

Unbreakable 2151

Chapter 2151

Vicki cherished this little white bird, which was pure white and strikingly elegant. She usually lavished it with attention. Jarrod had interacted with it a few times before.

From the drivers seat, Alec noted, Miss Hampton usually keeps such a close watch on it. Its unusual for it to have flown off like this.

The bird seemed comfortable with Jarrod, not attempting to flee but gently pecking at his collar.

Alec laughed. Mr. Schultz, it looks like it really likes you. Miss Hampton has had it for over a year, and it remembers you more than it does her, despite seeing you only a few times. Such an ungrateful little thing.

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Should I take it Before Alec could finish, a soft snap interrupted him.

Squeak The little white bird lay lifeless in Jarrods hand, utterly still.

Alec was shocked. This was Vickis beloved pet, and Jarrod had just killed it

Jarrod looked down at the motionless bird in his hand, its white feathers still pristine even in death. What a shame. It just wouldnt listen. Much like Nicole.

Jarrods frustration was palpable as his thoughts once again shifted to Nicole. He had devoted so much care to her, trying to win her over and handling her delicately, yet she had fled without a second thought. Disobedient birds deserved punishment, and people werent any exception.

He was confident he would capture her eventually. He just hadnt decided on her punishment yet. Nicole was stubborn and resilient.

Most importantly, she didnt quite take to him despite his efforts, much like this bird, having fled away from its cage. At times, he wished He wished he could just break her.

Jarrod told Alec to keep driving and casually tossed the birds body into a trash bin, his expression icily detached. Once he recaptured Nicole, he would ensure she could never escape again. Even in death, she would only perish in his grip.

Nicole was in a cozy courtyard at the foot of the hills, trying her hand at knitting. She aimed to knit Roscoe a soft cashmere scarf.

She had chosen a soft, misty blue for the yarn, a color that complemented him well, understated, pure, yet unique.

As she knitted in the courtyard, a bird perched on the wall and began to caw miserably.

Nicole felt disturbed by the noise and tried to scare it off.

But the bird seemed oblivious to her and continued to caw sorrowfully.

Growing more nervous, Nicole tossed a pebble at it. The bird flapped away in response, leaving behind a single feather.

Nicole gazed at the feather, a wave of discomfort swelling within her.

She walked back and forth, trying to soothe her nerves.

Suddenly, a furry little animal brushed against her legs.

Looking down, Nicole saw it was Keith, who seemed to sense her distress and wagged his tail energetically to comfort her.

Watching Keith reminded her of Roscoes routine talks during his feeding, and gradually, her anxiety lessened.

She returned to her seat and resumed knitting the scarf, her fingers moving quickly.

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This was the first present she had made for Roscoe, and she was keen for him to try it on soon.

It was still daylight when Roscoe got back. He had traveled to town to fetch a rare herb beneficial for Nicoles health.

He had made a deal with the towns pharmacy to buy whatever herb they had, even braving the bad weather to get it. That was exactly what he accomplished today.

Upon entering, Roscoe saw Nicole had moved from outdoors to beside the campfire, still working on the scarf.

She had put on a bit of weight, and though she was still lean, she no longer looked as gaunt.

The firelight lit up her face, making her appear lively and beautiful.

The sight of her knitting was deeply heartwarming.

Roscoe walked over, gently took the yarn from Nicoles hands, and handed her a plum blossom cake. Then, he playfully quipped, Youre supposed to practice just a little each day. Did you push yourself too hard today?

Im not that delicate, and knitting isnt strenuous, Nicole responded with a chuckle. She took a bite of the plum blossom cake, whose flavor and sweetness were distinctive to this town and delightfully unique.

Remember, dont overwork yourself. Youre only allowed forty minutes of knitting each day, Roscoe said softly.

Forty minutes is hardly enough. My hands are still adjusting. I cant finish well in that short time, Nicole replied.

It doesnt matter if it isnt perfect. Theres no rush. Even if you finish it by summer, Ill wear it, Roscoe assured her.

Nicole chuckled. Wouldnt you get a heat rash wearing it in the summer?

That would be a joyful rash, Roscoe quipped and stood up to prepare dinner.

