

Heiress 321

Chapter 321

Bella stared at him in astonishment and asked, "How... How did

you

end up here?"

Steven, who was standing behind her, witnessed Christopher's mysterious reappearance. His heart sank, and he silently clenched his fist.

"They told me this elevator was only reserved for you, so I waited here," Christopher said with a gentle, shallow smile, skillfully sidestepping the real question.

"I wasn't asking about that. I meant, why did you come to find me?" Bella furrowed her brows. "Your dad is supposed to visit our house tonight. Aren't you heading to Hatchbay with him?"

Christopher calmly and confidently clarified, "That's why I'm here-to pick you up. Let's go back to Hatchbay together."

Bella pursed her red lips, suspicion creeping into her heart. His words were faultless, but not entirely innocent.

"Thank you for coming to pick me up, Mr. Iverson, but Asher has already made plans with me. He should be here soon, and I'll be following him back home." Bella politely smiled. "See you at Yara Park tonight."

"I've already informed Uncle Wyatt of my intention to come and pick you up. He agreed, so Asher won't be coming," Christopher said with an unruffled demeanor.

"What?!" Bella's beautiful eyes widened. She lost her composure.

“Our families have a long-standing relationship. Chairman Thompson and my father are sworn brothers, and you and I grew up together. With such a connection, Uncle Wyatt shouldn’t worry that I’d kidnap you,” Christopher explained calmly.

Christopher thought to himself, “Though I really wanted to whisk you away... I’d love to bring you back to Sentania, cherish you, protect you, and love you like my exclusive treasure.” “Well... Alright, thank you for making the trip.” Bella remained polite, maintaining a sense of propriety in their relationship.

This was rather unexpected from her eldest brother. Asher was usually so caring and protective of her, like a mother bear guarding her cub. But this time, he actually pushed her toward another man.

Bella thought, ‘Does Asher also want to market me off like Wyatt? What if Christopher was a psychopath in disguise?’ Bella sighed silently, feeling guilty for being suspicious of her savior.

“No trouble at all. I always have time for you, Ms. Thompson.” Christopher smiled warmly.

Bella had grown accustomed to this man’s flirtatious way of speaking. She did not dwell on it too much as she walked alongside him.

“Ms. Bella!” Steven’s heart felt a pang, and he quickly called out to her.

Both of them came to a halt.

Bella’s beautiful eyes filled with curiosity as she asked, “What’s the matter, Steve?”

At this moment, Christopher adjusted his glasses. His dark, hawk-like eyes squinted slightly as he turned his gaze slowly toward Steven behind him. Steven felt a stinging pain in his heart from that gaze. He stiffened, hesitating to speak. “Miss, I...”

“Oh, right, Steve, I almost forgot.” Bella raised her gentle, bright eyes to him and said, “You don’t have to follow me home. You can leave early. You’ve been working hard lately, so go home and rest well tonight.”

With that, they walked away from Steven.

Steven's shoulders slumped. A shiver ran up his spine when he recalled Christopher's concealed, chilly gaze. He felt a cold force wrap around him, like being plunged into a dark cellar.

Bella and Christopher walked side by side in the lobby, quickly drawing the attention of all the hotel staff.

"Wow, look! Ms. Thompson has changed her companion! There's finally a male presence besides Mr. Lovett!" Someone exclaimed.

Another colleague said, "Really! And he's so handsome! Mr. Lovett is totally outclassed!"

"Mr. Lovett and this gentleman have completely different styles, right? This one is like a handsome and stern Dobermann, while Mr. Lovett is like an adorable Golden Retriever. They're incomparable!"

"I vote for Mr. Lovett!"

"I vote for the handsome vampire-looking guy!"

"Choosing favorites is for kids. As an adult, I'll take both!"

Outside the hotel's main entrance, Christopher's car had been waiting for some time. His secretary respectfully opened the car door. Just as Bella was about to get in, the man gently took hold of her arm.

"Ms. Thompson."

"What's the matter, Mr. Iverson?" Bella looked at him in surprise.

Christopher's eyes brimmed with indulgence as he gently curled his lips. He retrieved a brand new and pristine white handkerchief from his pocket, intending to help her wipe away the lipstick that had strayed beyond her lips.

However, this time, Bella did not let him have his way. Her almond eyes sparkled as she quickly took the handkerchief from his palm.

"I can manage on my own."

