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I wouldn't have been so nice to her if I knew sooner.

"Rosalie may not be around anymore, but she'll always be in my heart. No one can take her place!" Stephen's loud and clear words left Avril stupefied.

Stephen sure loves Nicole's mother very much. However, that does not seem to be the case with Lady Musgrave, so that means I still have a chance.

Portia's face darkened when she heard Stephen, and she stomped out after glaring at her husband.

Avril lifted the corner of her mouth to let out a snicker.

Staring at Avril with his keen eyes, Evan feared that the woman might have an ulterior motive for getting close to Stephen.

When Evan and Nicole and went out for a walk at night, the former mentioned his worry to the woman.

The woman looked at her husband in surprise. "You're saying that there's a reason Avril wanted to get close to my dad?"

"There's a possibility of that happening!" Evan nodded.

Nicole furrowed her brows. "What could it be then? I think she's fighting for someone she loves. She probably fell for my dad because he's good-looking, mature, and manly. That's possible, right?"

"Well, I'd say you're certainly more confident about him than himself."

Nicole continued to keep her brows knitted. "So now you're saying my dad thinks Avril has an ulterior motive too?"

Evan's lips curled up slightly. "You know what? Forget it. Let's talk about us instead."
"What about us?"
Evan lifted his head up to look at the starry night sky. "Which star do you think is the brightest?"
"Are you trying to find the brightest star with me, Mr. Seet?" Nicole, too, stared at the twinkling stars.
The wind gently blew on her wavy hair, and the faint smell of perfume lingered in their noses. Evan then played with the hair hanging from her forehead as he moved his lips to say huskily, "The brightest star is not up in the sky. It's here."
With eyes deep like the ocean, he gazed into her sparkling eyes. To him, her eyes were more beautiful than any star in the night sky.
Nicole lowered her head shyly because it had been a while since he had looked at her like that.
Evan cradled her face between his hands and kissed her luscious lips softly.
She closed her eyes, and the scene Sheila described to her appeared in her mind. She could see Evan digging out the urn in a storm before hugging it to sleep.
It was as if the scene was happening right before her eyes.
Nicole could not believe how much the man loved her. Even when he thought she was dead, he had never stopped loving her.

Filled with warmth on the inside, Nicole put her fair, slender arms around Evan's neck.
After the long kiss, she looked at him and asked, "Were you sad when you thought I died?"
The man took in a deep breath when he was reminded of the terrible pain. "Never scare me with a fake death again!"
Nicole pouted. "I wouldn't have 'died' if I weren't convinced that you wanted me dead! I thought I was giving you what you wanted then."
At that point, the man's expression turned grave.
"Nicole, I'll make sure you get justice for your suffering in prison. Davin told me the Muirs found a witness. Unfortunately, he was kidnapped when he reached K Nation, so we'll have to look for new evidence when we get back."
Nicole was silent when she remembered how Levant and Susan had impersonated Evan to fool her.
She lifted her head to inquire seriously, "If I tell you that Levant and Susan are involved and that the two had colluded for a while, would you believe me?"
Her husband squinted slightly when she mentioned Susan.
I've already assigned someone to investigate the fire that happened all those years ago. I wonder if the investigator found anything.

Seeing how Evan said nothing, Nicole pouted displeasedly. "I knew it! I knew you wouldn't believe that Susan's involved because she saved your life and has a thing for you. To you, she's an angel incapable of such savagery."

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Evan was amused by how jealous Nicole seemed, so he reached out to caress her fair cheek. "I know very well what kind of person Susan is. Don't worry. I'll get the bottom of it."
Nicole would like to know what he would do to Susan after he found out the truth.
She felt asking him directly but then decided that it was better to see for herself what the man would do.
Another breeze came up, making her sneeze twice, so Evan wrapped his arms around her. "Let's go back inside, You'll catch a cold if we stay any longer."
She nodded, and the two walked back shoulder to shoulder. Another cool breeze came up, but his warm hand held hers tightly, so the cold did not bother her.
Looking at how the two walked into their bedroom intimately, the four children were relieved.
Maya's eyes sparkled with joy. "Daddy and Mommy are finally together then! How wonderful!"

"Our family is now complete, all thanks to Grandma!" exclaimed Nina.

"Good thing Grandma and Grandpa got there in time. Things would've been very different if we only had Uncle Davin to depend on. Mommy might have even actually become Levant's wife!" sighed Juan solemnly.

"So it's been proven that your Uncle Davin is unreliable!"

