

That Can Be Arranged chapter 6

Chapter 6 I Don't Want Her Near Gregory

"Well, I..." Tessa cast the briefest of looks at Nicholas, unsure how to answer Gregory's question.

The next second, the little boy's eyes turned red, and he pressed his lips into a thin line as he tried to keep from crying, but alas, his tears fell anyway.

His tears alone were enough to make Tessa's heart shatter into a thousand pieces.

To one side, Kieran felt his heart twist at Gregory's silent crying, and he quickly interjected, "Just let her carry him for a while, Nicholas. What's the rush? Besides, this lady is going on stage in a bit, so she could just bring Greg into the hall and get right to the performance afterward. I mean, look at our baby—he's crying! If Mom sees how puffy his eyes are, she's going to freak out."

Nicholas frowned, and his sharp gaze lingered on Tessa for a long moment. What is it with this woman? What did she do to make Greg so obsessed with her? But he didn't want to see Gregory cry, either, so he maintained his composure as he said in clipped tones, "If it isn't too much of a bother, Miss Reinhart, then we'd be much obliged if you could keep our Gregory company for a while longer. He's just a child, and he can be a little clingy, so we hope you won't mind."

Instantly, Tessa shook her head. "Oh, please, there's no need to be so formal. It's no trouble taking care of him at all." Frankly speaking, she was far too fond of Gregory to think of minding him as a chore, though she was admittedly surprised that Nicholas would allow an outsider like herself to take care of his son.

Gregory, on the other hand, did not dwell too much on this. He had cheered up considerably after his father had given the green light, and in his trademark childlike voice, he said, "Thank you, Daddy!"

Then, he hastily turned to look up at Tessa with adoration. "Pretty lady, you still need a violin, don't you? I'll take you to see Grandma's huge violin collection, and you can pick whichever you like!"

Tessa nodded indulgently. "Alright, lead the way."

With his spirits clearly restored, Gregory happily reached out his little hand and pointed out directions to Tessa.

Just like that, the both of them retreated from the vicinity of the VIP lounge and headed toward Madam Sawyer's makeshift music room on the yacht.

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Now that Kieran and Nicholas were the only ones left behind, they exchanged a quick look of disbelief. The former was the first to muse in bewilderment, "Wow, don't you think Greg is being a little too generous here? Mom wouldn't even let anyone breathe on her violin collection, and she only put them out on display because it's Greg's birthday today. Are we just going to let him bring outsiders into the room and borrow whichever instrument they wanted?"

Nicholas' gaze darkened, but he said nothing as he watched Tessa and Gregory interact with each other up ahead.

Turning, he addressed the bodyguard next to him in a low voice, "Tell me everything about what happened earlier, and don't miss out on any of the details!"

The bodyguard knew better than to keep him waiting, so he quickly recounted all that had taken place outside the orchestra's lounge that led up to this present moment between Tessa and Gregory.

Having heard all that, Nicholas merely frowned. As far as he could tell, Gregory was the one who had offered his affections to the woman voluntarily, without her having done anything. But the little guy has never been this close to any outsider before, so why this woman? What's so special about her?

Nicholas was still pondering on this when Kieran suddenly recalled something next to him. Rubbing his chin pensively, Kieran said quietly, "I remember Greg saying that he wanted a certain violinist to perform for his birthday, and he even told me her full name. Do you think

that woman is the violinist he was talking about? If that's the case, then... Greg must have met her before."

When he heard this, Nicholas' expression grew stormy.

"Nicholas, I think there's something off about this woman! Maybe she's trying to get close to Greg with some ulterior motive in mind. We have to be on guard."

"As soon as the performance is over, I don't want this woman anywhere near Gregory!" Nicholas barked coldly.

"Of course. Leave it to me," Kieran promised solemnly, looking grim.

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In the music room, Tessa was shocked when she was greeted by the sight of the dozens of precious, priceless violins displayed before her.

Of all the violins here, the cheapest one could fetch close to a million, and if there were an accident, she shuddered to think about how she was going to pay for the damages.

