

Mistaking the CEO for a Gigolo Chapter 1027

"I'm guessing it's some sort of private facility. Maybe they don't allow calls out of concern that it might affect the patients," said Kyle, as he glanced at Maya.

Maya pursed her lips and said nothing in response.

She'd lost more weight recently and wasn't even interested in eating the cheesecake her mother liked. I want Mommy to see how different I look when she gets back. A brand new Maya!

After Evan hung up, he felt his insides churning yet again.

Damn it, Nicole. Where on earth are you?

Do our feelings mean nothing to you? What about the kids? Can you just let them go too? We really miss you, Nicole. When are you coming home? Come home, please...

That night, Evan dreamt of Nicole.

Nicole was curled up in a dark corner, shivering. Her hair was a mess, and her gaunt, pale face stared blankly into space. She couldn't seem to remember who she was, let alone find her way home. Evan called out to her as hard as he could but to no avail. The only thing he could see most clearly was the fear in her eyes.

Evan stopped briefly but knew he had to keep on trying. "You don't have to hide and suffer alone, Nicole. Let me share the burden with you, okay?"

"Your hands are chilled to the bone. Are you cold?"

"Nicole, let's go home, shall we?"

Without warning, Nicole got up and left. Evan trailed closely behind in hot pursuit. They walked like this for ages when Nicole suddenly disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"NICOLE!" he shouted frantically.

With a panicked yell, Evan woke up with a jolt. His body was drenched in a cold sweat.

The scenes from just now were so vivid that Evan thought they were real.

This made Evan feel distressed. He wondered if Nicole was in fact, hiding somewhere, suffering through the torment of her illness all alone.

Is she going through everything I dreamt of?

Worriedly, Evan picked up his phone and made a call to the Hidden Masters. He had to know if they'd made any progress in tracking down her location or if she'd left a trail for them to follow.

Unfortunately, they had nothing to report, which only angered Evan. "For f*ck's sake, are you all completely useless? Keep looking!"

Sighing, he slumped back into his pillows and glanced at the clock. It was three in the morning, yet he felt restless.

This was clearly going to be a long night. Evan was pensive, his mind heavy with worry and longing.

Since he was unable to shake it off, he decided to get up and immerse himself in work. Hours passed in his study as he did what he could to alleviate his burdens.

Before he knew it, another year and a half had passed, and there was still no news about Nicole.

Her very name became a constant source of agony for him. It was also a taboo, for nobody dared mention her except for the children.

Evan lived out his days like a living corpse. The chill he exuded kept everyone away, and nobody dared approach him.

Seeing how their father was, the four children couldn't help but look at him with fear and respect in equal measure. All this while, they had been living with Sophia at the Seet Residence. They were reluctant to broach the topic of returning to Imperial Garden.

One day, the children happened to discuss Nicole's disappearance while they were sitting at the table having a chat.

Maya sighed. "Don't you think it's weird that Mommy has been away for so long? Without even making a single phone call?"

"It is odd. I suspect she's not even receiving treatment abroad. If that's the case, Daddy would be visiting her often, but he's not doing that at all. Look at how he's moping around!" said Nina.

"I have a feeling that Mommy is missing, and Daddy doesn't know where she went," replied Juan thoughtfully. He thought that Nina's suspicions made sense. "That's why Daddy looks so cold and distant every day. Do you still remember that rumor about Mommy eloping with some man? Is that actually true?"

Nina rolled her eyes at Juan. "Don't be silly, Mommy isn't someone like that."

"That's right! Our Mommy wouldn't do anything like that! Imagine how sad she'd be if she knew you doubted her like this!" retorted Maya earnestly.

Juan sighed again. "I'm not doubting her. I'm just saying. But honestly, if Mommy could come home now, even if she were to give me a beating, I'd be over the moon!"

Kyle, who'd been deep in thought, suddenly asked, "Do you think Mommy went to see her mentor?"

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"You mean, Mommy's acupuncture mentor?"

"Yes! He seems to be a very capable person!"

Sophia happened to overhear the conversation between the children. If that is indeed true, is it possible that he would've cured her by now?

Nearly two years had passed since Nicole disappeared. If she were cured, that would've been a good thing. Sophia's concern was that the treatment result showed otherwise and Nicole was dead.

Sophia toyed around with the idea for a bit, wondering if it was a possible clue that might reveal Nicole's whereabouts. Soon after, she gave Evan a call and bade him look into Wesley.

Evan recalled that when Nicole was looking into her biological father's identity in K Nation, Wesley had indeed made an appearance. But he only showed up to leave behind a letter before vanishing into thin air.

