

N Destiny 2411

Chapter 2411

Roy reminded Imogen, "Keep this between us. Don't spread it around."

She assured him solemnly, "Of course, captain. I won't tell anyone."

"I think Miss Lloyd was kidnapped because someone knows she shares a good relationship with the vice president. They took her to threaten him."

She agreed, "I think so too. They were obviously going after her in the coffee shop."

He nodded. "We'll have to double the protection for the vice president's close ones after this."

Since Imogen couldn't get anything more from Roy, she left.

Back in the presidential suite, Shirley came out of the bathroom wearing pajamas. Zacharias was already waiting for her on the couch with a medical kit beside him. She sat with him and unbuttoned her shirt, revealing two bruises on her back for him. Brushing her hair aside, she exposed her elegant nape and back, adorned with a healthy tan rather than fair skin.

He applied oil to his hands and began massaging her bruises, taking her slightly off guard with the intensity. A flirtatious moan escaped her lips, prompting her to bite her lip to suppress any further sounds.

"Don't hold back. If you need to, let it out," Zacharias encouraged, smiling as he applied a bit more pressure. He intended to enhance blood circulation, aiding in the speedy recovery of the bruise.

Resisting the urge to moan, Shirley thought, / won't make a sound in this quiet room; it's too embarrassing to hear myself.

He was mindful of her discomfort, so he adjusted the pressure. Once he finished with her back, he said, "Alright, turn toward me."

She hesitated, feeling self-conscious about the bruises on her ribcage just beneath her chest, even though she wore a sports bra. Turning away, she couldn't bring herself to meet his gaze.

Zacharias gently placed his hand on her bruise, his thumb making contact with the fabric of Shirley's sports bra. Though it might have been unintentional, he grazed it slightly as he withdrew his hand, causing her to blush. Looking at her, the man had a sheen of sweat on his forehead. He smiled and then reached for the other side, the warmth of his fingers seeping into her heart.

After he was done, he suddenly held the back of her head and gave her a deep kiss. A soft moan escaped her lips, her heart, already fluttering from the earlier teasing, now racing.

However, he swiftly returned to packing the medical kit. Unwilling to let him off the hook after igniting her desire, she seized the moment, pouncing on the man and pinning him down on the couch.

Sitting on top of Zacharias, Shirley held his shoulders, flipping their roles around. He wasn't the one lusting after her; it was the other way around now. He hesitated for a moment, narrowing his eyes. She cupped his cheeks and planted a kiss on his lips. He allowed her to playfully nibble on his lips, engaging in a teasing exchange of tongues. It was a flirty kiss. Her face turned red when she stood up, but she felt a sense of satisfaction after boldly kissing the man.

"Get some rest," he said. Something was bubbling in his heart.

Shirley went back to her room, and her phone rang. She checked it out and realized the call was from Imogen, and she picked the phone up. "Hello, Imogen."

"How's your wounds, Shirley? Are they serious?" Imogen asked, concerned.

Chapter 2412

"Yes, he did. Are you hurt, Imogen?" Shirley asked, concerned.

"I'm fine. I broke my arm when I was escaping, but I got it fixed. Still have some bruises around, but they're superficial wounds." Imogen asked, "By the way, Shirley, any idea who those kidnappers were? Did they mention anything to you?"

Shirley recalled her unsettling speculation earlier. Despite initially dismissing it, too many coincidences lined up, making it hard to ignore. She thought to herself, Why did she choose that specific coffee shop on the street? She needed to confirm, not because she thought Imogen would harm her, but to be certain. "They did share something with me, and it's perplexing. Still baffles me, to be honest," she admitted.

Imogen's expression turned horrified, and her pupils contracted. Unable to contain herself, she inquired, "What did they say?"

Shirley frowned, sensing a hint of panic from Imogen.

Imogen quickly realized she rushed the question and offered a reassuring smile. "Sorry, Shirley. Don't take it the wrong way. I'm assisting Roy with the investigation, and I need more details from you."