Watching him walk away, Nicole set aside the plum blossom cake and picked up the scarf again, knitting with renewed vigor.

For some reason, she felt a pressing need to finish it more quickly.

She felt an unsettling fear, dreading that Roscoe might never get to wear this scarf.

On Vickis fathers birthday, Jarrod and Vicki attended together.

When Jarrods scandal first surfaced, Vickis father, Wayne, firmly insisted that Vicki and Jarrod end their relationship.

In high society, a little flirtation and some quirky habits were nothing unusual. Many men viewed their mistresses merely as a means to alleviate stress. But they wouldnt treat their wives in such a manner.

Truth be told, Wayne had been wilder than Jarrod in his younger days, but Vicki was his most cherished daughter, born to the woman he loved dearly. Thus, he had always spoiled Vicki.

As Jarrods scandal broke, Wayne immediately ordered an investigation.

He was stunned by the findings. The woman involved with Jarrod was Nicole, the heiress of the Lawrence family who had been missing since then. Back then, the dramatic downfall of the Lawrence family had once been a major topic of conversation in society.

While everyone feared Jarrods ruthless nature, Wayne admired Jarrods uncompromising approach. He saw a lot of his younger self in Jarrod, a man with guts. But with the Lawrence familys downfall, it wasnt fair to simply say Jarrod bore a grudge against them by keeping Nicole by his side and torturing her.

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Hatred could take many forms, but it wouldnt manifest in this way.

Having experienced lifes ups and downs, Wayne knew Jarrod must care deeply for Nicole. When a man became overly fixated on a woman, it could introduce tons of potential dangers.

Wayne was okay with Jarrods flings with other women, but not with emotional entanglements. Otherwise, Vicki wouldnt lead a cheerful life, should she marry Jarrod.

Having seen through this, Wayne strongly disapproved of Vicki's relationship with Jarrod, but he was helpless against Vicki's self-destructive threats. She was seriously harming herself, cutting her wrists deeply. The fear was so great that he finally agreed to assist Jarrod.

Despite everything, Wayne appreciated Jarrod's capabilities, knowing his potential. Even given the smallest opportunity, Jarrod could emerge triumphant from the most challenging situations. And Nicole remained missing, as though she had fled.

Reassured by this, Wayne gradually began to warm up to Jarrod.

At today's birthday celebration, under Wayne's arrangement, he was flanked by Lowe, his son, and Jarrod, his soon-to-be son-in-law, signifying that Jarrod would soon join the Hampton family and become a pillar among the family, thriving together.

However, Lowe was quite displeased with this. He surmised had it not been for Nicole, the woman trapped by Jarrod's side before, he wouldn't have faced this downfall. For the deal he had struck with Nicole, with the threats of exposing his compromising photos, he had stolen documents from his father, resulting in his demotion and a forced period of reflection at home.

Seeing Jarrod highly regarded at the family banquet raised questions and added to Lowe's unease. Was Wayne thinking of passing on the Hampton legacy to Jarrod?

Lowe silently pledged to keep a watchful eye on Jarrod, his expression darkening. He was bitter, and he intended to spread that bitterness.

Lowe said to Jarrod, Mr. Schultz, have you located the woman involved in your scandal?

As Lowe spoke, a sudden coldness descended upon the table. The atmosphere grew tense.

Luckily, Wayne had stepped out momentarily, avoiding the uncomfortable moment.

However, being asked this question by Lowe while his fiancée was beside him was humiliating for Jarrod.

Vicki glared at Lowe with intense displeasure, her look silently warning him to shut up. Although they were half-siblings, their relationship was strained and affection was scarce.

Despite Vicki being a woman, Lowe remained cautious around her.

Emboldened by alcohol, he slurred his words. Sis, don't get mad, I'm just curious. Your fiancé seemed the type who has been sowing his wild oats. Didn't he make out with that woman against the tinted glass? I wonder if he'd be up for a threesome or something.

Lowe, shut your mouth! Vicki could no longer contain her frustration and lashed out at him.

But Lowe refused to stop, his long-held grievances pushing him to continue. Normally, his father overlooked his escapades.

While he was told not to set his eyes on the company employees, the allure of his cousin-in-law, a married woman, was too tempting to resist.

