could not step foot into the Holdens' home.

As for his eldest daughter, Sherlyn, the prospect of switching her and Corinne position was completely out of the question. Marvin was getting old, and though he did not want to be a

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shoe-shiner or a bootlicker, he did not want to miss out on the chance to finally be associated with a first-tier family as an in-law.

Marvin then put on a fatherly smile as he turned to his

youngest daughter Corinne and looked cheerfully at her. He then explained to her using a gentle tone.

"Please don't misunderstand, Corinne. I drank a bit of wine before coming here today, and I only said all those stupid things to you because I was drunk. To tell you the truth, I was just angry that you were always away from home.

"You made me so worried, especially when you didn't tell me about your marriage! I rushed here to see you as soon as I knew that you were at the Holdens. Please tell your dear husband not to chase me, his father-in-law, away!"

Corinne was still in Jeremy's embrace, and after hearing Marvin's words, she slowly turned her head to look at the familiar-looking man who felt like a stranger to her.

"You're Sherlyn's father, not mine. You didn't come here to see me. You came here to try and kick me out and replace me with your precious daughter Sherlyn."

The smile on Marvin's face froze, and deep down, he was

angry as his youngest daughter for being so ungrateful. However, he had no choice but to smile even more in Jeremy's presence. "Didn't I just tell you that it was a

misunderstanding, Corinne? You don't need to be so alienated from me. We can always talk things out!

Corinne's lips curled into a smirk and there was a touch of sarcasm in her eyes.

At that moment, she suddenly felt thankful that a spineless and unprincipled man like Marvin turned out not to be her biological father. Otherwise, she would have hated herself for inheriting those genes.

She ignored Marvin, cocked her eyebrow, and said to Bowen who was waiting not far away, "You remember their faces,

don't you, Bowen? You don't need to be polite to them if they ever show up here in the future."

"Yes, ma'am!"

Bowen bowed his head respectfully in response. He then raised his chin, signaling for the idle servants to chase Marvin out and let him join his wife and daughter.

Upon seeing that he was not going to get any benefits, Marvin became a little frustrated and started thrashing about to smash everyone around him. His true colors were finally revealed.

As he was being dragged out by the servants, Marvin gritted his teeth and reprimanded loudly, "Corinne ! You... You're a terrible daughter! How dare you treat your father like

this? Watch out, because your actions will only incur God's wrath. Karma will get to you!"

Jeremy's eyes turned cold and he could not bear to hear

someone cursing at Corinne. He then looked up at Bowen and hinted at the latter to teach Marvin a lesson before letting

them leave.

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Bowen understood Jeremy's wishes and turned around to inform the servants. After all those people cleared out, Corinne felt as if the air was fresh again as she pushed the man's chest.

"You can let me go now, can you?"

Jeremy gazed down at her, but he tightened his grip on her instead of loosening it. "You want me to let go of a ruthless little girl like you so you can bring all your belongings with you and leave me behind?"

Corinne frowned and looked at him. "Didn't you notice that my luggage bag is light? It's empty. I didn't pack anything inside at all! I was just pretending!"

Jeremy noticed that there was something off about the weight of the suitcase, but he was still a little displeased and had a stern look in his eyes. "Why didn't you call me when they came over to harass you?"

Corinne answered indifferently, "Weren't you at work? I didn't want to disturb you, and besides, it's not worth going through the trouble of abandoning your responsibilities at work just to deal with those useless pieces of trash. I could chase them away if I wanted to, but it'll only be a stopgap measure. They're going to come back anyway because they'd feel that my words carry no weight.

"I know them too well. If you don't come forth and say something, they won't believe a word I say, and they're not going to give up either! So, I decided to act as if I'd resigned

myself to my fate and pretended to pack my luggage to keep them around here. Once you come home, you can take over and help me deal with them!”

The man stared at her earnestly and said in an admonishing tone, “I see. Am I supposed to thank you for how

understanding you are of my job?”

Corinne grinned and exclaimed, “No thanks necessary! You’re more than welcome. I’m well aware of your priorities.”