Shirley smiled and said, "No worries. I know you're concerned for me."

"Can you share what the kidnappers told you? Any mention of a possible accomplice?" Imogen asked, this time in a softer tone.

Shirley went with that line of questioning and said, "I think they did, but I bumped my head. I still feel dizzy now, so I forgot what they told me. Maybe I'll remember it when I wake up tomorrow."

"You bumped your head? Is it bad?" Imogen asked.

"I'm alright. Just have to get some rest," Shirley said.

"Get some rest, then. Tell me right away if you remember what the kidnappers told you, alright," Imogen said. Shirley said, "Sure thing."

"And we're friends, Shirley. I want to contribute something, so if you remember anything, tell me right away," Imogen requested, a little unabashed.

Shirley agreed right away, "Of course. I'll tell you right away if I remember anything."

"Thank you, Shirley. You're my best friend. When you were back there kidnapped, I wished I could take your place. I wished you were the one to escape."

"Hey Imogen, mind if I ask you something? When they knocked you out, did they handcuff you and put something over your head?" Shirley inquired.

Imogen's eyes sparkled with cunning as she replied casually, "Guess they didn't expect me to wake up so soon after the knockout, so they didn't get a chance to cuff me in time. Lucky for me, their oversight allowed me to slip away. You're not thinking I'm in cahoots with the kidnappers, are you, Shirley?"

Shirley quickly dismissed the idea, saying, "No way, Imogen. I know you like the back of my hand."

Imogen breathed a sigh of relief. Despite coming from a privileged background, she realized Shirley was somewhat sheltered and naive, making her unlikely to suspect anything. "Thanks for trusting me. This whole kidnapping fiasco is entirely my fault. I shouldn't have gone for that extra coffee or taken you into that coffee shop," she admitted, berating herself.

Shirley reassured her, "It's not your fault. If they wanted to take me, they could have done it anywhere else."

"I'm sorry, Shirley. This is all because of me. I caused the vice president to worry about you," Imogen lamented.

"Don't beat yourself up. Let bygones be bygones. I'll just be more cautious from now on," Shirley consoled Imogen.

Chapter 2413

Imogen hung up, but she couldn't relax. Shirley didn't tell her what the kidnappers said to her. She had to find out the answer before she could truly be at ease. After the call ended, Shirley's eyes twinkled with doubt. Then, she called Roy.

“Hello, Miss Lloyd.” Roy never called her by her first name. She was an important figure, after all.

“Can I make a request, captain? Do you have any footage regarding the kidnapping?”

“If you need it, Miss Lloyd, I can ask the cops to provide the footage.”

“Thank you. I really need them. Send it to my email, please!” Shirley thanked him, hung up the phone, and sat down in silence. Soon, someone knocked on the door. She opened it up to see Zacharias and a table of sumptuous dinner waiting for her.

“Come, let’s eat,” said Zacharias gently.

Shirley looked at him, glad she escaped fast enough. If she’d died in that crossfire, she would never be able to see him again. The thought that Zacharias might marry another woman and fall in love with her made Shirley appreciate her life more. She wanted to stay alive to be with him for eternity. An urge filled her heart. When Zacharias turned around, she darted ahead and wrapped her arms around his waist, resting her head against his back.

Zacharias was stunned. He could feel the love Shirley had for him, and he held her hand before turning around to face her. The passion in Shirley’s eyes was unwavering. She said, “Let’s date once we get back, Zacharias.”

Zacharias’ eyes went wide, delight filling his gaze. “What’d you say?”

“Let’s date, I said. What? Are you chickening out?” Shirley challenged Zacharias, looking at him.

Zacharias held the back of her head and pulled her into his embrace. “I’d love to tell the world we’re going out.”

Shirley buried her head in his chest, smiling. This means he’s mine now. “Okay. Once we get back, I’ll tell my folks we’re dating.” Shirley was a little sheepish and nervous. She wondered if her parents would be shocked if they heard the news. Their daughter was courting the vice president himself, and she actually did it.