In hindsight, Nicole might have been with that elusive man after all since nobody had heard from her in the last two years.

The possibility of this lead gave Evan some hope, like a beacon in the dark. It was as if he'd received the news of the century. Excitedly, he immediately ordered the Hidden Masters to investigate.

Every day after that, he lived in a state of constant anticipation. Evan couldn't wait to see if this line of clue would lead him to Nicole.

It wasn't long before the weekend arrived. Nina stared at her mannequin and absent-mindedly began scribbling. Maya was watching her with excitement, her eyes glowing in awe.

"Nina, what are you doing?"

Nina immediately snapped out of her reverie and gave the mannequin a good, hard stare. Upon realizing that the look she started on was undeniably masculine, she blushed. The mannequin looked handsome.

"Nina, I've heard that people manifest their subconscious desires in their artwork. Are you thinking about a handsome man by any chance?"

Nina sighed inwardly and turned around to look at Maya in exasperation. "Don't be silly! I was just trying to see what makes makeup for both genders so different!"

Maya pouted and grinned at her. "Oh, I see. I thought you're being precocious, having an eye for cute guys at only thirteen years old!"

Nina looked up at Maya again, thinking of giving her a retort, but something held her back. She realized that after Maya had succeeded in losing weight, her face resembled Mommy even more. Not only that, but Maya also seemed to look prettier than herself.

Nina relied on makeup in her pursuit of beauty. Every brushstroke and color she used on herself was meant to enhance her features. Maya on the other hand, seemed to be blessed with a sort of innate, natural beauty.

"Maya, what do you do to have such rosy cheeks? I'd like to improve my complexion, so why don't you come up with a meal plan for me? Did the gourmet specialist teach you anything about making them?"

"I don't need the specialist for that! It's something that can be sorted out in a few minutes!" replied Maya. "How about this? Give me a set of makeup, and I'll give you a meal plan with top-notch ingredients. It's a mutually beneficial agreement! Deal?"

"Deal!"

With that, Nina began to work on matching beauty products for Maya, and the latter designed a meal plan to give her a better complexion.

Having finally completed their tasks, the two also decided to do the same for Sheila. They wanted to give her something tailor-made as a way of expressing their gratitude.

When Sheila received the gift, she was absolutely delighted. To her, Nina and Maya were a godsend.

“From now on, I’ll leave my beauty in your capable hands!” exclaimed Sheila.

Maya and Nina nodded. “No problem. Where’s Uncle Davin? He seems to be quite busy!”

“Him?” At the mention of Davin, Sheila became angry. “He said he was helping Levant to pursue someone, but from what I’ve heard, that doesn’t seem to be the case. Apparently, it’s the opposite! He’s helping the woman to pursue Levant, but who knows if that’ll work at all? Maybe the woman might fall for Davin instead since he’s showering her with that much attention and kindness!”

Maya rolled her eyes and tried to placate Sheila. “Don’t worry! You’re so beautiful, and Uncle Davin won’t have eyes for anyone else but you!”

“However, this is still worrisome. It’s bad enough that Uncle Davin is a renowned playboy and a skirt-chaser to boot. If he hasn’t done anything like this in the past, why would he gain such a reputation?” mused Nina aloud, sarcastically.

Nina’s words only served to aggravate an already annoyed Sheila even further. “You’re right,” said Sheila with a sigh. “I have every reason to get to the bottom of this myself!”

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After Sheila left, Maya looked quizzically at Nina and asked, “Why did you say that about Uncle Davin? Didn’t he buy you the latest beauty kit the day before yesterday?”

“They’re called principles, Maya.” retorted Nina with a huff. “Him buying me things has nothing to do with the matter at hand, so I’m not going to conflate the two!”

On the surface, Nina’s words made sense, but Maya still thought it was obnoxiously self-righteous of her to say so.

Maya only blinked at Nina in response. Well, don’t threaten Uncle Davin and then ask him for favors! Even after he’s bought you stuff, you still badmouth him? You’re as bad as Kyle! That’s why you both can’t get along with him! Hypocrite!

Meanwhile, Sheila walked out of the Seet Residence carrying the things both Maya and Nina gave her. Immediately, she made a phone call to Davin.

“Davin, where the hell are you?”

“I’m at home, I didn’t go out today!”

Through gritted teeth, Sheila said, “Really? Why don’t I show you where I am right now?”

With a click, she took a picture of her standing outside the Seet Residence and sent it over.

Davin swore and rubbed his chin. "Fine, I'm at the Levant Winery."

"Is that so? If I find out that you're not there in the next fifteen minutes, you're dead meat!"