Driven by desire, Lowe had engaged in several secret encounters with her. She was adept, ensuring his comfort, but their liaisons were cut short when Nicole exposed their compromising photos online, resulting in her suddenly being transferred away by his father.

Damn it! Lowe cursed under his breath.

The incident caused a huge uproar, with his cousin splitting a substantial amount of money due to it.

Lowe felt he could have maintained their discreet meetings and had more fun if it hadnt been for Nicoles meddling. Ultimately, Jarrod was also to blame for his own involvement with Nicole.

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Observing Jarrods virtuous appearance, which belied his true libertine nature, Lowe could not restrain himself, disregarding the presence of other guests. Mr. Schultz, I heard youre still pining for that woman. Was she so memorable that you cant let her go?

Vickis face lost all color at his words. Nicole was a sore spot for her. Despite her numerous hints that Jarrod need not wait until their wedding night, he remained distant.

Vicki, well-traveled and experienced with past boyfriends, was no stranger to relationships. Jarrod was her rightful fianc, and intimacy between them seemed only natural.

Yet, Jarrod resisted her advances, avoiding even a simple kis. There had been a moment when she had stolen a quick kis, only for him to pull away immediately.

As Lowe continued, Vickis unease grew, leaving her to wonder if Jarrod still harbored feelings for Nicole.

Mr. Lowe Hampto

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n, who told you that? Jarrod questioned, his eyebrow arched. He was cornered by Lowes persistent probing, but more so by Vickis presence, determined not to let her harbor any insecurities.

After all, women could be quite hard to deal with when distressed.

However, Jarrods opinion of Lowe was low. To him, Lowe was nothing more than a decadent pleasure-seeker, who wouldnt hesitate to betray him for his own gains. Yet, it wasnt the time for confrontation.

Lowe sneered, revealing his true intentions, Of course, I have solid proof. Are you worried about upsetting my sister? I think shes quite resilient. After watching that video, she seemed unfazed and is still deeply in love with you, which is quite admirable

While his words seemed to praise Vicki, they were in fact a mockery, suggesting she was ineffectual in holding a mans affection and allowing Jarrod to pursue other liaisons.

Vicki caught the underlying mockery and her face turned deathly pale.

How could she not be affected by the resurfacing of that topic? She knew the woman in the video was Jarrods first love, Nicole. Their relationship had begun in college and ended bitterly after a dramatic fallout. What she hadnt expected was that after all these years, they were still entangled. And Jarrod even managed to be so cruel to Nicole by forcing her to make out with him.

Vicki had watched that video intently. Call her twisted or sick, she simply wanted to see what Jarrod was like amid sexual intercourse.

In Vickis book, Jarrod captivated her no matter what he did, even in moments that bordered on sadistic. Paired with his strikingly handsome face, it sparked an involuntary desire in her.

Particularly at the end, when Jarrod showed a look of complete satisfaction, it was unlike anything Vicki had ever seen. It terrified her. Jarrod seemed truly, deeply in love with Nicole.

Hearing that Nicole had fled, Vicki prayed she would never return.

Otherwise, she wasnt sure how she might react.

Lowe, rather than worrying about my relationship with Vicki, perhaps you should pay more attention to your own health. Jarrod retorted coolly.

Lowe's eyebrows knotted in irritation. What do you mean by that?

Jarrod gave Lowe a cold look, his voice steady. Your father is eager for grandchildren, and you have been with quite a few women. Yet, none has borne you a child. Could it be theres an issue with your health?

Lowe felt a flash of panic. His carefree younger years, spent indiscriminately in liaisons, had led to a diagnosis of oligospermia, indeed making it difficult for him to father children. Despite his reckless behavior, he had yet to father a child. He wondered how on earth Jarrod knew about that. His father was already displeased with him. If his infertility came to light, whatever favor he retained would vanish.

Bullshit! Jarrod, stop spouting nonsense. You think youre capable, huh? Are you planning to father a child to inherit the Hampton estate? Lowe, inebriated and angry, disregarded the decorum required for the solemnity of the birthday banquet.

Thank you for your concern, Lowe. I will have my own children,

Jarrod replied evenly.