“Okay.” Zacharias kissed Shirley’s hair.

Shirley had dinner with Zacharias. Halfway through, her phone rang. She checked it out and realized she had a new email. Shirley wanted to investigate things later that night. If she wanted to clear her doubts, she had to go through the whole case again, but she didn’t want to tell anyone before she had the answers-not even Zacharias.

After dinner, Zacharias had a virtual meeting with the people back at home. Shirley left him in the lounge and went to her room. Quickly, she turned on her laptop and opened her email. The cops had sent her more than twenty videos. She played the first one.

In the clip, she and Imogen were strolling on the streets, unaware of the coming danger. Shirley didn’t even speed up the clip. She sat on her bed, the silence keeping her mind sharp. She stared at herself in the video, but she was mostly looking at Imogen.

After she saw herself going into the gift shop, she noticed that Imogen was sitting outside, sipping on the coffee they had bought earlier. It was then Imogen took out her phone and checked something. Shirley put on her earphones, trying to see if she could hear anything. It was a message notification from Imogen’s phone.

Is she reading the news, or did someone text her?

She turned up the volume to the fullest and realized it was a text notification. From Imogen’s actions, she was obviously going through her messages. After she was done reading them, Imogen looked at the coffee she was holding, musing about something.

Chapter 2414

Soon, Shirley came out of the gift shop. Imogen got up and held Shirley’s arm. She told her that the coffee wasn’t nice, so she wanted to get another cup from another shop. In the next footage, Shirley realized there was another coffee shop right across the street, but she didn’t realize this back then. Now that she was going through the videos, she realized they could’ve bought a cup of coffee from the nearby shop.

Imogen took me straight ahead, though. Also, there was a turn at the end, but it seemed like she knew there was a coffee shop there. She didn’t even look around.

Noticing that face made Shirley's heart sink. This is Imogen's first time coming to Flor and her first time going down this street, so how did she know there was a coffee place there? Did she look it up? That's the only plausible explanation, but even so, it seems fishy.

Shirley continued watching. The video showed the coffee shop's curtains being drawn while she was fighting inside. Fifteen minutes later, Imogen leaped out the window. Shirley kept rewinding that part and realized something was amiss.

The kidnappers didn't go after Imogen after she escaped, but I heard one of them saying that they wouldn't let any of us go, so why didn't they go after Imogen after she ran away? There were about eight of them in the shop. They could've sent a couple to go after Imogen. Also, Imogen's arm was broken after she escaped. The kidnappers would've recaptured her if they wanted to, but weirdly, they didn't go after Imogen.

The more Shirley rewound the video, the more bone-chilling things got. Could Imogen have been in cahoots with those people? What's the reason for kidnapping me? For ransom? Is she one of them?

Shirley knew Imogen needed money; she wouldn't even buy skincare products. Back at the base, Imogen would always come to her room and use her stuff. Most of the time, Shirley gave Imogen the skincare products her mother had given her. After setting up that hypothesis, Shirley thought about the days she spent with Imogen and realized she didn't know Imogen that much at all. There was always a veil covering her. Imogen was only nice to her, seemingly because she wanted to get something out of their friendship.

The one that left the deepest impression on Shirley was the time Imogen gave up on her possible achievement just to help her, but in the end, Imogen was given praise-by Shirley's father, no less. Now that Shirley thought about it, that could've been part of Imogen's plan. She knows Dad loves me, so she used that to her advantage. Even if she gave up what she could have achieved, Dad would still praise her anyway.

Shirley felt her heart clenching. She had no idea that the one person she thought was her friend was someone she didn't know at all. Shirley kept watching the videos. When she factored in the possibility that Imogen might've been the kidnappers' accomplice, everything she saw made horrifying sense. There was footage of the crossfire and part of it showed Imogen lying in a tree quietly, her finger on the trigger of her firearm. She was sniping every single kidnapper who tried to escape. In other words, she was trying to destroy the evidence.