Sheila hung up with a huff and drove her BMW straight to the Levant Winery.

When she reached her destination, Davin happened to arrive at the same time. He wasn't sure of how to explain the situation when Tiffany exited his car.

This upset Sheila even more, who proceeded to grill Davin about the other woman's presence.

"It's not what you think it is!" Stammered Davin. "It's... I just... She..."

Davin was worried that he might cause a misunderstanding and that Sheila would go ballistic. Due to his nervousness, however, he found himself unable to explain what was happening.

Tiffany then walked up to Sheila and took the initiative to explain. "Ms. Muir, this is a simple misunderstanding. He's helping me on the behest of Avril, who asked him to do this before she left for K Nation."

"Helping you with what, exactly?"

"She's helping me to pursue Levant!"

Sheila pursed her lips and gave Tiffany the once-over.

When I first met her two years ago, she was a miserable woman who had a child to raise. She's changed quite a bit over the last two years. She's got a better figure for one. Even her situation has improved.

I've also heard that she's set up a small design company, and the business is going smoothly.

However, there was a huge disparity in her station and that of Levant's. Judging by the standards of compatibility, Sheila felt that it was not a good match at all.

She also couldn't understand why Davin was so keen on helping her.

"Ms. Tiffany, I'm going to be honest. Do you think Levant would fancy someone like you? I don't think so."

Tiffany did not respond immediately, a thoughtful look on her face. "Whether or not he likes me, I want to try. That way, even if things don't work out, I won't regret not trying at all."

Even if he did take a fancy to her, there was no guarantee that they would be together anyway.

However, since they were both unmarried, Tiffany felt that she should at least express her feelings.

Her purpose wasn't to ensure that she would definitely end up with Levant. She just wanted to make sure that she had no regrets. She might even give up on the idea completely if she acted on it and failed.

"You want no regrets? Then I reckon you should be doing this yourself without anyone's help. Davin is a man. He shouldn't be helping you chase after another man. Do you think this is even remotely appropriate?" queried Sheila.

Tiffany glanced at Davin. "I think what Ms. Muir said is perfectly reasonable. You have my apologies. I won't bother you again, Mr. Seet."

Shortly after she finished speaking, Tiffany gave them a brief nod and walked towards the Levant Winery.

Davin turned to look at Sheila, clearly exasperated by the whole affair. "There, are you happy now? You've ruined my transaction!"

"Transaction? Just what business do you have with her?" Sheila frowned at Davin, but she was curious nonetheless.

Davin sighed and explained, "As mentioned earlier, it was Avril who asked me to set her up with Levant. I only agreed because there is valuable information I could gain if this goes through!"

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"What information?"

"Information about my sister-in-law! You know what my brother is like now. Any news about Nicole will definitely give him a new lease on life."

"Really? Avril can obtain this for you?"

"Why do you think she was going back to K Nation in a rush? According to a lead provided by the Wicked Palace, Nicole showed up at K Nation with someone. Avril was initially going to stay behind and play matchmaker between Levant and Tiffany, but I offered to see this through in exchange for that piece of information."

"Then why didn't you tell Evan and have him look into this?" asked Sheila.

"It's the credibility of this information that I'm worried about. Evan will be happy for a brief moment, but he'll spiral into depression again if it turns out to be a false alarm."

Sheila pondered over this and thought it made sense, but the notion of Davin helping Tiffany still made her feel off.

"Tell Avril to leave the matchmaking between Levant and Tiffany to me. Ask her to focus on obtaining that lead and to notify us when she has an update."

Davin was surprised at Sheila's offer. "Didn't you think they're incompatible? Why are you helping her then?"

Sheila thought about this before she replied. "Well, Tiffany said she wanted no regrets, remember? She'd accept any possible outcome, even if it means Levant won't be with her. Furthermore, I also want news about Nicole as soon as possible."

"Okay, then I'll call Avril now. Tiffany has already entered the winery, so please do your best to help her. You cannot mess this up!"

"Relax. I meant what I said when I offered to help."

With Sheila's reassurance, Davin took out his phone and made the call.

Sheila soon made her way to the penthouse suite, where she heard a discussion coming underway. Cautiously, she pressed her ear against the door, hoping to make out what both Levant and Tiffany were saying.

"Levant, I know that we're like oil and water and that I'm not worthy of you. But won't you at least give me a chance? This is a relationship I desire, and I'm willing to work hard for it!" Cried an impassioned Tiffany.

"I think you need to understand that while many things can be obtained through hard work, love isn't one of them." Levant sighed.

Sheila pursed her lips and shook her head, cursing inwardly. If this dolt can say this to Tiffany, would it kill him to be more self-aware?

