

Chapter 11 - Betrayal At The Altar Novel by Dolores Delia (Rachel Grey & Louis Smith)

She could clearly feel that the man had ulterior motives, but his calm expression did not seem like that of a deceitful person.

She let out a sigh and obediently sent him her phone number.

He called her number and, upon hearing her ringtone, hung up the call. "Now you have my phone number. Please save it, Miss Grey."

Under his gaze, she saved his number as instructed. "Mr. Jones, is there anything else?" Although she could not decipher his true intentions, she could instinctively sense that he had some other motive.

Still, her subconscious told her that keeping a distance from this man was always better. However, being as smart as he was, it was without a doubt that he could sense the deliberate distance in her words. "Miss Grey, don't you already have some suspicions about my intentions?" He gazed at her with pitch-black eyes that flickered with a dim glow. "Grandma said that, when pursuing a woman, one must give one hundred percent sincerity. One must not be all high and might, instead, be proactive, considerate, and, most importantly, remain faithful all the way through. Well, the other points will be proven true later. But, when it comes to proactivity, I am certain that you have noticed that, am I right?"

Upon hearing his words, her brows twitched several times.

She did not expect him to be so frank about his speculations and even more so about his intentions, which left her somewhat bewildered.

"Mr. Jones, what does it mean for you to tell me all this out of the blue?" Her eyes flickered slightly as she made up her mind to feign ignorance.

She did not have the energy to deal with the man in front of her right now, nor was she prepared to accept a new relationship.

Furthermore, they were merely acquaintances.

"Miss Grey, you should have noticed my grandma's fondness for you," he said without blinking and his eyes sparkling with a meaningful glint. "And most importantly, I adore you, Miss Grey."

His words were straightforward, leaving her no room to play d*mb.

Her heart skipped a beat when their eyes met.

However, she hastily avoided his gaze as if her eyes had been stung. “Forgive me for being blunt, Mr. Jones, but I suppose your decision was made in such a hasty manner. After all, we don’t know each other well enough, and I currently have no intentions of accepting a new relationship.”

After all, she did not know enough about the man before her. Meanwhile, since most men were proud and ar*ogant, she supposed that they would often feel ashamed and disappointed, giving up ultimately when f*ced with direct rejection from a woman.

“Could you tell me how well we must know each other?” He fixed his gaze on her firmly. His deep, indecipherable look carried an imperceptible sharpness at this moment, like a predator locking onto its prey.

She was suddenly speechless.

She had known Louis for three years, during which they had spent all their time together. She had helped him without reservation, accompanied him through difficult times, and saved the Smith Group from bankruptcy. In other words, she had nurtured him to become the latest famous rich man in Seaxas along the way.

She had thought that she was the person who knew Louis the best in the world. However, despite all this, what she received, in the end, was his unhesitating betrayal.

“Do not judge a book by its cover, eh? What you see is not all there is. Still, intuition never lies, and it will affect a person’s judgment.” David’s deep voice rang out slowly. “So, I believe in my intuition.”

Hearing his words, Rachel could not help but laugh. “I understand the principle of not judging people by appearances, but when we get to know someone, don’t we usually start with their clothing, appearance, and eating habits? In other words, the most basic understanding should come before intuition.”

David did not intend to continue arguing with her about this matter. Instead, he compromised and smiled reluctantly. “There are a thousand Hamlets in a

thousand people's eyes. I don't expect you to agree with my views, Miss Grey. I hope you understand that pursuing you is my own business, so you don't have to feel any psychological burden." In the face of his persistence, she could only sigh helplessly. "Mr. Jones, I'm sorry, but I'm not considering anything emotional now..."

"Miss Grey, first of all, pursuing you is my own business, and secondly, I have no ill intentions. You don't need to respond to me with any enthusiasm immediately," he said. "In other words, you don't have to feel sorry for me, let alone have any psychological burden because of it."

After speaking, he turned around and left, not giving her a chance to refuse.

She stood there, looking at his tall and straight back, feeling both angry and amused.

She could have decisively refused with absolute certainty if he had used love at first sight as an opening line or the previous encounter as an excuse.

However, this man's cleverness lay in his straightforwardness. He had no intention of hiding his thoughts and was honest about his intentions.

This not only caught her off guard but also made her feel a little helpless.

At the end of the day, she was a person, and it was only natural that she found it impossible to be indifferent about everything.

Mary walked in with her favorite Best Fry pancakes when she was starving. "Rae, hurry. Eat while it's still hot," she said.

After putting down her belongings, she sat on the couch and caught sight of the men's suit jacket next to her. Her lips curved slightly downwards, and a hint of undisguised disdain appeared in her eyes. "You said you had decided to leave him behind, so why are you still holding onto his old clothes? Are you planning to go back to him?"

"It's not Louis's." She looked up at the suit jacket being pinched by her best friend with thoughts of the man she could not resist. Therefore, she could not help but let out a sigh. "It is from the man who drove me to the hospital yesterday."

Mary raised her eyebrows in surprise, her eyes gleaming excitedly as if she had caught a whiff of gossip. “My dear, you are obviously hiding something.”

“What could I be hiding?” Her eyes flickered slightly as she lowered her gaze and said softly, “It was just a chance encounter.”

“If it was just a chance encounter, why are you looking like that?” Mary smiled mischievously at her friend as she said, “Confession is good for the soul, and resistance is futile. Come on, spill your guts.”

After some persuasion from Mary, she briefly recounted the encounter at the hospital.

Fortunately, her friend’s attention was diverted entirely by Louis and Olivia. “Good lord, that pair of adulterers makes me sick! I would skin her alive and turn her into ashes if it were me!” Mary exclaimed.

“I hope she learns her lesson this time,” Rachel said, her eyes hiding a barely perceptible

chill.

After all, she didn’t plan to waste too much time and energy on Olivia. However, she would not mind making her suffer a bit if she failed to take her words seriously.

She was never a soft–hearted saint.

Mary nodded in agreement. “But I can’t just let Louis Smith off the hook like this!”

“So? What are you going to do?” she asked.

“I’m withdrawing my investment!” Mary said lightly, “I only agreed to give money to the Smith family because of you, but since they have turned their back on you, there is no point for me to remaining kind to them.

“But you should have discussed it with me before making a decision,” she said. “Not only does the Shallow Bay project have the development potential, but you also lost millions by suddenly withdrawing your investment! Oh lord, you have a problem with money, don’t you? Don’t you like to make money?”

Mary, meanwhile, acted as if her heart was carved open as she ran to her best friend's side, crying as she said, "I'm losing millions, Rae. You have to compensate me!"

"Why should I compensate you? It's obvious that you don't like money..."

In contrast to the joyful atmosphere on their side, Louis was very distressed at this moment.

After all, the Shallow Bay project had been the Smith Group's primary focus in recent years, with few people in the company seeing its potential initially.

To push the project forward, he overcame numerous obstacles and went to various places to solicit investment. Nonetheless, divestment had occurred at a critical juncture in the project, which would undoubtedly give it a fatal blow.

"No matter how, just make sure that you contact the Green family as quickly as possible!" his voice was tinged with a hint of coldness.

The assistant on the other end of the phone responded, "Yes, Mr. Smith."

After hanging up the phone, he took a deep breath and returned to the hospital ward.

Inside the hospital room, Mrs. Smith looked at the wound on Olivia's forehead and could not help but sigh. "She is a country woman by nature, and it is simply impossible for her to change her rough and crude ways no matter what. It was fortunate that Louis broke up with her during a critical time. Otherwise, who knows how many jokes she would cause in the future if she married into our Smith family!"

