

N Destiny 2391

Chapter 2391

Did this man insist on kissing her for a full ten minutes?

The passage of time remained ambiguous, but when Zacharias finally released Shirley, his breath was heavy, and his eyes bore a dangerous intensity, akin to a tiger ready to pounce. He delicately touched her forehead and uttered, "Go back to your room. Don't come over again." He struggled to contain the inner turmoil, attempting to release her. The fear of losing control over his sanity haunted him, uncertain of the consequences if he succumbed to the primal instincts within.

She was also obedient, but her legs were a bit weak. She whispered, "Good night."

After speaking, she quickly left. Back in her room, Shirley lay on the bed, her heart racing. Thoughts of intimately kissing Zacharias consumed her mind. While reflecting on it, she sensed a profound emptiness within, as if she yearned for his embrace.

She immediately covered her flushed face and buried her head in embarrassment. What was wrong with her? How could she think of such things?

The next morning, she asked her father to send her passport. Although the distance was far, the delivery was fast, so it arrived on the second night. Zacharias arranged for her to complete the necessary procedures for going abroad.

Imogen was coming along this time. She had been secretly looking forward to it. Shirley packed her luggage, ready to depart at any moment.

Zacharias was busy with work these two days, and she hardly saw him during the day. Finally, departure time had come. Shirley climbed into the car, finding herself sharing the ride with Imogen.

"Shirley, let's take care of each other when we are abroad," Imogen said.

"Definitely!" Shirley nodded. The corners of Imogen's lips curled into a smile. "Gosh, am I happy or what? I can't believe I get to go abroad with Mr. Flintstone."

Shirley's chest felt tight at those words. She wanted to tell Imogen something. However, the fear of causing her friend pain held Shirley back. They had a close bond, and Shirley couldn't bear the thought of hurting anyone, especially someone she considered a friend.

Shirley remained unaware that Imogen had orchestrated this situation with the intention of making her feel guilty.

Zacharias was already at the airport when the two women arrived. After they boarded the plane, Shirley and he were in the same cabin while the bodyguards were in another.

As Zacharias had many documents to review, Freddie was helping him organize. Shirley's eyes had a hint of pain when she stared at him. When the plane was about to take off, Zacharias said to her, "Sit next to me."

Shirley then moved to his side. Seeing this, he turned to her with a smile. As the plane accelerated, his hand naturally covered hers.

Shirley felt a warmth in her heart and silently allowed him to hold her hand. Freddie, who sat at the back, couldn't see what they were doing.

This hidden love affair was like a sapling quietly growing in their hearts. Shirley didn't struggle to define her feelings for Zacharias. She just followed her heart.

On the plane, Imogen wanted to go to Zacharias' cabin, but her identity made it inconvenient for her to do so. She truly envied Shirley. It was a given for Shirley to accompany Zacharias.

It seems that the difference in their background and status made Imogen feel like all of this was unfair. She put in so much effort, yet she didn't receive the deserved recognition and fair treatment. Therefore, she wanted to prove that she was not inferior. As long as it aligned with ethical principles, she would reach out and seize what she desired.

Shirley stayed awake the entire time during the flight of more than ten hours. Zacharias, on the other hand, took a nap after going through some documents, wearing an eye mask as he slept next to her.

In the quiet cabin, with only the sound of the plane outside, she leaned on the cushioned seat. Her gaze fell on the face of the man beside her.

The man wearing an eye mask displayed a proud nose, sensual lips, and a perfectly contoured jawline connecting to a masculine Adam's apple.

Zacharias' face was truly one that could drive women crazy. Shirley found herself getting lost in the sight. When she snapped back to reality, she realized she had been staring at the man for quite some time.

Cradling her slightly heated face, she wondered why her mind and heart were now filled with images of this man.

Chapter 2392

They arrived in Flor 18 hours later. Shirley stood beside Zacharias, and they were given a warm welcome. Roy and six of his men stayed around Zacharias closely, watching the surroundings. They were led to the Royal Hotel, a place where VIPs stayed. Zacharias had a suite, and Shirley was waiting for Freddie to give her the card for the room. A while later, Freddie gave her the card, and he said, "Miss Lloyd, this is the key to your and Mr. Flintstone's room. Keep it close."

