## **CHOSEN 1541**

Chapter 1541

Carolina's expression turned blank, and it took her a while to come back to her senses. She said, "Jonah, I know you've always been upset about the crap I pulled on Chloe. You've always felt sorry for her and guilty about her! But your favoritism and protection should have a limit. At your age, are you really gonna go this far just to make up for your guilt, even if it means dragging your own name through the mud? You've been a straight shooter all your life, and now you're just piling on the blame on yourself. Is that worth it?"

Jonah shook his head, "I handed you the control of the company, the reins of the family, and even allowed you to be harsh on Chloe, and other things. If I didn't owe you, I wouldn't have spoiled you like this over the years."

Carolina was taken aback.

Jonah continued, "So, all the evidence today is true. Nick is not your biological son."

"Shut up!" Carolina suddenly shouted in emotional outburst, "I don't want your money anymore, okay? You don't have to go out of your way to make up stories to cover for Chloe. That's just ludicrous. Weren't you always about dignity? Don't you want to keep that now?"

Jonah shook his head, "That year, she gave birth ten days before you. You were working overtime at the company that day, and your water broke. The security guard found you and sent you to the hospital. By that time, the amniotic fluid had already dried up. You fainted and don't remember any of this. You had a C–section, but the baby was already dead."d2

"Shut up!" Carolina covered her ears with her hands, trying to drown out Jonah's voice with her own. She didn't want to hear his nonsense!

People started whispering below. Jonah was trembling with his crutch, but he forced himself to stand there and continued, "I knew you'd be heartbroken when you woke up, so I brought her newborn son, who was only ten days old. You woke up and saw him, and you were delighted."

"Stop it! Jonah, I don't believe it! You're just making this up to help Chloe! Nick is my son! The son I carried for nine months. That's the truth. I don't want money anymore. Just take back your words." Carolina said.

If money used to be Carolina's crutch before, now she was completely falling apart.

"Carolina, our son is really gone." Jonah said.

"I don't believe it!" Carolina's face twisted as she glared at Jonah, "The checks were all normal."

Jonah took a deep breath, "The checks. You were at the company all the time that year. How many times did you go for the checks? You were working overtime almost every day when you were pregnant. Do you still not understand how you lost the baby? Sometimes I want to blame you, but I was the one who made the first mistake. If had paid more attention to you, maybe this wouldn't have happened."

Carolina paused. Her gaze seemed to suddenly realize something, and then she stared at Jonah. "So while I was working all day at the company, you were accompanying that woman? Taking care of her, going for check—ups with her and accompanying her in childbirth." Her questions got sharper and sharper, sounding increasingly bitter to others.

Jonah was silent for a long time before finally admitting with a bitter smile, "Yes, that's right. When you were busy with work, I was taking care of another woman."

He admitted it outright. His appearance here today meant he had decided to reveal his secret of many years. He had made too many mistakes in his life. Admitting them was a relief for him, as well as a way

of making amends. He had been covering up the damage that was already done, pretending, and deceiving others. Now, he couldn't let his mistakes continue.

He had indulged Carolina in doing too many unforgivable things, causing Chloe too much pain. He couldn't just let it go anymore.

Maria, her child, Carolina, Nick, Chloe... He felt guilty towards them all. His mistakes had caused things to spiral out of control time and time again. These were all his doing, and he should end what he started,.

Jonah seemed determined to reveal all his past mistakes to the public, openly admitting everything he had done.

Chloe finally laughed. This was all too familiar.

It took Carolina a long time to sneer. When she was working hard and staying up late at the company, her husband was with another woman, accompanying her, taking care of her, going for check—ups and helping her give birth.

She knew Jonah's character best. He wouldn't lie. His expression didn't look like he was lying either.

"So the baby I worked so hard to give birth to was a stillbirth?" She started to cry, "Jonah, so the son I love so much is actually your child with that woman?"

Carolina looked up at the sky, tears flowing uncontrollably.

It was too ironic. Chloe had just said to let her experience the feeling of Lance and Keira being together. Carolina had pushed Lance and Keira together because she preferred Keira and wanted to give her the best. She never thought that Keira and Lance being together was a mistake; she even thought it was

natural.

And now she was being punished for it.

Chloe had worked hard and put in a lot in the Olson Group, but Lance was with Keira. And Carolina, who had worked hard for the Summers family, found out that her husband had been with another woman all along.

Carolina truly understood this feeling deeply. It was too ironic. Everything she had done to Chloe, now she was experiencing the same pain.

"Jonah, you did a great job." Carolina said.

Carolina sat in the chair, her hands covering her face, completely defeated.

In the end, she even begged Chloe for money for Nick's sake, ignoring her dignity, But the result was this.

"It's just so absurd. I've busted my ass off for the Summers family my whole life, and in the end, turns out I've got zero connection with the Summers family. Ha! All of you guys are Summers, and I'm the only one who's not. Just me." Carolina murmured.

## Chapter 1542

"This is just ridiculous. I've spent my entire life being loyal to the Summers family, and in the end, I'm the only one who doesn't belong to the Summers family. You're all Summers, all but me all but me..."

Jonah, Nick, and even Chloe. But where did she belong...

Jonah's lips trembled, and his eyes were filled with tears. His heart was filled with pain, sorrow, regret, and guilt. "I thought I would take this secret to my grave. I thought I was nearing the end of my life, but I didn't make it... I never would have thought that you would go and ask Chloe for money. If it weren't for that, my dirty secret could have been buried forever..."

Nick sighed deeply and took a deep breath.

"It's fate. it's fate... I have to pay for the mistakes I've made in this life. Maybe it's a good thing to confess. At least we can die with a clear

conscience "c2

The courtroom was silent. Everyone quietly watched the events in the courtroom. They didn't know how to describe the current situation, and they didn't know what they were feeling. For them, this trial was really unexpected. Every second was surprising. First, there was Carolina's unscrupulous behavior, and now this shocking twist. It was simply unbelievable.

It was like watching a suspense horror movie. They never knew what would happen next.

This turn of events caught Carolina off guard and left everyone in the courtroom unable to fully react. This was the first time the judge had encountered such a chaotic situation. He was also shocked by what had happened and was somewhat stunned.

Today's trial was full of surprises. Who could have expected that Old Mr. Summers, who was always low–key and charitable, had done such a thing in the past? And they were even more surprised that he

had managed to keep it a secret for so many years, but he chose to expose this secret today, in court

Facing the chaotic courtroom, Chloe, who had been standing quietly with a blank expression, suddenly raised her chin, and a sarcastic smile appeared on her lips.