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His words eased the tension evident on Vickis face. She and Jarrod were set to marry in three months, and Jarrods reference to having children suggested he envisioned a future with her as the mother of his children.

Vickis worries dissolved in an instant, convinced that bearing Jarrods children would cement their relationship and guarantee a blissful future together.

Lowe, seething with anger, was now convinced that Jarrod was aware of his oligospermia. Damn it! Jarrod always knew how to hit where it hurt most.

You're quite confident, Jarrod, Lowe sneered, turning to Vicki to stir more trouble. Sis, you'd better watch out. He said have children, but he didn't specify with whom. Don't flatter yourself. This man doesn't love you

Before Lowe could continue, Wayne delivered a sharp strike to his head. Can't you say anything decent?

Observing Lowe's haggard appearance, Wayne scornfully added, He's your future brother-in-law. Keep your mouth clean!

Lowe bit back his retort. Brother-in-law? He scoffed, knowing all too well that Vicki was the result of Wayne's affair. Otherwise, there wouldn't be any brother-in-law.

However, Lowe restrained himself, knowing Wayne's affection for Vicki was largely because she reminded him of her mother, the woman Wayne had never stopped loving.

Lowe did not share Wayne's enduring romantic sentiments. He was quick to love and leave, forgetting each woman as soon as she disappeared from his life.

Jarrod, don't take it to heart. This kid has been spoiled by me. Please guide him in business since he's not as skilled as you,

Wayne explained, justifying his indulgence in Lowe due to his age and the absence of other male heirs.

Despite Wayne's less favorable view of Jarrod's personal affairs, he appreciated Jarrod's business savvy and truly felt Jarrod was indeed far more competent than Lowe.

In these elevated circles of society, fidelity among men was rare.

Minor scandals were often overlooked if one possessed the requisite clout.

Jarrod, tied to the Hampton family with the upcoming marriage with Vicki, was expected to help deal with the mess and trouble Lowe had caused, but Wayne's view of Jarrod's character was overly optimistic.

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Known for his vindictive streak, Jarrod was unlikely to overlook Lowe's continued provocations.

As the event concluded, a remark from Lowe ignited a lethal intent in Jarrod.

Mr. Schultz, it's no wonder you were drawn to that woman. So slender, yet unexpectedly tempting and curvy. I couldn't help myself after seeing her. Frustrated by his father's rebuke, Lowe was in a sour mood and inclined to make things difficult for Jarrod by provoking him.

Aware of Jarrod's feelings for Nicole, Lowe intentionally stirred him by adding, That video of you with that woman, I always play it before I start with others. It's more effective than any drug. Just seeing her exquisite body gets me excited

Jarrods normally calm demeanor instantly shifted, his eyes flashing with a fierce, murderous intent that made Lowe step back in fear.

Dont look at me like that. Im not afraid of you Despite his bold words, Lowe instinctively hid behind his bodyguard, intimidated by Jarrods menacing glare, which seemed potent enough to devour him whole.

Jarrodd paused briefly and swiftly regained his cool, his demeanor nonchalant once again. He had spent a considerable sum to delete that video when it first surfaced. Though it was no longer available online, he knew the possibility of someone keeping a copy couldnt be dismissed.

Jarrodd flashed a dazzling smile and warned, Lowe, remember not to speak carelessly next time. Im not into men, and if people heard you were clinging to my video, they might think you have designs on me. Hey, Im your future brother-in-law. Your father isnt getting any younger, and such rumors could be the death of him. Should anything happen to your father, Lowe, you would be the one to blame.

You! Lowe was seething with rage. Jarrodd had twisted his comments to insinuate his preference, instead of just a reaction to Nicole.

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Onlookers began to view Lowe with suspicion, some even whispering among themselves, speculating whether Lowe harbored feelings for Jarrodd who, quick to clarify, categorically denied any interest in men.

Everyone knew of Jarrods preference for women. The idea of him being interested in men was preposterous.

Lowes increasingly dubious reputation only worsened as whispers and rumors began to spread among the people around him, suggesting that Jarrodd had openly rejected Lowes advances.

These rumors, however, would only become widespread later on.

The day after these murmurings began, a brutal attack occurred at a rowdy party Lowe hosted.

