

Chapter 8 Suffering

When Sierra returned to the hospital, Yulia was gone. Only her grandmother remained in the room.

Sitting by the bedside, she thought about what the doctor had just told her. A heavy weight settled in her chest.

Her grandmother had been sick for years. Her organs were failing. She probably had no more than a couple of years left. The doctor had told her to be prepared—to go along with whatever the old woman wanted.

She gripped her grandmother's hand tightly, unwilling to let go. She was terrified of losing the only family she had left.

"Grandma, please... Hold on."

She knew how to make medicine. She *would* make something to help her grandmother.

With that thought, she pulled out her phone and logged into a forum.

The forum was mainly for research discussions, but it had everything—people asking for help, answering questions, even posting bounties.

What she needed was a lab.

A university lab would be ideal, fully equipped with everything she needed—but there was no way she'd get access to one anytime soon.

After some thought, she created a new account.

Tano was too well-known. She wasn't sure if people still remembered, but she didn't want to take any risks.

There were still three months left in her probation. If someone caught onto anything suspicious, she could be sent back. Using her new username, she posted a request to rent a lab, listing the specific equipment she needed and the duration—six months. Seven hundred thousand dollars.

It was a high price, but she had no choice. Labs with the equipment she needed were rare. And the people who owned them weren't short on money, which meant they would be cautious.

A lab could be used for all kinds of things—some legal, some not. Renting one out carried risks.

While Sierra was busy searching, Cameron had already investigated what happened to Madam Lily and reported back to Bradley.

"That family took the money and went to a small hospital for the amputation. The surgery was botched, and the wound got badly infected."

He continued, "She was just sent back to the hospital. From what I've heard... she isn't doing well."

Bradley's expression darkened as he read through the reports. He hadn't realized just how badly Madam Lily had suffered. No wonder Sierra had been so furious.

Seeing his displeased expression, Cameron hesitated before speaking again.

"And... I also looked into what happened in prison."

Bradley's gaze snapped up. "Speak."

Cameron's voice was slightly strained. "Over the past three years, Miss Xander was sent to the hospital four times."

"The first time was ten days after she was imprisoned. Her forearm was slashed—deep enough to expose bone. She stayed in the hospital for half a month."

"The second time was two months later. Her collarbone was fractured—apparently, something heavy fell on her. She was hospitalized for a month."

"Then, her cell caught fire. She was trapped inside and inhaled a dangerous amount of smoke. Her throat was severely damaged. She nearly lost her ability to speak."

"The last time... was about half a year later." Cameron hesitated before finishing, "She slit her own veins. There was massive blood loss. She almost didn't make it."

His voice grew quieter as he spoke, seeing Bradley's face get darker and darker.

Finally, he quickly added, "After that, things got better. Miss Xander didn't suffer any more injuries."

"Enough!" Bradley cut him off. "Why didn't we know about any of this?"

Cameron pressed his lips together before mumbling, "You... told us not to. You said that even if she died, it had nothing to do with you."

Bradley opened his mouth but couldn't say a word.

Had he said that?

When?

Then he remembered.

Back then, when Sierra was imprisoned, The Xander Group's stock had plummeted. Investors were on his back, demanding explanations.

He had been stressed out, dealing with crisis after crisis.

Someone had called him about Sierra—said she was hurt.

He hadn't even thought before snapping, "We've already cut ties with her. Whether she lives or dies has nothing to do with us. Don't call me again!"

So... this was all because of him?

Guilt crashed over him. He hadn't known.

Back then, it had taken him months to stabilize the stock. By the time things settled, Sierra had already been in prison for months.

That was when he remembered to *handle* things.

Yes, he had arranged for things to be taken care of.

Thinking of that, he immediately said, "Didn't I tell you to take care of her? How did this still happen? I even told you to check on her—how did you not know?"

His expression was sharp, full of accusation.

Cameron quickly explained, "I was going to visit Miss Xander... but Miss Denise asked if she could go instead. She wanted to see her sister. So, I gave her the slot."

He continued, "Only one person is allowed to visit at a time. So, I handed over the things to Miss Denise and asked her to pass them on to Warden Watson."

"Denny?"

Bradley was stunned.

Denise had visited Sierra?

She never mentioned it.

And if she had gone, why hadn't she told them how bad things were for Sierra?

His mind was a mess.

But right now, he wouldn't worry about why Denise was involved.

He could only think about Sierra's cold, indifferent expression from earlier.

Guilt twisted in his gut.

"Get to the hospital."

He could still fix this.

He would find the best doctors.

He would personally take care of it.

At the same time, Sierra's post had received many replies.

As expected, there weren't many labs in Lin City with the equipment she needed—let alone anyone willing to rent one out.

Some people had kindly left suggestions, saying that The Xander Group had the best lab in the city.

They even mentioned Mr. Evan from The Xander Group, who also taught at the university.

Apparently, he was easy to talk to.

Sierra let out a mocking laugh.

Evan? Easy to talk to?

That was the biggest lie in the world.

That man always put on an air of refined politeness, but underneath it, he was arrogant and insufferable.

Besides, she had no intention of asking Evan for help.

Just then, her phone vibrated.

A private message.

From someone she actually knew—Misty.

They had never met in person, but they had exchanged messages many times.

More than once, Misty had helped her break through dead ends in her research.

And now, even with her new account, he had still reached out to help.

He said as long as she promised not to use the lab for anything illegal, he could assist her.

Warmth flickered in Sierra's heart.

He was still the same.

She immediately replied, explaining that she only wanted to develop some medicine—nothing shady. She asked for his help.

Misty responded quickly, telling her to wait for his message.

Sierra trusted him. She felt a little more at ease.

Just then, several nurses entered the room, saying that her grandmother was being moved to a VIP suite for free.

Then, a team of specialists arrived to personally examine her grandmother.

Sierra knew this wasn't just a coincidence.

She looked up.

Sure enough—standing outside the room was Bradley.

His gaze was complicated.

After a moment's hesitation, he stepped inside.

"I really didn't know about Madam Lily's situation," he said. "But don't worry. These doctors are the best. I'll make sure she's properly treated."

He continued, "You don't have to worry about the costs—I'll cover everything. I've already ordered a top-of-the-line prosthetic for her. She *will* be able to walk again. I personally took care of everything this time."

His words were almost laughable.

Did he think this would erase everything that had happened?

Seeing her indifferent expression, Bradley frowned. Holding back his irritation, he said, "What do you want? Whatever it is, I'll try to make it happen."

He said it as if she was being ungrateful.

Sierra let out a soft laugh.

"Then I want The Xander Group's lab," she said. "Will you give it to me?"