

Chapter 3 Plans

Sierra glanced down at her wrist, her expression indifferent. "Oh. I got hurt."

Bradley opened his mouth but ultimately said nothing.

An injury like that made people think of all sorts of things.

The anger he had felt earlier from Sierra's sharp words faded slightly. He cleared his throat. "Even though you're still under parole, we managed to get your student status reinstated. You'll handle the enrollment paperwork tomorrow and resume classes."

Sierra was a little surprised.

She had been wondering how to get back into school, but she hadn't expected the Xander family to take care of it for her. At least that saved her some trouble.

First, she'd get back in. Then, she'd apply to change her major.

She had always wanted to study biology, but because of Denise, she had been forced into the literature department instead.

The Xander family hadn't wanted Denise to be alone in that department, so they had switched Sierra's major without even asking her.

To fit in, she had taken on a double major.

She wouldn't be that foolish again.

The sooner she had access to lab equipment, the sooner she could start working on pharmaceuticals again under her alias, Tano.

Back then, there had been someone who admired her work. They had exchanged messages online multiple times and were supposed to meet to discuss joining a research team.

Then she got thrown in prison.

As Sierra was about to thank Bradley, Denise suddenly spoke up.

"Sierra, I got into grad school! I'll be staying at the same university, so we can go to class together."

Ha. So that's how it was.

For a second, Sierra had actually thought hell had frozen over—that maybe, just maybe, they were finally being considerate of her.

But of course, it was all because of Denise.

Denise was going to grad school, so now they suddenly decided to reinstate Sierra's enrollment too.

If this were before, she would have just been the sidekick, tagging along while the golden child got all the attention.

And to think, for one stupid second, she actually believed they had finally remembered she was part of the Xander family too.

Eleanor smiled as she placed food into Sierra's bowl, speaking gently. "Evan is staying at the university as a professor, but he'll be busy.

You should keep an eye on Denny."

Sierra stared at the sticky barbecue ribs in her bowl, feeling nauseous.

She had never liked sweet, greasy food, yet it appeared on the Xander family's dinner table every night.

Because Denise liked it.

Sierra put down her fork and stood up. "I'm full. Enjoy your meal."

With that, she turned and left for her guest room.

She couldn't openly fall out with them just yet.

She had to survive these three months of parole.

No one had expected her reaction.

It wasn't until she was already upstairs that Sean scoffed. "Look at her. What kind of attitude is that?"

"Enough, Sean," Eleanor scolded. "Sierra just got back. Give her some time."

Denise spoke up gently, "I'll go check on Sierra. I should talk to her about school tomorrow."

Eleanor's expression softened. "Yes, you two have always been close. Go talk to her. She's been acting stranger and stranger lately."

She frowned but quickly suppressed her frustration.

Sierra had spent three years in that kind of place—of course, she had changed.

Upstairs, Sierra was sitting in her room, planning to find time tomorrow to visit her grandmother.

Then, a knock sounded on the door.

Before she could answer, the door opened.

Denise stepped inside.

Sierra's expression instantly darkened.

"Sierra..." Denise called softly, as if testing the waters. "I just wanted to see if you needed anything. I can have someone prepare it for you."

Sierra lifted her gaze slightly, her eyes full of ridicule.

That sentence made their positions clear.

How laughable.

She was the Xander family's real daughter, yet she was treated like a guest here.

No, even worse than a guest.

Sierra's voice was ice-cold. "Three years ago, I told you—never come near me again."

Because of Denise's mistake, Sierra had spent three years in prison.

She didn't need a sister like that.

"Sierra..." Denise's eyes turned red. "I know you blame me. I know I owe you. I really want to make it up to you. I—"

Sierra cut her off.

"If you really feel bad, then pay up."

Denise froze. The tears in her eyes wavered as if she wasn't sure whether to let them fall.

Sierra let out a cold laugh. "Didn't you say you feel guilty and want to make it up to me? Then how about this—one million a year. Three years, three million dollars. Fair deal, right?"

Denise was completely stunned.

She hadn't expected Sierra to ask for money.

After a long silence, she finally stammered, "Th-three million is too much. I... I don't have that kind of money."

Denise was spoiled and had plenty of allowance, but a few million? That was beyond her reach.

A few hundred thousand, maybe.

But she had no intention of giving even that.

"Too much?" Sierra's cold gaze locked onto Denise. "I sat in prison for you for three years. You think three million isn't fair?"

"N-no, that's not what I meant..." Denise bit her lip, looking troubled. "I'll... I'll figure something out."

With that, she hurriedly left the room.

Not long after, Sierra's door was thrown open—this time, kicked open.

Bradley stormed in, his face dark with anger.

"You've been back for a day and already turned the house upside down. Can't you behave yourself? You know Denny's health isn't good—why are you bullying her?"

Sierra's expression remained blank as she stared at Bradley.

So this was her big brother.

No questions. No hesitation.

Just straight to the accusations.

"Bradley," Sierra said slowly, "you say I bullied her. But why don't you ask how I bullied her?"

She looked past him at Denise, who stood behind him with a pitiful, teary-eyed expression.

"Did I insult you? Did I hit you? Or did I frame you and throw you in prison?"

Denise frantically shook her head. "No, no..."

Just hearing Sierra bring up prison made her tremble.

"Bradley, Sierra didn't bully me. Let's just go downstairs."

Bradley looked at Denise and felt his heart ache. He quickly reassured her, "Don't be scared. I'm here. She won't be able to hurt you."

Sierra crossed her arms, leaning against the wall, watching their sibling act with growing boredom.

"If you're not here to give me money, then get out. I want to rest."

"Money? What money?" Bradley demanded.

Denise had come to him earlier, her eyes red, but she hadn't explained anything.

Seeing her upset, he had simply assumed Sierra was the problem and rushed over.

"Denise said she was going to compensate me—three million dollars."

Back when she first came to this family, Franklin had given her a card with one hundred thousand dollars.

She had returned it.

At the time, she thought she had come back for family, not money.

Now, she wouldn't be that naive again.

Pride didn't put food on the table.

If they were offering, why shouldn't she take it?

Besides, that three million was hers.

She had earned it.