Davin and Sheila were walking down the stairs and just happened to hear Kyle.

"What did I ever do to you, Kyle? How can you say such things about your own uncle? And how has it been proven? Come on, tell me."

Kyle glanced at his uncle coldly. "Not only have you failed to rescue Daddy, but you also failed to stop the wedding between Mommy and Levant."

Davin felt the need to explain himself to the children.

"That's not my fault! Blame your Grandpa. He promised to rescue your Daddy and have your Mommy and Daddy go back together. I only did nothing because I trusted him."

Kyle unceremoniously rolled his eyes at his uncle. "That doesn't even make any sense!"

"How can you blame Grandpa when you're the one who was incapable of rescuing Daddy? That's not right, Uncle Davin."

Davin could not believe that his nieces and nephews were turning against him, so he continued to defend himself.

"Your Grandma may have rescued him, but I'm the one who contacted her, so you can also say that I'm the one who rescued your daddy. Besides, Sophia's my mother. What difference does it make which one of us rescued Evan? In conclusion, considering the two points mentioned, you can regard me as your daddy's savior."

After the four exchanged pointed looks, Nina suddenly said, "Well, Grandma promised to buy us new clothes and give us presents. Since there's no difference between you and Grandma, why don't you do that for us instead?"

Among the Seets, Davin was the only poor one, so clever Nina targeted her uncle's money.

After clearing his throat multiple times, Davin put on a dry smile. "I think you better ask your grandma for that because, your Grandma and I, we don't mingle our money. You can ask her yourself if you don't believe me."

Sheila glanced at her fiancé and solemnly told him, "You're a man, Davin. Stop being so cheap! And you're my man, which is all the more reason why you should be more generous."

She then promised the children to take them shopping the next day and buy them whatever they want.

The four cheered happily and thanked her before turning back to continue ridiculing their uncle.

"You're not even as generous as a woman, Uncle Davin."

"Stop being a cheapskate, Uncle Davin."

"If you keep that up, we'll only spend time with Aunt Sheila and not you."

When the children were done throwing remarks at Davin, they all went into their bedroom, leaving the man to wonder helplessly if he would have enough for his wedding and future children.
What's wrong with being thrifty?
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He remembered how hard those months without money had been for him. He would feel insecure without money, so he had forced himself to be thrifty.
Sheila patted her fiancé's shoulder. "I've noticed that you've changed, Davin. Do you really have to be that cheap?"
That remark made Davin remember how frivolous Sheila could be with her spending.
We'd both be broke if we don't change this habit of hers.
He looked at her and replied, "Yes! We have to be!"
After sizing the man up, Sheila sighed internally and assumed that Davin was still being haunted by those difficult months he had experienced.

I guess I'll have to tell the children tomorrow why their once generous uncle turned so thrifty.

They might even learn the virtue of thrift, so it could be a good thing.

Nicole was lying in Evan's arms as the two cuddled intimately. They felt like comrades-in-arms who had been through life-and-death situations together. Evan played with Nicole's hair, while she caressed his face with her finger. She smiled softly when she realized that his face exactly matched the one in her memory.

The man stared at her as if he had a lot to say to her but decided not to say anything in the end, for he could feel just how closely connected they were.

It felt as if they could communicate with each other without uttering a word.

As the two gazed at each other, Nicole finally broke the silence.

"When are we going back, Evan?"

"Whenever you want."

The answer made Nicole halt her actions. She wanted to go back as soon as possible because she was worried about Lane Corporation, and the Seet Group needed Evan too, but she was also worried about her father.

It doesn't matter if Avril's really in love with Dad or if she had an ulterior motive because either one is enough to cause chaos at the estate.

And if Avril refuses to let Dad go, I'm sure he will be helpless against her.

Evan knew what Nicole was thinking, so he suggested, "Let's have our wedding as soon as possible when we get back. We should ask Sir Musgrave to come with us so that he can attend the wedding."



Feeling safe and secure on Evan's chest, Nicole slept like a baby that night.
When she woke up, the sun was already shining brightly in the sky. After rubbing her sleepy eyes, she checked her watch and was shocked to see that it was already ten o'clock in the morning.
The four little ones were already waiting outside her bedroom when she finally got dressed.
"Mommy, Avril's here again looking for Grandpa. She's fighting with Grandpa's wife now, so you better go take a look."
Nicole did not expect to wake up to such alarming news.
What an unpleasant surprise!
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"She's still here? In the living room?"

Nicole rushed to the living room, and before she even reached there, she could see Avril beside her father, muttering something to him.