Louis walked in just in time to hear his mother's words, and his eyebrows furrowed slightly. Olivia caught a glimpse of his expression, and her eyes flickered slightly. She said with a pitiful expression, "Regardless, this is all my fault. I shouldn't have appeared at this time and caused a misunderstanding between Rachel and me. Besides, I shouldn't have affected their relationship by..."

"It is not your fault." He interrupted her, took the apple his mother was peeling, and explained calmly, "Between her and me, it was always about mutual benefit. You know, even without your appearance, that relationship would not have lasted long."

“With her background, how could she match the Smith family? It was only because of Louis’s kindness. You know, he couldn’t bear to reject her, so he agreed to marry her under her persistent begging,” Mrs. Smith said with obvious disgust when Rachel was mentioned. From the beginning, she had not agreed to the engagement between her son and Rachel. However, he seemed to have made up his mind. Because of this engagement, she had become the laughingstock of the upper–class circle for a while.

Olivia lowered her eyes, looking like she was about to cry. She presented as though she was a withering rose, which attracted pity. “When my father was framed years ago, he was worried that I would be implicated, so he sent me abroad hastily. That is the reason why I let Louis’s sincere love go to waste. I have done Louis wrong, and I have also hurt Rachel indirectly. But, you know, I just couldn’t control my feelings for Louis over the years...”

As she spoke, her voice trembled and quivered with emotion. The tears streamed down her cheeks like pearls, and her eyes were red from crying. “It is all my fault,” she said. “If not for me, none of this would have happened. Even if she hit me or made me kneel, I would be willing to return to Louis’s side as long as I could. I will do anything,” she said.

Louis felt a pang of sadness as he looked at her face, which was visibly upset and tear–streaked.

Without hesitation, he wrapped his arms around her, holding her tightly as he tenderly brushed away the salty tears that had rolled down her cheeks. He spoke to her in a soft, reassuring tone, letting her know she need not blame herself for whatever had happened. “You don’t have to say all of this,” he said gently, trying to comfort her.

As soon as Mrs. Smith laid her eyes on the two, a small smile crept up on her lips as she watched her son embrace the distressed Olivia.

She quietly left the room when, all of a sudden, Jane rushed in with her hand covering her face. “Mom...”

As soon as Jane saw her mother, she ran into her arms like she had found herself a savior. “You have to help me! I demand justice!” she cried.

“What happened?” The mother’s face changed suddenly at the sight of her daughter’s swollen cheeks. She held Jane’s face gently in her hands and asked coldly, “Did that bitch hit you that hard?”

Omitting her earlier mockery of Rachel, Jane recounted in detail how Rachel had hit her and even tried to kill her by dragging her to the balcony on the 15th floor. "Mom, you would not see me right now if no one were watching."

"Why did you go and provoke her? What is the point of doing that?" Louis reproached.

Thinking about Rachel's indifferent attitude toward him before, his expression turned a bit cold.

"But, Louis, I'm your sister!" she defended herself with reddened and teary eyes. "I'm the one who got hit and almost thrown off the building. How could you blame me for it?"

He snorted coldly. "Why didn't she hit me, eh? She could have hit me, but she hit you instead."

"Mom, can you believe what he is saying?" She stamped her foot in anger and hugged her mother's arm, throwing a tantrum. "She must apologize to me! I demand an apology!"

She was adamant about taking revenge, seeking justice for herself.

The mother tenderly caressed her daughter's swollen face while her eyes gradually became colder and filled with more disgust toward Rachel.

She had never liked Rachel. Not only did she despise her background, but she also loathed the indescribable arrogance and ostentatious aura that she carried.

She had thought that Rachel would behave appropriately after leaving the Smith family.

Nonetheless, she had become even more brazen, even daring to lay her hands on her daughter. It was as if she did not take the Smith family seriously.

"Let's go! I want to find out how she would have the guts to lay a hand on you!" Mrs. Smith grabbed Jane's hand and marched aggressively toward Rachel's ward.

Since Mary had received a phone call and left, only Rachel was in the ward right now.

Suddenly, a loud noise at the door caught Rachel's attention.

She turned her head and saw Mrs. Smith and Jane standing at the door.

Her eyes narrowed, a layer of coldness covering her delicate face as she said coldly, "You are not welcome here. Please leave."

"Rachel, how dare you speak to me like that?" Mrs. Smith strode into her ward, carrying her Hermes bag and looking down at Rachel. With her eyes filled with disgust, she looked at them judgementally. "Did you lay your hands on Jane?"

Rachel's lips curled into a sneer. "And how dare you come here and accuse me?"

"How outrageous!" Mrs. Smith exclaimed furiously. All of a sudden, a hint of disdain appeared at the corner of her mouth. "I've seen many women like you before! You used to act meek and obedient in front of Louis, but you finally show your true colors now that you know there is no hope for you to marry into a wealthy family!"

"The only thing that can hold me back in this world is myself," Rachel replied, and a faint smile appeared on her lips. Despite the smile, her eyes seemed to be covered by a layer of ice. "A mere Smith family is not worthy of my energy."

If she had not fallen in love with Louis, she would not have willingly removed her own armor or joined the obnoxious Smith family.

The Smith family was on the brink of bankruptcy, after all.

She wondered if she did so for the title of "Mrs. Smith".

Now that she had willingly given up Louis, everything about the Smith family would have nothing to do with her, and it would no longer be a shackle that bound her.

"Do not flatter yourself!" Jane covered her swollen cheek and glared fiercely at Rachel. "You pestered my brother relentlessly before and forced him to marry you within three years. In the end, everything you did was all for the sake of our family's wealth!"

Hearing her words, Rachel sneered, “The Smith family’s wealth? I am curious as to what kind of wealth a family on the brink of bankruptcy still possesses. Is it just a bunch of debts or mortgaged properties?”

“You...” Jane gritted her teeth and glared at Rachel, her eyes filled with hatred. “Stop talking nonsense and apologize to me on your knees!” Rachel glanced at Jane’s swollen face and casually said, “Impossible. There won’t be any apology coming from me, but I can help you make your face symmetrical.”

Jane took a step back and hid behind her mother in fear when Rachel approached her.

Mrs. Smith’s face became gloomy, and she stared at Rachel fiercely. “Rachel Grey, you have gone too far!”

“Me?” Rachel laughed as if she just heard a funny joke. “Back when the Smith family was on the brink of bankruptcy, I helped with the planning and networking, attracting investments from everywhere. The success your family has today is all thanks to me, Mrs. Smith! Haven’t you heard that you must be grateful to whoever has given you a helping hand? Is this how you people treat someone who helped you?”

It was a fact that Mrs. Smith had to admit, but also the truth that she desperately wanted to conceal.

After all, for a big family like theirs, it was embarrassing that they had to rely on a country girl with an ordinary background to turn the situation around. If this were to be made public, the Smith family’s reputation would be completely ruined.

Mrs. Smith took a deep breath and suppressed the anger swirling in her chest. She took out a bank card from her bag and said condescendingly, “There are 200 thousand dollars inside. Take it.”

Rachel lifted her gaze to Mrs. Smith but did not reach out to take the card.

Mrs. Smith walked up to her and placed the card on the nearby table.

Despite wearing high heels, which made Mrs. Smith taller than Rachel, it felt as though Rachel was more condescending, rising above her head instead.

It made Mrs. Smith feel even more disgusted.

“I have seen you by Louis’s side all these years,” Mrs. Smith said, lifting up her chin and striking a superior pose. “But emotions are emotions, and gratitude is gratitude. They are two separate things. Now that you and Louis have broken up, let’s not have any further involvement. Consider this money my way of making it up to you. From now on, the Smith family owes you nothing.”