Shirley gasped. If I hadn't seen her true colors, does it mean I'd be in danger at all times? Shirley held her forehead. How should I deal with this? Without hesitation, she wanted to bring Zacharias into this. She got up and opened the door. Zacharias was done with his meeting, and he was having a glass of red wine on the veranda.

"Zacharias, I have something to tell you." Shirley went up to him.

Zacharias noticed the solemnity in her eyes, and he put his glass down. Equally serious, he asked, "What is it?"

Shirley held his hand. "Come into my room."

It sounded like a flirty invitation, but Zacharias knew things weren't that simple. He went into Shirley's room, and Shirley closed the door. She told him to take a seat on the couch; then she showed him the laptop.

Chapter 2415

"I think Imogen has something to do with the kidnapping," said Shirley curtly.

Zacharias looked up in shock. "Does she have something to do with it?"

Shirley nodded. "I asked Roy to give me the security footage, and there's footage of me and Imogen going shopping. My gut tells me that Imogen has something to do with the kidnapping."

"Why would she do this?" Zacharias was frowning, taking this seriously.

"Perhaps it has something to do with money. Imogen's family isn't all that rich, but she's an ambitious lady," said Shirley. She was reminded of when Imogen told her that she wanted to gain Zacharias' attention. She told Shirley that she'd fallen in love with Zacharias at first sight, and Imogen even hinted to Shirley that she wanted to woo Zacharias. That's proof of her ambition.

"If she is involved, then we have to deal with her!" Zacharias cursed himself. He had a meeting that day, and Imogen requested to stay back with Shirley. He gave her that permission, leaving a snake by Shirley's side. "I'm sorry. This is my fault, too. I shouldn't have let her go shopping with you."

Shirley wrapped her arms around Zacharias' neck and kissed his forehead. "It's not your fault. If I hadn't gone through this whole ordeal myself, I'd never have realized Imogen is a traitor."

Zacharias held her in his arms. "I won't let anyone I don't trust stay with you ever again."

Shirley should be glad she went through this, or she would've never seen Imogen's true colors. Simply put, she might even end up in a worse state after this. "We're keeping this a secret for now. After we go back, we'll come up with a plan," said Shirley.

"I can keep her under surveillance right now."

"No, not for now. I'm trying to set her up so that she'll expose herself," said Shirley.

"We'll go with your plan, then." Zacharias patted Shirley's head, feeling for her. It must suck to be betrayed by a friend.

Shirley was upset. She lay in Zacharias' embrace and rested her head on his shoulder. Zacharias held her, kissing her hair. "It's alright. I'll be with you forever."

That soothed Shirley's heart, and she looked at him with determination. "Really? Forever?"

"Forever," said Zacharias honestly.

Shirley's heart was filled with warmth. She smiled and brightened up like a blooming flower again. Captivated, Zacharias held the back of Shirley's head and kissed her.

Shirley had her arms wrapped around Zacharias' neck, kissing him back as well. Whenever she was with him, she could forget all the bad times.

Meanwhile, Imogen was in her room, unable to sleep. She kept thinking about the whole case. If she couldn't confirm that Shirley didn't suspect her at all, she couldn't rest easy. What did the kidnappers tell her? Nonetheless, she had confidence they wouldn't betray her.

The next morning, after Shirley woke up, Imogen asked her out to have coffee at the hotel's coffee shop. Shirley agreed to it like she usually would. Concerned, Imogen asked, "You said you bumped your head. Are you better now?"

Shirley smiled. "Yeah. My head didn't hurt this morning, and I feel better now."

"Do you remember everything the kidnappers said?"

"Yeah," said Shirley, nonchalant.

"What did they tell you?" Imogen asked, nervous. She thought she acted natural enough, but Shirley saw through her facade. It was all things that Imogen let slip.

"They said they couldn't split the money because there was another kidnapper who didn't come. I think they had an accomplice. Not all of them died, it seems." Shirley guessed with a frown.