Shirley's eyes went wide. "What? Mr. Flintstone and I are sharing a room?"

"Yes. It is his request." Freddie smiled. Shirley looked at him and nodded awkwardly. "I see. Shirley pushed her luggage into Zacharias' room. When she came in, Zacharias was on the couch, making a call. He then pointed at a guest room, telling Shirley that that was her room.

Shirley took her luggage into the room. Since they would be staying for a week or longer, she opened up her luggage and unpacked it, and then she hung the clothes.

When she was done unpacking her luggage, she saw Zacharias' luggage still in the living quarters, so she took them into her room and was going to sort it out for him.

Zacharias was done making his call, and he came into the room. "You're going to sort it out for me?"

“Yes. Open these up, please. I don’t have the passcode,” said Shirley.

Zacharias crouched down and opened up the suitcases. There were clothes and necessities inside. Shirley thought he was good at packing his things, unlike most guys who would only stuff their belongings without a care in the world. She took his clothes out and hung them.

Zacharias pointed at one of the underpants. “You gave me these.”

Shirley looked at the underpants. “I gave you a necktie. This was from the retail assistant.”

“But to me, it’s from you anyway,” argued Zacharias.

Shirley didn’t argue back. She then noticed the necktie he was wearing. She bought that for him, too. Shirley stared at it for a few moments. Oh, it’s not bad. I have a good eye for things like that.

Zacharias looked down and held up the necktie, and then he kissed it. “Your presents are pretty. You know how to pick stuff.”

That wasn’t him talking about the necktie. He was just praising Shirley in a roundabout way. Shirley went back to sorting out the clothes for him. She would be living in this suite with Zacharias for a week at least. For some reason, she was slightly looking forward to it.

Zacharias said, “I have a ball to attend tonight. Can you come with me?”

Shirley blinked. “Me?”

“I don’t see any other girls here,” said Zacharias, amused. There are perks to taking her along with me

“Do I need to dance?” asked Shirley, nervous.

“Maybe, but it’s fine if you don’t want to,” said Zacharias. He would respect her decision. Shirley quickly said, “But I didn’t bring any dresses with me.”

“I’ll deal with that. Just get ready for the ball tonight.” Zacharias chuckled. He looked forward to the ball.

It didn’t take long for Imogen to find out that Shirley was staying in the same room as Zacharias. That confirmed her guess that Shirley was hooking up with Zacharias behind her. Oh, she’s up to schemes too? Acts like she doesn’t like him when I’m around, only for that to be a ploy, so I’d lower my guard?

Imogen already had self-esteem issues because of her family background. She was a perpetual cynic who couldn’t see the good in anything. Imogen stood before the floor-to- ceiling window, a sneer curling her lips. Why do you get to live the best life while I have to stay as a bottom feeder? If I can marry Zacharias, I can be on the top echelon of this nation. This is my only chance, and you’re stealing it from me.

Just then, Imogen’s other phone rang. She picked it up and smirked. “Hi,” she said in Chinese.

Chapter 2393

“That’s great. We’ve missed you too. We’d love to see you.”

“Sure. I’ll come up with the time, and we’ll meet,” said Nora. She then hung up. The person she talked to wasn’t some regular guy. They were from an underground organization in Flor. When Imogen was taking IT classes back in the day, she inadvertently got in touch with a hacker. They had been staying in touch for three years since then under the name of Nora. Eventually, she found out they were with the mafia. She should have cut off all ties with them, but she started getting some ideas, so instead of cutting off ties, she deepened the connection.

She showed off her skills and true self to these people and acted just like a bad girl. That made her quick friends with these people. Refusing to stay in her current hierarchy in society, Imogen tended to delve deeper into other parts of society to find a way up.

Back in the presidential suite, Shirley was lounging on the settee on the balcony, agonizing over a certain matter. She would be going to the ball later that night with Zacharias, and she knew Imogen would be there as well. She and Zacharias were going to be really close at the ball, so she wanted to tell Imogen about her relationship with Zacharias before that.

They were friends, so she had to be honest with Imogen. Shirley mused over her options, and eventually, she decided to meet Imogen. When she came back into the lounge, Zacharias was still on the couch, talking about work with Freddie. He realized she was going to leave the room, and he arched his eyebrow. "Where are you going?"