The man patted her angrily on the head and said, “What do you mean you’re aware of my priorities? Do you even know what my priorities are? From now on, I want you to remember that anything involving you is my top priority. You must call me as soon as possible if something happens!”

Corinne was startled for a moment and her thoughts went blank. She then nodded obediently and said, “Okay. I promise to do as you say next time.”

Bowen came back after instructing the servants to ‘teach’ the Carews a lesson, and he was very much pleased to see Jeremy embracing Corinne that he could not help but smile at them like a proud parent.

Corinne was a simple and easygoing woman who never put on airs. The servants at home all looked at her in a different light and never gave her treatment that was befitting of her status, yet she never once felt offended by them. By the time they all became familiar with her and understood her, their attitude toward her changed and they grew incredibly fond of her.

Bowen imagined an alternate universe where that delusionally

confident Sherlyn married Jeremy and realized how much suffering he and the other servants would be subject to. With that thought, Bowen cherished Corinne’s existence even more.

“The food’s almost ready, sir. Do you or the missus have any other requests for dinner?”

Jeremy raised his eyes, glanced at both the living room and the dining room where the Carews had been earlier, and

immediately frowned with disgust.

“No. I’ll bring her out for dinner. Have someone disinfect the entire house.”

“Yes, sir.”

Bowen understood that the house had been imbued with the Carews’ stench, thus affecting Jeremy’s mood considerably. He would have ordered the servants to clean the house even if Jeremy never instructed him to do it.

Jeremy gazed at Corinne in his embrace and said, “Wait here while I go upstairs and get dressed. I’ll bring you out to relax.”

Corinne blinked curiously. “Oh? Where are we going?”

The man patted her head with his big hands and said, “You’ll know when you’re there.”

Corinne pouted. ‘Why are you being all mysterious?’

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Corinne sat down and waited for Jeremy to change into a fresh set of clothes. She felt a little bored, so she took out her cell phone and played a few games to pass the time.

Half an hour later, Jeremy said to her, “I’m ready. Let’s head out.”

She raised her head and was stunned to see him. It was rare for Jeremy to change into casualwear, and it was such a stark contrast from his business-like suits and leather shoes. Even his hair was not combed into his usual serious, mature, and meticulous hairdo, and there was a touch of gentleness to his determined expression.

“Have you had your fill of staring at me?” The man walked up to her and poked her forehead.

Corinne snapped back to her senses, rubbed her slightly- hurting forehead, and placed her phone into her pocket.

She curled her lips and asked, "Can't I look at you?"

The man cocked his eyebrow. "If you like looking at me so much, then why'd you let me sleep in the study every night? If you let me sleep with you in the room tonight, you can look at me as much as you want. How about it?"

Corinne blushed, stood up, and said seriously, "I just think you look several years younger with this getup. Don't read too much into my stares."

Jeremy frowned in displeasure. "Do I tend to look old?"

Corinne nodded without hesitation. "Why do you think I

always call you 'mister'?"

Jeremy lowered his gaze, leaned closer, and hooked her chin up. "Now that I'm not so old to you anymore, isn't it about time you call me something else other than 'mister'?"

Corinne thought for a while and said, "I'm hungry, bro! Let's go!"

'B-r-o?'

Jeremy was speechless.

Any girl who felt butterflies in their heart at that moment would not just call him 'bro' on such an occasion! Jeremy massaged the space between his brows and followed the little girl forward helplessly.

Rather than asking his driver to drive them, Jeremy decided to drive a sports car and bring her to a villa in the suburbs with a

mountain view.

Corinne got out of the car, looked around the quiet

environment, and felt that the house looked pretty nice. At the same time, her hunger grew stronger as he smelled the aroma of barbecue wafting from the villa. Before she had time to ask whose home it belonged to, Jeremy pulled her into the yard with him after parking the car.

The yard was exquisitely maintained, and one could tell that the homeowner was a person of great taste. When they walked in, they saw Zeke, whom they had not seen in a while.