When she listened closely, she was taken aback by Avril's bold suggestion. She could not believe how straightforward and audacious Avril was when the woman suggested that Stephen divorce Portia. Avril even mentioned how Wicked Palace and the estate would be a family once Stephen marries her and how that would benefit everyone.

Seeing how Avril kept trying to sell her father on the naive idea dignifiedly, Nicole thought the woman seemed like a character that would only appear in a play. She had never seen someone show their ambition so unabashedly as Avril did.

Evan did mention that Avril might have an ulterior motive. Does wanting to be the duchess count?

"I have a point here, don't I? I mean, you don't even like your wife, so why not get a divorce?"

The duke turned to glance at Avril sharply. "That's it! Stop yapping and go home. Don't ever come back here again!"

The woman froze for a second before sitting down on the couch aggrievedly.

"I'm not leaving! I risked my safety to keep you company when you were in Wicked Palace, and now that you're out, you want to throw me out like I'm trash? I won't have that!"

Stephen sighed irritatedly. "What do you want then?"

"I love you, and I want to be with you!"

"Avril, you have a great future ahead of you. There's no need to waste your time on me. Just tell me exactly what you want from me or what you need me to do, and I'll get it done."



Nicole hated	hearing	the word	"stepmoth	er."

Avril's only a few years older than me, yet she thinks she has what it takes to be my stepmother?

Nicole took a deep breath before inquiring unceremoniously, "Is everyone at Wicked Palace as shameless as you are? You'll do anything to get what you want, won't you?"

Avril froze at first but then nodded vigorously. "Yes. That's how we do things at Wicked Palace. We'll stop at nothing to get what we want. I thought you would've figured that already after witnessing what Levant's done to get you."

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Nicole was left speechless for a while but then thought of Sophia.

"Your aunt, Sophia, was also a member of Wicked Palace, but she's different. You should learn a few things from her."

Avril smirked when she heard that. "You're wrong. My aunt is even bolder when it comes to getting what she wants. Otherwise, she wouldn't have left with Grandma and severed ties with Wicked Palace. The only reason she came back was to help her son. To achieve that, she had no problem going back to Wicked Palace after staying away for so many years. So you see, if something's important enough, people will do anything to get it. It's not just me because I believe we're all the same."

Nicole could not help but unwillingly agree with Avril's words.

"So what's so important for you have to get close to my dad?"

"I want to be with someone I love. Don't you think that's important? For that, I'm ready to give my all," answered Avril frankly, her words leaving Nicole speechless once again.

Aspirations do differ from person to person. To each their own, I guess.

Noticing how Nicole kept silent, Avril continued, "Think it over. If you help me get what I want, I'll promise you something in return. Think of it as a deal."

Nicole was surprised by the offer, but she was not sure if she should do it. She knew her father did not have feelings for the woman before her now.

"My dad only has eyes for my mother, and that's been the case for more than twenty years. Nobody can replace her in his heart, so I think you should listen to him and find somebody else to give your love to."

Avril stayed silent for a moment.

She then responded, "I don't blame you for not wanting to help me. After all, it must be hard for you to imagine having a stepmother as young and beautiful as I am."

Nicole was left dumbfounded by the woman's way of thinking.

But then again, Dad must feel like he'll never find love again. He's been missing Mom ever since she died more than twenty years ago. That couldn't have been easy.

It's not exactly a bad thing to have someone take care of him in his later years and make him happy.

I'm sure Mom wouldn't mind.

She probably wouldn't want to see Dad live out the rest of his life miserably.
After taking a deep breath, Nicole looked at Avril. "I'm not going to stop you from pursuing my dad, but it's up to you to win him over."
The former was taken aback by her own words, for she was supposed to solve her father's problem for him, but she now sounded more like she was encouraging Avril to carry on.
At that, Avril turned delighted. "Don't you worry. I'll do my best to win him over. Just you wait!"
Evan was just as surprised when Nicole told him what had happened.
"You said what?"
"If Avril truly loves my dad, it's not a bad thing for him to have someone beside him in his later years."
Evan froze as he stared at Nicole with his deep-set eyes. Although he knew she simply wanted her fathe to be happy, he was still not convinced that things were that simple with Avril.
I should speak to this cousin of mine when I get the chance.
"Have you talked to your father about going back with us?"
"Shoot! I forgot all about it! I'll do that now."

Naturally, Stephen promised to go back with the two when he learned that his own daughter was going to have a wedding, but when he noticed Avril waving excitedly at him, he doubted his decision.