"To see Imogen," said Shirley.

Zacharias finally nodded, giving his permission. He wouldn't let her run around all she wanted. This was a chaotic place, after all.

Shirley asked where Imogen's room was. She got her answer, went to her friend's room, and knocked on the door. Imogen stuck her head out of the room a while later. When she saw Shirley, she smiled happily. "I knew it was you, Shirley. Come in."

"How did you know?" Shirley went into the room.

"Instinct. My instinct has always been accurate. Imogen sat Shirley down on the couch and rested her head in her hand. "I heard you're staying in a room with Mr. Flintstone, I envy you. You can stay close to him all day, every day. I wish I were in your place."

Shirley pursed her lips before looking at Imogen. "I have to be honest with you, Imogen."

Imogen knew what Shirley was going to say, and she sat up straighter. "Okay, hit me with it."

"You know how I told you I didn't like Zacharias? Well, after getting to know him better, I realized that I actually like him," said Shirley honestly.

Imogen acted stiff for a few moments, and then she smiled. "He's a charming man, and you've been by his side for so long. I am not surprised you fell for him."

Shirley apologized, "Sorry. I know you like him too."

Imogen pulled her hair back. Bitterly, she said, "A commoner like me has no business loving him. Only women like you are worthy of Mr. Flintstone."

Shirley consoled her. "Don't look down on yourself, Imogen."

"Shirley, it's the truth. You were born to privileges most people can't access their entire lives." Imogen looked at Shirley calmly.

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Imogen, after hearing this, turned her head and congratulated Shirley. "Congratulations. I might be calling you Mrs. Flintstone in no time."

Shirley's heart tightened. She felt that her friendship with Imogen was changing. Perhaps... it wouldn't be as open as it used to be.

The environment had made their friendship more fragile. Shirley smiled. "Let's just go with the flow. I don't want to push too hard."

This time, Shirley didn't argue. She knew that many things were beyond her control. For example, her feelings for Zacharias. She had rejected him initially, but now, for some reason, she seemed to accept his pursuit.

Beneath Imogen's calm exterior, her heart was tormented by pain and jealousy. But she couldn't say it, and she couldn't show it. She didn't want Shirley to see her dark side because it wasn't time for a final falling out yet.

"Shirley, don't burden yourself. Really, you and Zacharias are a match. I sincerely wish you both well." Imogen pretended to be sincere.

"Thank you for your understanding." In an attempt to apologize, Shirley brought a gift-a small box. "Here's a brooch. It looks great on a suit. I hope you like it."

Imogen took the box and opened it. Indeed, there was a beautiful brooch sitting inside. She smilingly said, "I really like it. Thank you."

"If there's anything you need help with, feel free to ask, Shirley mentioned.

"Alright, you should go back to Mr. Flintstone. After all, his safety is the most important." Imogen got up to open the door and see Shirley off.

Shirley nodded and left. Once outside, she sighed with relief. She had finally explained things to Imogen.

After Shirley left, Imogen angrily threw the brooch that Shirley gave her on the ground. She sneered. "What do you take me for? A beggar to be pitied?" Imogen didn't want to endure this insult. For her, everything Shirley gave her felt like charity. None of it was genuine.

When Shirley opened the door, Zacharias was the only one sitting on the couch. Freddie had left. Shirley sat down next to Zacharias. "Do you need help organizing the documents?"

Next to Zacharias were some scattered documents he had just signed.

"I'll leave it to you." Zacharias nodded. Shirley started arranging everything then. The afternoon went by peacefully. After finishing the task, Zacharias suggested that she rest for two hours, as they didn't know what time the evening banquet would end.

Shirley was indeed a bit tired. To ensure that she was in a better condition tonight, she went back to her room to rest.

At half past four in the afternoon, Shirley was awakened by her alarm. She promptly freshened up and came out. Seeing Zacharias still sitting on the couch, she couldn't help pitying him and even had the impulse to embrace him from behind.

Despite the strong impulse, she managed to restrain herself. She sat beside him and asked, "Do you want to take a break?"