Just then, Greg reached upward and pointed at the violin on the highest shelf, then told one of the bodyguards behind them, "You there, take that violin down for us at once."

Without wasting a second, the bodyguard did as he was told.

Gregory looked at Tessa meaningfully. "Pretty lady, this violin suits you."

When she took a proper look at the instrument, she felt her heartbeat skitter to a stop. The violin presented to her was handcrafted by one of the most renowned violin makers in the world, and it was worth at least ten million. Asking me to play symphonies on this will only add pressure to my performance!

Presently, Nicholas and Kieran were standing in the doorway as they watched this scene with mild interest.

Perhaps swayed by Gregory's insistence and somewhat bemused by Tessa's subsequent hesitation, Nicholas spoke up coolly, "Miss Reinhart, seeing as it's Gregory's birthday today, you should take the violin for your performance if he likes it so much."

Judging by the hard assertion in his tone, Tessa realized he was not offering room for negotiation or rejection. Nonetheless, she was still skeptical when she heard this, but she caved in and took the violin as graciously as possible. "In that case, I... Thank you, President Sawyer."

Nicholas nodded curtly. "This violin is the only one of its kind, so I hope you can bring out its best, Miss Reinhart. We wouldn't want Gregory to be disappointed now, would we?" With that, he lifted his arm and checked the time on his limited collector's edition wristwatch, then pointed out, "The banquet is already starting. You may leave to get ready for the performance now, Miss Reinhart. I'll bring Gregory out of here. See you later at the ceremony."

Then, he deftly took Gregory out of Tessa's arms.

Reluctant to leave, Gregory stared at Tessa wistfully and muttered, "S-See you at the banquet later, pretty lady!"

Nicholas did not spare him the chance to protest or dawdle as he spun on his heels and marched out of the music room without looking back at Tessa.

When his retreating figure finally disappeared from sight, Tessa let out a small sigh of relief.

She would be lying if she said she did not feel Nicholas' wariness and aversion toward her, but she couldn't blame him. Gregory was an important child, after all, one who stood to inherit the Sawyer family name and fortune. It made sense that he was under such intense scrutiny and protection at all times.

That Can Be Arranged chapter 7

Chapter 7 Love at First Sight

The ceremony was getting off to a slow and steady start in the banquet hall, and midway through, the emcee went up on stage to read out the name of the violinist for the solo

performance. Gregory, who had been sufficiently bored since the beginning of the banquet, immediately lit up as he exclaimed, "Daddy, it's the pretty lady!"

Nicholas' gaze flickered over to the stage.

Presently, Tessa had already changed into an elegant beige dress, which had a modest cut that accentuated the curve of her waist and flattered her silhouette flawlessly. She was holding the violin Gregory had picked out for her earlier as she strolled gracefully to center stage.

When the track lights shone on the porcelain skin of her doll-like face, she looked dazzling.

For a minute, surprise flashed in Nicholas' dark orbs, and he thought he might actually be enchanted by her.

On stage, Tessa couldn't help being a little nervous as she stood tall and straight under the scrutiny of the deathly silent audience. This was the first time in her entire life she was performing before so many important and distinguished members of society, particularly ones as formidable as the Sawyers.

As she looked up, she unintentionally noticed Nicholas among the crowd.

His long and lean build seemed to stand out among the other guests, and the imperious air with which he carried himself made him look untouchable and high above everyone else.

Inadvertently, she locked eyes with him, and she shuddered when she saw how his eyes resembled a deep and endless sea, like dark whirlpools that threatened to pull in and drown you with one look.

Her heart skipped a beat, and she quickly broke eye contact, meeting Gregory's eager gaze instead.

The little guy was perched on a highchair as he stared at Tessa with glittering eyes, the anticipation clear in his face.

For some reason, all the anxiousness drained out of Tessa as soon as she saw the child, and she even managed an easy smile.

Before she kicked off her performance, she leaned toward the microphone and said gently, "It's a great honor to be able to perform here today. The symphony I will be playing next is dedicated to the most adorable and brilliant little birthday boy. Here's to many more happy accomplishments, little one!"