She turned to the judge on the platform and said, "The evidence above is enough to prove that I have no blood relation to Carolina Petry. Although she is my elder in name, she has never fulfilled her responsibilities. So, I suppose I have no obligation to support her, right?"

The judges looked at each other, discussed briefly, and immediately banged the gavel, declaring that Carolina's lawsuit was invalid. Chloe was not obliged to support her. At this point, no one was surprised by the verdict.

Chloe took a deep breath and glanced at Jonah, who was trembling on the witness stand, and Carolina, who was sitting there, furious. She gave a small smile, stood up, and turned to leave. The matter was settled, and she didn't need to stay and deal with them.

Seeing Chloe leave, Damon also stood up, followed by Nathan, Rose, and others. The chaotic courtroom gradually returned to order. In the end, only Jonah, Carolina, and Nick were left. Carolina sat there, watching Chloe disappear from her sight with a triumphant smile

Now, all she felt was hatred. Why couldn't she beat her?!

Since the trial was not open to the media, a group of anxious reporters immediately surrounded Chloe when she left the courthouse. They all

asked about the outcome of the trial.

Chloe, held by Damon, walked expressionlessly through the crowd. She didn't give any response. She was escorted all the way to the car Before getting in, Chloe turned to face the approaching reporters

and said calmly. "Thanks for your concern. The result of the trial is... I won."

She paused slightly as she spoke, faced the camera, and revealed a faint smile. Then, under Damon's protection, she got into the car.

Although this was the answer the reporters wanted most, it wasn't enough. They were still unsatisfied.

Soon after, bystanders came out, and the reporters immediately surrounded them.

The bystanders' accounts also shocked the reporters.

Not long after, Wendy came out of the door with a gloomy face. The reporters shook their heads at the sight of her but still gathered around.

"Ms. Wendy, I'm sorry that Ms. Summers has disappointed you again. How do you feel right now?"

"It's said that you've been paying for Carolina's living expenses these days. Now that you've lost the lawsuit, do you plan to get your money back?" "The Alonso Corporation is just getting back on its feet and needs funds. This money should come in handy, right?"

The reporters could no longer maintain a neutral interview stance toward Wendy. Her series of actions were just too unacceptable. The reporters' sarcasm only made Wendy's face look worse.

After she left without saying a word, the reporters and bystanders were speechless about this woman. They were all talking about her.

"No matter what we say, it won't change her. She's just like Carolina, shameless."

"I'm speechless about shameless people. How could she be like this."

"She probably still thinks she's great. Shameless people never know how shameless they are. In their hearts, they always have their own sense of justice."

In the midst of this complex discussion, time slowly passed, and Jonah and his group finally appeared at the courthouse door. Carolina was behind them, looking sad and being supported by several people. When she walked down the steps, her body even softened for a moment, almost falling down. Her appearance silently confirmed that all the news they had just received was true. If not for this, how could a shameless person like Carolina end up like this?

Reporters started to grill again, "Jonah, can you spill the beans on who your lover was back in the day?"

"Where is she now? How did you persuade her to hand the kid off to you, or did you, more accurately, rip the child from her arms?"

"How did your child with Carolina die back then? And how have you managed to keep this under wraps for all these years?"

Chapter 1543

"Could it be that you've turned a blind eye to your company and let Carolina run amok all these years because you felt guilty?"

Jonah's wrinkled face trembled violently, and his complexion was so bad it looked like he would collapse at any moment. He replied, "That's all in the past She must be somewhere living peacefully and happily now, and I won't reveal who she is. As for the child... The child was taken from her by force by me I feel guilty towards her, and to my wife as well. I've been trying to make up for it in my own way, which has led to the current situation. It's all my fault. I apologize to Chloe once again."

Facing the press, Jonah was still candid, firmly disclosing everything he had done in the past. Carolina was standing behind, and as Jonah repeatedly publicized how he betrayed her and how he cruelly treated another woman, she could only sneer, full of irony. Hearing Jonah admit it personally was even more shocking than hearing it from someone else

"What a farce. It's so ridiculous I can't believe the man I've been with for so many years had betrayed me. I worked my ass off for the company. and my man was taking care of another woman's child. Haha. All these years, I was clueless. All these years... My husband wasn't mine, my son wasn't mine, and my granddaughter wasn't mine. Haha... You guys are all part of the Summers family, only I'm not. You are really something

She was laughing like a madwoman, repeating these words over and over. To her, this was obviously the tragedy of her life. Her life turned out to be such a joke c2

Chloe had her fiancé snatched away by Keira, fortunately, she found out early and decisively ended the relationship. She wasn't married, didn't have children, and wasn't deceived for a lifetime like her.

How lucky Chloe was, but what about her?

The reporters were inevitably shocked by Carolina's performance, but considering the situation, if she were indifferent, they would find it odd.

Wendy habitually smashed her office into a mess. A few secretaries and assistants stood outside, expressionless and silent. As for this crazy woman, their attitude was just to do their jobs well. After all, the stuff she was smashing wasn't theirs.

After venting, Wendy sat in her wheelchair, panting heavily, her eyes red and swollen.

When Cole arrived and saw her like this, he immediately frowned He said, "What are you freaking out about?"

Wendy s features twisted together, every part of her face trembling.

She shouted, "Again! It's like this again! I just want to see her fail! Why can't it happen? Even though her odds of winning were slim, why could she turn the tide? Why is she always so lucky? This bitch, why is everything so smooth for her? She's the president of Starlight International, she's Damon's woman, and she's the princess of Y country! Everything is hers! Why? Ahhh!!!\*

In the end. Wendy suddenly clutched her head and screamed. She thought that her relationship with Damon, and her position in the Alonso family, were stronger than Chloe's. But what happened?

She watched as Chloe gradually surpassed her, took everything that belonged to her, and yet didn't get any punishment. She just wanted to see Chloe's face of failure That wasn't very unrealistic, right? Why couldn't she even realize this small wish?

Cole was startled by Wendy's shouting, and he looked at Wendy suspiciously. "Wendy, are you really... sick?"

This was too abnormal! He had always been avoiding this question, not believing that the daughter he had been nurturing would have a problem. But her recent series of behaviors forced him to admit that Wendy might be twisted inside

Wendy's eyes were full of hatred, she looked straight at Cole. "What's wrong with me? I'm completely healthy. Why are you worried about me? I'm very healthy now."