Christopher's gaze flickered, and he merely smiled without saying anything. Soon after, the top-of-the-line Bentley departed from the hotel entrance.

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Across the street, the tinted windows of a sleek black Lamborghini glided down, revealing Justin's sculpted and handsome face.

His lips remained tightly pressed, and his eyes, usually cold, now held a subtle hint of red as he focused on the Bentley moving away. The sight of Bella and Christopher as a couple sent a palpable shock through him, causing his heart to react as if electrocuted. A chill surged through his veins.

Justin had gone without sleep for two consecutive nights, and not even sleeping pills proved effective. Since they parted ways at the concert, Justin has been preoccupied and absent-minded. Known for his focus at work, he even skipped important meetings and let reports pass unnoticed.

The reason behind his behavior eluded him, but he was certain that Bella was the root cause of his insomnia.

Today, without informing Ian, he quietly drove himself to the KS World Hotel and waited patiently for the afternoon.

His sole objective was to catch a glimpse of Bella.

Even if it were just to ensure a full night's sleep, he longed to see her.

However, the shock hit hard when he saw Bella still in Christopher's company. Intense pain radiated in his head, and a momentary haziness clouded his vision.

The uncertainty of whether this encounter would alleviate his insomnia lingered, but the impact was akin to a heart attack.

Justin's bloodshot eyes darkened. He gritted his teeth and floored the gas pedal.

The sports car surged forward and raced to catch up with the Bentley.

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Tonight, Yara Park buzzed with activity as the servants hustled to prepare for the arrival of distinguished guests. Following Wyatt's invitation, the kids who could make it had returned Asher, Axel, and his seventh son, Ralph, were already there. Bella was en route.

Amelia, who was swamped with important coursework, could not make it. Since it was not a particularly important gathering, Celeste insisted her daughter prioritize studying.

"Another night of testosterone overpowering estrogen." Axel sipped his tea in the living room. He glanced at Asher on his left and then at Ralph on his right, shaking his head with a playful smile. "Why is it so tough for us to meet up with our sisters?!"

"Ax, be grateful. We just cracked a big case, and the chief gave us a two-day break. Otherwise, we won't get to see each other in another decade!" Ralph, sporting a leather jacket, lounged on the sofa with his head propped up on his arm. His relaxed posture revealed the vibe of a guy who had spent considerable time in the police force, void of the grace that an elite man should have.

As the youngest Thompson son, he bore the closest resemblance to Wyatt-thick brows, doe-like eyes, a steep nose, full and slightly upturned lips, and a sun-kissed, wheat-colored

complexion that accentuated his bright, starry eyes.

“Ugh, I really don’t mind that.” Axel teased.

“Be thankful for my presence!”

Suddenly, there was a sharp snap.

Asher and Axel jolted up in their seats. Their faces reflected a mix of confusion and curiosity as the scene unfolded before them. Ralph, the picture of nonchalance on the sofa, effortlessly raised his arm, nabbing a walnut hurtling toward him from an unidentified source.

‘Damn! Is this the kind of reflex humans are supposed to possess?’ Axel thought.

“Hehe! Mom, you really know how to pamper me. You chose such a large walnut, knowing they’re my favorite!” Ralph smoothly rose from the sofa, delicately placing the walnut on the coffee table. With practiced finesse, he crushed the shell with one hand, retrieving the kernel with a cheerful grin.

“Sit up straight or stand properly! Honestly, you’re lacking all the poise expected of a Thompson man! Are you really a cop? Or have you spent a decade undercover in the

underworld?” Mila scolded Ralph with her hands on her hips. She strode over to her youngest son with a frustrated expression.

“Well, it’s no big deal, right?” Ralph grinned, munching on a walnut kernel and extending his hand to his mother. “Mom, this isn’t remotely enough to fill my cravings. Got any more walnuts?”

“What on earth are you wearing? Hurry upstairs and change into something befitting our status before our guests show up!” Even the sophisticated and well-informed Mila could not suppress her irritation. She delivered a stern kick to her son’s butt. “I don’t care how you conduct yourself in the police force.

The moment you step back into this house, you're Wyatt Thompson's 7th son, and I expect you to act accordingly! Chairman Iverson and his sons will be arriving shortly, so don't embarrass your father!"

In the study, Wyatt sat on a vintage leather sofa, sporting a pair of reading glasses on his straight nose, attentively flipping through the photos in his hands.

The protagonists in the pictures were none other than Bella and Christopher.