“Owes me nothing?” Rachel smiled, but there was no warmth in it. “The Smith family owes me much more than 200 thousand dollars.”

The mother squinted her eyes slightly and smiled sarcastically, giving her a look. “I knew it. Why don’t you name your price then?” she asked.

She sneered, “My price? I want the Smith family to go back to the brink of bankruptcy!”

“Rachel Grey!” Mrs. Smith shouted sternly.

Truth be told, the Smith Group had barely managed to revive itself. Therefore, Mrs. Smith would not allow her to curse it.

Without another word, Mrs. Smith raised her hand and fiercely slapped Rachel’s face.

Jane watched on with excitement beside them, cheering in her mind. Her eyes widened in amazement.

After all, with that slap, Rachel’s face would definitely swell up like a balloon.

Mrs. Smith’s hand sliced through the air, creating a sharp wind around it. However, just when it was about to strike Rachel’s cheek, it was stopped.

It was because Rachel had taken hold of the attacking hand. Seeing this, Mrs. Smith could not help but stare at her in disbelief.

Mrs. Smith struggled instinctively but found that she could not break free from Rachel’s tight grasp. A hint of panic flashed across her eyes as she exclaimed, “Rachel, what are you trying to do?!”

Rachel gripped Mrs. Smith’s wrist more tightly, and a mocking smile broke across her face. She leaned toward Mrs. Smith and whispered in the latter’s ear, sarcasm and mockery lingering in her voice, “Since childhood, I have

been taught to respect the elderly and love the young. But if Mrs. Smith insists on being stubborn, I don't mind showing you the view from the 15th floor."

"You!" Mrs. Smith glared at her with fury. Her face had turned red. With gritted teeth, she exclaimed, "Rachel, you will pay for your disrespect toward me! Louis will never forgive you!"

Hearing that, Rachel chuckled and shoved the woman's hand away. "What does it matter to me if he forgives me or not?"

Mrs. Smith stumbled in her high heels and nearly fell to the ground, though Jane managed to catch her quick enough.

"Let's go!" Mrs. Smith gritted her teeth. She then snorted coldly and left without looking back.

As they walked out of the hospital ward, Jane could not help but complain, "Mom, Rachel is getting more and more out of control. We have to give her a taste of her own medicine!"

"Shut up!" Mrs. Smith glared at her daughter, her wrist throbbing slightly from pain as she said, "Don't provoke her unless you want trouble in the future!"

Jane grumbled unwillingly, "All right."

She lowered her gaze, hiding the malicious intent in her eyes.

She would never forget today's slap, and someday, she would make Rachel kneel and beg for mercy!

After the mother and daughter left, Rachel finally got a moment of peace.

However, immediately after that, the door was pushed open again.

She furrowed her eyebrows with annoyance and lifted her gaze toward the door, saying, "Will you ever stop..."

However, she found that the person who had pushed open the door was not Mrs. Smith but a stranger dressed in a black suit.

She smoothed out the annoyance on her eyebrows and politely asked but with a hint of coldness, "Who are you?"

“Hello, Miss Grey. I am Mr. Jones’s special assistant, Eddie Brook.” Eddie politely nodded at her and added, “My boss has prepared a gift basket for you.”

A smart woman like Rachel immediately understood that “Mr. Jones” was David Jones.

She replied, “I appreciate Mr. Jones’s kindness, but I cannot accept it since I have done nothing for him. You should take these back with you.” After all, Rachel did not like to accept something from a stranger for no reason, especially when she was aware that David had feelings for her. If she accepted, it would be tantamount to agreeing to his actions.

Meanwhile, Eddie remained polite and maintained a slight smile, making it impossible for people to fathom his emotions. “It seems what I’ve prepared doesn’t meet your preference, Miss Grey. Please wait a moment. I will prepare something else for you and make sure that you will be satisfied.”

In other words, if she refused to accept the gift basket, he would continue sending them until she finally agreed to take them.

Rachel cleared her throat before saying, “Then, you can leave it here.”

“Please enjoy, Miss Grey.” Eddie placed the gift basket on the table. His scrutinizing gaze quickly passed over her.

Rachel glanced at the chocolate inside, which was high-end and wrapped in exquisite boxes. Seeing that, she thought those were not typical items that one could buy from a supermarket.

“Please thank Mr. Jones for me.” She suddenly remembered to show her gratitude and said in a hurry, “It’s going to rain outside. You can take this umbrella.”

Eddie was startled for a moment before he smiled and said, “Thank you, Miss Grey.”

At this moment, his gaze toward her had changed from scrutinizing to appreciative.

Back then, when Eddie saw his boss sitting in the office and conducting a video conference while arranging a gift basket, he found it both strange and eerie.

However, what he found most unbelievable was how his boss carefully arranged the chocolates and instructed him to deliver them to Miss Grey. Though he had been by his boss's side for many years, he had never seen him show any particular interest in a woman. So, he was quite surprised when his boss started showing interest in one with such a unique charm that he even personally arranged a gift basket.

However, Rachel's words and actions made him see things in a different light.

As an employee, he was used to dealing with all kinds of wealthy young masters and mistresses. He was accustomed to their commanding tone and casual orders.

Even if others showed him respect, it was only out of deference toward his boss. However, he could feel that Rachel treated him with genuine respect and regard.

In other words, she did not take one's status or position into consideration, and she simply treated him as an ordinary person.

Eddie finished the task and made his way back to the company to report about it. After hesitating for a while, he finally handed his boss the investigation report he had finished. "Mr. Jones, would you like to take a look at this?"

David lifted his gaze. His sharp eyes pierced straight into his assistant's eyes like a sword.

Eddie's heart skipped a beat as he realized the gravity of the situation, and he subconsciously broke out in a cold sweat. He was reluctant for a moment before he cautiously explained, "The reputation of Miss Grey is not very good, so I took the liberty of conducting a private investigation on..."

However, his boss crushed the investigation materials and casually said, "No more playing clever!"

His tone was indifferent, yet it was sufficient to send shivers down Eddie's spine.

In an instant, Eddie tensed up. Realizing that he had made a grave mistake, he responded, "Yes, sir."

It was fine for an assistant to anticipate his boss's thoughts and intentions, but one should never cross the line and act on his own accord without the boss's permission. In other words, what Eddie did was a major taboo.

However, since Miss Grey's reputation was simply infamous, he was worried it would cause unnecessary trouble and a bad influence on his boss.

Based on his boss's demeanor, he could guess that the rumors had been heard to some degree. However, it seemed as though his boss had no intention of verifying the reality.

In the quiet office, David suddenly spoke, "I believe her."

Eddie's pupils flickered with incredulity.

As far as he could remember, his boss had never invested any energy in the opposite sex. Miss Grey was the only one so far.

Judging from Mr. Jones's attitude toward Miss Grey, one could easily tell that he was determined to make her his!

Thinking that he had worked for his boss for many years and had never made any mistakes, he had not expected himself to make one in the face of Rachel.

"Deliver three meals to her every day in the following days," David said. "Don't let your vulgar words reach her ears."

"Certainly."

In the following days, Eddie delivered the meals to Rachel on time.

Mary, who simply loved to watch the show, even expressed her fair guess. "Without a doubt, this man is a master."

"What kind of master are you talking about?" Rachel looked at her friend in confusion.

"A master of testing," Mary said with all seriousness. "You know, although he is not by your side, he is always with you. He will surely get you."

Hearing this, Rachel's brows twitched into a deep frown.