Damon ruined her limbs with no chance of recovery, yet why did she claim she was completely healthy? Cole felt more and more frightened by the sight of his daughter. He said, 'Are you mad or stupid? Considering your current physical condition, you..."

"So what?" Wendy suddenly screamed hysterically again, interrupting Cole. "So what? Damon ruined me! Because of that bitch Chice, he tortured me into this state! Can I be fine now? Can my hands and feet recover? is my current state not healthy? The doctor said I'm healthy

She started crying, "I am like this because of Chloe, and I can't even see her face of failure How can I accept this?"

Seeing her lose control, Cole felt pain in his heart. Yes, even he, who had lived for decades, had never experienced such a thing. She was still young, how could she bear such pressure?

He said, "Everything needs to be taken slowly. Think clearly before you act. In your current state, aside from making a fool of yourself, what else can you achieve?"

Wendy nodded, slowly calming down.

"You're right. Dad, you're right! We need to take it slow. There's something off about today, let me think. Why would Jonah choose to confess everything today after hiding it for so many years? He's always been in the church. unless..."

She stopped speaking, her eyes slowly sharpening, and finally, she let out a faint laugh. "This bitch is really ruthless

This lawsuit attracted a lot of attention, and Chloe's victory made everyone breathe a sigh of relief. And the reason for the victory made people even more shocked

"Wow, I didn't expect such a big secret to be involved."

"I can't believe the biggest culprit is Old Mr. Summers, who has always been relatively nice to Ms. Summers!"

Chapter 1544

"While his wife was pregnant and busting her chops for the company, he was off playing house with his mistress, attending prenatal appointments, and even had the nerve to pass off their love child to his wife. He's seriously the worst guy ever. I've seen it all now."

"I gotta say, as shameful as Carolina's actions are, they're kinda understandable this time." "But it's pretty wild. I thought the only shot at winning the case was if Ms Summers wasn't actually a blood relative of the Summers family. Turns out, it has nothing to do with Carolina. Hahaha..." "And is it just me, or does anyone else feel a tiny bit of sympathy for Carolina despite all the screwed up things she's done?" "You're not alone!"c2 "You're not alone." That was human nature for you. No matter how terrible someone's past actions might have been, if they were the underdog now, people would forget how unforgivable their past behavior was. Suddenly, a lot of people started feeling sorry for Carolina "Did Ms Summers go a bit overboard this time? After all, Carolina is old, and she doesn't really need the money. If she had just given it to her, she would've done a good deed. Why go to such lengths to expose a secret that's been kept for so long? How many years does Carolina even have left? Can't Ms Summers show a little compassion?" "Carolina is her grandfather's wife, after all. Giving her a little money wouldn't be the end of the world, right? Why take this to court and embarrass her like this? I really want to know, even if she won the case, is she really happy?" "Honestly, if she had just given in a bit, the Summers family wouldn't be in such a mess. "Yeah, Carolina and Jonah messed up, but no one's perfect. She can't be completely faultless." The online comments were a bit hard to understand at first, but if you thought about it, this whole farce

wouldn't have happened if Chloe had just backed down a bit.

At this critical moment, someone suddenly said that a few days ago, Chloe had visited Sacred Heart Church.

Jonah had always been alone at Sacred Heart Church, oblivious to the outside world. Otherwise, he would've stepped in and stopped Carolina from causing a scene at Starlight International from the start. But he didn't. Instead, he suddenly appeared in court at the end, took the stand, and exposed his past scandal, completely turning the case around.

This news didn't seem like much, but it put Chloe right in the middle of the controversy She must've found something beforehand, went to Sacred Heart Church, and used the evidence she got to force Jonah to testify for her!

"So it's really like that, huh? Even though Jonah is a bad guy, he's always been good to Chloe, right? But now he's old, and he's being forced to expose his scandal It's kinda funny and sad at the same time."

"Everyone s praising Ms Summers like she's some kind of saint. I don't get it. Where do you see her goodness in her selfishness, manipulative behavior, and willingness to do anything to get what she wants? She's the typical villain in novels and TV shows! What the hell is wrong with society? Don't you guys have your own standards of judgement? Just because other people say she's good, you just go along with it? Every time she's in trouble, there's a bunch of people kissing up to her. It's disgusting!"

"Your words are a bit harsh, but you're speaking the truth."

Even though she won the case, Chloe's reputation took quite a hit.

Seeing these comments, Wendy felt a lot better. She was even more motivated for the upcoming business gala. Considering Chloe's current image, who knew how she'd be treated at the gala?

Chloe was indeed affected. From the time she left the court until she got back to her apartment, she looked upset.

The scene of Jonah on the witness stand, revealing his past sins bit by bit, still echoed in her mind. His gaze, his expressions, his demeanor, everything was still fresh in her mind. She didn't expect Jonah to come forward and expose his past to the public.

She could handle all the consequences, including any negative impact. She made him pay the price, but she didn't make him face the public

himself

If he wanted to atone for his sins in the church, then he could just stay there Even though people might've thought badly of him, he was isolated from the world in the church and wouldn't be affected He could live peacefully, and that was enough Exposing the truth was necessary, but not in this way

The TV in front of her was on, playing ads on a loop. She sat on the sofa, hugging a pillow, her head down, expressionless, not saying a word.

Damon gave her enough time to think and digest everything. But he wouldn't let her dwell on it definitely. He sat down next to her, his face emotionless. He asked, "Are you still thinking about it?"

Chloe blinked, turned around, and buried her face in Damon's chest. "I didn't expect him to be the one to reveal everything. Hadid so many unforgivable things.

She was shocked by what Jonah said today. She knew Jonah had betrayed Carolina, and that Nick wasn't Carolina's biological son, but she didn't

know he had done so many things back then. She asked, "Are all men like this, thinking that betraying their wife is a fun and exciting thing to do, and even feeling superior about it?"

Damon frowned. "No."

Chloe could hear the irritation in Damon's voice, but she just closed her eyes as she lay in his arms. She looked tired. She said, "But this is good. Remember to handle those online comments for me..."

He replied, "Okay."

Realizing that Chloe was extremely tired, Damon's voice became softer. After a while, feeling the steady breath of the woman in his arms, Damon picked her up, gently walked upstairs, and laid her on the bed in the bedroom.