Zacharias massaged his temples. He placed the documents aside and looked at the woman who had just taken a nap. Her cheeks were full, and her complexion was charming. Seeing this, he reached out and pulled her into his arms.

The impulse that Shirley had restrained seemed to be released. She reached out, embracing Zacharias' neck, and pressed her cheek against his.

Zacharias' heart beat a little faster. This was the first time she had voluntarily welcomed him. He kissed her hair as though he was praising her. "I picked a gift for you. Go take a look."

Shirley immediately lifted her head and saw a white evening gown laid out on the other end of the couch. It had a simple and elegant design with a fishtail hem. For such high-end occasions, simplicity often appeared more dignified. An excess of flashy and diverse elements would seem out of place.

Shirley rarely had the opportunity to wear evening gowns, so she looked at the dress with a bit of worry, fearing that she might not be able to look good in it.

"Can I wear this?" She voiced her doubt.

Zacharias was confident in her. "I believe you can handle any dress."

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Shirley put on a faint smile. "As long as I don't embarrass you."

Zacharias chuckled. "How could you possibly?"

At this moment, Freddie knocked on the door. Shirley got up to open it for him, and he said, "Miss Lloyd, the makeup team is here. Could you please move to another room?"

"Sure. I'll be right there." Shirley nodded. What thoughtful arrangements. Shirley picked up her evening gown. "I'll go over now."

“Okay, see you in a bit.” Zacharias nodded. Shirley sat in the makeup room, where professional makeup artists applied makeup to match the evening gown she would be wearing. They aimed for a very subtle yet sophisticated look for her tonight.

Patently waiting, she hoped that the makeup wouldn’t be too extravagant. When she opened her eyes, her small face had become more stylish and sophisticated. The makeup highlighted her deep, bright, captivating eyes and plump, sexy red lips.

Looking at her face, Shirley saw a hint of sexy femininity that she had always considered herself lacking. She had always identified as a tomboy. For women of her race, having smooth, straight hair was more charming than any other hairstyle. Shirley’s hair was indeed beautiful, with a soft and shiny texture that required minimal styling from the stylists.

Shirley went to change into her evening gown, and indeed, Zacharias’ taste proved to be accurate. The evening gown suited her perfectly.

When the waiter brought out a pair of sparkling high heels, Shirley suddenly felt a bit nervous. It seemed like she had a natural aversion to these high-heeled shoes; in any case, wearing them always led to various awkward situations.

However, tonight’s evening gown required these high heels, and she had no other choice but to wear them.

Reluctantly, Shirley put them on. After the waitstaff left, she stood in front of the mirror, looking at the reflection. She almost couldn’t recognize herself.

It was a beauty that combined allure, charm, and a touch of heroism. At that moment, Freddie knocked on the door and entered. “Miss Lloyd, it’s about time to head out.”

“Okay, I’m coming.”

Shirley’s slender hand reached out and picked up the crystal clutch containing her phone and lipstick from the table.

As she walked on the red carpet in the corridor, a figure appeared at the end of the carpet. With one hand in his pocket, he looked handsome, like a prince waiting for a princess.

Shirley suddenly felt a bit nervous and shy as the man's gaze carefully appraised her. With her head lowered, she almost tripped on her high heels as she reached the man.

"Ah!" Almost instinctively, she leaned forward, reaching out to grab onto anything that could prevent her from falling. That happened to be Zacharias' neck.

In this slightly embarrassed state, she hung onto him, and his large protective hand naturally encircled her slender waist, bringing her even closer to him. Shirley raised her head and explained somewhat helplessly, "I can't walk in high heels."

"Do you want to change them?" Zacharias asked humorously.

Shirley firmly shook her head again. "It's fine."

To avoid embarrassing him, she would persist.

Zacharias reached out and caressed her long locks. "Alright. Let me know if it becomes unbearable."

With Shirley's nod, Zacharias extended his arm for her. "Hold onto me."

She naturally took his arm. With his assistance, walking became much easier for her.

Freddie also approached and admired Shirley. "You are gorgeous, Miss Lloyd."

Zacharias proudly added, "Of course."

It was because she was his woman.

Shirley smiled modestly without saying a word. They arrived at the lobby on the first floor, where Roy and his subordinates were waiting outside the elevator. When Imogen saw the elevator doors open, she was suddenly struck by the sight.