Now that she had accepted David's goodwill, she had no choice but to be nice to him. Thinking about his conviction back then, she realized that she could hardly resist.

She felt that she needed to fulfill the appointment with Mrs. Jones as soon as possible as a way to repay the favor of the meals and also to clear things up with David.

She hesitated for a moment before she took out her phone and opened Whatsapp. [Do you have time today? If Mrs. Jones is available, I would like to go and chat with her.]

As soon as the message was sent, a reply came instantly, and the duo agreed to meet in 20 minutes.

Upon seeing the immediate response from the other party, Rachel could not help but wonder if he had been waiting for her message all along.

Noticing her distracted state, Mary asked casually, "What are you going to do about the Smith family?"

"I will resign," Rachel replied decisively.

After all, she had nothing to hold onto in the Smith family.

Now that she wanted to cut ties with them, she would make sure to see it through because she was not the kind to procrastinate.

Hearing her response, Mary secretly breathed a sigh of relief.

Originally, she had been worried that her friend would feel guilty in the end.

Over the years, as an outsider, she had witnessed the extent of Rachel's dedication to Louis, and it was precisely thanks to her assistance that the Smith family had risen to their current position. In other words, without her help, the flourishing Smith family would not be able to maintain their success.

While Mary was lost in thought, her phone rang again. She took a look at the caller ID, and a faint hint of derision appeared in her eyes.

She hung up the phone without any hesitation. She realized that she had underestimated Louis's persistence.

The phone call was disconnected once again, bringing gloominess to Louis's face.

The sudden withdrawal of funds by the Green family had become known to the company's board of directors, and everyone believed that he had offended the family, which caused the directors' disapproval.

However, upon careful recollection, he realized that he had not even seen anyone from the Green family recently, so it was impossible for him to have offended them.

He was eager to meet with someone from the Green family to understand the reasons behind their fund withdrawal. In the meantime, he also wanted to persuade them to invest again.

While leaning against the hospital bed, Olivia looked at Louis's cold and grim face. After hesitating for a moment, she carefully asked, "Louis, is something wrong?"

"Nothing," Louis replied perfunctorily.

Her expression became downcast, and pearl-like tears silently rolled down her cheeks.

Seeing the tears on her face, Louis felt a sense of distress. He quickly walked up to her and gently wiped away the tears on her face with his fingertips. "Why are you crying when everything is fine?" he asked.

"It is all because of my uselessness. I can only watch you run into trouble, and I am not able to help," she said, nestling in his arms like a little bird. Meanwhile, her soft, tender hands rested on his chest. "Sometimes I really envy Rachel. I envy her intelligence and her methods. If she were here with you now, she would surely be able to help you."

Upon hearing Rachel's name, he felt a wave of annoyance.

It was as if the people around him were constantly reminding him that he was nothing without Rachel.

He had his own pride, so it was only natural that he found it difficult to be content living in the shadow of a woman.

However, the fact was that Rachel was the one who had fought for the investment from the Green family, and the fact that the Green family suddenly withdrew their investment shortly after Rachel broke up with him had him contemplate the cause within.

He wondered if Rachel had interfered and taken the opportunity to retaliate against him.

At the thought of this, a cold light flashed in his eyes.

“Take some rest. I will go talk to Rachel,” he said.

“I will go with you.” Olivia grabbed his hand and explained without waiting for him to refuse, “Rachel doesn’t have any relatives here. We should take extra care.”

He hesitated for half a second before he nodded. “When you see her later, don’t take anything she says to heart. Trust me. I will protect you and never let you get hurt again.”

Through his words, one could tell that he already viewed Rachel as a malicious presence.

“I understand.” Olivia blinked cheekily. She then stood on tiptoe and left a quick, gentle peck on his lips.

Rachel and Mary were gossiping about random things when they noticed Louis and Olivia appearing at the door.

In an instant, the smile on Rachel’s face disappeared, and a layer of chilliness took place between her eyebrows and eyes. “Please leave,” she said coldly.

Olivia bit her lip slightly and subconsciously tightened her hand that was holding Louis’s. Her expression turned gloomy immediately.

Having noticed Rachel’s coldness, Louis furrowed his brows slightly, and his hand gently stroked Olivia’s hand.

The scene deeply stung Rachel’s eyes. It felt as though her heart had been squeezed very tightly.

It was a tenderness she had never seen before.

In the past three years, she had been drinking so much alcohol at social events to help him secure investments from investors, and the only thing she got in return was his brief tenderness.

Meanwhile, Olivia did not have to do anything. Rather, just a pitiful look from her could easily evoke his tenderness.

It turned out that it could be a world apart when someone no longer loved one as they used to.

“I have come to ask you something.” Louis walked into the ward holding Olivia’s hand and got straight to the point. “Do you know anything about the Green family’s sudden withdrawal of their investment?”

Rachel lifted her gaze once again to look at him, carrying a hint of usual indifference in her eyes. “So, you came just to question me? Is that it?” she asked.

“This is an important matter!” His expression turned sullen as he looked at her. “The Shallow Bay project needs funding the most right now. Do you have any idea that the Green family’s sudden withdrawal of investment will have a profound impact on the Smith Group?”

“I do,” she replied casually.

In the beginning, she had given him all of her. Because of love, she had regarded the Smith Group as her own. However, there was no need for her to care about the development of the Group now that she had given up on him.

A faint smile tugged at the corner of her mouth, with a hint of sarcasm in the depth of her eyes. “But what does it have to do with me whether the Smith Group survives or dies?”

“Rachel Grey!” he could not bear it any longer and reprimanded her in a stern manner. The next second, the anger which had been brewing in his eyes erupted. “You have always been able to separate public and private affairs, so why have you become so unreasonable now? I will find my own way to resolve our conflicts and make up for you. So, how can you retaliate against me by threatening the future of the company? What you are doing right now is

something that only a despicable person would do. You are simply taking advantage of the chaos!”

She picked out a piece of chocolate with her delicate fingers, elegantly unwrapped it, and spoke calmly to refute his words, “Well, so you are saying that it was only natural for me to devote myself wholeheartedly to the Smith Group while ignoring the matters there would make me a despicable person, right? I take advantage of the chaos, huh? You are absolutely hypocritical!”

“Louis’s emotions got out of control because he has been busy with company matters lately. Please do not blame him for misuse of words,” Olivia said innocently as she looked at Rachel. “The Smith Group is Louis’s whole life work, and you should not involve personal grievances in it, Rachel. I know you hate me and despise me, but as long as you are willing to help Louis, I am willing to kill myself even if you want me to.”

“Then, go ahead and kill yourself,” Rachel blurted out.

Looking at Rachel, who was pushing her aggressively, Olivia turned to look at Louis with reddened eyes and a pitiful expression, looking as if she had suffered a great injustice.

Louis hugged her protectively, his eyes full of anger as he looked at Rachel.

“Rachel, why do you have to be so aggressive? Olivia is innocent. It is me who cannot forget her, and I have always loved her. If you have any grievances, come after me!”

“No. It is my fault.” Olivia, who was in his embrace, looked at him with tears in her eyes. “I should not have come back. I should not have shown up in front of you. I should not have ruined your relationship. It is all my fault...”

Mary, who was watching the drama on the side, could not help but question, “Olivia, did you drink a bottle of laxative before coming here? How come there is so much bullshit spilling out of your mouth?”

Olivia’s gaze fell on Mary upon hearing that.

Mary was dressed very low-key, but everything she wore was worth examining. The few bracelets that casually draped on her wrist were all limited edition items sold worldwide.