He stood by the barbecue grill with his shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbows. With a basting brush in his hand, he was busy

basting the chicken wings on the grill with honey. As soon as he heard footsteps, he raised his head and said with a smile, " Hey! Jeremy's here with the wifey!"

Corinne looked at Zeke and glanced over his shoulder to see the abundance of people on the other side of the floor-to- ceiling windows of his living room. It seemed very lively there.

She had already keenly noticed that it was not an ordinary gathering, so she asked as soon as she walked up to the grill, " What's the special day?"

Zeke raised his handsome eyebrows playfully. "It's your boy Zeke's thirtieth birthday! I invited everyone over so we could chill and have a simple celebration."

Corinne nodded. "I see. Happy birthday, then!"

"Thank you."

Zeke smiled. He then intentionally stretched out a hand

toward her. "Don't just give me your well wishes. Where's my present?"

Corinne was speechless.

'How would I have known that this was supposed to be a

birthday party?!

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In her embarrassment, Corinne frowned and turned her head so she could whisper to Jeremy. "This is on you, mister! It's so awkward to come empty-handed to a birthday party, and it's all because you didn't tell me beforehand!"

Jeremy did not take her comments seriously and reached out to pick up a barbecued meat skewer from the grill. He took a bite before handing it to her.

"You didn't give me a present for my birthday, so what makes you think I'll let you give a present to someone else?"

Corinne was speechless at his response and took the meat skewer from him. As mature as Jeremy seemed, he was sometimes very childish in the sense that he placed too much importance on such trivial things.

Indeed, it was because of a misunderstanding that she had with Jeremy over Anya's sudden return to China that led her not to give him a present. However, Annie insisted to bring her shopping and buy gifts. Though she did not buy the present on her initiative, she did buy one, but it later went to the bin

when she saw Jeremy hugging Anya in the Lunar Century Manor.

Jeremy threw the car keys in his hand to Zeke. "Here. This is your present."

Zeke caught the keys and stared blankly at Jeremy as if he had been bestowed with the greatest honor. "You're sure you're not joking? Are you really going to give this sweet ol' thing to me?"

"You don't want it?"

Zeke stuffed the car keys into his pocket at once. "I do, I do! That's so kind of you, and I'm more than happy to accept it!"

Corinne pulled Jeremy to one side and complained, "Don't you think it's too half-hearted of you to give someone a second-hand car for their birthday? What kind of a friend are you?"

Jeremy pursed his lips, placed his hand on her head, and explained, "There's nothing in this world that he can't get, but that car is a commemorative model with only one limited edition in existence. Not even money can buy you that, and he's been asking for it from me since ages ago. I was only willing to part ways with it for your sake today."

Corinne was speechless. He was so good at cajoling her that he went so far as to say that he was giving his friend a gift for her sake.

However, that sports car was indeed a limited-edition vehicle that not even money can buy. Jeremy traveled in an MPV every day, and the car was practically 90 percent new because he had never driven it. Moreover, it was something that the birthday boy had always wanted, so it could not be considered rude to give him that even though it was a second-hand item.

"How are we supposed to go home now that you've given him the car?" Corinne asked another pointed question.

Jeremy said nonchalantly, "You can bring me to the subway."

Corinne rolled her eyes at him. "Don't you have any common sense, mister?! We're in the suburbs, and it'll take at least two hours to get back to the city center using the subway, with God knows how many times we need to change lines! What if we miss the last bus?"

Jeremy was speechless. 'Did that damn girl just accuse me of not having any common sense?!'

While Zeke was barbecuing his chicken wings, he pricked his ears and listened to the conversation between the two of them.

Firstly, he was shocked that his pampered friend Jeremy would even consider the option of taking the subway. Secondly, he felt that Corinne's clapback at Jeremy was both very bold and incredibly amusing.

He could not help but tease the two of them, “Why are you both so worried? If you can’t catch the last bus, you can always stay overnight at my place. My guest room here has a huge, brand-new bed that’s big enough for the two of you to toss around!”

Corinne was not as thick-skinned as most people, and she blushed when she heard Zeke use the word ‘toss’. She glared angrily at Zeke and said, “You can toss yourself around there later!”