Shirley, in an elegant evening gown, walked out, arm in arm with Zacharias. Sweet and natural, the two looked like a perfectly matched couple.

However, no matter how jealous Imogen felt, she could only hide it deep within. She put on a smile, exchanged a congratulatory look with Shirley, and kept her envy hidden.

Chapter 2396

Shirley was still somewhat uneasy in front of her fellow colleagues. As they got into the car, it was already dusk. The neon lights flickering on the streets portrayed a romantic and exotic atmosphere. Shirley sat beside Zacharias, and the colorful lights outside the window made them both appear elegant and charming.

She suddenly thought that with her outfit and riding in the same car as Zacharias, it seemed as if they were heading to their wedding.

“Nervous?” Zacharias turned his head and leaned in to ask. Shirley shook her head. “Not at the moment.”

Zacharias was in a particularly good mood. This visit was mainly about making friends, so there wasn't much to be stressed about. After this, he could take her out for a proper week-long fun.

The evening banquet was held in an antique and elegant hall, which would serve as an important venue for entertaining foreign guests. Security was extremely tight, and as Shirley got out of the car, Roy walked over and whispered to her, “Miss Lloyd, please put this on.”

It was a small earpiece.

Shirley took it and nodded. “Alright.”

“We can’t get close to Sir, so please make sure to prioritize his safety. Everything depends on his life, Roy said, looking at her gravely.

Shirley nodded firmly. “Rest assured! If anything happens, I will do my best to ensure his safety.”

That night, she was both Zacharias’ plus one and bodyguard. If anything were to happen, she would fulfill her duties and protect him completely.

Zacharias was busy greeting several ministers from Flor. When he turned around, he saw Shirley standing about a few feet away. He reached out and beckoned her over to his side.

Smiling, Shirley walked gracefully to his side as Zacharias introduced her to the ministers. The ministers immediately praised Shirley, who appeared poised and elegant, walking alongside Zacharias as they headed toward the banquet hall.

The guests that night were the most distinguished in Flor, so the screening process for their identities was extremely strict.

Zacharias received special treatment as a distinguished guest. The president himself came to greet him. Shirley, standing by Zacharias’ side, keenly felt the power of privilege. Compared to those welcoming him,

Zacharias was very young, but he had the support of significant power. They engaged in lively conversation, and Shirley’s Chinese proficiency made communication effortless.

“She’s Mr. Flintstone’s companion, isn’t she? She’s the most beautiful Eastern woman I’ve ever seen.” They praised Shirley highly.

With Zacharias holding Shirley’s hand, everyone could see that their relationship went beyond mere companionship. The way Zacharias looked at Shirley was filled with love, earning Shirley even more respect from those around them.

As the dinner began in candlelight, the elegantly decorated table set an exquisite atmosphere. Shirley sat beside Zacharias, listening to their conversations.

The atmosphere was relaxed, and while Shirley appeared at ease, there was a tense nerve inside her. She carefully observed anyone who approached Zacharias, paying attention to their every move.

Meanwhile, in the rest area for the security team outside, Imogen sat in the car waiting. Her gaze was fixed on the dazzling banquet hall. She really wanted to go inside and take a look. Rumor had it that this building was the sixth-ranked aesthetic architecture in the world, not open to the public. So, getting a glimpse inside wasn't easy.

"Imogen, go relieve Nixon," Roy's voice echoed through the communication device.

Imogen pushed open the car door. The temperature outside was around 46 degrees Fahrenheit, making her body tense. She took over Nixon's position as a standing guard. She had to stand straight. Despite having her period that day, her job didn't allow any special treatment. She had to perform her duties just like a man, causing some inner discomfort.

In the banquet hall, after dinner, came the wine-tasting session. Shirley sipped a few sips of red wine and then set the glass down. However, Zacharias couldn't refuse the enthusiastic toasts from the guests. Shirley was a bit worried about this man's alcohol tolerance, but it seemed he could handle it well. He drank four glasses without showing any signs of flushing.

Chapter 2397

Finally, the wine-tasting session ended, and it was time for the formal dinner and dance. Shirley breathed a sigh of relief; she hoped to finish quickly and return to the hotel. This kind of place wasn't quite suitable for her.