Olivia could not help but wonder why would a person with a remarkable background get involved with Rachel.

Olivia plunged into Louis's 'arms with grievances and distress while a barely noticeable hint of coldness flickered in her eyes.

Louis held her tenderly as he looked gloomily at Mary. "Miss, please be mindful of your words!"

"Tsk." Mary's lips curled into a half-smile, her eyes brimming with contempt. "Then, let me give you a piece of advice, Mr. Smith. One should always know when it is too far, and you'd better figure it out as soon as possible!"

Her warning and implications were unmistakable.

Frowning, he coldly questioned, "What do you want to do?"

Mary snorted, her eyes filled with sarcasm, "What can I do? I just want to kindly remind you that being a homewrecker shows one's bad character, and no one would bless them even if they truly love each other. Moreover, Miss Cruise is a public figure. Have you imagined what will happen to the Smith Group once the affair between you two is exposed? Can the Shallow Bay project go smoothly with that?"

Hearing her words, Louis's face immediately turned sullen.

He had a hard time bringing the Smith Group back to life and getting it back on track. No mistakes would be allowed at this crucial moment.

The directors of the Smith Group already had a problem with Louis because of the sudden withdrawal of the Green family. If Louis' affair with Olivia brought a negative impact on the company, the directors would definitely regard Louis as the culprit.

After that, Louis might even be dislodged.

His affair with Olivia might not be a piece of breaking news, but once known to the public, it would also whip up public opinion.

At the thought of it, Louis furrowed his eyebrows imperceptibly, and his gaze toward Mary revealed a glimpse of darkness and coldness. He asked Mary in a steely voice, "Who the hell are you?"

“Mr. Smith, now, I’m really starting to doubt whether you are a competent CEO or not.” Mary looked askance at Louis with mockery in her eyes and added, “I can’t believe you know nothing about your company’s former investor.”

As Mary spoke, she exchanged glances with Rachel.

Rachel then let out a faint sigh and said lightly, “This is Ms. Mary Green.”

Louis knew clearly what the word “Green” represented.

His eyes opened wide suddenly, and he stared at Mary incredulously.

The shock in his eyes gradually turned into raging anger, and his gaze, as sharp as a knife, shot toward Rachel. He gritted his teeth and said slowly, “So, it was you who sowed discord between us!”

“You’re wrong.” Mary chimed in, explaining, “At first, I agreed to cooperate with the Smith Group merely for Miss Grey’s sake. Now, I go back on my word purely because of my disdain for the homewrecker.”

Hearing the words, Louis pinched his lips tightly, his dark eyes staring intently at Mary.

When perceiving the hostility in Louis’ eyes, Rachel slightly moved to shield Mary behind her.

Rachel then looked at Louis with unusually cold eyes and spoke in an indifferent tone, “I, Rachel Grey, always do my business fair and square. I can think of multiple ways to retaliate against you, so I don’t have to use the sneaky trick behind your back. I didn’t pay you back before, not for my remaining love for you but for throwing away the misfortunes of meeting you. So, before I change my mind, hurry up to leave now, or…” Her gaze inadvertently swept over Olivia’s face before she warned with a stern look, “I don’t mind letting you two be a star-crossed couple!”

Louis’ face darkened promptly with a hint of ruthlessness in his deep eyes. “Did you just threaten me?” he asked.

“She was just telling you the truth.”

A low deep voice suddenly sounded behind them.

The crowd in the ward subconsciously looked in the direction of the voice.

The person had exquisite features and deep eyes. Even the gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose failed to hide the coldness in his eyes.

He walked directly toward Rachel with his straight and slender legs. The hem of his black windbreaker swayed slightly in mid-air as he strode in with a carefree calmness in his reserved temperament.

Rachel was glued to the spot, gazing dazedly at Adrian.

She thought, “Why does my little uncle Adrian come here?”

“Look at your silly look.” It sounded like Adrian was expressing his disgust for Rachel, but his gaze toward her was full of doting. As he spoke, he raised his hand to ruffle her soft hair.

“I’m not silly at all.” Rachel pushed Adrian’s hand on her head away and led him toward the sofa.

With his inquisitive gaze on Rachel and the man, Louis blurted out his question in a cold voice, “What is your relationship with him!”

Hearing Louis’s voice, Rachel stopped smiling and swept her cold gaze toward him before asking sternly, “Why haven’t you left yet?”

“Answer me! What is your relationship?” Louis, with his darkened expression, questioned again in a frosty voice as if he had caught his wife in adultery and wanted to figure out what was happening.

Rachel’s delicate face flashed with mockery, and with a snort, she answered, “Mr. Smith, who are you? Do you have the right to question me?”

“I…” Louis opened his mouth. He was about to refute Rachel’s words but found himself speechless even after racking his brain.

Rachel’s lips curved into a sarcastic smile, and she sneered, “Mr. Smith, please get out of here!”

Hearing the cold voice, Louis pursed his lips and left with Olivia’s hand in his after looking Adrian up and down.

However, he uncontrollably turned back and took a scrutinizing look at Rachel when he reached the door. There were mixed feelings in his dark and indiscernible eyes.

The moment Louis and Olivia stepped out of the ward, Rachel slammed the door of the ward with a bang.

Glancing at the closed door in front of her and Louis' sullen look, Olivia had a hint of coldness in her eyes. She then remarked lightly, "Rachel is really attracted to guys, unlike me. I have no male friends around except you."

Seeing Louis's cold face and his tightly pursed lips, Olivia decided to change the topic. "That man doesn't look young. Have you seen him

before? Do you know who he is?"

Louis's brows frowned slightly. With an inexplicable look in his eyes, he answered casually, "Maybe it's her previous partner."

"I see," Olivia responded slowly and got lost in thought.

At this time, in the ward, Mary darted a look at Rachel and said tactfully, "Since you have someone to accompany you, I'll leave first."

With that, Mary nodded at Adrian and got up to leave with her bag in her hand.

Finally, only Rachel and Adrian were left in the spacious ward.

Adrian put down the glass of water on the table and took the lead in asking, "Is that man you wanted to marry three years ago despite the opposition of your family?"

Adrian's cold voice didn't reveal his expression, but it inexplicably struck terror into Rachel's heart.

Rachel hesitated for half a second and nodded.

"That man doesn't seem like a nice guy!" Adrian grunted in disgust. He had thought of how to teach Rachel a lesson before coming to her.

However, watching Rachel standing there ill at ease, he didn't have the heart to criticize her. Later, he sighed helplessly. "Didn't you regret devoting yourself to such a scum instead of living a free and easy life as a princess?"

"Yes, I did." Rachel arched her eyebrows and showed a big pleasing smile before passing the glass of water to Adrian. She then said in a cute voice, "Adrain, please don't be angry about it."

Adrian raised his eyebrows. He reached out to take the glass and answered with a serious look, "You are the Johnson family's apple of the eye. How can I get mad at you?"

It was known to everyone that the daughter of the richest family in Seaxas, the Johnson family, was adored by her family although no outsiders knew her exact name.

Old Mr. Johnson loved her so much that he would like to fulfill all her wishes. The two young masters of the Johnson family also treated her as their hearts.

Perhaps it was because Adrian was only 11 years older than Rachel, Rachel was more relaxed and reckless in front of Adrian than Tom.

She held and shook Adrian's arm like a spoiled child before saying softly, "Well, Adrian, I know I was wrong. Please don't get angry..."

"Rachel, you are not foolish. Why did you take the bull by the horns on marrying that man?" Adrian couldn't help blaming Rachel at the thought of Louis's philandering appearance. "Ask yourself. How could that scum of the Smith family be worthy of you? I have no idea how that guy enchanted you!"