Levant had been chasing after Nicole for so long. Even now, when nobody could confirm if she were alive or dead, he'd been unable to let her go. The man's lack of self-awareness was truly astounding.

"I understand that," said Tiffany exasperatedly. "But not everyone falls in love at first sight! We've not really established much contact, and we barely know anything about each other. Who knows what would happen if we gave each other some time?"

Levant was silent for a while. Before he could respond, however, he was interrupted by the door bursting open.

Sheila hurriedly walked towards them, a big grin plastered across her face.

"Levant," tutted Sheila. "I think there's some sense in Tiffany's words. You barely know her, so how can you be sure that you won't fall in love with her?"

"Are you telling me I don't know my own thoughts well enough? And what are you doing here, pray tell? Didn't anyone tell you it's rude to barge in like that without knocking?" asked Levant icily.

Sheila cleared her throat to hide her discomfort and grinned at him sheepishly. "I apologize. I was in a hurry and forgot to knock. Davin is here as well by the way."

"Back to the discussion at hand, I think she's being reasonable," said Sheila as she gave Tiffany a brief nod. "You haven't given Tiffany a chance, so how do you know you're both incompatible? Unless... you're afraid you would end up falling for her? Maybe you already like her now!"

Levant only glanced at her and ignored everything she said. Nonsense.

After Davin strolled in, Sheila winked at him and they began trying to convince Levant yet again.

"There you are, Davin. I think Levant is afraid to give Tiffany a chance. Perhaps he's afraid of falling in love with her, what say you?"

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Davin looked at her, feigning shock. "Surely he isn't a coward?"

“Well, he’s unwilling to give someone else a chance, plus he’s afraid of opening up his heart to another person... He’s definitely a coward to me,” said Sheila cheekily.

“Is that so?” Wondered Davin out loud, and gave Levant the once-over.

“Oh, yes.” Sheila turned to look at Levant as well.

Levant felt as if his head could explode. So the two of them are ganging up on me now?

“Are you done causing a ruckus?”

“No! If you won’t give Tiffany a chance, then you’re a coward unworthy of respect!”

Levant smiled disapprovingly. “And why should that matter to me?”

Sheila and Davin shared a look. Levant wasn’t even taking them seriously, and they were at wit’s end.

“Alright then, Levant. Let’s make a bet.” Tiffany’s voice broke the silence as she looked Levant in the eye. “Half a year. Give me half a year, and if you still have no feelings for me, I’ll make myself scarce. I’ll even avoid all the places you’re at. Do we have a deal?”

She looked at him impassively, refusing to back down.

This was something important to her. If Levant developed feelings for her during this six-month period, then she’d be able to have the romance she had been dreaming of. But if he didn’t, she would be able to leave with no regrets, having tried her hand at trying to claim his heart. She tried, and that was all that mattered.

Levant met Tiffany’s gaze, realizing he too, experienced the same infatuation before. He mulled over her offer and felt that perhaps six months was enough to make her give up on him. Even he could start anew.

“Half a year it is.” Levant nodded in agreement. “I hope that you’ll find your own happiness after this.”

“Thank you for giving me this opportunity!”

Everyone could see that Tiffany was ecstatic.

After the matter was finalized, Davin found himself feeling happy for both Levant and Tiffany. He genuinely believed that the two would make a good match.

Sheila was happy as well, but mostly at the prospect of getting information from Avril. She had completed their end of the bargain, after all.

I wonder if Nicole is doing okay.

After the pair left the Levant Winery, she immediately asked Davin to call Avril.

“I called her before we entered the winery, but she had no news then. She’ll notify us when she has something.”

“Well, you should push for more urgency. The sooner we have some news, the sooner we can resurrect your brother.”

Resurrect? The word left a bitter taste in Davin's mouth.

Glaring at Sheila, Davin said, "Sheep, mind your tongue. My brother is still alive and well!"

Sheila was startled at his tone of voice, thinking she hadn't expressed herself clearly enough. "Well, your brother is behaving like the living dead. He may be alive, but with Nicole gone, his heart is no longer beating as it should. Don't you agree? Love is bittersweet that way. It invigorates, but it also hurts."

Davin was startled. He hadn't expected someone as cold as Sheila to express that sentiment with such tenderness.

He looked at her and asked, "Then, do you want this kind of love?"

Sheila turned to meet his gaze. "If I didn't, would I have been able to keep my distance since I fell for you when we were children? Do you think all these years have been easy on me?"

"No, of course not. Most people wouldn't have your perseverance. But maybe I'm just that charming! How else would you still like me after so many years?" Joked Davin.