"As per your instructions, I've been discreetly keeping an eye on Ms. Bella's dating situation," Quentin reported respectfully. "She hasn't contacted anyone else on the list, but her interactions with Mr. Christopher from the Iverson family have been quite frequent."

Wyatt repeatedly flipped through the photos, nearly wearing them out. Upon hearing this, he asked in a deep voice, "Has Christopher Iverson made any inappropriate advances toward my Bella? Any improper behavior?"

"No, Mr. Christopher is a refined gentleman. He knows how to conduct himself in the company of Ms. Bella and has shown no signs of crossing any boundaries."

"Hmm." Wyatt pondered in silence, choosing not to say more.

At that moment, there was a knock on the door. Celeste's gentle voice came from outside. "Wyatt, Chairman Iverson and his sons have arrived."

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On the ground floor, within the main hall.

Asher and Axel, alongside Ralph, who had donned a sophisticated suit, and the two madams, had graciously received Lance and his second son, Charles Iverson, into their residence.

“Asher the CEO and Axel the prosecutor! My, you two have grown into such fine young men! Oh, is this Madam Mila’s younger son? The last time I saw you, boy, you were still so small and playful. Now, you’ve grown to be so handsome! Where are you working these days?”

Lance Iverson, the chairman of the Iverson Group, warmly approached the Thompson brothers and enthusiastically shook hands with them.

“I am currently serving as a police officer, assigned to the criminal investigation department, Uncle Lance,” Ralph replied with a faint smile.

“Really... A police officer?” Lance expressed a degree of surprise, a glint of shrewdness flickering in his eyes.

From the perspective of this business magnate, a police officer was the lowest rung among public servants, earning meager wages, constantly putting themselves in danger, and engaging in a variety of gritty and strenuous tasks. More importantly, the career trajectory was limited. The pinnacle would be a senior police commissioner, far from the significance of inheriting a multi-billion-dollar family business.

“My son lacks talent. I’m sure his career choice has given you a good laugh.” Mila displayed a hint of embarrassment. Her younger son’s chosen profession had always been a source of concern for her.

Among Wyatt’s wives, Mila held the highest social status because she was from the Larson family. She did not want to compete with Wyatt’s other wives or partition the rest of the Thompson family, but her

upbringing had instilled a strong sense of family honor.

Thus, Mila aspired for her children to be exceptional individuals, subjecting them to particularly stringent expectations.

Yet, her youngest son, Ralph, happened to be an unambitious person and insisted on dedicating his life to criminal investigation, deviating from the path she had envisioned for him. It truly caused her a considerable headache.

“Mila, you’re being too humble!”

Sasha, who had always been forthright, stepped forward and proudly patted Ralph on the shoulder with a beaming smile. “How is Ralph lacking talent? At the age of 27, he achieved first -class merit and three second-class merits for consistently solving major cases. He’s genuinely the pride of the Savrow Police Department!”

“Not only that, Ralph is now the captain of the Savrow First Criminal Investigation Division. He’s also the youngest captain in the history of the division, Uncle Lance.” Axel added. He joined in with support, as he did not want the Iverson family to look down on his impressive seventh brother.

“Haha... Truly a promising young talent, indeed!” Lance chuckled in agreement.

Ralph, upon hearing the accolades from his family, was even more pleased than receiving

merits. He shyly scratched his head and grinned.

“Lance! Oh, my...”

Accompanied by Celeste and Quentin, Wyatt approached Lance and his son. His smiling eyes concealed a hint of teasing. “It’s been quite a while since you paid me a visit! I was starting to think some part of you malfunctioned and you went overseas for maintenance, afraid to face me.”

“Oh, that’s rich coming from you!” Lance briskly approached, sporting a playful frown. “Two months ago, I invited you to go horseback riding with me, and you came up with some excuse about being busy. What happened to the enthusiasm you used to have for horseback riding? It made me wonder if your legs aren’t nimble enough to climb onto a horse anymore due to your age. Were you afraid I’d make fun of you, so you declined my invitation?”

“Haha... You really worry about inconsequential matters. My body is still agile!” Wyatt mischievously curled his lips. At 60 years old, he could still exude such arrogance.

“When we are both elderly, toothless, and residing in a nursing home, I am certain I will be the one pushing your wheelchair. Just wait and see!”

Observing the two brothers banter like in the old days, everyone could not help but chuckle on the side.