The hall burst into encouraging and enthusiastic applause.

Tessa smiled graciously, then bowed. Having done so, she resumed her position at center stage, and as the noise in the hall gave way to silence once more, all the lights turned and fell on her.

Unfazed by the spotlight, she wedged the violin firmly beneath the curve of her jawline and poised to play the first chord.

Soon, the gentle melodious sound of the violin filled the hall, soothing the crowd as they immersed in the quiet beauty of the performance, much like how one might take in the choir of skylarks.

The petite woman on stage was like a fairy who had descended under the moonlight. Her features were soft and delicate, her beauty so ethereal. Her confidence was as dazzling as she was as the spotlight shone on her.

Everything about her seemed so wonderful that no one could bear to look away from her for even a second!

What was more impressive was the sound of the violin, which appeared to have put the audience into a trance as the melody moved and transported them to some wonderland.

The audience were having a whale of a time, and they were each admiring the girl's skillful performance.

A while later, Gregory clapped his little hands as he applauded Tessa's breathtaking performance, and he turned to ask Nicholas excitedly, "Isn't the pretty lady brilliant, Daddy?"

Nicholas' gaze darkened slightly, but instead of answering Gregory, he asked, "Have you seen her before?"

The child nodded. "Yes, I saw her once when I tagged along with Great-Grandpa to one of those orchestra performances."

Somehow skeptical, Nicholas pressed, "Was that all? You didn't speak to her or anything like that after you saw her?"

Gregory shook his head and replied firmly, "No, but I like her a whole lot!"

While the father and son were discussing this, Remus was seated among the guests at another table, and his eyes were narrowed as he appraised Tessa, who was still on stage. He looked pensive and somewhat frustrated as he thought, Have I seen this girl before somewhere? Why does she look so familiar?

Before he could dwell more on this, the hall burst into thunderous applause and cut off his train of thought. As it turned out, the solo violin performance on stage had already come to a perfect end.

Tessa came back to her senses after her musical reverie ended, and she bowed deeply before the distinguished guests below the stage.

Gregory even let out a few whooping cheers as he clapped his little hands tirelessly.

Just as Tessa was stepping out of the banquet hall, she handed the violin gingerly to the bodyguards behind her. "Could you please help me take this violin back to the music room? It's worth too much for me to hold on to it much longer."

"Of course," the bodyguard said readily, taking the violin from her and leaving in a hurry.

Now that Tessa had performed smoothly and returned the extravagant violin, she felt the weight slide off her shoulders, and she was elated. More importantly, she even got to celebrate the adorable little boy's birthday.

He must be happy now, she thought with a warm smile. I hope my performance lived up to his expectations.

Then again, she wondered if this meant she would never see him again. After all, they came from very different worlds, and the chances of them ever crossing paths in the future were slim to none.

For some reason, the thought of this left her feeling a little forlorn and reluctant.

Meanwhile, inside the hall, Gregory asked Nicholas when he saw Tessa go down the stage, "Daddy, I want to see the pretty lady. Can the bodyguards bring me to her, please?"

"No, we have to go home right now. Your grandmother's waiting up for you," Nicholas said with forced patience as he picked Gregory up from the chair and held him to his torso.

He wasn't about to let his son get close to some strange woman with an unknown background. Heaven knows what ulterior motives she may have for being so chummy with Gregory!

"No, I want to see the pretty lady! Let me down, Daddy!" Gregory whined, wriggling and struggling to break free from his father's arms, but that did little to hinder Nicholas from bringing him out of the banquet hall. "Stupid Daddy! You poopy head! I want to see the pretty lady! You told me that you would let me have whatever I want on my birthday!"

Nicholas ignored him as he stormed out of the hall wordlessly, the air around him growing dangerously cold.

"Liar! You're nothing but a big, fat liar! It's bad enough that you won't bring me to see Mommy, but now you want to stop me from seeing the pretty lady, too!" With that, Gregory began to sob piteously.