All the bad reviews about Chloe on the internet suddenly disappeared without a trace. Wendy found out this news right away, looking at the computer and smirking.

There was no way Cole would let Wendy be in charge of the company all by herself. When he walked into the office and saw her like this, he immediately furrowed his brows. He asked, "What's up?"

Wendy looked up and saw Cole, her smile even brighter.

Chapter 1545

She pointed at the computer screen, laughing.

"I can't believe it, Damon's actually lost his marbles over a woman. He rashly withdrew the attack on Chloe to protect her. Didn't he think that this would only piss off those haters even more? This femme fatale must've completely bewitched him! Oh no, that's too much of a compliment for her if she really was, why did she fail to hold onto her fiancé in the first place? A woman nobody else wanted, yet Damon treats her like a treasure. He's gone mad!"

Seeing Wendy's crazed state, Cole frowned. He said, "How could he be so thoughtless? Don't count your chickens before they hatch!"

Wendy scoffed, "Just look, after the comments were withdrawn, the online attacks on her are even more vicious."

She was right, the comments on Chloe had become even more fierce.

"Feeling guilty, is she? She has the nerve to do it, but not the courage to take the criticism?" "Can she only handle flattery and not criticism?" "I suddenly feel like it was so stupid of me to defend her online before. She only allows us to argue for her but doesn't allow others to criticize her!" "She forced an elderly man to ruin his own reputation by testifying in court for her, she must be feeling guilty" "A problem that could've been solved with some money, and now she's pushed two elderly people to this point, is she happy now?" "Such a cold-blooded woman, today I finally see her true selfishness..." "I used to idolize her, but now, looking back, I feel so stupid for sticking up for her. Thinking about everything she's done, it all feels so ruthless! She never leaves any room for others, it's so cruel..." Cole merely glanced at the flood of similar comments, although the content varied slightly. Of course, there were also some netizens who consistently defended Chloe, but they were fewer in number. His brows furrowed, he was doubtful about Damon's action. Did Chloe bewitch him so that he couldn't bear to see her suffer a bit? So, he acted without thinking about the consequences? Because of that woman, he had hurt Wendy to this point, so it wasn't impossible for him to act this way He shook his head slightly and sighed softly. It's such a waste of good talent. He said, "The business banquet is tomorrow night. I will personally go to Harper's Mansion tonight to invite Presley and Robin. If you're done with your things, go home now."

Hearing about the Harper family, the smile on Wendy's face disappeared. She said, "Grandpa Presley

has officially retired now. He probably wont

attend.

Cole responded emotionlessly with a cold hum, "His grandson made you into what you are now, and we haven't even gotten an explanation from him. The last time I asked for his help with Alonso Corporation, I got nothing. Today, I'm inviting him to a banquet, so he shouldn't refuse

Wendy nodded "If the head of the Harper family. Presley, shows up, those hesitant investors will definitely trust us. No matter what the recent gossip says he's still the leader of the Harper family"

"Right if we're really going to hold a business banquet, we need to make full use of its effect." Cole added. His gaze returned to the computer screen in front of Wendy, a hint of confusion in his eyes.

Why did he always feel that Damon's behavior was too irrational? Was he really so foolishly infatuated with a woman? But he quickly put this question out of his mind. At most, it was about protecting a woman. No matter how big the issue was, it wouldn't have serious consequences.

He didn't need to bother with such trifles.

That night, at Harper's Mansion

Presley had been in a foul mood ever since Damon's withdrawal of the negative comments about Chloe. Even though Damon had announced his departure from the Harper Group, he was still his grandson at the end of the day The rash decision he made, being so influenced by a wornan, completely went against his teachings What he feared most was happening

He initially didn't want to bring up the topic, but Cole seemed to be deliberately provoking him As they sat in the living room watching TV, the news about Chloe and Carolina's lawsuit appeared Cole shook his head and sighed. The developments in this matter are really unexpected. Ms Chloe is so ruthless. But since she had the courage to make that decision, she shouldn't be afraid of others opinions, right? Damon care about her too much, making such a rash decision Didn't he think the consequences would be even worse when he withdrew the comments?

After he finished, he sighed again. "Damon was the only promising kid I've seen in years, who would have thought he would be so bewitched by

a woman.

Presley's face grew even darker, and the dinner he had just eaten seemed to be stuck in his stomach, unable to digest

However, Robin, upon hearing this, narrowed his eyes slightly, a sparkle flashed in his eyes, and a hint of a smile appeared at the corner of his mouth, but it quickly returned to normal

Seeing Presley's dark expression, Cole felt somewhat relieved, he placed two invitations on the table. He said, "Alonso Corporation is hosting a business banquet tomorrow night. I believe you're well aware of the purpose of this banquet, and i hope you can attend."

Robin glanced at the invitation, a touch of sarcasm flashed in his eyes. He asked, "I heard you're trying to get your eldest daughter to manage the company?"

Cole paused for a moment. "...I just want her to gradually familiarize herself with the business in the company. After all, the project at hand is very important, I can't retire at this critical moment. Wendy still has a lot to learn, so I hope you can help her when needed."

Robin just chuckled nonchalantly. "Well, of course."

Presley hadn't spoken a word the entire time. It was obvious Cole was intentionally making him feel uncomfortable. He wasn't oblivious to it. The two invitations were just lying there. Cole didn't even bother asking him, he didn't even get a chance to refuse

Was Cole exploiting his guilt over what Damon had done to Wendy, acting so brazenly without any second thoughts?

But the thing was, with what Damon did to Wendy, turning a healthy girl into such a state, the Harper family would always been in debt to the Alonso family. Cole had hit the nail on the head, exploiting his vulnerability. Because of the guilt he had in his heart, he had no choice but to attend.

Chapter 1546

While seeing Cole off, Robin walked him all the way to the front gate of Harper's Mansion.

Cole said, "I heard that before Damon left the Harper Group, he plunged most of the funds into a new development project?"

Robin pressed his lips together tightly, a shadow flickering in his eyes. He replied, "I'm really sorry that I failed to help Alonso Corporation back then I didn't expect him to do this. As far as I know, that project just started being planned a few months ago. From design to planning, it was all him, and no one else was involved. Seems like, he had this move planned out all along

He knew that the Harper Group would eventually fall into my hands, and even knew that the Alonso family would seek help from the Harper family in their time of trouble, so he used the money for the project in advance. Despite his young age, he plays a deep game. He pushed things forward without a ripple, leaving no way out for others'

He never thought his nephew had any particular talent, but now, some of his actions really put fear in him. Such a sharp—minded junior was hard to ignore.c2

Hearing his words, Cole just smiled. "No matter how smart Damon is, without the Harper family, he won't be able to achieve anything significant Even if he has the ability to start over, the smart ones won't give him that chance, right?"