Jeremy looked at him coldly and said, “Focus on your barbecue!”

Zeke remained silent. ‘No one can afford to offend this couple!’

“Jeremy! Come up and get a drink!” someone shouted all of a sudden.

When Jeremy heard his name being called, he looked up and saw someone waving at him from the balcony of the second floor. There, he saw Jason and Gerald sitting on the outdoor

sofa along with Lucas and his sister Anya. They were all looking at him from above.

Corinne cocked her eyebrow and said, “Your friends are looking for you!”

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Jeremy looked up at the people upstairs and nodded slightly before putting his arm over Corinne’s shoulders to bring her upstairs.

Corinne did not budge, and she shook her head while saying, “I’m going to wait here for the wings. I don’t feel like going up there to socialize with you!”

Jeremy did not force her and patted her head instead. “Okay. Take your time with the food then. I’ll head up and say hi before coming back down to you.”

Corinne nodded, gave him an ‘OK’ gesture, and then took a bite of the delicious meat skewer that he just gave her.

After Jeremy entered the villa, Zeke handed Corinne a bunch of barbecued chicken wings and had a meaningful smile on his lips as he said, "You did a pretty good job training such a difficult guy like Jeremy to be so submissive!"

Corinne's lips twitched. "You're a pretty odd guy. It's your birthday, and you invited all these people over to have fun while you, the birthday boy, toil away at the barbecue just to cook some wings for them. Don't you feel tired of making your own life difficult?"

Zeke was taken aback for a moment, and his handsome eyes stared right into Corinne's pupils with a look of admiration.

"The others are worried about whether or not my wings turn out okay, but you're the only one who shows concern about my well-being! I'm so touched!"

He then placed his tongs down and went toward Corinne to give her a hearty hug. Corinne dodged him out of disgust and avoided Zeke's bear hug.

Zeke ended up hugging the air, but rather than feel awkward, his grin became even bigger.

"You're right! Those heartless people are enjoying their fill of food and drink without caring about me! You're better than all of them! Could you watch the fire for a bit and make sure the chicken wings don't burn? I'll be back soon after I take a bathroom break!"

Corinne was at a loss for words because it was obvious that Zeke wanted to avoid the drudging task of having to barbecue for everyone.

However, Corinne agreed readily because she did not want to go in and have any awkward conversations with people that she was not familiar with. She went to the grill, flipped the chicken wings over, and then brushed it with a layer of sauce.

She then wondered to herself, 'If those people inside are so focused on chatting with each other that they forgot to come out here and get the food, will all these chicken wings be mine to eat? Well, I guess it's better for them to be so engrossed in the conversation so they don't snatch these delicious wings from me!'

“Hey, Corinne!”

A voice called out to her just as she worried that someone might come out and take her wings.

Corinne looked up and saw Sunny standing opposite the grill.

He had the same high and mighty expression on his face that was so characteristic of him. He behaved like that whenever he saw her, and he always had this stubborn expression as well as an intense glare. It was like she owed him money or

something!

Corinne cocked an eyebrow and answered with an insipid expression, “It’s you! Did you finish your homework today before you came to play?”

Sunny always felt that Corinne spoke to him as if he was a little kid, so he frowned in displeasure and said, “I’ve done it all!”

“Oh, that’s great then! Go ahead and have fun!” Corinne did not want to entertain Sunny and looked down at the grill to continue focusing on barbecuing her chicken wings.

Sunny remained where he was and stood in front of the grill while staring at her. He opened his mouth, then closed it, and hesitated for a while before speaking awkwardly.

“Ahem! I’m sorry for what happened last time, Corinne. My brother... He’s usually a good person, but he gets worked up whenever someone mentions my missing sister.”

Corinne chomped down indifferently on the chicken wings. “Is that so?”

Sunny’s expression became inexplicably uneasy. “So... Umm... You’re not angry with me, are you?”

Corinne answered nonchalantly, “Why would I be?”