The word 'mommy' instantly made Nicholas think about that woman from five years ago. At that moment, hatred and rage seemed to course through him uncontrollably as he thought, You don't need a mommy who abandoned you for money, Gregory! You deserve better than that!

However, when he saw how miserably the child in his arms was crying, he felt his heart soften as he promised, "Look, I'll bring you to see her some other day, okay?"

It was as if he had uttered the magic words, for Gregory immediately stopped crying, and as he sniffled, he looked up at Nicholas with wide, sparkly eyes. "Do you really mean it, Daddy?"

That Can Be Arranged chapter 8

Chapter 8 Gregory's Lone Visit

"Yes," Nicholas said, just to humor the kid. He was convinced that it would only take a few days for Gregory to forget all about that woman, and he was even more convinced that there was no way a woman unknown to the Sawyers could make such a long-lasting impression on a tender-aged child.

Alas, Nicholas had spent every waking moment of the following three days keeping Gregory company, only to hear the boy whine about seeing Tessa.

While Nicholas had come up with various excuses to delay such plans of seeing Tessa, Gregory lost patience and threatened to ignore him for good. Then, the boy king decidedly locked himself in his room, refusing to come out or let anyone in.

Staring at the tightly shut bedroom door, Nicholas began to grow exasperated. He didn't have time for this, certainly not on a day when he had to drop by the company to attend an inter-continental meeting.

As such, he summoned the butler and ordered sternly, "Keep an eye on Greg, and don't let him get up to nonsense. Call me if anything unexpected happens."

"Yes, sir!" Andrew, the butler, said solemnly with a respectful nod.

Then, Nicholas straightened up and headed out the door. Soon, his towering figure disappeared behind the door of an exquisite Bentley idling outside, and the car pulled away from the curb, cruising away from the house.

Presently, Gregory was huddled up in his room, simmering in childish anger as he pressed against the balcony and watched his father's car drive out of sight.

When the car disappeared entirely from view, Gregory turned and stalked back into his bedroom, then slung his Superman backpack over his tiny shoulders. After that, he sneaked out through the hole in the backyard wall and promptly deleted all the camera footage that would have recorded his escape.

In actuality, he had already looked up online the address where Tessa's orchestra was supposedly based. If Daddy doesn't bring me to see her, then I'll go and see her myself!

Now that his mission was accomplished, Gregory dusted off his starfish-like hands and made a triumphant noise. "You must have underestimated me if you think you can keep me under lock and key!"

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The little one had only just made his great escape when he hailed a ride through a phone application. He cleverly set the Heavenly Chorus Orchestra as his destination, which was around a startling hundred-something miles away.

Nearly two hours later, Gregory finally stepped out of the car and looked up at the entrance of the Heavenly Chorus Orchestra building.

Tightening his grip on the strap of his backpack, he took a deep breath and walked through the doors, then looked up at the receptionist as he asked softly, "Hello, miss, I'm here to find my mommy. Her name's Tessa Reinhart, and she works here! Could you help me call her, please?"

The receptionist took an immediate liking to the little boy, but when she heard he was Tessa's son, she couldn't hide her astonishment.

Tessa had been working here for all these years, but never once had she mentioned that she was a mother to such an adorable little boy. "Are you here on your own, little one? Give me a moment while I call your mommy right now."

"Okay, thank you, kind lady!" Gregory said cheerily, then stood by the front desk and waited.

Meanwhile, when Tessa got the call from the receptionist saying somebody was here to see her, she had thought that it could be a member of the audience from one of her shows, but what the receptionist told her was, "Miss Reinhart, your son is here to see you, and he's on his own. Please come over as soon as possible; it's not safe for a child like him to be wandering around alone. Heaven knows what kind of predator would try to kidnap him!"

“Er...” Stunned, Tessa blinked and finally said, “Okay, got it, I’ll be right there.”

Her child had been taken away from her five years ago, and she wondered idly if some kid had come over to the building and mistaken her for his mother. Then again, she thought it was some kind of twist of fate, so she hurried over to the building. Better me than some human trafficker, she told herself.