Sheila had initially wanted to comfort Davin with her words, but she wasn't expecting that narcissistic response.

"Davin Seet, I think you have something special that has not changed all these years."

"Really? What would that be?" asked Davin.

"You're so f*cking thick-skinned! I'm not sure where you found that audacity, but please put it back!" said Sheila exasperatedly.

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Davin was not expecting that remark from Sheila, he was expecting some form of praise instead. He looked at her with a wounded expression.

"Stop right there, Sheep! Stop, I say! I really want to discuss who's more thick-skinned here!"

Sheila merely ignored him and drove away in a flash.

At night, Evan stood in front of the window, looking thoughtfully at the night sky. There were plenty of stars that reminded him of Nicole's clear and sparkling eyes.

His lips curved into the ghost of a smile, thinking that Nicole winked at him.

Memories engulfed him like the ocean's waves as he recalled every bit of the time he spent with Nicole.

For him, this was the happiest time of the day. It was during nightfall that he was able to bask in his happiest memories with her.

He wondered if Nicole was looking back at the memories they shared somewhere out there in the distance.

In the past two years, he recounted the memories they had made. Over and over again, he came to the conclusion that their happiness was far and few between.

Nicole, what do you think?

What are you doing right now?

The stars twinkled again, but he could not hear a response from her.

Just then, the low buzz of his cell phone snapped him out of his reverie. He took a deep breath, walked to the desk, and answered it.

“What is it?”

“Evan! I have some good news, I think you’ll thank me for this!” came Davin’s excited voice from the other end of the receiver.

“Speak!”

“Nicole is still alive. Six months ago, she made an appearance with someone in K Nation, and there is no mistaking her for anyone else. So are you excited yet?! How are you going to thank me for this?”

“Anything else?” asked Evan.

Davin said, “Unfortunately not. I only found out that much for the time being, but I think this is excellent news! Now how are you going to express your gratitude?”

Evan was silent for a while. “I already know about this. Nicole was with Wesley. They showed up in K Nation six months ago and surfaced in S Nation two months ago. The Hidden Masters are looking into it now, so I think we’ll find her soon enough.”

Damn, he already knows this much?

Davin had not anticipated that Nicole would be traveling with her mentor.

Avril’s investigative skills went at a snail’s pace compared to that of the private investigators Evan hired.

Davin was planning on making Evan happy with this piece of information and to be rewarded for his ‘efforts’. The possibility seemed highly unlikely now.

“Well, Evan, at least you know that Nicole is alive. You should be happy! I know you’ll both meet soon!”

With nothing further to say, Evan hung up.

Hearing that Nicole was alive did make him happy, but there were still things that bothered him after all this while. When she raised the three children abroad alone, he wasn’t by her side; He couldn’t be with her when she lost her memory at the estate either. And now? Nicole had been suffering from hallucinations for the past two years, and still, he was not there with her.

She had to go through her hardest moments in life alone—that was by far his biggest regret. Evan would never be able to forgive himself for leaving her alone that way.

He vowed that when Nicole was found, he would do his best to love her and remain with her. He would do anything to make up for the lost time.

The next day, Evan received an anonymous email asking him to meet.

I wonder who that is?

He carefully looked through the email, but found only a single sentence: See you at The Passion at 8 o'clock in the evening!

The Passion was where he first met Nicole. Evan wondered who this mysterious person could be.

Surely it couldn't be Nicole?

He suddenly felt invigorated, his eyes shining with excitement. Evan truly hoped that it was Nicole and could not wait for the evening to arrive.

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The day seemed to pass by a lot slower, given Evan's anxiety. The hours and minutes dragged on, and he found himself constantly looking at the clock.

Finally, it was the time of the meeting. Evan drove to The Passion at top speed. The lights inside glimmered seductively, adding to the lush atmosphere.

The interior was noisy and harsh-sounding, but Evan barely registered it. His handsome face remained impassive and calm, completely unresponsive to the din around him.

When he walked towards the specified booth, he noticed that there was a woman seated there.

Evan observed the woman's back carefully as his brows furrowed in doubt. Her back was too thin, as it bore no resemblance to the person he was anticipating.

Perhaps it isn't her after all?

His heart sank a little, but he was eager to find out anyway.

Evan then approached the booth and took his seat. After seeing the woman's face clearly, the disappointment weighed heavily in his heart.

This woman was a complete stranger to him. "You asked to meet me?"

The woman nodded.

"What do you want?" asked Evan impatiently.

The woman studied him before replying. "I wanted to see for myself. What kind of man would my fellow acolyte fall for?"