Chapter 399

Sunny was relieved to see that she did not take it to heart. Phew, that's great! I'm glad you're not angry with me. At least things won't be so awkward between us that way!"

Corinne felt that the conversation was a pointless one, so she ignored him completely.

Sunny scratched the back of his head shyly and said, "I'll be honest, Corinne. I... I've grown to like you now."

Corinne paused while basting her chicken wings and then looked up at Sunny as if she just heard a joke. He was already blushing, but she was as calm as ever as she said, "Oh, thanks for liking me, I guess?"

Her indifference made Sunny frown unhappily. "Hey! What was that response?"

"How else am I supposed to respond?"

Corinne picked up the fan and fanned the charcoal fire to increase the heat. A little bit of char would go a long way to adding that extra bit of flavor!

Sunny was so angry that his cheeks were trembling. "What is wrong with you? I'm confessing my love to you right now!"

Corinne did not take him seriously at all. "Aren't you doing that to help your sister deal with her love rival? Did you expect me to take it seriously?"

Sunny folded his arms arrogantly, and said honestly, "Well, I admit that it's part of the reason, but the main reason isn't because of my sister! My feelings for you have been a bit

different recently. I can't explain what kind of feeling it is, but it's special, and I don't seem to hate you as much as before when I see you!"

Corinne chuckled.

'Do high school students like them think that the equivalent of "I don't hate you" is "I like you"? Tsk, tsk, tsk. Sunny, how many people are you going to like every single day? Are you going to like each person that you meet just because you don't hate them?'

“Sunny,” a warm voice suddenly called out to him from behind.

He turned around and saw that his sister Anya had exited the villa, and he immediately began to worry about her. “Anya! Why’d you come out wearing so few clothes?”

As he said that, he immediately took off his coat and walked over to put it on Anya’s body.

Anya smiled appreciatively and said, “I’m fine. I’m not feeling cold right now.”

Sunny stubbornly pressed the jacket onto Anya’s shoulders. and was determined not to let her take off the jacket and return it to him. “You should still wear more clothes even if you’re not cold. We can’t have you catching a cold!”

Anya could not do anything about it and so readily accepted her brother’s jacket. She then looked at Corinne who was busy barbecuing behind the grill and made small talk with her. Why didn’t you go in with Jeremy after you both arrived?”

Corinne continued to grill her wings. She did not even glance at Anya as she answered curtly, “I have anxiety, and I don’t

like places where there are too many people.”

Anya saw that Corinne seemed too busy with the chicken wings to talk to her, so she patted Sunny’s arm and said, “How could you just stand there and watch her do all the grilling without even bothering to help her? Boys must learn to behave like gentlemen, so how long are you going to stand there

without helping her? Girls shouldn’t be exposed to all these oily, smoky fumes!”

Sunny was very obedient to everything his sister said, so he rolled up his sleeves and walked over. “Leave it to me, Corinne. You can step aside with my sister and stay away from all this smoke!”

Corinne was not very happy because she was worried that her wings might be ruined. “Do you even know how to grill these?”

she asked, doubting him.

When Sunny's kind gesture was met with her skeptical

expression, he emphasized, "I'm a pro! My classmates and I go barbecuing pretty often during the holidays, and everyone says that my grilled wings are the best!!"

Corinne finally backed away from her position and said, that so? Guess I'll have the honor of trying your awesome barbecued wings today."

"Is

Sunny was prepared to show his skills and make Corinne look at him with admiration.

At that moment, Anya suddenly came over and took Corinne's arm affectionately. "You can leave it to Sunny. Let's go to the small gazebo over there and have a chat. It's about time you get some rest too!"

Chapter 400

Corinne neither liked Anya nor had any interest in chatting with her, but her actions seemed to suggest that she had something to say to Corinne.

However, speaking to Anya face-to-face would be better than having to deal with Anya's behind-the-scenes scheming. Corinne withdrew her arm, patted the creases on her sleeves, and nodded to Anya as she curled her lips slightly and said, "Let's talk then."