Intruders overpowered Lowe, subjected him to a severe beating, and nearly castrated him.

Although they didnt complete the castration, the attack inflicted deep psychological wounds on Lowe, plaguing him with nightmares each night.

Furthermore, the assailant completely erased all data from Lowes computers and phones, permanently deleting every video, including those belonging to others.

Lowe, though not known for his sharp wit, instantly had a suspect who might be behind all this.

The day following the attack, numerous videos depicting Lowes debauched activities spread throughout Ardlens, reaching nearly every local resident. His unrestrained behavior triggered a dramatic drop in the Hampton Groups stock

attack, Lowe brought these concerns to his father but found no sympathy.

Wayne was already troubled by the existing rumors surrounding Lowe and found it both ridiculous and humiliating that Lowe had been storing video of Jarrod with Nicole.

Moreover, Wayne harbored fears that Lowe might truly be infatuated with Jarrod, an idea so distressing that he felt it would dishonor his family Lineage.

As a consequence, when Lowe voiced his complaints, Wayne responded by confining Lowe to his home and placing him under strict surveillance.

Angered and unprepared for such severe repercussions from a seemingly minor slip of the tongue, Lowe felt deeply aggrieved and confused.

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For a considerable period afterward, he struggled with sexual dysfunction, which only intensified his hatred toward Jarrod.

In the dim light of the underground parking garage, Jarrod leaned back in his seat, his chair reclined fully with his long legs stretched out. His expression was one of relaxed allure.

As a man in his prime, his needs were significant, and he tended to them personally. The car's screen displayed a scene where Nicole was kneeling and begging. Back then, not wanting to see her plead for another man, he had her turn away, grabbed her hair from behind, and coldly smashed her face against the glass.

His gaze dimmed as he restrained himself, turning off the screen and then fastening his belt buckle. Nicole in the video wept, looking heartbreakingly pitiful, her tears all for another man.

The fleeting satisfaction left a shadow of melancholy on Jarrod's handsome face, a stark contrast to his usual indifference, transforming him momentarily. He wondered where Nicole had hidden herself.

Meanwhile, Lowe, confined to his home and deprived of his usual escapades with women, felt a deep frustration brewing.

At that moment, he had a visitor. It took him a second to recognize the man as Deniz, his aunt's brother-in-law, somewhat distantly related and reportedly ruined by an offense to Jarrod over drugging Nicole.

Lowe's interest piqued. They had both suffered because of the same woman, which made him feel a sense of camaraderie.

Moreover, Lowe found Deniz somewhat likable. Deniz was opportunistic yet charismatic, capable of entertaining him like a loyal companion, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

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Destitute and likely harboring a deep-seated hatred for Jarrod, Deniz fit the old saying well. The enemy of my enemy is my friend. It was such a principle as old as commerce itself.

Mr. Hampton, I heard you've been unwell lately, so I came to check on you, Deniz said obsequiously as he handed a bag of health supplements to the servant.

To Deniz, Lowe now stood as a vital pillar of support, a potential lifeline to reclaim his business and restore his standing in Ardlens.

Mr. Miller, you're too kind. I'm not seriously ill, Lowe responded.

What brings you to see me?

Deniz smiled and said, I heard you've recently had some disagreements with Mr. Schultz from the Schultz Group.

Lowe had his own ideas, never one to reveal his full hand too early.

With a forced smile, Lowe responded, Deniz, where'd you hear that? Jarrod is my future brother-in-law. We had just some casual chatter. We're family at the end of the day.

Lowe's words prompted Deniz to get straight to the point.

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Deniz, feeling a jolt, shot up from his seat. Lowe, Jarrod's ambitious. Remember what he did to the Lawrence family?

Everyone knew Nicole came from the Lawrence family. The Lawrence family had a history with the Schultzes. When Jarrod returned years ago, he absorbed the Lawrence family's enterprises, even trapping Nicole around his side to humiliate her. It was no wonder Nicole loathed Jarrod.

Lowe, seasoned in wealth, chose to play dumb. What's the Lawrence matter got to do with me? Ambitions not a bad thing in a future brother-in-law.