Chapter 2416

"Do you know about the missing accomplice, then? Their gender, perhaps?" asked Imogen, staring at Shirley nervously.

Shirley pursed her lips. "I'm not sure, but I did hear something. They left a laptop at the coffee shop. I'm sure I can find their accomplice's name there, so I'm going over today."

Imogen held Shirley's hand tightly. "I'm coming with you, Shirley. I can't let you risk your life alone."

"Sure. Meet me back here in fifteen minutes," said Shirley.

Imogen said, "Just make it the two of us. If too many of us head over, we'll be alerting the enemy."

“Sure. Just the two of us.” Shirley nodded.

Imogen saw Shirley off. She was getting nervous as she bit her lip and clenched her fists. I can’t believe those idiots left a laptop around. What’s more, Shirley heard them. I have to find that laptop before she does and delete all of its files. Then, I’ll destroy it. I cannot let anyone see my chat history with those guys, or my life will be ruined.

Shirley came back to the suite. Zacharias was on the veranda, making a call. When he saw her, he quickly hung up and approached Shirley. “Where did you go?”

“I went to set Imogen up, of course. I’m going to expose her today. Tell Freddie to leave a laptop in the coffee shop where we got kidnapped. Hide it in the room behind the wine cellar.”

“Are you going with Imogen?” Zacharias understood what the trap was.

“Yeah. I lied to her and said the kidnappers left a laptop in the coffee shop. If we go now, I’m sure Imogen’s going to search for the laptop and delete all the files in it.”

Zacharias nodded. Once Imogen left, he would ask his men to search her room for any evidence. Shirley changed into a set of new clothes and came back out. Zacharias suddenly took out a pistol and handed it to her. “Take this, just in case.”

Shirley thought it was unnecessary, but she took it anyway. After seeing through Imogen’s true colors, she knew she couldn’t be careless. That woman was a dangerous individual now. After Shirley hid the pistol, Zacharias held her hand.

“Be careful. I’ll be there to assist you.”

“Don’t come. Tell Roy to come instead.” Shirley stopped him. I can’t let him run around.

“Fine, Roy will go with you guys.” Zacharias nodded. He lied a little. He would still go anyway.

Fifteen minutes later, Shirley returned to the hotel's lobby. Imogen eased up a little. She was worried Shirley might bring someone along, but she was alone, and it made things easier.

"Let's go. I got a car. We're sneaking out," said Shirley.

Imogen smiled. "Let's go."

Shirley was driving. Imogen was talking about the days back in the base, and she lamented, "Aside from the impossible training, life was nice back in the base."

"Yeah. I miss those days too, lamented Shirley. It'll be nothing but memories from now on. After today, we'll be strangers. Imogen will pay for her crimes.

"That's the shop. It's still cordoned off. We should go through the backdoor so that no one sees us, Imogen suggested.

Shirley nodded. She said, "I heard that the laptop's hidden in some wine cellar. We'll split up and find it."

"Park the car there, Shirley. I'll check things out first," said Imogen.

Shirley pretended not to realize what Imogen was trying to do, and she nodded. "Sure. You go on ahead. I'll park the car. Someone's going to tow it away if I park here."

Chapter 2417

Imogen got out of the car while Shirley went to park. Quickly, Imogen entered the premises and rummaged through the wine cellar. Eventually, she found a laptop bag under the cellar and unzipped it. There was a laptop inside, and she heaved a sigh of relief. She looked outside the window, noticing that Shirley was coming over. She swiftly stepped onto the counter and hid the laptop in a hidden compartment above. When she leaped back down, Shirley had just entered the store.

"I've searched everywhere, Shirley, but there's no laptop in sight. You must've gotten it wrong."

Shirley frowned. "That can't be right. I did hear them saying they left a laptop here. We should keep looking." Shirley started looking around, and Imogen played along.

About fifteen minutes later, Shirley said, "Well, perhaps I've been mistaken."