As romantic music filled the air, many guests approached Zacharias during the dinner to greet him. At that moment, a man of similar age smiled and approached. "Zach, you've changed so much... for the better, of course!"

The man was dressed in a handsome white suit, a typical foreign hottie.

“William, it’s been a while.” Zacharias smiled and embraced him. Watching their brotherly embrace, Shirley wondered if Zacharias had friends here too.

After a hug, Zacharias turned to Shirley. “Shir, this is my schoolmate, William. His father is the prince of Flor.”

“Nice to meet you,” Shirley greeted with a smile. A hint of a knowing smile laced William’s eyes as he said to his good friend, “Zach, you lucky man. Your companion is a beauty.”

Zacharias smiled silently, giving no remark, and then William said to him, “I’ll have to greet other guests. I hope you two can have a wonderful time tonight.”

Zacharias noticed that Shirley seemed uncomfortable with her feet. He took her hand and said, “Let me take you to rest.”

A VIP lounge had been set up, and Zacharias led Shirley into one of them. After the waiter brought in drinks, Zacharias closed the door.

After finally getting some private time, Shirley breathed a sigh of relief. She lifted her evening gown and took her left foot out of the shoe, revealing a red and swollen area around her small toe.

At that sight, Zacharias crouched down, reaching out to hold her ankle and inspect. Shirley, feeling a bit shy, tried to withdraw her foot. “I’ll be fine after some rest.”

“It’s swollen. I’ll have someone bring you a new pair of shoes,” Zacharias said with concern. Shirley shook her head. “No need, I can endure it. It happens whenever I wear heels.”

“Don’t wear them anymore then. Just put on what’s comfortable,” Zacharias suggested, planning to call someone to bring a pair of shoes.

“Don’t bother, really” Shirley quickly stopped him. “I have adhesive bandages; I’ll just use them.”

With that, Shirley opened her bag and took out a thin piece of adhesive bandage. She felt better after applying it when she put her shoes back on

Zacharias looked at her with a touch of distress. He didn't expect her to go this far just to match his status.

"We'll leave earlier, then," Zacharias suggested, and Shirley nodded. As Zacharias stood up, he cupped her face and kissed her on the lips as if comforting her. Shirley was slightly startled, and a sweet feeling surged from her chest.

They couldn't stay in the room all the time, and soon, it was time for the dance. Zacharias took Shirley out, and just then, a beautiful Western girl boldly approached and invited Zacharias, "Mr. Flintstone, may I invite you for a dance?"

Shirley knew the girl. She was the daughter of Flor's vice president. Obviously, she was very polite in inviting Zacharias.

Shirley considerately let go of Zacharias' hand and smiled. "I'll be waiting over there."

Zacharias couldn't refuse the girl either because the two countries were establishing friendly relations. He smiled and nodded. "It would be my honor." As Zacharias and the girl walked toward the dance floor, Shirley watched their figures. Suddenly, she felt a sense of tightness in her chest, as if a hand had gripped her beating heart, making even her breathing a bit uneasy.

Shirley knew that the girl's invitation to Zacharias was just a polite gesture, but she still felt an uncomfortable sensation in her heart. Perhaps it was jealousy.

Zacharias and the girl entered the dance floor, and Shirley saw a waiter bring a glass of red wine. She could have declined, but she reached out and took the glass.

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She tried her best not to watch Zacharias and the lady dancing. Yet, she couldn't help her eyes from wandering when she saw Zacharias putting a hand on the lady's waist, and the lady's hand was on his shoulder. They were shaking hands, too. At this point, she'd forgotten about the wine she was tasting. Her heart was squeezing with each interaction. All she could taste was jealousy.

Since Shirley was now alone, a few of the gentlemen there had their eyes on her. They'd like to be acquainted with this exotic lady. Plus, it didn't hurt that she had a smoking hot body.

Even though Zacharias was dancing with another lady, he was paying attention to Shirley. When he saw her drinking alone, his heart tightened as well. Just then, another guy was starting to hit on her. He wanted to end the dance right away. Fortunately, the dance was only about six minutes. The foreign lady finished the dance, looking bashful. Nonetheless, there was delight in her eyes as she remarked shyly, "You dance well, Mr. Flintstone. I'd love to dance with you next time."