Deniz, seething, couldn't believe Lowe, once a carefree playboy, now employing such cunning. It was like pulling teeth getting him to spell it out. It appeared Lowe had picked up Jarrod's cunningness after spending so much time with Jarrod.

But considering his current situation, Deniz grasped he couldn't confront Lowe. Even if Lowe was lacking, Lowe still had his father's support, while he had nothing left. His last shot at returning to Ardlens depended on this. Ardlens meant a lot to him since all his roots and connections were there.

Deniz decided to speak his mind. Since Jarrod had managed to absorb the Lawrence family's enterprises, have you considered that perhaps his upcoming marriage with your sister is just a ploy? Maybe his true intention is to absorb the Hampton family's empire. After all, he suffered significant losses this time, and returning to the peak of the Schultz Group won't be easy.

Lowe responded calmly, Deniz, you're overthinking it. If Jarrod wants to acquire the Hampton family's empire, he has my father to deal with, and you know my old man is no ordinary man.

Knowing Wayne had paved his way in the cutthroat business world, he wouldn't be naive.

If Jarrod aimed to swallow the Hampton familys empire, Wayne must have some leverage over Jarrod, keeping him in check.

Lowe, lets be frank. Your father isnt getting any younger, and accidents can happen to anyone. Seeing Lowes expression darken, Deniz hastily clarified, Im not cursing your father. Im simply pointing out that when dealing with Jarrod, treading carefully is crucial. Look at my situation. Im a native of Ardlens, yet I cant even return, hiding around like a rat.

Deniz, acting instincts kicked in with tears glistening, bitterly said, Whys this happening to me? I just wanted to make out with Nicole, and hes done this to me.

Lowe consoled, Deniz, youve been through a lot. I felt Jarrod was wrong to act that way over a woman.

Feeling a sense of connection, Deniz quickly added, I heard Jarrod has a history with you, all because of Nicole.

Lowe remained silent, offering no reply.

Deniz persisted, Lowe, you see, I just want to come back to Ardlens. Were on the same side in dealing with Jarrod.

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Lowe despised beating around the bush. He surmised Deniz must have some trick up his sleeve before sneakily approaching him like this.

It would have been wise to have laid it out earlier, letting him decide if he would be interested. Such a straightforward matter, yet Deniz had been skirting around it for too long.

Impatiently, Lowe stated, Deniz, I sympathize with your situation, but Im afraid I cant intervene. You know Jarrod. Hes going to marry my sister. I cant meddle in your affairs.

Seeing Lowe about to dismiss him, Deniz held nothing back anymore.

Lowe, Ive got something to show you, he said, tapping away on his phone before thrusting it toward Lowe. I heard Jarrods hunting down this chick. Look who I stumbled upon.

Lowe peered at the photo, lips curling in disdain. Nicole exuded allure, the type to make men lose their minds. No wonder Jarrod was hooked. Hed crawl through fire to have her back.

Sinking into the sofa, Lowe uttered, Deniz, why tell me this instead of Jarrod? Im not the one pursuing this woman.

Because Jarrods burned me one too many times. Cant trust him anymore. Coming to you is me being straight up. Youre sharp, Lowe. With this info, you call the shots. And when Im back in Ardlens, Ive got your back. Always.

Deniz's words dripped with such finesse, flattering Lowe, who swelled with pride.

Next to Jarrod, Lowe felt he was an idle good-for-nothing in Wayne's eyes. If Jarrod truly had his back, it would be okay, but Jarrod had been way too ruthless. Just because of a few words from him that rubbed Jarrod the wrong way, the next day Jarrod had people beat him to a pulp.

Lowe knew Jarrod's upcoming marriage with Vicki would only spell trouble, never any good. Given that scenario, he needed to get ready ahead of time.

Deniz, are you really committed to this? Lowe inquired.

Deniz was practically ready to do anything to prove his sincerity. He kept affirming, Absolutely. Lowe, as long as I spend my life in Ardlens, I'll be grateful to you every single moment.

Deniz wasn't naive. He knew he would be allowed to come back to Ardlens if he met Jarrod, using the photo of Nicole as leverage. Yet, he had already taken one hit. Trying to intimidate someone like Jarrod was a poor decision. Lowe served as a stark reminder of that.