Tonight, Lance adorned a meticulous four-piece suit, featuring a charcoal gray base and a silver-white tie with fine black stripes as an accent, radiating finesse.

Unexpectedly, Wyatt did not adhere to the usual conventions. He chose to wear a white silk long robe with delicate embroidery, which added a touch of luxury. He looked effortlessly handsome in such casual attire. Not a single strand of white hair adorned his temples, and his posture remained as straight as it was twenty years ago. It was genuinely exasperating for

Lance.

Lance and Wyatt were both individuals who placed special emphasis on their appearance. Since their youth, they have dedicated considerable effort to dressing and skin care. They had engaged in this friendly competition for more than twenty years, seemingly determined to outdo each other until they were both in their coffins.

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“Hello, Uncle Wyatt.” Charles approached with grace and politely bowed toward Wyatt.

Although Charles and Christopher were half-siblings, their physical traits diverged noticeably. Christopher, Lance’s fourth son, boasted a delicate and androgynous appearance, rendering gender identification challenging. Conversely, Lance’s second son showcased more sharply defined features—thick, arched eyebrows gracefully extending into his temples. His eyes were deep-set, and his gaze was as sharp as his father’s. He was also tall and slim.

“Oh, Charles, greetings to you as well!”

Wyatt extended an affectionate smile to the younger Iverson, whom he had watched grow up. “Lance, didn’t you say that you were bringing your youngest son along as well? It’s been quite a few years since I last laid eyes on your fourth son. Why isn’t he with you?”

“Haha... That rascal mentioned having some last-minute business to attend to, so he will be arriving a bit later.”

Lance scanned his surroundings, expressing confusion. “Wyatt, didn’t you say Bella would be joining us tonight? Why haven’t I seen her?”

“Cough, cough... Bella mentioned she had some matters to attend to and would join us after resolving them.” Wyatt could not quite grasp his daughter’s routine, but she usually would not break a promise.

“Tsk, Bella better not bail on us! I came specifically to see her!”

Lance insisted, “I won’t leave without seeing Bella tonight!”

Soon after he said this, the butler’s clear voice echoed from outside. “Chairman Thompson, Ms. Bella is back!”

“Speak of the devil!”

Upon hearing of his daughter’s return, Wyatt instantly lit up with a beaming smile. His eyes sparkled with indulgence.

At this moment, everyone turned to look at the entrance.

Lance’s eyes immediately brightened. He extended his neck and eagerly gazed outward.

Charles, who was usually nonchalant, also subtly changed his expression. Accustomed to grand scenes, he even discreetly adjusted his tie. He was inexplicably nervous.

“Dad! I’m back!”

A crisp and sweet voice resounded through the hall.

Bella, radiant as the sun, walked in with graceful steps alongside Christopher, shocking everyone except for Asher.,

Even Wyatt was astonished.

At this moment, Lance’s and Charles’s expressions became intriguing.

Lance’s brow furrowed slightly, while Charles pressed his lips together, the color draining

from them. His gaze turned cold and gloomy. A sense of irritation at being played surged in his chest. With a sullen face, he tugged at his tie.

“Uncle Wyatt, Dad, apologies for our tardiness,” Christopher said.

First, he cast a deep glance at Bella by his side, then politely bowed to the two elders.

“Chris, did you happen to run into Bella at the door?” Lance’s gaze shifted between them, probing.

“No, Dad.” Christopher slowly curled his lips. His affectionate gaze lingered on Bella’s side profile. “I deliberately went to pick Bella up from her hotel and came here together with her.”

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Suddenly, the hall fell silent, and the air became somewhat tense. Bella turned in surprise, meeting Christopher’s gentle gaze.

The way Christopher said “Bella” made Charles scowl even more. Wyatt glanced at his beloved daughter and appraised Christopher. His gaze was unreadable, yet he only smiled lightly, saying, “Chris, you purposely went to pick up Bella? That’s too much trouble.”

“Uncle Wyatt, you’re too polite.”

Axel nudged Asher with his elbow and asked in a low voice, “Ash, when did Bella get so close to Christopher? I had no idea!”

“Do I need to disclose every detail about Bella?” Asher remarked casually.

“Are you aware of their relationship, then?”

“I am.”

“Damn! Are you showing off how much closer you are to Bella?!”

“I asked Christopher to escort Bella back.”

Axel drew a sharp breath. “Ash, how can you casually push our baby sister toward another man? It’s hard to know someone’s true colors. What if this Christopher has impure intentions toward her? What if he makes unwanted advances on the way?”