"Excuse me for a moment," said Zacharias politely. He then strode up to Shirley.

A gentleman was trying to hit on Shirley. Just when he was about to ask her to dance with him, someone behind Shirley said, "Sorry, but she'll be dancing with me next."

A surprised Shirley swiveled her head and saw Zacharias standing behind her. The other guy backed out of the competition the moment he laid his eyes on Zacharias, smiling and excusing himself.

Shirley had finished her drink. She was about to take another sip, but Zacharias pulled the glass away. "The glass is empty."

Shirley looked at him awkwardly and put the glass down. Then, she looked at Zacharias. "So, you had fun dancing with her, didn't you?"

Zacharias knew she was jealous, but he had no time to savor it. He knew he had to cheer Shirley up, or it'd be a disaster. "I'm sorry. I should've declined," said Zacharias.

Shirley soon realized she was being petty. So, she shook her head. "No. You should've danced with her. It was for diplomacy."

"You're the most important person around here. I don't want to upset you." Zacharias held her hand. "So, let's dance. I'm not taking no for an answer."

Before Shirley could say anything, Zacharias had already tugged her close and spun her around. She fell into his embrace, and he hugged her tightly.

Shirley raised her head, trying to say something. Alas, Zacharias was already kissing her. Shirley's eyes went wide. The sensation of his lips pressing against hers made her turn a shade of red.

"We'll leave after this dance is finished." Zacharias placed an arm around her waist and took her to the dance floor.

"But... I don't know how to dance," muttered Shirley nervously.

"I'm here. I'll teach you." Thus, Zacharias patiently taught her how to dance. Shirley had no choice but to accept the challenge. Once they were on the dance floor, Zacharias switched up his style. He gently placed both hands on Shirley's waist and requested, "Just hold on tight to me."

Shirley saw a lot of people dancing just like they were. Nonetheless, it was obvious those were established couples. If anyone saw her and Zacharias dancing like that, they'd think she and Zacharias were deeply in love. "Do we have to?" Shirley raised her head to look at him.

Chapter 2399

Shirley got into the car. Zacharias stayed outside and talked a bit more before finally coming in. The car slowly moved away from the building and made its way to the hotel. Shirley's feet were sore after today's party.

The clock struck nine. Zacharias suddenly held Shirley's hand, fingers interlocked. Shirley didn't refuse. They held hands tightly as the car took them across the streets of this foreign land. They genuinely looked like a couple madly in love.

Eventually, they arrived at the hotel, and Shirley got out of the car. The pain was killing her. At this point, she needed to hold the door for support just to get out of the vehicle. If she could, she would've taken her shoes off and walked barefoot.

Imogen naturally noticed Shirley's discomfort. She also knew Shirley was never one for heels. So, of course, her feet were hurting right now. She was just about to help Shirley and act like she cared about

her. Alas, Zacharias was already standing by her side. Before Shirley could even say anything, he bent over and held her in a princess carry.

The surprised Shirley quickly put both hands on Zacharias' shoulder. "Oh, put me down," murmured Shirley shyly. She was feeling a little awkward being held by Zacharias in front of all the team members.

"Don't move." Zacharias smiled and went into the hotel with her in his arms. Imogen stared in shock. She could see that Shirley and Zacharias were already madly in love. Everyone else followed Zacharias in silence. They knew how he felt about Shirley a long time ago.

Shirley buried her face in Zacharia's chest. The elevator slid open. All the other bodyguards tacitly went into the other elevator aside from Roy and Freddie.

Shirley was feeling too bashful to even look up from her safe spot. Zacharias took her all the way back to their room and put her on the couch. She was still blushing as she complained lightly, "Don't do that next time."

Zacharias said, "Don't move. I'll rub some oil on that."

Shirley remained seated, waiting for Zacharias to return with the medical kit. When he was done rubbing the oil on her feet, Shirley smacked her cheeks. She thought she was getting drunk. She wasn't wasted. Instead, she was only a bit tipsy from all the alcohol today.

Zacharias took a shower. He'd met too many people today and hated how he was smelling. So, he decided to take a shower before having a good talk with Shirley. Moments later, he came out of the bathroom wearing a cotton robe. He immediately turned his attention to Shirley.