Thinking that Rachel had cut off contact with the Johnson family for such scum, Adrian was filled with bitterness and pulled a long face.

He played with the glass in his hand. A trace of mixed emotions flashed in his dark eyes as he said casually, "It is thanks to you that the Smith Group succeeded in overcoming its crisis and is rising rapidly, right?"

"Don't be nervous. With Mr. Johnson, one of the top 10 outstanding lawyers in the world, as my family, I know the law well and will never break it. So, don't worry about me." Rachel knew that Adrian was annoyed to see her bullied by the Smith family and wanted to seek revenge for her.

But Adrian was obviously overqualified. If Rachel intended to retaliate against the Smith family, she could even make it without Adrian's assistance.

Adrian raised his hand and pinched Rachel's face, but her previously chubby face was pale and thin now. His heart ached at that, and he said with concern flashing in his eyes, "You brute, I am trying to help you!"

Adrian learned from the previous phone call with his elder brother Tom that Rachel had devoted herself to the Smith family all these years but was abandoned by the scum Louis Smith. It was much more annoying than being defeated by his opponent.

"Uncle Adrian, I've thought it over. I won't get married for the rest of my life." Rachel leaned on Adrian's shoulder and added, "From now on, I will stay by your side and won't go anywhere."

After her failed relationship with Louis, Rachel learned not to cater to indifferent people and also not to disregard others' kindness.

Smiling indulgently, Adrian ruffled Rachel's hair and said with a gentle tone, "Whether to get married or not solely depends on you. The Johnson family doesn't need to sacrifice your marriage to gain their wealth."

After saying a few words, Adrian made his exit early due to work.

Before leaving, he turned to remind Rachel, saying, "Don't forget to attend the board meeting next Monday."

"Got it." Rachel nodded her head.

After seeing Adrian off, Rachel glanced at the clock and found it was almost time for her appointment with David.

She took a shower and changed into a clean dress.

Not long after Rachel finished dressing up, there was a knock at the door.

At the sight of David's assistant Eddie, Rachel was slightly stunned, and her heart pounded inexplicably.

Her lips then curled into a polite smile. "Thank you, Mr. Brook."

“Miss Grey, you are welcome.” Observing Rachel’s smile, Eddie inadvertently mentioned David, saying, “Mr. Jones is occupied for the time being, so he asked me to take you there.”

Since perceiving David’s affection for Rachel, Eddie had been treating Rachel more respectfully and cautiously, as if Rachel were his boss.

Rachel showed a half smile and replied softly, “Thank you for telling me about this.”

After getting into the car, Eddie explained, “Old Mrs. Jones was discharged from the hospital three days ago. I’m sending you to the mansion now.”

“Thank you,” answered Rachel.

The car finally halted in front of a tranquil villa.

The black and white villa was surrounded by lush greenery, looking as beautiful as a landscape painting. People seeing it could clearly sense the tranquility and peace of being remote from the madding crowd.

The whole mansion owned four courtyards. They were square and exquisite, showing off their sheer majesty.

There was a lake in the middle of the courtyards, and the stream meandered through the flowers and trees, passing under the corridor like a curved moon encircling half of the mansion. The koi hidden under the lotus leaves were faintly visible through the shimmering surface of the lake.

Old Mrs. Jones’s house was located on the east side of the mansion. A breeze blew over the beautiful flowers and trees nearby, and Rachel could smell their faint yet refreshing fragrance.

At this moment, the maids were working in an orderly manner. Eddie walked into Old Mrs. Jones’s house and spoke, “Old Mrs. Jones, Miss Grey is here.”

“Lead her in, please!” Old Mrs. Jones answered without hesitation.

Rachel walked inside and greeted Old Mrs. Jones, “Sorry for my unexpected arrival, Old Mrs. Jones.”

“Please don’t say that.” With beaming eyes, Old Mrs. Jones held Rachel’s hand and led her to the sofa. “I am really glad that you visited me.”

Old Mrs. Jones looked carefully at Rachel’s fair little face. Rachel looked much better, but she remained frail. “How are you doing?”

Rachel replied gently, “Thanks for your concern, Old Mrs. Jones. I’m already better. What about you? I didn’t know that you were discharged from the hospital...”

“It’s nothing serious. It’s an old weakness of mine.” Old Mrs. Jones looked at the well-behaved and sensible Rachel and found her more adorable. “David said that he was responsible for your hospitalization. Is it true?”

Rachel shook her head slightly and answered, “No. It’s my own problem.”

She knew that even without David’s presence, she would have suffered that serious illness.

After all, she had been physically and mentally overwhelmed.

Rachel thought the trauma she suffered in childhood had made her tough and unbeatable, but she still found it very hard to endure the pain when she was betrayed by the man she loved.

Noticing the despondent look on Rachel’s face, Old Mrs. Jones held Rachel’s hand tightly and said, “People are always greedy. They discard the old as soon as they have something new, and they never get satisfied. Therefore, they are instinctively fickle in their affection, but we can choose to be consistent in love. What belongs to you will not leave you even if you let go of your hands. And you should let go of things that do not belong to you. The choice is yours.”

Rachel stayed quiet with her head low. She was lost in thought while recalling what Old Mrs. Jones had said.

Marriage was never a restriction, much less a shackle that bound the other person to be loyal to someone forever.

“Love is like beautiful scenery. The couple travels hand in hand, but both of them have the choice to get off midway. You will eventually meet your Mr. Right, who can go to the same destination with you.” Old Mrs. Jones reached

out and stroked Rachel's thin cheeks. "Good girl, people live for themselves, not for others. Being trapped by love will only make you lose your true self."

Rachel gazed at Old Mrs. Jones, and her fragile face broke into a smile. "Thank you for your enlightening words."

"Thank you for coming and chatting with me." Old Mrs. Jones burst out laughing cheerfully.

Time flew. Old Mrs. Jones uncontrollably yawned.

Rachel saw the scene and said, with a touch of apology on her face, "I'm sorry. I forgot the time. You just got out of the hospital, so you should have a good rest."

With that, Rachel rose to her feet and was about to leave.

But Old Mrs. Jones took Rachel's hand and stopped her. "It's rare for to talk with me. What about having dinner here before leaving?"

"Old Mrs. Jones, I..."

Before Rachel declined Old Mrs. Jones's invitation, Old Mrs. Jones hurriedly interrupted, "I know I am an old lady, and young people like you dislike me. You always have your hands full, and you don't even have time to have a meal with me."

After saying that, Old Mrs. Jones glanced at Rachel, dropped her head disappointingly, and sighed. "Since you want to leave, then leave now. Anyway, I'm used to being alone all these years."

"I..." Rachel didn't have the heart to reject Old Mrs. Jones. She remembered her maternal grandfather had once complained to her about her busy life. All these years. Rachel had spent little time accompanying her maternal grandfather. Would he feel lonely in the spacious mansion of the Johnson family?

Thinking about this, Rachel compromised and quietly let out a sigh. "I can stay here, but you need to get some rest now."

"Well, I promise you." Afraid that Rachel would backtrack, Old Mrs. Jones hastily responded, "You can't coax me and go back on your words."

Seeing Old Mrs. Jones act like a spoiled child, Rachel chuckled and replied, "Don't worry. I won't lie to you."

After sending Old Mrs. Jones back to her bedroom, Rachel was led by the maid to a guest room.

It was a black-and-white room, revealing a cold atmosphere and its luxury.

Rachel looked around the room's furnishings. The scent of fir permeated the air.