Robin smiled, "My nephew, he's just too hot–headed. But he's young, it's good for him to go through some things."

Cole chuckled, "Yeah, you guys should knock him down a peg or two. Talking big about going all out against the Harper Group is one thing, but actually doing it? That's not gonna be a walk in the park.

From what I see, his mind is all on women these days. How would he have time to go against the Harper Group?"

After saying goodbye to Cole, Robin stood at the door of Harper's Mansion for a long time.

Perhaps Cole was right! Without the Harper Group, Damon was nothing. Even if he had great ability and wanted to start over, there was no way Robin was going to let that happen.

But given Presley's recent mindset and attitude, it seemed he always had an important position in the Harper family. The power to control the Harper family was still in Damon's hands. If one day Presley really summoned Damon back, then the Harper Group was surely his again. He needed to find a way to eliminate Presley's thoughts about Damon.

Chloe won the lawsuit but pissed off the public. On top of that, Damon temporarily blocked negative comments about Chloe online, and now the online sentiment was almost entirely against Chloe.

Those who were neutral or supported Chloe before had started to change their position to some extent.

In just an afternoon, the negative comments Damon had just removed popped up again like mushrooms after the rain. Damon read some of the comments online with a senous expression. He couldn't help but log into his account, ready to personally respond, only to have his phone snatched away halfway

"Alright, if looking at this bothers you, then don't." Chloe, in her pajamas, leaned against Damon's back, rested her chin on his shoulder, glanced at the comments on his phone, and smirked mockingly.

Damon held her waist tightly, pulled her in front of him, and trapped her in his arms, a cold anger flickering in his eyes. "You see what they ve said about you? And you still have a smile on your face?! His voice wasn't loud, but it was like a low drumbeat, enough to shake one s heart.

Chloe's smile deepened "You probably haven't seen me get slammed worse, have you? When the rumor in school was that i stole Keiras perfume formula and that I seduced the judges in the competition, how much nasty stuff have I been through? These are only visible, but unheard, and compared to back then, these are nothing!"

Damon's face was still gloomy.

"Their words can't come true, it's not like they can achieve whatever they say. If that were the case, they would have made their fortunes and become the richest people in the world by now. They can swear at me all they want, but they are not living better than me. These insignificant words, you don't have to take them to heart"

Damon looked gloomy, reached out, and gently poked her forehead. "Don't you think you're contradicting yourself? Who was it that asked me to help deal with these comments this afternoon?!"

Chloe smiled, "It was me, but I suddenly felt like letting those people who I always bully have some fun. This is a good opportunity to let them vent a bit Or else they might hold it in for too long, can't vent, get anxious, and hire a hitman to get rid of me in secret. Wouldn't that be more troublesome? Who knew you were so gung—ho, I just thought about backing out, and you've already handled half of it

Damon stared at her for a long time, then suddenly sneered. "What do you mean handled half of it, Chloe, you obviously set me up!"

Chloe shook her head, "I didn't."

Damon, "Say that again?"

Chloe nodded, "Okay, maybe a little"

Damon laughed, "Because of your stunt, this hot topic is about to be dominated by us two. Never thought I'd be an ternet sensation because of you one day."

Chloe. "Such a rare opportunity, for you, and surely for others too. "Chloe winked, her eyes full of cunning. It's hard for anyone to guess whet she's thinking

Damon raised an eyebrow, then the anger in his eyes faded, and he said lightly, "Fine. Let's go with your plan, as long as you're happy"

Chloe looked at him with a touched expression, "Why are you so good to me?"

He asked, "What do you think?"

Chloe thought for a moment, then said, "You must've been keeping a mistress out there and feeling guilty towards me. That's why you've been so lenient with me. No. Stop that tickles. I'm sorry....

Before Chloe could even finish her sentence, Damon's hands were already kneading her waist and the crook of her arm. He deliberately chose Chloe's most sensitive areas to tease. He said, "Go on, I want to hear about this mistress of mine What's her name? How stunning is she?"

Chloe, "Quit fooling around. I'm sorry..."

Right on cue, Damon stopped, released his grip, and carried her to the bed. He said, "If you're done playing, then go to sleep!"

Chloe lay on the bed, staring at the ceiling, and said, "Let me think, what moves will Ms Wendy make at tomorrow's business banquet?"

With a blink of an eye, Chloe rolled over, climbed onto Damon's belly, and asked with a smile, "Are you considered a tycoon now?"

Chapter 1547

Damon looked down at the petite woman lying on his stomach and raised an eyebrow. "What are you up to now?"

What did he mean by "up to now"? What had she done before? Chloe didn't reply directly, "Just asking."

Damon shook his head, "Well, I'm not."

Upon hearing this, Chloe frowned, "Didn't I give you the 20 billion from Las Vegas?"
He replied, "Does having 20 billion make you a rich dude?"c2
Chloe's mouth fell open, speechless for a moment. Didn't he consider 20 billion as being rich? Then what was his idea of a rich dude? She even thought of herself as a super–rich lady now!
She said, "Having 20 billion should make you rich."
Damon said, "Guess rich dudes aren't as rich as I thought"
Please, just shut up! If people heard this, it might bring trouble! It was infuriating.
Chloe, "What about the 20 billion."
Damon, "What? Didn't you give it to me? Are you backing out?"
Chloe rubbed her chin against Damon's muscular stomach, envious of his abs. How could his body be so good?
Chloe, "I'm not backing out, just wondering if you have any plans for it. If not
"I have plans."
Damon didn't even let Chloe finish her sentence before answering. A hint of disappointment flashed across Chloe's face. "Alright."
Damon gently stroked her hair. "You okay?"
Chloe looked a bit disappointed, but she shook her head, "No."

Damon watched her for a moment, then, pushing her shoulders, he laid her down on the pillow. He said, "Go to sleep early. It's late."

Chloe sighed, staring at the ceiling with wide—open eyes, clearly not feeling sleepy. She tried to close her eyes, but it didn't last long before she opened them again. She turned to look at the man next to her, only to meet his intense gaze, as if he knew she couldn't sleep and was waiting for her to open her eyes.