It didn’t take long for her to reach the orchestra building, but the moment she stepped through the doors, she locked eyes with Gregory.

She stared at him with wide eyes, and she stood frozen in shock. What’s the little guy doing here?

Gregory, on the other hand, beamed when he saw Tessa, and there was no hiding his excitement. He slid off his seat with his backpack slung over his shoulders. He barreled toward her with as much speed as his little legs would allow. He threw his arms around her leg and said sweetly, “Pretty lady, you’re finally here!”

Tessa felt her heart melt into a puddle. Crouching down, so she was at his eye level, she asked gently, “Sweetheart, what are you doing here?”

Gregory pouted and mumbled, “Daddy doesn’t have time to bring me to see you, so here I am on my own!”

On your own? For a minute there, Tessa wondered if she had heard him wrong. She felt the hair on her neck stand to attention as she found herself at a sudden loss for words. I don’t know what sort of blind courage a little boy could have to make a trip all by himself here! Also, the Sawyers will be at their wits’ end when they discover he’s gone missing!

She shuddered when Nicholas’ frosty expression flashed in her mind. Hastily, she made to placate Gregory, “Sweetheart, it isn’t right for you to be here on your own without telling your family beforehand. Come along now. I’ll bring you home.”

“No, I don’t want you to go home!” When Gregory heard that she was asking him to leave, he hugged her tightly and looked up at her dejectedly. Still pouting, he asked, “Why do you want to send me home, pretty lady? Is it because you hate me?”

“Of course not! That’s impossible. I can’t even begin to tell you how much I like you,” Tessa cajoled soothingly.

Still, he seemed unconvinced, his little face somber as he pointed out accusingly, "Then why didn't you tell me goodbye before you left the banquet the other day? I asked Daddy to bring me to you, but we couldn't find you anywhere, and I didn't even get to say goodbye."

Upon hearing this, she stiffened in surprise. This little guy actually tried to look for me while on the yacht? She hadn't had a reason to stay back after her performance, given how the rest of her orchestra was already alighting the yacht.

She didn't think that the little one would think she had left without saying goodbye to him.

A fond smile curled on her lips as she gazed at him gently, then consoled him, saying, "Sweetheart, you've misunderstood. Anyone who sees how adorable you are will love you at first sight, but I just think that it's inappropriate for a child your age to be wandering out of home without a chaperone." She paused for a while before adding, "See, if your daddy finds out you've gone missing and called the police, then I would be a kidnapper, wouldn't I?"

A kidnapper who has taken the Little Prince of the Sawyer Family away from home. Now that's a crime I'd never dream of committing, even if I had Dutch courage.

However, Gregory unexpectedly patted his chest as he promised confidently, "Don't worry, pretty lady, I'll protect you! Daddy won't be able to bully you at all!"

Amusement flashed in Tessa's eyes as she sputtered at his childish oath. Reaching out a hand, she caressed his little face gently, more than happy to have the little guy's promise of protection.

That being said, she was still worried and unsettled. After a moment of thought, she pressed, "Sweetheart, do you think you could give me your daddy's number?"

That Can Be Arranged chapter 9

Chapter 9 Gregory Has Gone Missing

Over at Sawyer Group, Nicholas was still in the meeting when he got a call from Andrew. As soon as he heard that Gregory had gone missing, he stood up abruptly and walked out of the conference room with a steely expression, announcing through gritted teeth, "Dismissed!"

There was no hiding his anger and hostility. The sheer incompetency! What's the use of keeping the staff if they can't even keep an eye on a toddler?!

He looked more mutinous than he had seconds ago as he boarded his car. Just as he was about to rush back to the manor, his phone rang with an intrusive trill.

It was an unknown number, Nicholas noted, but he was in such a daze that he mispressed and answered the call instead of rejecting it.

As soon as the call was put through, an awkward female voice filled the other line, stammering, "H-Hello, President Sawyer. It's me, Tessa, the violinist who performed at Young Master Gregory's birthday banquet the other day. Do you still remember?"