Anya's expression froze because Corinne's action of

withdrawing her arm was a clear sign that she rejected Anya's touch. At that moment, Anya's deer-like eyes blinked blankly, as if innocent, pitiful, and unsure of what it was that she had done wrong.

The two of them went to the small gazebo in the villa

courtyard, and Anya was the one who spoke first. "I'm starting to notice that Jeremy is quite fond of you and treats you very well these past few days.

Corinne figured that their conversation would be boring and pointless, so she took two skewers of grilled meat before going over with Anya and replied to her while eating, "Does he?"

A somewhat bitter smile unfolded across Anya's face. "It seems so. I'm sure you're very happy now that he's being very kind to you."

Corinne thought for a moment and said bluntly, "I don't feel anything special in particular."

Anya then smiled wryly again and lamented, "I used to be like

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this when I was with Jeremy. Every day was a happy day for me. It's such a shame that men are so fickle. They tend to forget about past relationships once a new woman comes along..."

Corinne was chewing on her barbecued meat when she froze as soon as she heard what Anya said. She turned her head to look at Anya and asked with a frown, "When were you two in a relationship?"

Anya then raised her hand to cover her mouth, as if she had just realized that she had misspoke. "Oh, didn't Jeremy tell you? Umm... I'm sorry about that, Corinne. Guess I said something I shouldn't have. Just pretend you didn't hear anything and don't take it to heart!"

Corinne nodded with a smile. "Sure."

She then continued eating and no longer asked any further questions.

It was Anya who ended up being stunned. She had never expected Corinne to have such an indifferent reaction to her statement. Other girls would probably be very curious to find out more about their boyfriend's ex-girlfriend.

"Aren't you curious about what happened between myself and Jeremy?"

"I am," Corinne said as a matter of factly, and her tone was still as frank and indifferent as before, "But even if I'm curious, I can always ask him myself. You don't have to trouble yourself and waste your breath."

Anya was startled by that response and looked at Corinne with a sympathetic gaze.

"Are you that naive, Corinne? Didn't you

ever consider why Jeremy never took the initiative to tell you about it after you've been with him for so long? Do you think he'll tell the truth if you ask him about it right now?"

"I'm sure he will," Corinne said without the slightest hesitation, and there were zero traces of doubt in her indifferent expression.

Her answer made Anya's mind blank for a moment, and she immediately frowned as if she was shocked by how much Corinne trusted Jeremy. Despite her initial bewilderment, she smiled again and said, "You seem to know very little about men, Corinne. To be honest, all men prefer their new relationships rather than their past ones. If they wanted to make their current girlfriends happy, they would never admit to the wonderful memories they had in their previous relationships."

Corinne cocked her eyebrows disapprovingly. "Is your dear Mister Jeremy as fickle as those other scumbags in your eyes? Why would you still like him so much then if that's the case?"

Corinne's pointed question left Anya dumbfounded for a moment, but the latter soon said, "Since you're being so frank with me, then I might as well extend the same courtesy to you. I don't like Jeremy-I love him! I'll love him in all his flaws, and in fact, all the world's men are the same. Do you honestly believe that a loyal man exists?"

Corinne narrowed her pretty eyes. "When you say that, you are denouncing not only Mister Jeremy, but your father and brothers too. Aren't men all the same? Do you view your father and brothers in the same light as well? Are they just as fickle as all other men?"

Anya had already expected that Corinne would refute her, but she was not as stunned as she was earlier and merely lamented helplessly, "I'm not denouncing them. I've just

seen too many fickle men in my life, and that includes my family members. They can never stick to one woman. My father once had an ex- wife, and as chaste as my brother is, he sometimes has different women keeping him company. I do hope you'll understand the reality that all men are the same. Once the

fresh excitement is gone, they'll start to lose interest in their current partners regardless of how beautiful or amazing their women are."

Corinne finally understood the point that Anya was trying to drive across. "You're warning me, then? Are you trying to tell me to be mentally prepared for the day that Mister Jeremy will get tired of me and start disliking me? Or else I should leave him as soon as possible and quit while I am ahead?"

Anya nodded kindly. "I'm glad you get the point, Corinne."