Acolyte?

"Who is this fellow acolyte of yours?"

The woman smiled. "Nicole, of course."

At the mere mention of Nicole's name, she saw that Evan's face lit up immediately. She had noticed that Evan's face was the epitome of disappointment when he first laid eyes on her.

"Is Nicole alright?" asked Evan, a hint of worry clouding his features.

"I'm afraid not," she replied grimly.

"Where is she?"

"She doesn't want to see you."

"Why?"

"How am I supposed to know what happened between the two of you?" She stared at him pointedly, a sour look on her face. "I can bring you to her, but it has to be in secret."

Evan nodded. "Alright."

Even if he could only see Nicole in secret, he would be happy. Evan was willing to go to hell and back for her.

The woman looked at him excitedly. It's just like Wesley had said. He is truly a handsome chap, and very eager to meet Nicole. We've been taking care of her for so long now. She is so affected by her hallucinations. I've lost count of the number of days we've been troubled by her illness. All those sleepless nights! He's her husband, so asking him for a reward for our efforts doesn't seem to be that unreasonable!

"I wasn't finished. You can meet her, but there are some conditions."

"Tell me."

Seeing how eager Evan was, she decided not to beat around the bush. The woman reached into her bag and fished out a notebook which she then gave to Evan.

"This is a log of what I've done to take care of Nicole for the past two years. How are you going to thank me? I'll let you decide. I'd prefer cash of course. Do you catch my drift?"

Of course, he understood what she meant. The woman was asking him to pay her for her efforts.

Evan examined the notebook carefully. She had recorded the progression of Nicole's illness, as well as things they needed to look out for. Towards the back, she recorded her daily physical condition as well as her diet.

Each page was full to the brim, but there was no doubt that she had been very attentive to Nicole.

He noticed that in the past three months, there was no record of Nicole having hallucinations. Most of it detailed recovery steps.

Evan was curious. "Have her hallucinations stopped? Is she cured?"

The woman sighed. "It took Wesley a full twenty months of traveling all over the country, looking for a cure to get her back to normal! In the last three months, there have been no relapses, but she is still weak. She has been depressed and needs proper care."

Evan was relieved when he heard the news.

Over the past two years, all he cared about was the condition Nicole was in. The thought nagged at him persistently, day and night.

Knowing that her illness was now cured, he was very happy.

But when he thought about how much pain she had to endure throughout her treatment, he felt distressed again.

Nicole, why are you so stupid?

Why don't you let me bear it with you?

"Wesley and I now have other matters to attend to, and there are other cases that require our attention. I'm afraid we can't keep looking after Nicole." The woman pursed her lips and continued. "She is your wife, isn't she? Shouldn't you be taking care of her instead?"

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Of course he was willing to take care of Nicole. He'd been dreaming of meeting her again and promising to do right by her.

But there was a slight problem.

The woman saw right through his concerns and sighed.

"But she doesn't want to see you, nor does she approve of you taking care of her. You'll need to solve this dilemma on your own. I'll give you her location and let you figure this out."

"Make sure you read that book as well. Every detail you find in there is the result of my efforts, so let's settle this amicably."

The woman stretched her hand out expectantly.

Evan glanced at the thick notebook on the table and mulled over his decision. Shortly after that, he took out a gold card and slid it across the table towards her.

"How much is in here?" asked the woman. She was curious about his fabled wealth.

"As much as you need. You've done so much for Nicole and there is no way to put a price on that. The card has no limits, so feel free to use it as you see fit."

The woman's eyes widened in surprise. For reasons unknown, she felt the card weigh heavily in her palm, like she couldn't lift it.

"Don't worry, I will not use the money here frivolously. It will only be used to help people in need. Consider this a joint effort of charity where you and Nicole provide the funds, while Wesley and I provide the services."

Evan looked at her and nodded appreciatively.

After that, the woman gave Evan an address on a slip of paper, along with a word of caution to not startle Nicole.

"I'll leave her to you. Wesley and I cannot tarry any longer. You should find someone to secretly keep an eye on her, then figure out how to get her to go back with you."

The woman wore a look of faint surprise on her face, but she continued. "In fact, I forgot to mention that Nicole has missed you dearly. She hasn't stopped thinking about you, but her reluctance likely stems from fear. I think she's afraid that her illness will affect you somehow."

The word 'affect' triggered a strong reaction in Evan, as if a knife had been plunged into him, twisted, and yanked out again.

He had been through thick and thin with Nicole, but did she not trust him? Does she think that the burden of her illness is too much for me to bear?

Does she still consider me an outsider deep down?