"You bumped your head, after all. Maybe you heard it wrong," said Imogen.

Shirley agreed, saying, "You're right. That could be the case. I'm sorry for wasting your time."

Imogen patted Shirley's shoulder. "It's fine. Let's go back to the hotel."

Shirley nodded and left with Imogen. Halfway on their way back, Imogen said, "Shirley, I want to get some presents for my friends before we head back. Go on without me."

Shirley knew what Imogen was going to do, so she said, "I'll be on my way, then. I might even have to stop by a police station and have my testimony taken."

Imogen got out of the car and saw it off. Once Shirley was out of sight, she went into a gift shop and perfunctorily picked some presents. Five minutes later, she came out of the shop and got a cab to the store earlier. As soon as she arrived, Imogen got a chair, stood on it, and took the laptop bag down.

She left the shop, but just as she was about to get away, four cars surrounded her, and several plain-clothes officers came out of them. They'd been staking the place out. "Freeze. Hands where I can see them."

Shocked, Imogen said, "This is a mistake. I was just grabbing something for a friend."

The cops had gotten their orders to capture Imogen, not allowing her to explain herself. They cuffed her and took her into the car. Meanwhile, Shirley hadn't gone that far. She saw Roy standing by the roadside solemnly with a few cars around him. Shirley got into one of the cars and saw Zacharias, whom she had told not to come, reviewing the store's surveillance footage.

“Imogen has been captured. Your plan worked

perfectly!” Zacharias praised her. Shirley had remained calm after finding out what the situation was, and that itself was worth praising.

“We’ll meet her at the police station next. I want to know why she did this.” Shirley still felt agonized. She couldn’t accept this betrayal.

“Sure. We’ll swing by the police station right now. We found another phone in Imogen’s room. She has deleted the text messages, but we’re getting someone to recover them. We’ll retrieve her call history, too,” said Zacharias. Now, they had enough evidence to prove that Imogen was involved in the kidnapping.

Meanwhile, Imogen was in the police car, panicking. She could only think of one person who could help her-Shirley, the one who trusted her wholeheartedly. She knew that Shirley, being her best friend, would defend her right away and clear her name. “You’ve got the wrong person. I’m Zoravia’s vice president’s bodyguard. I need to call my team now,” said Imogen, panicking.

“We’ll talk when we’re back at the police station. I don’t care who you are, but we have the power to arrest anyone suspected to be a criminal.”

“I need to make a phone call!” Imogen argued.

Chapter 2418

The police station was within sight. Imogen was eventually locked in a room, awaiting interrogation. She pleaded to make a call several times, but her requests were denied. She panicked as she paced around.

Soon, Shirley and Roy arrived. The number Imogen called belonged to the ringleader of the kidnapers, and the cops were trying to recover the deleted text messages. “They’ll recover the messages in ten minutes. We just have to wait,” said Roy.

“We have time. It’s not like she can run away,” answered Shirley. The friendship she shared with Imogen was already lost. After she saw how conniving Imogen was, she knew there was no friendship between them all along, she was only using Shirley to her advantage.

Ten minutes later, the lost messages were recovered. Shirley, through the messages, saw how Imogen exposed her true identity. She was also the one who came up with the abduction plan. The proof of betrayal sitting right before her suffocated Shirley for moments. She held up the paper and asked the cops to let her meet Imogen.

The cops knew who Shirley was, so they promptly brought her to where Imogen was locked up. Imogen was in a rut, but when she heard someone coming, she quickly held the steel bars and tried to see who it might be. To her delight, it was Shirley. "Shirley? Shirley you're finally here! I thought you wouldn't come." Imogen heaved a sigh of relief, thinking Shirley had come to save her.

However, she noticed that Shirley wasn't smiling. She was cold and indifferent. Imogen pleaded, "Shirley, you have to prove that I'm innocent and tell them to release me."

Shirley turned to the cop. "Give us ten minutes, please. Thank you."