Since even Lowe couldn't outmatch Jarrod, his chances of succeeding would be slimmer. Therefore, he decided to disclose this to Lowe, an act that could seek favor while gaining an ally for future endeavors in Ardlens.

Lowe peered at the photo and advised, Go inform Jarrod.

Deniz stood there, stunned. After all the twists and turns, Lowe simply gave him this one instruction. Wasn't that essentially the same as him seeking out Jarrod himself?

Lowe pressed on, Deniz, we're relatives. Moving forward, I'll keep tabs on your matters and lend support. Just pass on this woman's whereabouts to Jarrod. Don't fret about anything else.

Lowe had his own schemes. Rather than exploiting Nicole's whereabouts to threaten Jarrod, it was wiser to inform Jarrod directly, prompting him to fetch Nicole. That would ruffle the current state of affairs.

Lowe doubted Vicki wouldn't feel a pang of jealousy when she caught wind of this. Likely, she would fail to remain as composed as she appeared to be now.

To Lowe, Jarrod seemed under some spell, managing to keep a woman who held a grudge against himself, a move that would undoubtedly seal his own fate.

Once Jarrod fetched Nicole back, Lowe could simply sit back and enjoy the spectacle that followed.

Deniz couldn't quite grasp Lowe's intentions, but since Lowe had said so, it meant he was on board with the plan.

Given Lowe's assurance, Deniz didn't pry any further and just complied. Without hesitation, he sprang to action, wasting no time in tracking down Jarrod.

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Vicki had been sticking to Jarrod like glue these past few days. A while back, Lowe's words had sown a seed of doubt in her mind.

When Vicki had a minor outburst recently, Jarrod didnt bother to comfort her, simply claiming he was occupied.

This left Vicki unsettled, constantly pondering Lowes insinuation about Jarrods reluctance to start a family with her. It was absurd!

If not with her, then who else would Jarrod even consider having a child with? In just three months, she would become his wife.

Determined to keep a watchful eye on Jarrod and start a family promptly, she was resolved not to give any other woman a chance.

Currently, Vicki sat in Jarrods office, awaiting his departure from work for their dinner plans.

However, as the daylight waned, she grew restless with each passing minute of his absence. Unable to remain idle any longer, she sought out Jarrods assistant, Alec.

Alec, appearing hesitant, reluctantly revealed that Jarrod was engaged in an urgent meeting with a business partner.

What? Vickis irritation flared. To her, the business partners importance paled in comparison to her own. How long will this take? she demanded.

Alec hesitated before responding, Mr. Schultz asked me to take you home first.

Vickis frown deepened. Take me home? I can wait a bit longer.

Im afraid that wont cut it. Hes meeting with some big shot client, Alec mentioned, a hint of concern in his voice.

Vicki shot Alec a suspicious glance and briskly strode a few paces forward, yanking the VIP meeting room door wide open.

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Oh, Miss Hampton Alecs attempt to intervene was futile.

Vicki surveyed the vacant meeting space, turning abruptly to confront Alec. Wheres Mr. Schultz? She and Jarrod had just finalized plans for dinner. How could Jarrod vanish into thin air like this?

Alec cleared his throat, offering an explanation, Mr. Schultz had to jet off on an urgent business trip abroad. Left with no choice, he wanted me to relay his apologies and assure you hell make it up to you tonight.

Vicki seethed with frustration. Even if it was urgent, a heads-up would have sufficed. Shed traveled all the way to Schultz Group, only to be forgotten. What could possibly be so pressing that he had to bolt like this?

Fuming, she retrieved her phone, dialing Jarrods number, only to be met with a mechanical female voice. Im sorry, the number you have dialed is switched off

Vickis unease swelled as she noticed the absence of any response from Jarrods phone. Where on earth could he have gone off to? She fixed her gaze on Alec, her words sharp and direct, cutting through the tension. Alec, cut the pretense. Just tell me straight, wheres Jarrod?

Alec, predictably tight-lipped, offered his reply, Look, Im not feeding you lies. Mr. Schultz really went on a business trip. Theres a big deal brewing in the international market, and he had to handle it alone.