“Impure intentions are commonplace. In this world, no man will be immune to Bella’s charm. As for the latter, we don’t need to concern ourselves with it.”

Asher lightly smirked. “If Christopher were the person you described, would he still be standing here in front of us with all his limbs intact?”

“Hmm, valid point.”

After all, being the heiress of KS Group, Bella had been taught by Drew and Asher how to wield a sword and handle a gun since childhood, while her peers were still playing with dolls.

In truth, Asher's actions were not entirely selfless. Justin had firmly entrenched himself in Bella's life for 13 full years. Even though Bella had uprooted that man from her heart, the deep and heart-wrenching wound left by Justin could not be ignored.

At this moment, she needed someone in her life to fill the void in her heart. Her brothers could not play this role, but Asher felt that Christopher could do so.

The men engaged in conversation in the living room, while the three madams "interrogated" Bella in the backyard.

"Bella, come clean. What's your relationship with Christopher?" Sasha, with a sly smile, hugged Bella's slender waist and straightforwardly posed the question.

"Consider us friends," Bella said calmly.

"A boyfriend?" Sasha excitedly pressed for details.

"A male friend!" Bella was exasperated.

"Oh, there's no such thing as platonic friendship between men and women. So, he's your boyfriend. Even if you're not official now, it's bound to happen!" Sasha casually pinched Bella's slim waist.

"Back then, when I saved your dad from an attempted assassination by a business rival, he said he wanted to become sworn siblings with me. Look at us now! We just haven't had a child."

Bella was completely speechless, defeated by Sasha's lack of filter.

Mila and Celeste looked at each other, not annoyed but rather amused by the situation.

After all, if it were not for Sasha's brave intervention back then, Wyatt might not be alive today. There were still two gunshot scars on Sasha's lower back and left shoulder from the time she shielded Wyatt from a bullet.

"Bella, it would be great if you could be with Christopher. It's not just about matching social status. Lance Iverson and your father are close. If you marry into the Iverson family, they will surely treat you well." Celeste swooned. "Besides, Christopher is very handsome. Your children would undoubtedly be incredibly good-looking."

"Wait a minute! How did we suddenly jump to having children together?! He has nothing to do with me... Where is this even going?!" Bella felt the conversation was getting more absurd.

"Celeste, I think Bella should not choose a lifelong partner solely based on looks." Mila, being more rational, narrowed her eyes slightly and seriously analyzed the situation.

"From what I know, Christopher had just returned from Sentania. He doesn't hold much stake in the Iverson Group, and his foundation is not very stable. His mother has been exiled abroad by Lance under the guise of seeking medical treatment, and she's rarely heard from. If we let Bella marry him, it may seem like a good match on the surface, but in reality, she might be marrying beneath her status. Who knows? Christopher might be eyeing Bella's net worth, wanting to leverage her substantial background to gain power within the Iverson family." Mila expressed her concerns.

"Oh dear! What you said makes a lot of sense. We really shouldn't be hasty about this!" Sasha, always swaying with the wind, was now echoing caution.

"Bella, even when shopping, we compare prices from three different stores. When it comes to marriage, we can't treat it lightly. Either don't get married, or marry someone truly exceptional if you do. Maybe you should consider Charles?" Celeste suggested.

Bella felt overwhelmed and could not find the words to explain herself. She covered her head with both hands, feeling frustrated.

With so many mothers around, their nagging was like having eight hundred mosquitoes buzzing in her ears.

Her head was throbbing.

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During dinner, everyone indulged in delectable dishes and savored the Lafite wine from

Wyatt's collection, carefully curated for over a decade. The ambiance retained its harmonious tone, just as it had before.

In reality, for the two tycoons, this meal served as a nostalgic gathering, reminiscent of times over two decades ago. The significant change lay in the addition of children, adding to the joyful scene under their roofs.

Lance had a specific purpose in mind this time-finding suitable wives for his two unmarried sons. Throughout the banquet, Charles occupied the seat directly across from Bella, while Christopher sat beside her.

The dining table was wide, so the one sitting beside Bella was closer to her as opposed to someone sitting across from her.

Charles observed with a sense of helplessness as his younger brother attended to Bella with the utmost care and attention. Dark flames flickered in his eyes, and the fork in his hand was nearly deformed.

'What a bad start! This little bastard took advantage of the ideal circumstances. He's at the right place at the right time, with the right people!'