Evan was hurt. He felt that they should spend the rest of their lives bound to each other to weather this storm.

Nicole, you're not even giving me the opportunity to help you!

What you're doing is unbearable!

Do I have to make you feel this way too?

After Evan left The Passion, he received a call from the Hidden Masters.

According to their reports, they had finally pinpointed Nicole's location.

"I'll visit her tomorrow. For now, I'll leave her safety to you."

"Yes, Mr. Seet."

After the call ended, the four Hidden Masters chatted amongst themselves.

"I saw Mrs. Seet just now," said Jeremy. "She so thin, just like a goddamn bamboo pole. Mr. Seet is going to feel distressed when he sees her."

"She may be thin," replied Jensen. "But she's alive and that's what matters. She'll go back to looking like herself eventually."

Damien smirked. "Given Mr. Seet's tendencies when it comes to pampering her, I think she'll regain her vigor in no time at all!"

"Yes, Mr. Seet definitely has a plan. Wait and see!" responded Darius.

Suddenly, Jeremy snapped his fingers, as if he'd remembered something out of the blue.

"I know! Let's make a bet. I bet it'll take half a year for her to become nice and plump!"

Jensen found the proposal interesting and agreed. "Three months is my wager! Making someone gain weight is easy. Besides, Mr. Seet is going to scour the earth for all kinds of delicacies for his wife. He'll whisper sweet nothings to her as well. I think the combined force of food and encouragement will definitely make her nice and plump in three months or so."

Damien disagreed with the notion. "Mrs. Seet isn't a pig for God's sake. How will she gain weight so easily? Besides, she has a sickness of the mind and needs proper care. I'm willing to bet that it'll take a year."

Darius pondered on this briefly before replying, "I'm thinking it'll take...three years."

Jeremy balked at him. "Three years? Darius, are you underestimating Mr. Seet's abilities?"

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"Exactly, why would it take so long?" queried Damien.

"Well, all we have to do is observe. I'm sticking to my bet of three years." retorted Darius.

Jeremy grinned and looked at his companions. "The cost of the wager will be three months of our salary. Winner takes all!"

"Deal!"

"No problem."

While they were gleefully betting on Evan's progress, the four were not prepared to see the state Evan was in the next day.

Jeremy was the first to be shocked by Evan's appearance as he made his way towards them.

He rubbed his eyes hard, thinking he was mistaken. "No, that's definitely Mr. Seet. Are my eyes playing tricks on me?"

"If you mean that he looks so gaunt and ghastly that he might die at any given moment, then your eyes are not playing tricks on you," said Damien, wide-eyed.

"If what I'm seeing is real, then why does Mr. Seet look so horrible? There's no real way to describe this, this..."

Jeremy sighed and trailed off, gesturing vaguely at Evan. Meanwhile, the other three were already making their way towards Evan in a hurry.

"What's the matter, Mr. Seet?"

"My time will come soon," replied Evan weakly.

The four Hidden Masters were dumbstruck.

"WHAT?"

"What's wrong?"

"Mr. Seet, what's happening to you?"

Seeing their extremely shocked expressions, Evan's eyes flashed triumphantly.

It appeared that his corpse-like makeup and acting skills had passed the test. Even the four of them had fallen for it.

I hope this works on Nicole.

“Just focus on keeping Mrs. Seet safe for now. There’s no need for excessive questioning.”

Immediately, Evan’s usual demeanor returned as he glanced at them icily.

Only then did the four understand that Evan was pretending to be sick.

Even so, they could not understand why he went through such a fuss.

Soon, they noticed that he slowly made his way towards Nicole’s residence.

“What is Mr. Seet doing?”

“Going to scare Mrs. Seet probably.”

“But why?”

“How would I know! Just watch, I’m sure he has his reasons.”

The four quietly followed suit, trying not to alert anyone to their presence.

Evan silently observed Nicole, who was sitting in the corridor by the courtyard. This was a figure familiar to him, but she wasn’t quite as he remembered her.

Upon closer observation, his expression immediately turned cold, and he couldn’t help but raise his eyebrows.

Didn’t the woman say that Nicole was cured? Then why did she look so haggard? She was so frail and thin. A gust of wind could’ve easily swept her away.

Immediately, his gaze shifted into one of pure distress.

Nicole in her current state was in desperate need of care. He had to make sure that she came back to him as soon as possible.

He pretended to bump into random things as planned. I have to make some noise.

Sure enough, the sounds succeeded in drawing Nicole’s attention.

“Who’s there?”

As Nicole looked over curiously, Evan pretended to evade capture. Instead, feigning difficulty, he turned around and walked away from her with his head lowered.