Caught red-handed, Chloe blinked and gave him an awkward smile. She said,... I'm not sleepy now."

A few seconds later, Chloe said, "I need to use the restroom."

A few minutes later, Chloe lay back down on the bed.

Not long after, she looked at Damon again, who was still staring at her.

Chloe, "...I'm thirsty, I want some milk."

Damon squinted his eyes, sat up from the bed, threw off the blankets, and put on his slippers.

Chloe got up from the bed, "Where are you going?"

Damon, "Aren't you thirsty for milk?"

Before he could finish, Chloe had already leaned against Damon's back, "I'll go downstairs too."

Damon stood up, turned around, and looked down at the petite woman kneeling at the side of the bed. In a deep voice, he said, "Stay here. It's cold downstairs"

Chloe, "I'll heat up the milk myself I feel bad always troubling you."

Damon chuckled bent down, and said close to her, "Stop making excuses for your insomnia."

Chloe felt guilty, and in a couple of seconds, she pointed to her belly and said, "Maybe it's because they're too active"

Damon looked at her belly, pursed his lips, and didn't know how to respond to her words. What a good way to dodge responsibility. "Stay put" He glared at her and was about to get up when Chloe quickly reached out to hug his neck. Her legs were wrapped tightly around his waist, and her body was almost entirely leaning on Damon. She said, "I don't want to stay in the room alone"

Damon supported her body, and she held him tightly, her head leaning against his shoulder, looking like she wouldn't let go no matter what

Taking a deep breath, Damon walked to the closet, casually grabbed a fluffy pajama, draped it over her, and then carried her downstairs. Chloe hugged Damon, her chin resting on his shoulder, and a faint smile in her eyes She nestled her face into his neck.

Damon put Chloe on the couch, bent down to put the fluffy pajama on her, and then rubbed her head annoyedly. He said, "Wait here."

Finally. Chloe nodded her head

Watching Damon turn and walk into the kitchen, Chloe curled up on the couch, picked up the remote and turned on the TV. She found a random movie, hugged her legs, and rested her chin on her knees. Her eyes looked forward but somewhat unfocused.

No matter what happened to Carolina, she didn't care, but every time she closed her eyes, she would see Jonah standing on the witness stand in court. His trembling when he used his crutch, his facial expressions, and every glance, even every tremble in his voice, were magnified in her mind, making her restless.

She didn't care about the comments on the internet, but she herself was wondering if she had gone too far. She really didn't expect Jonah to testify in person. She closed her eyes and, took a deep breath, and then let it out, finally burying her face in her knees.

Hearing a soft clink of glass, Chloe looked up to see Damon putting a cup of milk on the table, then staring at her. He said, "The milk's a bit hot. Wait a bit before you drink it."

Chloe managed a smile and nodded

Damon, "These were his choices, and you don't need to take it to heart. After hiding for so many years, he might have wanted to be freed from the bes. He just lacked the right opportunity His decision to testify in court today was meaningful. He achieved his wish and protected you."

Today's events were somewhat overwhelming, but compared to what she had experienced before, it wasn't that important Her unusual behavior today was just because she encountered people and things she couldn't let go of

She had not been involved in the first half of Jonah's life, so she couldn't judge his past. In her life, especially those years, any bit of care and warmth from a family member was enough to remember for a lifetime. Jonah's behavior today was completely out of her expectations.

She sighed deeply. "His past actions have nothing to do with me, just that he treated me, compared to Carolina, quite well

Damon, "So you're a sucker for nice guys, huh? If someone shows you a little kindness, you're ready to give them the world in return, right?"

This woman, she was just too easy to read. If someone was good to her, she'd give back even more. How could anyone see her as cold—hearted?

But sometimes, being cold-hearted wasn't a bad thing, you know.

Chapter 1548

Chloe remained silent as Damon poked her chest with his finger. "Listen here, Chloe, your heart now belongs to me. I won't allow you to share your feelings with anyone else. Without my permission, you're not allowed to make space for anyone else in your heart. It's mine, it's in my control, and it only has one job to keep beating in you. Got it?"

Chloe blinked lightly and felt a bit relieved. "Wow, you're so bossy. How can there only be room for you? What about my company, my mom, and Rose

Before Chloe could finish her sentence, Damon turned around and started to tug at her clothes. "Enough," he said, "I might as well just rip it out!"

"Hey don't. I'd die Chloe chuckled, finding Damon's childish antics amusing and heartwarming. She placed her hand over her chest, pretending to stop Damon's actions

Damon paused, looking at her seriously "Good, you know you'd die if I ripped your heart out. If you dare to allow it to misbehave, I'll really take it out!"c2

Chloe laughed and nodded, "I get it. I get it!"

Damon adjusted her messy hair and gently brushed her soft cheek. "His intentions were clear in the church yesterday, weren't they? If he wasn't really committed, he wouldn't have made that decision. He wants to repent, he wants you to be happy, and he's even praying for you. He finally spilled the secret he's been hiding for years. I think his life from now on will be the most relaxed it's been in years. You haven't wronged anyone You living your best life, that's probably what he wants most."

Chloe nodded gently, her long eyelashes fluttering, and her heart felt lighter. That was how it's gonna be She still had to live her life

After finishing her milk, she was carried upstairs by Damon. Unable to sleep, she kept Damon up by talking to him, asking for an apple, then an orange. then needing to use the bathroom. She'd thought of every excuse not to sleep.

When she came out of the bathroom for the second time, Damon pulled the restless woman into his arms. Chloe struggled, "It's too tight. It's stifling Loosen a bit..."

"My little girl, it's almost two in the morning! Go to sleep!" His tone was commanding, and for the first time, he felt like he was dealing with a hyperactive child.

"I know, I'll sleep. Just loosen up a bit. I wasn't like this before, it's not my fault, but I really think our two kids will be mischievous. Look at me now, they're keeping me up all night..."

Damon closed his eyes, helpless

Chloe seemed genuinely exhausted, and she fell asleep in Damon's arms. Once he was sure she was asleep, Damon let out a sigh of relief.

The next day, at the Crown Hotel.

The Alonso Corporation's business banquet was the highlight of the day. Online condemnation of Chloe continued, which Wendy was pleased to see When she arrived at the Crown Hotel, reporters swarmed around her. When asked about the upcoming business banquet, Wendy seemed very happy, and it was the most shed smiled in front of the cameras in a while.