She then stepped on the soft wool rug and went to the window.

The window provided an awesome view, displaying everything outside. Rachel had a wonderful time gazing at the garden.

The amazing scenery of the garden demonstrated the owner's good taste in architecture.

As Rachel was immersed in her thoughts, her phone on the bed rang. Rachel knew who would call her at this time without looking at it.

Rachel's slender fingertips swiped across the screen, and she picked up the call.

"Rachel, why aren't you in the hospital?" Mary's voice was heard through the phone.

Rachel curled her lips. "I'm outside. I won't be coming there for the time being. I need you to help me talk to the doctor."

"I'm glad that you're okay." Mary quietly sighed on the other end of the line. "I talked to the doctor just now. We can proceed with the discharge papers tomorrow."

Rachel replied, "Great."

"Also..." Mary hesitated for a moment before she said with a chuckle, "My studio recently received a new order, and the other party is from the Shain family. She specifically requested you to be her designer, so..."

Although Mary was the eldest daughter of the Green family and also the heiress, her mind was not set on inheriting the family business. Instead, she was more inclined to the design industry.

Five years ago, Mary decided to invest in her hobby and opened a high-end custom dress studio called "Redamancg". It took half a year for the studio to become famous before it finally became the darling of the fashion industry.

These days, the studio was not only a brand highly sought after by famous women, but it also had a brand value of over 20 million dollars.

One of the studio's designers named "Queen" was particularly sought after. The clothes she designed were rare to come by, and they became fashion pieces that many celebrities competed for.

Because of this, many fashion brands recognized designer Queen's value and wanted to poach her. But she kept her identity a secret and did not give anyone clues, so gradually, people lost their drive to uncover her identity.

Rachel pondered for a moment before saying lightly, "Sure. But there are many things I need to deal with after returning to the Johnson family. So, it will take longer than usual."

"It's alright. The other party said that as long as you agree, she can wait for no matter how long it takes. She also said that her biggest dream in life is to be able to wear a dress designed by you on her wedding day," Mary said. She could not conceal the excitement in her voice. "Babe, I look forward to you returning to us and leading us to the top."

Rachel smiled. "Alright, wait for me. We'll be back at the top in no time at all."

After the phone call ended, Rachel thought of the reason why she started designing wedding dresses in the first place, and her smile unknowingly faded.

At that time, she had fantasized about every wedding dress she touched. She had dreamed of walking toward Louis while wearing a dress that she designed by herself, but the reality turned out to be completely different. She thought to herself, "There is nothing sadder than trying to touch the heart of a person who has never reciprocated my feelings."

Before Rachel had time to dwell on her sadness, a loud clang was heard outside the door.

Clang!

It sounded like something breaking.

The loud noise startled Rachel, and she rushed outside to see what had happened.

“Miss Grey.” Rosie was bending over to pick up some ceramic shards on the ground. When she heard Rachel, Rosie looked up at her with an apologetic smile. “Look at me. I’ve become so clumsy due to my old age. I accidentally broke this because I didn’t get a good grip on the flower pot. Did I scare you?”

“No,” Rachel replied. She bent down and helped Rosie to pick up the remaining pieces. “Let me help.”

“Oh,” Rosie cried out softly. “No, no. Let me do it myself. Be careful not to hurt yourself.”

Rachel smiled sweetly. “Don’t worry. I’ll be careful.”

Rosie’s heart melted when she saw the sight of Rachel kneeling on the ground and picking up the broken pieces.

She finally understood why Rachel was so well-liked by Old Mrs. Jones.

Rosie had been with Old Mrs. Jones for a long time, and she had seen all kinds of people. All she needed was to take one look, and she could tell if someone had ulterior motives.

But Rachel was clearly different from the other women who had tried their best to marry into the Jones family.

Rachel was not scheming like other women.

She had a quality of innocence that had become almost impossible to find in most people.

When Rosie saw that the mess was almost cleared, she took the broken pieces from Rachel’s hands and asked politely, “Miss Grey, do you have any food preferences?”

“I’m good with anything,” Rachel replied sweetly.

A gentle smile appeared on Rosie’s face. “Miss Grey, please make yourself at home. Don’t be too polite, or the old lady of the house might think that we didn’t do a good job at making you feel comfortable.”

At that moment, they heard people exclaim from outside, “Hey, the weather changed so suddenly!”

“Oh, no!” Rosie’s face changed drastically, and she rushed outside quickly. “The old lady’s favorite orchid is still outside. Don’t let it get wet!”

Old Mrs. Jones had green fingers and enjoyed taking care of plants to pass her time. These plants were her favorites.

When Rachel saw Rosie leaving in such a hurry, she subconsciously followed her.

There were many potted plants placed along the corridor. The most eye-catching one was an orchid which Rosie must have been referring to earlier.

When Rachel was young, she was ignorant and accidentally knocked over her grandfather’s potted orchid plant. Instead of reprimanding her, her grandfather was only concerned about whether she was scared or injured.

Later, she learned from her Uncle Tom that the orchid plant she had knocked over was a very expensive one that had cost her grandfather 3

million dollars.

As Rachel spotted the orchid, she grew curious about the identity of the old lady for the first time.

She also wondered about what David was like.

When Rachel spotted the dark clouds forming, she did not have time to continue pondering. She picked up a pot of moth orchids and ran toward the greenhouse which was nearby.

Miss Grey, you should just rest, Rosie said as she looked at Rachel’s slender arms and legs. “Leave the rough work to us.”

Rachel replied, “It’s no trouble.”

It had started drizzling, and the rain was becoming heavier. Rachel hugged the pot of moth orchids in her hands and subconsciously picked up her pace.

The cobblestones along the garden path were a bit slippery. Rachel's shoes were drenched, and she suddenly slipped as she ran along the cobblestones. It was too late for her to regain balance, and she stumbled.

Rosie, who was standing not far behind her, exclaimed, "Miss Grey!"

Rachel was so frightened that her face turned pale. She closed her eyes and subconsciously hugged the potted plant in her arms.

In the blink of an eye, a strong arm wrapped around her waist, and she was pulled into a tight embrace.

Everything happened so suddenly that Rachel could not react in time.

The pain that she was expecting from the fall never came. She wondered to herself, "What is happening?"

When Rachel slowly opened her eyes, she saw David in close proximity. It turned out that he had caught her just in time to break her fall.

The man's jawline was extremely sharp, and his protruding Adam's apple looked vaguely sexy. He had a long and slender neck. One could feel an elegant aura emitting from him. He was a very attractive man indeed.

Their bodies fit together perfectly. Rachel was instantly enveloped by the man's large frame, leaving her with no space to escape.

Their gazes met without warning. Rachel could see her own reflection in the man's eyes, and it was so intoxicating.

Her heart skipped a beat. Then, it started pounding. Soon, a tinge of pink appeared on her fair cheeks.

"Have you always been so clumsy?" David's deep and mesmerizing voice rang in her ears. It was as if the man was teasing her.

His warm breath fanned across Rachel's face. It instantly felt like an electric current passing through her body, making her skin tingle and causing her to tense up involuntarily.

At this time, Rachel noticed that David's arms around her had loosened. She hastily pulled away and retorted in a low voice, "It's not that I'm clumsy. It's just that the path was too slippery..."

David caught a glimpse of the blush on her face. He suddenly thought about teasing her. With a low laugh, he said, "If we go with your logic, the cobblestones on this path should be removed."

Rachel pursed her lips and did not speak.