She heard no response, but what she did hear was her heart thumping wildly in her chest. She wasn't so presumptuous as to think Nicholas would still remember her after their brief meeting on the yacht, but then again, that wasn't her priority at the moment.

Clearing her throat, she explained promptly, "President Sawyer, Gregory has come to the orchestra building to look for me all on his own. I was concerned that you might be looking for him, so I figured I'd give you a call. If it's not too much trouble, could you please come and bring the little one home?"

Nicholas' gaze darkened ominously at this as he said icily, "I see. I'll be over right now. Thank you." Then, he hung up the phone decisively and gave his assistant a call, snapping irritably, "Find every bit of information you can on a woman called Tessa Reinhart right

now—her childhood, her accomplishments in school, every single detail there is to know about her!”

Keeping his phone, he stepped on the accelerator and sped over to the Heavenly Chorus Orchestra company building.

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At the speed he was driving, Nicholas managed to get to the building in record time, having taken a mere hour to complete the otherwise two-hour drive there.

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When he stormed through the main entrance of the orchestra building, anyone could see how stormy his face was.

At the sight of him, Tessa straightened up and greeted him stiffly and awkwardly, “P-President Sawyer!”

Trevor, on the other hand, looked rattled as he kept quiet, not daring to so much as let out a breath.

In stark contrast to their uneasy demeanors, Gregory was happily seated down, his little legs dangling over the edge of the chair as he looked entirely relaxed.

The vein near Nicholas’ temple was throbbing dangerously, and his voice sounded somewhat disembodied, as if it came from the depths of hell, as he demanded darkly, “Gregory. Sawyer. I don’t know where you keep all that audacity, but how dare you run away from home!”

Tessa and Trevor jumped at the thunderous volume of his voice.

Gregory, however, seemed completely at ease as he turned his head away haughtily, sneering, “It’s not my fault that you didn’t keep your promises, Daddy. You told me you’d bring me to see the pretty lady, but you went back on your word, so I have no choice but to come here alone.” He spoke softly, but that did little to hamper the hurt and accusation in his words.

Nicholas was taken aback by the forward protest, and for a second, he wasn't sure if he had the right to argue. He couldn't deny that he had been stalling Gregory, hoping that he might eventually forget about the promise, though Nicholas couldn't very well admit this.

As such, he took a deep breath and walked up to Gregory, intending to talk some sense into the boy. "You have to cut me some slack here, kid. I've been really tied up at work, but I did try to free up my schedule to bring you to see Miss Reinhart. You shouldn't have run away from home. All of us were worried sick!"

"Hmmp!" Gregory scoffed, then added primly, "As if I would believe you. You were cooped up at home for the past three days, so don't tell me you were busy working! Don't think I don't know that you see me as a dumb kid who will fall for your lies! I'm already four, and I wasn't born yesterday. You can't keep spinning lies to humor me!"

Amused by this, Tessa sputtered aloud before she could stop herself.

Meanwhile, Nicholas blinked in surprise, but he, too, was amused. The rage that had welled up in him seemed to disappear after the little guy's grumbling. Having calmed down, Nicholas went on to cajole the child, saying, "Okay, so now that you've seen the pretty lady like you wanted to, don't you think it's time for you to go home with me?"

Naturally, Gregory refused to entertain the idea of leaving, given the Herculean effort he had put in to track down his favorite pretty lady. He slithered down from his seat and stumbled over to Tessa on his little legs, then scoffed at his father contemptuously once more as he snapped, "You can go home on your own if you want to, but I want to stay here with the pretty lady. I will not be going back!"

As soon as he was done with his announcement, he wrapped his little arms around Tessa's leg like a stubborn baby sloth.

Presently, Nicholas' gaze flickered over to Tessa, his eyes so cold and dark that they evoked a barren winter land, but there was an inquisitive gleam in them nonetheless.

Tessa blanched, and she grew a little flustered. Knowing that Gregory was throwing a childish fit, she quickly joined in Nicholas' efforts to change the little fella's mind. "Sweetheart, I know you really like me, and I'm flattered. But this isn't the right way to go about it. Besides, I still have work to do—right, Mr. Oswald?" She shot Trevor a meaningful look.