The cops left. Once they were gone, Shirley turned back to the steel bars, looking at the panicked Imogen while staring into her eyes. "Imogen, why did you tell the kidnappers everything about me? When did you start working with them?"

Horrified, Imogen stared at Shirley in disbelief. She played dumb. "What are you talking about, Shirley? I don't get it."

"Stop playing dumb. See for yourself." Shirley hurled the paper into the cell.

Imogen bent down and picked them up. When she saw the text history, she froze. It was her chat with the kidnappers. "Listen to me, Shirley. They made me do this. They were desperate for money, so they came to me. They know you and Mr. Flintstone share a deep bond, so they made me tell them everything." Imogen's eyes were getting red. She was trying to regain Shirley's trust.

"Stop explaining yourself. I know full well what kind of person you are. Even back at the base, you only approached me because I was from a good family. You never saw me as a friend, only something you could use."

Imogen froze. She didn't think Shirley had seen through her true colors. "No, wait. You are my best friend." Imogen was still trying to regain Shirley's trust.

"Also, you sold me out to the kidnapppers for money. You risked my life. You handed me on a platter to them." Shirley's eyes flared with rage.

Since she couldn't regain Shirley's trust, Imogen sneered. "When did you realize it, Shirley?"

"Your operation was sloppy. It took me five years, but it's not too late to see your true colors now," said Shirley coldly. "You'll pay dearly for this."

Horrified, Imogen held the steel bars. "Do you think everyone has your luck, Shirley? You were born to privileges I never would have access to my whole life! What's more, you have the lover that I'll never get my whole life! Don't call me greedy! If you were in my place, you'd end up on this side of the cell, too!"

Chapter 2419

"Good begets good. You're bad to the bone. Even if you were in my place, you'd still end up on that side of the cell anyway," retorted Shirley coldly. Imogen had finally shed her mask. Shirley thought Imogen would at least feel guilty, but she had overestimated this woman. She's clearly beyond salvation.

"Of course, you can say that. Do you think you're some sort of saint? You told me you had no feelings for Zacharias, but you still made him yours anyway. I thought you'd never try to make a move on the man I like. You betrayed me first!" Imogen sneered.

Shirley said calmly, "That was just your ploy to keep me out of the race. You managed to make me feel a little bit guilty, but I'm glad I didn't refuse him because of your tricks. From now on, Zacharias is mine."

Imogen's face contorted with rage. She held the bars, snarling, "You're not worthy of him!"

Shirley smiled. "Well, it's not your place to comment. You will pay for your actions."

Imogen finally realized she had to be punished for her crimes, but she sneered. "Do you think I'm just going to give up? I never give up, no matter what. As long as I'm alive, we'll meet again, Shirley. I'll hound you like a vengeful ghost."

Imogen hated Shirley for exposing her; she hated Shirley for what she did to her.

“Do you think you’re going to an ordinary prison? Still thinking of tasting freedom, eh?” Shirley added coldly, “Treason either ends with a death sentence or a lifetime in prison. We’ll never meet again.”

Shirley was about to leave, and Imogen finally felt terror. She extended her hand, pleading, “Wait, Shirley. Can you get me a reduced sentence? I don’t want to stay in prison my whole life.”

Shirley left without looking back. She’d rather show mercy to anyone but Imogen.

Imogen held the steel bars, slowly sliding to the ground in despair. She closed her eyes, tears of fury and dismay streaming down her cheeks. She’d been trying to make a good life for herself, but all her efforts were ruined because of one little idea. She regretted doing this. If she hadn’t asked anyone to kidnap Shirley, she wouldn’t have noticed her schemes. Alas, there was no turning back time, and she had to pay for her actions.

When Shirley came out, Roy approached her. “We can leave now, Miss Lloyd. Imogen has to stay back for further investigation, and we’re not extraditing her.”

Shirley nodded. She wouldn’t care about Imogen’s case anymore. When she returned to the suite, Zacharias stood up and approached her.

He held her hand. “We have three days of vacation before we go home. Will you spend some quality time with me?”