She squatted down and carefully picked up the moth orchid plants from the broken flowerpot. She then gently wiped off the dirt on the roots with her fingertips. Smiling subconsciously, she said, "I'm glad the roots of the orchids are not damaged. Otherwise, it would be terrible."

David squatted down and looked at Rachel quietly. There was a tenderness in his gaze that had never been seen before.

But when his gaze shifted to Rachel's slender hands, he frowned and grabbed them.

Rachel was startled by his actions. She followed his gaze and realized there was a small cut on her wrist.

She must have accidentally injured herself earlier when she dropped the flowerpot. It was just a light scratch and not a big deal at all.

"I'm fine," Rachel said and wiped her wound with her shirt without thinking too much.

But David picked up Rachel without a word and walked toward the living room with large strides.

"The orchids!" Rachel exclaimed in shock as her arms instinctively wrapped around the man's neck. At the same time, her forehead brushed against his lips inadvertently.

David's body stiffened, but his pace did not slow down.

He entered the living room and placed Rachel on the couch. Then, he quickly found the first-aid kit and soaked some cotton balls in an antiseptic solution.

“Let me do it.” Truthfully, Rachel was not bothered by her injury. If David had not brought it to her attention, she would have left the wound to scab on its own. It simply was not something to be concerned about.

However, by kicking up a big fuss over nothing, it revealed just how worried David was about her. This touched Rachel deeply, and she was unable to reject his attention.

David turned a deaf ear to Rachel’s words. Holding the tweezers, he squatted before her and said, “This might sting a little. Bear with it.” Then, he dabbed at her wound gently with a cotton ball that had been soaked in antiseptic.

After cleaning up the mess outside, Rosie rushed into the house. Eddie, who had just arrived, was right behind her.

Eddie saw David kneeling on one knee and carefully disinfecting the wound on Rachel’s hand.

It was at that moment that Eddie realized just how special Rachel was to David. He thought to himself, “I don’t think there is anyone else like her in this world.”

He had never seen David kneel for anyone in his life.

Not long after, Old Mrs. Jones woke up from her slumber.

When she saw the gauze wrapped around Rachel’s hand, she asked in surprise, “Are you okay? How did you get hurt?”

While speaking, Old Mrs. Jones glanced at David. There was a complicated look in her eyes.

She thought to herself, “Don’t tell me that he was too forceful with her and accidentally hurt her in the process?”

Rachel smiled. “I got a scratch when I accidentally broke a flowerpot earlier. Mrs. Jones, please don’t worry. It’s just a minor injury.”

“I’m glad you’re fine.” Old Mrs. Jones nodded thoughtfully. She suddenly grabbed Rachel’s hand and said with a kind smile, “Since you’re hurt, you should stay here tonight.”

David raised his eyebrows. He chimed in, "Yeah, and it's raining outside. I don't think it's going to stop anytime soon, or at least not tonight."

"Rachel, your body is not fully recovered yet. You must not expose yourself to the rain. Since you're also injured, it would be terrible for you to get drenched," Old Mrs. Jones said seriously.

David handed a cup of tea to Old Mrs. Jones. With a small smile, he said, "Grandma's words make sense."

Rachel, who didn't have a chance to speak, was speechless. Old Mrs. Jones's proposal was out of the blue, catching her off guard. She did not know how to respond to the old woman's kindness.

Just like that, Rachel was forced to spend the night at their place. It had all happened so suddenly.

When dinner was ready, the three of them sat down at the table to eat.

Old Mrs. Jones looked at Rachel, who had an elegant dining etiquette. Her eyes sparkled as she said, "Rachel, are your parents both in Seaxas?"

At the mention of her parents, Rachel lowered her gaze. She shook her head and said softly, "My mother passed away when I was very young."

As for her father... It was better not to think about him at all.

A trace of coldness appeared in Rachel's eyes. She thought to herself, "He's as good as dead to me."

Old Mrs. Jones frowned slightly. She looked at Rachel with distress and said, "Then, are you living on your own? If you are, why don't you move in here with me? It's not safe for a young girl to live alone. If you move here, at least I can take care of you. Also, I'll get to see you whenever I miss you."

"Grandma, you shouldn't talk when you're eating. That's your own rule." David gave his grandmother a look and interrupted their conversation.

"Rules are meant to be broken!" Old Mrs. Jones snorted softly before pouting. "You're trying so hard to thwart my plans instead of helping me," she said.

David was speechless.

Rachel pursed her lips awkwardly. She then lowered her head and ate in silence.

At this moment, a hand reached toward her.

The man's hand was very pretty. His skin was smooth like porcelain. Rachel watched with fascination as he gracefully picked up a shrimp with his chopsticks.

With great skill, he peeled the shell of the shrimp in a matter of seconds.

Rachel had never seen someone who could peel a shrimp so gracefully and quickly. She had caught sight of his hand by accident, but now, her attention was fixed on his actions.

She thought, "With such beautiful hands, everything he does seems graceful."

She blushed when she thought about that exact pair of hands touching her.

David noticed Rachel's gaze on him, and a small smile appeared on his usually stern face. It was as if he could read her mind.

It was not until David placed a plate of peeled shrimps before Rachel that she returned to her senses. She gazed at David gratefully.

"Try them," David said as he looked at the dazed Rachel. His smile grew wider, reaching his eyes.

Rachel's response was delayed. She said softly, "Thank you."

She picked up her chopsticks and put one shrimp in her mouth. The sweet taste of the shrimp meat traveled from the tip of her tongue to her taste buds and finally spread to her heart.

Old Mrs. Jones raised her eyebrows and glanced meaningfully at David.

She thought to herself, "It seems that he's not as ignorant as I thought. Maybe he does understand how to pursue women."

"But..."

She looked down at her own shrimps which still had their shells and suddenly lost her appetite. David had not peeled them for her.

Old Mrs. Jones pushed the shrimps aside and asked again, "Rachel, when do you plan to come and stay with me?"

Rachel put down her chopsticks and replied sweetly, "Grandma, I'm actually staying with my grandfather."

"I see," Old Mrs. Jones said. There was a look of understanding on her face, but a trace of regret could be seen in the depths of her eyes.

Before this, Old Mrs. Jones thought that she could have David and Rachel live under the same roof. She hadn't expected Rachel to be staying with her grandfather.

When the dinner was over, David brought Eddie to the study to take care of some work affairs. After the matters had been dealt with and they left the study, they walked out into the living room and were greeted by a heartwarming sight.

Rachel was sitting right beside Old Mrs. Jones and chatting with her. The warm light in the living room illuminated her beautiful face, highlighting her sweet smile as she listened patiently to Old Mrs. Jones.

At that moment, David finally understood what home felt like.

"David," said Old Mrs. Jones when she caught sight of David, who was in a daze at the staircase. She beckoned him over with a wave. "Since you're done with work, you should go for a walk with Rachel. I'm tired, and I'm going to rest."

"Alright," David said. Then, he looked at Rachel as though he wanted her permission.

Rachel stood up. With a small smile, she said, "Grandma, please rest well."

A wide smile grew on Old Mrs. Jones's face as she watched the young couple leave together. Then, as if she was reminded of something, she heaved a long sigh. "I hope that rascal knows what he's doing and succeeds in making Rachel fall for him," she muttered to herself.

"Don't worry," Rosie said beside her. On the other hand, she felt that Old Mrs. Jones was worrying about nothing. Rosie looked at the disappearing back

views of the well-matched couple. Smiling, she said, "Mr. Jones is an outstanding man. How could Miss Grey not fall for him?"

Upon hearing this, Old Mrs. Jones raised her eyebrows. With an intriguing smile, she said, "Do you think Rachel is any inferior compared to him?"