The reporter asked, "Ms. Wendy we heard that you've also invited Ms. Summers from Starlight International. Do you think she will definitely come today?"

Wendy grinned, "Ms. Summers is known for marching to the beat of her own drum, so I really can't predict her movements. But I've already notified her, so naturally. I hope she can make it "

The reporter asked, "Considering you clearly sided with the plaintiff in yesterday's lawsuit, aren't you afraid that Ms. Summers will come for revenge?"

Wendy chuckled, "I just felt sorry for the old man Besides, wasn't she the one who won the case yesterday? She's finally rid of her troubles, she should be happy, right? If she does come today, I'd love to congratulate her."

This smug attitude clearly relished in Chloe's troubles Everyone knew what most people were saying and accusing Chloe of Her congratulations were clearly just a way to make Chloe feel bad.
Wendy's sarcastic tone was clear to everyone, and Chloe's dedicated fans couldn't help but retort
"You're always trying to compete with Ms. Summers. Why invite her to your family's business banquet? It's just to show off! Don't think we can't see it!"
Wendy raised an eyebrow, not denying it. She admitted she disliked Chloe, and, even more so, everyone who supported Chloe
"So what if I do? Didn't she say she wanted to give the Alonso Corporation as a wedding gift? I admit, she's smart, and the Alonso Corporation nearly got destroyed by her, but only nearly. I just want her to see that the Alonso Corporation she wanted is now mine. She must be disappointed"
How found hit the air to oth in among at 18/amdy/a bloom wards
Her fans bit their teeth in anger at Wendy's blunt words
"Don't get too smug!*
"Don't get too smug!*  "I'm not smug! I'm just genuinely happy. Especially when I see what people online are saying about Ms. Summers, it's so entertaining. That's life, I can't always be down on my luck, and Ms. Summers can't

time."

Now, the accusations against her online almost completely cover up any other chatter, and it was true that Jonah did testify in court Forcing an old man to spill the beans on his secret that he'd kept for years, just because she didn't want to cough up money, was just crazy

She just laid it all out there in front of the media, without even trying to sugarcoat anything It was clear as day to everyone around the world, that she and Chloe were like cats and dogs. There was no need for her to put on a show in front of the media, as it was pretty freaking obvious in this situation, it was a zero—sum game between the two of them it was either win or lose

Out of anger, Chloe's fans were reluctant to let Wendy hit the road

At that moment, a sleek, black luxury car crept up and parked outside the red carpet. When a tall, strapping man stepped out, there was a collective gasp from the crowd

Chapter 1549

Everyone turned their heads to where the buzz originated to see Damon, clad in a black, high—end suit, standing by the car door. He was skillfully buttoning up his suit. Then he took the coat Nate handed over, walked to the other side of the car, carefully helped a similarly tall woman out, and immediately draped the coat over her.

Although they couldn't see the woman's face at the moment, just by looking at her figure, they could guess who she was, especially when this woman was taken good care of by Damon.

The smug grin on Wendy's face froze solid. She stared hard at the two people not far away, veins popping on her forehead.

"It's Mr. Harper and Ms. Summers!"

The crowd got excited, and, paying no mind to Wendy, they all turned to surround the pair. Nate's bodyguards, who he had arranged beforehand, immediately started protecting the two.c2

Chloe was wearing a warm pink down jacket. Damon lifted the hood of her jacket over her head. He was protecting her with everything he had, not giving the cold any chance to touch her.

After the court case ended yesterday, Chloe had kept it short during the interview, only giving them the result and not saying anything extra. After that, she had made no comment on the worsening online public opinion about her. So tonight, the reporters had a lot of questions they wanted to ask her.

"Ms. Summers, is it true that the rumor online about you forcing Old Mr. Summers to testify in court?"

"If not, then what was your purpose for going to Sacred Heart Church?"

"Even though Old Mr. Summers was indeed in the wrong back then, wasn't it too cruel of you to force him to disclose his past?"

"He's kept it a secret for so many years, and now his reputation is ruined. Don't you feel even a bit guilty?".

"You won this court case, and pushed the two old people to this state. Are you really happy? Don't you feel guilty at all? It was a problem that could have been resolved with money. Why did you have to complicate things?"

The reporters' words were sharp and grating, because these were all questions that netizens were concerned about.

Chloe walked to the hotel entrance with a cold expression and then slowly turned around. Looking indifferently at the swarm of reporters in front of her, she slowly said, "Why can't I be happy about winning a court case? Why do you all think that me going to Sacred Heart Church must mean I forced him to testify? Do you think I kidnapped him and made him go to the witness stand? Why should I feel guilty? He did all those things himself, and I didn't force him to. He willingly took responsibility, so why should I be held accountable? This is a problem that could be solved with money. Why should I let it escalate to this point? Was it me who started this court case? Why should I give money to Carolina?

"Or, how about I tell everyone later that you guys became reporters because you slept with your bosses, your diplomas were stolen, I take away your properties and cars, introduce your spouses to others, then

abandon you in a foreign country. Then, when I am down on my luck and out of money, will you give me fifty billion?"

All the reporters fell silent.

Chloe, "Why are you all not speaking? Did I say something wrong? Where did your anger and sense of justice go? Did you all shut up because I mentioned money? You're not going to give it to me? Then I'll

take you all to court."

A reporter said, "Why? We're not your relatives or friends..."

Chloe, "Exactly, so who is Carolina to me? She did so many things to hurt me, and I should give her fifty billion and company shares? What kind of good deal is this? She relied on the fact that she's my eld

elder to demand money in front of me, and when she didn't get it, she immediately took me to court. Even if she was my own grandmother, and even if I really broke the law and have to go to jail, I wouldn't give her money. She hurt me, yet expects me to be good to her, What a joke! Before you criticize me, think about what you would do if you were in my shoes. Everyone knows I hold grudges, so don't talk to me about forgiveness. I'm not that great."

The reporters present were rendered speechless by Chloe's words. They looked at each other, not knowing what to say next.

Wendy sat to the side, watching Chloe. She wished she could tear that eloquent mouth of hers to shreds! "Since you didn't force- Jonah to testify, then why did all the hot topics and negative comments about you on the internet suddenly get taken down yesterday?"

Wendy's words made the reporters nod in agreement. "If you have nothing to hide, why would you do that?"