Alecs explanation rang hollow, though. Yet, he couldnt come up with a convincing story since Jarrod had simply vanished into thin air, leaving even him clueless about Jarrods whereabouts.

With Jarrods phone off the grid, Alec resorted to quickly inventing excuses while he scrambled to uncover the truth.

In a bid to placate Vickis growing concern, Alec motioned to the secretary, who arrived bearing a bag from a fancy jewelry brand. With a coaxing tone, he presented it to Vicki. Heres something Mr. Schultz had me order for you a while back. He meant to hand it over himself, but with his abrupt departure, he asked me to pass it on. He promised more surprises upon his return.

Vicki peered into the box, catching sight of the latest Limited edition Love of the Century necklace from the esteemed jewelry brand. It wasnt something just anyone with deep pockets could snag.

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The releases were all exclusive editions, requiring a certain status to acquire.

Vickis vanity tingled with satisfaction, but beneath the surface, a flicker of irritation remained. She lifted her gaze to Alec, questioning, Did he really order this?

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Alec maintained his composure, replying, Absolutely. It was a special request from Mr. Schultz.

Actually, Jarrod hadnt personally selected these jewelry pieces.

That wasnt his style. Instead, hed simply handed Alec a card and left the details in Alecs capable hands.

Whenever Vicki found herself discontent, Alecs solution was to shower her with gifts. Thus, since their engagement, Vicki had received meticulously chosen presents, those she assumed prepared by Jarrod but actually by Alec, for every occasion. It had helped to alleviate her frustration to some extent.

Observing Vickis demeanor soften, Alec continued to gently reason with her, Miss Hampton, Mr. Schultz deeply regrets any inconvenience caused, but he was conducting business, intending to secure a better future for you. I hope youll understand.

Vicki, the hopeless romantic, found herself utterly infatuated at that moment, making her remarkably easy to placate. Her ire swiftly dissipated. Alright, I get it. Alec, do you know where

Jarrold has gone to? He left so quickly. I'm worried he forgot something important. I'm thinking of flying over to bring some things for him.

Upon hearing this, Alec swiftly waved his hands. No worries, Miss Hampton. Mr. Schultz has got an assistant traveling with him. They'll see to all his needs. Plus, who knows? He might be back in a day or two. You just wait at home.

Alec finally managed to send Vicki away, heaving a long sigh of relief. He then tried calling Jarrold again, but silence greeted him.

Alec found himself utterly baffled, clueless about Jarrold's whereabouts. At the very least, a heads-up would've been nice, so Alec could brace himself for whatever was coming.

As Vicki settled into the car, just as the driver was about to pull away, they were halted by an unexpected interruption.

Vicki glanced over and recognized the face, prompting her to instruct the driver to lower the window.

Outside, Deniz wore a hypocritical smile. Miss Hampton, it's been a while. How've you been holding up?

Vicki didn't hold a favorable opinion of Deniz. Rumors had it that this old man had quite the reputation as a womanizer, and there were whispers of him mistreating his wife upon his return.

Vicki's aunt, ached for her sister suffering amid the marriage with Deniz, had allocated some projects of the Hampton Group to Deniz in a bit to shield her sister from Deniz's abusive behavior.

However, Deniz seemed to have fallen out of favor with someone, as his presence in Ardlen's became less frequent, sparing Vicki from witnessing his pleas for forgiveness.

Honestly, Vicki wasn't invested in Deniz's affairs, so she remained unaware of his conflict with Jarrold.

Deniz, why did you stop my car? Vicki's expression soured as she addressed him.

Deniz didn't seem bothered by her tone and continued to smile kindly.

I simply haven't seen you in a while and wanted to greet you. Vicki, you've grown even more beautiful.

Deniz's gaze lingered on Vicki in a manner that made her uncomfortable, his eyes assessing her in a way that felt invasive.

Vicki was instantly annoyed. She had heard Deniz once showed an inappropriate interest in her aunt. One time, when her aunt and sister were out, he pretended to be drunk and sneakily slipped under her aunt's quilt, attempting to undress her. After her aunt beat him up, he claimed his actions were due to the alcohol while the truth was otherwise.

Deniz, if there's nothing else, I'm leaving now, Vicki said, feeling disgusted. She signaled the driver to raise the window.