After a few steps, he collapsed.

Nicole looked at his back with surprise. There was some familiarity there.

This person is...

Is it really him? Or am I hallucinating again?

Perhaps this was a dream.

Nicole stood there blankly, unsure of what to do.

Evan who still lay on the ground, felt surprised at her reaction.

Can't you see that I'm lying here? Are you pretending to not notice?

His curiosity got the better of him as he secretly opened an eye to peek at her. It was then that he realized that Nicole was walking towards him, brows furrowed.

Immediately, Evan closed his eyes and pretended to lie there motionlessly.

Nicole bent over and studied his face. "Is this real?" she muttered to herself. "Or is this a dream?"

She wanted to pinch herself but she was afraid that it was truly a hallucination. Pinching would be of no use then.

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Inspiration flashed past her eyes, and she reached out to pinch Evan hard.

Evan was surprised by that. Did Nicole figure it out? Why else would she act like this? But... that is not likely either. After all, even the Hidden Masters were fooled! I better keep calm and monitor the situation for now.

"I guess I really am dreaming. He's not reacting to anything, even though I am pinching him so harshly," murmured Nicole to herself.

Evan turned speechless.

It had been two years since they saw one another. Turned out, his wife was still as cute as ever. I'm unconscious on the floor. What reaction could I give?

"Gah, never mind. I'll go take a nap. Who knows? Maybe everything will be better when I wake up," muttered Nicole before she stood up and walked back.

Evan didn't even know what to do with that information.

Nicole, I am unconscious and look terrible. It's like I'm on the verge of dying. How could you be so heartless and just ignore me like that?

Naturally, Nicole couldn't hear Evan's thoughts, so she returned to her room without turning back. She laid on her bed and closed her eyes.

Nicole would cause trouble to her mentor and colleague whenever she hallucinated. Her mentor later advised her to take a nap whenever she hallucinated, and that got her in a habit of going to bed when strange things happen.

Evan's arrival was too sudden, and Nicole assumed that she was hallucinating again. She thought that everything would turn back to the way it was, and the gravely ill Evan would disappear once she took a nap.

Hence, Nicole slept soundly on her bed.

Evan laid on the floor for a long while before he got up. The Hidden Masters, who had been hiding in the dark, couldn't help but comment on the matter.

"What is going on?" asked Jeremy with a frown.

Jensen scratched his head in confusion as well. He replied, "I have no idea. I thought Mrs. Seet would break crying after seeing Mr. Seet in that state. Yet, she's not bothered at all."

Darius chimed in, "Not bothered? That's an understatement. Mrs. Seet was downright ignoring him."

"So the guy is faking his illness, and the girl is ignoring him. What silly games are those two playing?"

"We don't know Mr. Seet well enough. If John were here, he would've been able to guess what Mr. Seet is doing."

"Now's not the time to talk about John. Let's go see how Mr. Seet is doing."

When Evan saw the Hidden Masters showing up in front of him, his expression turned stone cold.

"This is all your fault," complained Evan who shot a glare at every single one of them before leaving.

The Hidden Masters turned to one another. Each looked more confused and wronged than the previous one.

Jeremy asked, "W-were we involved in Mr. Seet's interaction with his wife?"

Jensen replied, "No."

Jeremy asked again, "Did we show ourselves?"

Damien answered, "Not at all!"

Finally, Jeremy asked, "Then why was Mr. Seet complaining?"

Darius sighed and explained, "We shouldn't have shown up after everything went down. Mr. Seet must be embarrassed about how Mrs. Seet ignored him like that, so he vented his frustration on us. That must have prompted him to put the blame on us."

The three other men turned to one another before saying simultaneously, "Good point."

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Evan never would have dreamed that his method would be ineffective. He fished his phone out and tapped on Kate's number.

When Kate saw the caller ID, she jumped up and asked in a worried tone, "What's wrong? Is Nicole hallucinating again?"

Kate only gave Evan her number because she was worried about Nicole hallucinating. That was why the first thought that came to her mind was that Nicole was sick again.

"No. I am just calling to ask for a favor."

"But Wesley and I are leaving. We're already at the airport."

“Can you postpone your trip and leave tomorrow? I really need your help.”

Kate thought about the credit card Evan gave her and about how the matter involved Nicole. In the end, Kate reluctantly agreed.

“Alright, I’ll head back right away.”

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Nicole woke up and wiped her forehead. She didn’t sweat, and that confirmed that she didn’t actually have a nightmare.

She got out of bed and suddenly recalled why she went to bed in the first place.

I think I saw Evan lying on the ground in the courtyard.