Chloe snorted, "Taking it down means I have something to hide? If I was really hiding something, I wouldn't take it down so that you guys can keep bothering me."

The reporters thought that made sense. Yeah, she would get scolded whether she did something or not. If she did do something, the consequences might be even
worse.
A reporter asked, "Then why"
Chloe, "Because some people are too eager to see me in pain, being criticized. Life being too smooth isn't necessarily a good thing. It can easily breed hostility. If I don't let them have their way occasionally, I'm afraid they would get too suppressed, and it would be a burden on their mental health, leading them to do something even more outrageous. There should be a proper balance of relaxation and tension in life. Letting certain people be happy once in a while is not a bad thing."
Wendy's face turned extremely cold. Everyone present unanimously turned their gazes towards her.
т
~Everyone could probably guess who Chloe was talking about.
"Hahahaha!" The fans who were just supporting Chloe couldn't help but laugh out loud.
One of them said, "What you said is absolutely right. Just now, Ms. Wendy did say out loud that she was very happy seeing those people criticizing you online."
Chapter 1550
The reporters on the scene couldn't help but laugh. They had heard it all very clearly. Was this just to make Wendy feel a bit better?
But the sacrifice was too much. They knew it now, but those online didn't, and were probably still criticizing her fiercely.

Wendy clenched her teeth tightly, staring at Chloe with icy eyes, sneering, "Chloe, when did you start being so considerate? You're even willing to make such a big sacrifice just to make me happy? If you really want to make me happy, you should just drop dead. That would make me even happier."

Chloe chuckled lightly, "Ms. Wendy, you're going a bit overboard."

Wendy squinted at her, sneering before turning her head to look at the tall man beside her.c2

He finally looked at her. Great. It would be even better if his gaze wasn't so cold and disgusted.

She smiled bitterly, tightly holding the blanket on her lap, and said, "Thank you all for coming to my business banquet today. It's chilly outside. Let's head in. The banquet will start soon. If there's a chance, I can introduce you to Mr. Azriel, who generously helped Alonso Corporation. Without him, Alonso Corporation wouldn't have been able to recover."

Chloe chuckled, "Really? I'd love to see what kind of person Mr. Azriel is, to be so foolish."

Wendy sneered, controlling her electric wheelchair, and went ahead of the two.

Chloe raised an eyebrow, turned to Damon, and said, "Let's go in."

Damon nodded.

Getting a response, Chloe was about to turn and leave when Damon's gaze hardened slightly, and he pulled her back by the arm.

Chloe stumbled into his arms. She said, "What's wrong?"

Damon, "You're just going to leave like that, huh?"

Chloe was taken aback, then opened her mouth, "Ah... Oh..."

She reached out and hooked Damon's arm. She had always been alone before, and it was a little awkward now that she was out with her man. After hooking his arm, she even gave Damon a pleasing smile. "Let's go."

Damon pursed his lips, wrapped his arm around her waist, and dragged her into his arms dissatisfiedly.

The reporters were a bit unwilling to let go and asked another question, "Ms. Summers, it's clear that Ms. Wendy is showing off by hosting this business banquet. Knowing that coming here would put more pressure on you, why did you still come?"

Chloe stopped, smiled at the camera, and said, "How would it add pressure? I believe tonight's banquet will be very enjoyable"

The media couldn't understand what this lady wanted to do.

Reporter, "What about the online criticism of you? Mr. Harper, since you were able to withdraw the comments the first time, you can definitely withdraw again, right? Why aren't you taking action now?"

All coincidences were a series of accidents:

The reporters only stopped them to ask two questions, when Robin and Presley slowly walked over. The media didn't know if Damon would answer their questions, they only noticed Damon's gaze

suddenly shift to the front. Then Robin's voice rang out.

"I didn't expect you guys to actually come. What a surprise. Damon, long time n

Damon's eyes were cold, "Not that long."

no see"

"Haha," Robin laughed carelessly, turning his gaze to Chloe, his eyes cunning like a scheming fox. He asked, "Ms. Summers, are you planning to invest in Alonso Corporation tonight?"

Chloe smiled slightly, "I was invited here. I'll see. If the situation meets my expectations, I certainly wouldn't want to miss this opportunity."

Robin laughed, sizing up Chloe up and down, "Ms. Summers, you're really lucky. My nephew has always been reluctant to get close to girls. His indifference to women was simply incomprehensible. But now, for you... He's given up his company, and doesn't even go home..."

Chloe's lips twitched slightly, but she didn't respond.

Robin pretended to be indifferent and said, "I noticed the news on the Internet yesterday. Damon, about the trending topic regarding Ms. Summers, you had it taken down, didn't you? How could you be so impulsive? Have you considered that there might be more serious consequences? This time can be an exception, but don't let all the attention focus on one thing. As a man, you should have bigger ambitions, right?"

The "one thing" in Robin's mouth was undoubtedly referring to Chloe. His words were subtle, but that didn't mean others heard them that way.

Presley, who was standing behind him, grew even more sullen at hearing this. He paused for a moment with his cane, then walked straight towards the hotel entrance. He didn't say a word.

Robin didn't say anything anymore, nodded, and followed Presley closely.

Chloe, arm in arm with Damon, followed them into the banquet hall.

Most of the guests were already there. Seeing Presley and Robin, everyone's eyes lit up. They suddenly felt that this business banquet was a huge benefit for them. Even the old and new chairmen of the Harper Group were here, showing that the Alonso Corporation's project was trustworthy.

But when they saw Chloe and Damon, the bustling banquet hall suddenly quieted down.
Some people whispered, "Ms. Summers is really here?"
"What is she thinking?"
"Does the Alonso family's project really have enough appeal to make her wary?"
"If the Alonso family weren't loaded, why would they take such a big risk, huh?"
'Ms. Summers wants to just waltz in and take over Alonso Corporation? As if it's that easy."
"I was hoping for a miracle, to be honest, I'm a bit bummed out."
"The eldest son of the Harper family sure has talent, but what a pity, he's lost everything over a girl."
"Why don't we ask them what's their real motive for coming today? What are they thinking? Are they here for people to laugh at them or what?"
Chloe had her fill at home before stepping out; she wouldn't eat at a place this crowded.
Not to mention, this was Wendy's territory.
She'd made quite a few enemies in the past. Now that she was pregnant with twins, if she was not careful, she would end up like the unlucky protagonist in a TV drama.
Her life was already a hot mess. The last thing she needed was more trouble.