Shirley was on the couch, head in her hand. She was probably taking a break or freshening herself up. Oh, right. She's not a good drinker. But... I remember seeing her having at least two glasses of alcohol earlier, Zacharias thought.

Zacharias imbibed quite a bit as well. Nevertheless, he was a better drinker than she was. So, he took a seat, causing Shirley to jolt awake from her impromptu slumber. Still, there was no hiding the slight daze

in her eyes. She blinked her eyes several times before pulling her hair away from her face. Then, she rose to her feet and decided to get a shower. "I'll--"

Zacharias gently tugged on her arm, causing her to fall into his embrace. Due to his actions, her lips were inches away from his face. She had a feeling he was being cheeky, rendering her momentarily speechless. Finally, she said in exasperation, "What do you want?"

"What do you think I want?" asked Zacharias.

"How am I supposed to know what you want?" Shirley played dumb, even though she'd seen through him.

"Do you really want to know?" Zacharias smiled.

Shirley nodded. "Mhm."

Zacharias held the back of her head and leaned in for a kiss. To her, it felt more like a little mischievous nibble.

"I want you," said Zacharias, his voice husky. Shirley felt her willpower crumbling. She could never resist the charm of a man like Zacharias.

Before she could give her consent, he released her. Then, he regarded the stunned expression on her face as he smiled. "Sleep tight."

Shirley turned a shade of magenta. He's such a player. He drags me into this whole whirlpool and pushes me away at the last moment. Then, all he says is 'sleep tight'?

Chapter 2400

"Zacharias, you're a jerk," cursed Shirley. Zacharias was stunned for a few moments before he chuckled in amusement. "Someone seems disappointed."

Shirley got up, pushed him away, and went back to her room barefoot. Zacharias sighed wearily. He knew he was a jerk. He flirted with her, but he couldn't finish the job. It wasn't like he didn't want to. He couldn't, nor did he have the courage to. The more he loved her, the more he couldn't bring himself to touch her. He didn't want to hurt her. Yet, he couldn't deny that she was deadly attractive to him. The most he could do to at least alleviate his desire was to flirt with her. Otherwise, he'd go mad with want one day.

Shirley felt refreshed after her bath. She lay on her bed, her mind occupied by Zacharias. His elegance, his regality, his confidence when he spoke, his imperturbable gestures... Everything about him was attractive to her. In the end, Shirley realized she was just a superficial woman who loved Zacharias for his looks and smoking hot body.

Someone else was not feeling well that night, either. Imogen. She went back to her room, simmering and stewing from the scenes she saw earlier. Everything Shirley was enjoying was in stark contrast to her life. Zacharias loved Shirley more than everything. He held her in his arms oh-so-gently, caring not for the opinion of the world. He only had eyes for Shirley.

She already has a good family and powerful supporters. Why does God give her a perfect man on top of that? Can't she at least have one flaw? Did God even close a window for her? Why can't I have some of her good luck? God is so stingy.

A message popped up on Imogen's screen. She picked up her laptop and checked the text. It was from her mafia friend. They asked, 'Nora, we're out of jobs here. You got anything for us? If it's a nice one, we can split the loot with you fifty-fifty.'

Imogen stared at the message, somewhat caught off guard. Then, she had the perfect idea. She sneered as she texted, 'I have just the thing for you. But I wonder if you have the gut to take it.!

'There's nothing we won't do.'

Imogen quickly sent them Shirley's photo. She texted, 'This girl's worth a billion. Kidnap her, and you can ask for that much. Just give me ten percent of the earnings. I'm fine with it, she added, 'and it's a billion. Remember that.'

'Whoa. Who's this girl? What's so special about her?'

'She's more important than you can imagine And she comes from a powerful family back where I came from. Also, she's not a regular girl. She can fight. Do you still want to take this job?

'We have mercenaries. Don't worry about it.

Imogen texted, 'Sure. Get ready for the job. I'll text you when it's time.' Imogen deleted the chat history and closed her laptop. Ah, I see now. I know what's the window God closed for her. She has no idea she has a snake for a friend. She's been too sheltered and has no idea how evil this world can be. One simple act is enough to gain her friendship.