Shirley nodded. “Of course.” All she wanted to do was hold on tight to the people she loved and never let go.

“I’ll pack some clothes, then. We’re leaving in half an hour,” said Zacharias. He then leaned down for a kiss. “Don’t think about anything else when you’re with me.”

Shirley smiled and nodded. “I won’t think about anything else but you.”

Zacharias ruffled her hair. She's grown a lot after this trip, and she's more direct about her feelings for me.

Half an hour later, under the escort of Flor's police cars, Zacharias and Shirley were led to a resort reserved for them.

Away from the bustle of the city, the roses in the resort bloomed like fairies. When Shirley got out of the car, she thought she had landed in a fairy-tale kingdom. "It's gorgeous." Shirley sighed. The air was filled with the scent of roses.

Chapter 2420

Zacharias took Shirley's hand. "Let's go. Let's enjoy ourselves over the next three days."

Shirley followed him into the resort. A group of servants were welcoming them, giving them presents and flowers. Shirley took the flowers. A steward said, "Sir, madam, please take a break on the second floor. We shall serve afternoon tea shortly."

Shirley was stunned. Madam? Do these people not know the relationship we share? Do they think I'm his wife?

Zacharias held his laughter in. He put an arm around Shirley's shoulder and said, "Let's head to the second floor then, madam."

Shirley pursed her lips, holding her laughter in as Zacharias took her to the second floor. Right after they came to the landing, she gave Zacharias a questioning look.

Zacharias chuckled. "Don't you like how they address you?"

Shirley loved it, but she still wasn't his wife, so she felt nervous being addressed that way. "I do. Shirley smiled. She then convinced herself, "It's not like anyone else is going to hear that here. I'll be your wife, then."

Zacharias smiled. "This could be a trial run for our marriage, then."

Shirley thought it was sweet. We'll see how things go. I can tell my folks we're dating once we get back home. We don't have to be worried about how the public will see us.

Shirley and Zacharias took their seats in the lounge on the second floor. Shirley was tired and hungry from the trip here, for it had taken them nearly three hours.

A moment later, the steward led a group of servants over to them. The servants were holding exquisite platters, and the food was exquisite. This was where Flor's royalty's guests were served, so everything felt regal.

Once the servants had taken their leave, Shirley picked up a nice piece of toast and took a bite. Her eyes lit up. "Oh, this is nice."

Zacharias hadn't taken his food, but when Shirley said the toast was nice, he took her wrist and fed himself with her toast. He bit on the spot she'd taken a bite out of. "It's nice," he praised.

Shirley smiled at him. "You just love taking my food."

"Yeah. It tastes better after you have a bite." Zacharias cocked an eyebrow. Shirley felt her cheeks burning up, but she felt sweeter than the dessert before her.

After teatime, Shirley wanted to stroll around the rose garden. The place was gorgeous; even a little time in the garden could cheer her up. Zacharias went with her. Shirley walked ahead of him, staring around. Her hair was untied, and it billowed in the wind. Even her profile stunned Zacharias.

The roses were gorgeous, but to Zacharias, Shirley was more captivating still. He only had eyes for her and nothing else.

Shirley felt his gaze focused on her, and her heart started to race. She turned around, looking at him. He was in a suit, his shoulders were broad, his hair was slick, and his features were sculpted and regal. Shirley looked around. Alright, there's no one here. She grinned, approaching Zacharias before holding his shoulder. Zacharias put an arm around her waist and pulled her into his embrace. Then, Shirley kissed him.

A surge of warmth, burning for Zacharias, coursed through Shirley's veins. Shyly, she leaned against Zacharias' chest and listened to the beat of his heart.

"It's cold out here. Let's go inside." Zacharias took her back into the residence.

Shirley followed him, but a servant was leading them. This place was huge, and the servant took them to the master bedroom. When Shirley saw her luggage inside, she blinked and looked at Zacharias. Quietly, she asked, "They can't be having us share a room, can they?"