Trevor had no idea what was going on at the moment, but he went along with her bluff as he muttered hesitantly, “O-Oh, yes, that’s right, Young Master Gregory—our Tessa still has plenty of work lined up for her today, and she won’t be able to keep you company.”

Disappointed to hear this, Gregory lowered his head sadly as he mumbled, “Oh, okay...” However, he had not completely given up. He bit down on his bottom lip, then stared at Tessa with bright eyes as he asked softly, “Then maybe we can have lunch together, pretty lady. What do you say?”

“Well...” Tessa was working up to another rejection, but when she saw how piteous the little guy looked, she couldn’t bring herself to say no to him. Then, she caught sight of Nicholas’ dangerously stormy face and thought, There’s no way he’d agree to this. As such, she sighed and said firmly, “I don’t think that’s going to work out, Sweetheart.”

Upon hearing this, Gregory sniveled, and his eyes turned red as tears glistened in them. His shell-pink lips quivered, and it looked like he was about to cry at any given moment.

Tessa’s heart twisted at this, and she quickly shot Nicholas a pleading look, hoping that he could intervene and calm Gregory.

Nicholas seemed equally distressed as he pinched the space between his brows, caving into his child’s tantrum. “Then do you promise to go home with me right after lunch?”

That Can Be Arranged chapter 10

Chapter 10 Who Are You Calling a Mongrel?

Gregory appeared to be considering the proposition, then nodded with a hum. “Daddy, I thought about it, and you’re right. I can’t just stick to the pretty lady and get in the way of her work if she has a busy day ahead.”

Next to him, Tessa broke into a bemused smile. He’s so well-spoken for his age that it’s hard to remember he’s just a toddler.

Having heard his father acceding to the lunch request, Gregory grinned, the sadness fading from his eyes as he cheered, "Yay! That means I get to have lunch with you, pretty lady!"

Tessa's lips curled into a gentle smile as she crouched down and wiped away the boy's tears. In the process of her doing so, Gregory pelted her with an endless stream of questions, one of which was, "Pretty lady, is this where you usually work? Can I have a tour of the place?"

Not waiting for Tessa to respond, Trevor interjected immediately, "Of course, you can, Young Master Gregory!"

Tessa agreed readily. "Well, of course, you can have a tour if you'd like. I'll be your personal guide." With that, she picked up the little one and propped him on her hip as she showed him all the different departments of the orchestra company building.

That being said, her impromptu tour guide duty came with immense pressure, given that Nicholas was behind them the whole time.

She knew he didn't like Gregory getting too comfortable with her, so she merely held the boy without encouraging affection.

However, Gregory seemed to think differently, for he took to her like a fish to water. He had one arm wrapped around her neck like it was the most natural thing in the world to do as he glanced around curiously and asked about anything he was remotely interested in, and Tessa answered him patiently.

It was nearly noon when they were finally done with a full tour, and Tessa thought it was time for lunch. Just as she was about to voice this out, the receptionist walked up to her and said quietly, "Miss Reinhart, there's somebody here to see you."

Tessa raised her brows in mild surprise. Who could look for me during lunch hour?

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Nonetheless, she set Gregory down and addressed Nicholas politely, "Just a moment, please, President Sawyer. I'll go and take a look at who it is." Then, she walked toward the front desk to do just that.

Tessa had not expected to be greeted by the sight of her stepsister, Sophia, and her stepmother, Lauren, the moment she rounded the receptionist's desk.

When she saw them, her expression immediately turned grim, and unconsciously, she clenched her fists even tighter. She could already guess what the both of them were doing here even before they explained themselves. They must be here because they're seething over the six million compensation!

True enough, her guess was correct, and they were indeed here to confront her about the six million compensation.

Aggressively, Lauren reached out and grabbed Tessa by the arm, her nails digging into the latter's flesh as she shrieked like a maniac, "You little b*tch! I didn't peg you for the heartless sort. I can't believe you actually framed Sophia and pinned six million worth of damages on her, even though she was innocent!"

Lauren had spent a small fortune getting Sophia onto that yacht, hoping that she could introduce her daughter into high society and bag a rich man of prestigious background. However, instead of achieving that end, Sophia ended up having to fork out six million in damages! The sum alone was of astronomical proportions, and it was a smidge away from crushing the Reinharts altogether.

Tessa smirked when she heard this baseless accusation and retorted icily, "I suggest you clarify this, Lauren. It was your daughter who messed up and broke Madam Sawyer's precious violin before the banquet started, so it only makes sense that you have to pay for it."

With her rage provoked, Lauren snapped, "How dare you speak back to me? You were the clumsy little fool who couldn't even walk without tripping over your own feet, and after you broke the violin, you decided to pin the blame on your sister! Where the hell is your good conscience, Tessa?!" Seething, she paused to catch her breath, then warned shrewdly, "You little wh*re, if you don't cough up the six million by the end of the day, then don't blame me for making you do it the hard way!"

"Hah! Let's just see if your bark is worse than your bite!"

Upon seeing the disdainful look in Tessa's eyes, Lauren grimaced menacingly and shouted, "Get in here and take her away!"

Having heard this, the two burly bodyguards dressed in black hurtled into the lobby of the building to do as they were told.

Lauren had hired the two men earlier today to take Tessa by force. In addition to demanding the six million from Tessa, Lauren came with an ulterior motive in mind.

As things were, the Reinharts were having a hard time tiding over the steady regression of the family business, and in an attempt to salvage the company, they had come to a collective agreement to form an alliance through marriage.

Among their clientele was a man whose family was powerful enough to help the Reinharts get their business back on track, but his son, to whom Sophia was initially arranged to marry, had suffered a terribly high fever during his childhood, and his brain was damaged as a result.

When Sophia learned of this, she refused to make good on the arranged union, and Lauren thought that now would be the perfect opportunity to force Tessa to take her place instead.

Presently, the two bodyguards restrained Tessa in their vice-like grip, and she realized with horror that she could not possibly take them down. Struggling to break free of the men's hold, she eyed her stepmother mutinously as she demanded, "What do you think you're doing, Lauren? Let me go right now!"

The receptionist panicked as well when she saw how quickly things had escalated, and she frantically cried, "Security! Security!"

The security guards were several floors down, so they wouldn't get to them that soon. Unexpectedly, Gregory beat them to it, and when he came out to see Tessa being apprehended by two aggressive men, he rushed over angrily. "Let go of the pretty lady right now! You can't just take her away!"

Sophia heard him shouting and turned to look at him. When she saw that it was Gregory, all the color drained from her face.

Before she could snap out of her daze, Lauren stepped forward and reached to shove the child. "Where the hell did this mongrel come from? Get out of my sight!"

Gregory had been shoved with no small amount of force, and his little body staggered backward before he toppled to the ground.

Mortified, Tessa shouted, "Are you out of your mind, Lauren? Why would you do that to a kid?!"

She broke free of her captors and hurried to help Gregory up to his feet, looking pained as she asked worriedly, "Sweetheart, are you okay? Does it hurt?"

He shook his head, looking cherubic as he answered quietly, "No."

He might be saying that, but Tessa saw that there was a red patch on his arm that was proof of how hard he had fallen.

Lauren, on the other hand, seemed oblivious to the trouble she had stirred up as she grew even more incensed, yelling, "I will not hesitate to hurt anyone who gets in my way today. What are you going to do about it?"

Tessa eyed her balefully. "You'll pay for what you did today!"

Lauren merely smirked contemptuously when she saw how Tessa so vehemently defended the child. "All I did was push him. There's no need for you to be so defensive. What, is he your mongrel or something?" she sneered.

Just then, a tall and lean figure approached the ruckus ominously, and a voice as cold and frigid as ice descended upon Lauren like the warning breeze of a snowstorm. "Who are you calling mongrel?"