Christopher, having learned from their previous encounter, knew Bella's fondness for seafood, especially crabs and shrimp-a delicacy she couldn't resist.

So, throughout the banquet, Christopher barely touched his plate. Instead, he patiently peeled the shrimp for Bella. He continuously offered the succulent morsels to her, while everyone discreetly

observed their interactions.

Bella reveled in the feast, showing no restraint in front of her family, and enthusiastically devoured her food. Christopher's long lashes were downcast, a smile gracing his lips. His slender, fair fingers expertly peeled open shrimp shells and delicately placed the plump, deshelled shrimp onto Bella's plate.

For a man from a wealthy family, such actions might be considered beneath his stature. However, Christopher appeared wholly engrossed, oblivious to onlookers, and savoring every

moment.

Bella displayed no signs of embarrassment, nor did she decline his offer. Instead, she graciously accepted each delectable offering, appreciating everything he did for her.

If it were just the two of them, she would undoubtedly reject him. However, with Lance present, the dynamics changed. Given this golden opportunity to expose his vulnerabilities, she couldn't let it slip away.

As Christopher peeled each shrimp, meticulously wiping his fingers with a tissue after each one, Charles couldn't help but sneer. He knew his younger brother had a cleanliness obsession. He wouldn't even wear the same piece of clothing twice. Yet, for Bella, he willingly broke his own rules. It seemed Christopher had decided to go all-in to compete with him.

"My girl is becoming more and more outrageous. You must excuse her behavior, Lance." Wyatt was somewhat embarrassed by Bella's behavior.

"Oh, Wyatt, don't say that. We're all family here, so there's no need to feel embarrassed. Bella's genuine nature is just like yours when you were young. I like it. I wish I could carry her back home right

now in a grand procession and make her my daughter-in-law! Hahaha!" Lance, after holding back all evening, finally revealed the purpose of his visit.

Wyatt merely smiled in agreement, not delving further into that particular topic.

On this side, Bella finally felt satisfied. She covered her small mouth as she let out a burp. Christopher turned his head. His deep gaze focused on her, tenderness swirling in his eyes.

“Wipe your hands,” Christopher said as he pulled out a tissue and handed it to her from under the table.

“Um, thanks.” Bella smiled, gracefully dabbing her lips.

“Bella seems to have a hearty appetite tonight,” Charles said with a gentle smile.

“Oh, I’m sorry. The dishes at home are just too delicious. I couldn’t resist...” Bella began.

“No, no, Bella, you misunderstood me. I don’t mean it as an insult. I just think that you’re different from the other wealthy young ladies I’ve encountered,” Charles said warmly.

Charles leaned forward and said sincerely, “I appreciate your genuine nature. I find you adorable and real.”

‘Hmm, being real just because of a meal. Hasn’t he met any women who eat regular food?’ Bella thought to herself, but she politely responded, “Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Charles.”

“I noticed you haven’t had much to drink. You must be thirsty. Have some red wine,” Charles suggested, smiling as he stood up, intending to pour wine for Bella.

Unexpectedly, at that moment, Christopher interjected with a cool tone and a mocking smile. “Seafood should be paired with white wine. How can you suggest red wine? Charles, it seems you have been

living with your head in the clouds, unaware of even such common knowledge.”

With Christopher's taunting, Charles's expression shifted instantly, and he discreetly clenched his fists."

The Thompson family members pretended not to notice, but at this precise moment, Lance exhibited keen perception. As he gazed at Christopher, his eyes unmistakably conveyed displeasure.

"Bella, I'll have someone fetch you a glass of white wine to wash down the seafood. A small glass won't do any harm," Christopher suggested gently, now disregarding the pallid Charles.

Bella coughed. "Well, to be honest, anything is fine for me."

Caught between the two Iverson brothers, Bella felt a tingling sensation on her scalp. She could only offer an awkward smile and say, "But I actually prefer beer..."

To her surprise, both Charles and Christopher simultaneously redirected their attention to her, saying in unison, "No! That could lead to gout!"

As dinner neared its end, Christopher briefly excused himself and headed toward the restroom.

Standing in front of the sink, Christopher methodically dispensed hand sanitizer into his palm. His cold and pale hands resembled finely preserved specimens immersed in formaldehyde. He rubbed them together vigorously until they glowed with a rosy hue.

He repeated this handwashing ritual five times and raised his hands to sniff them, but he still smelled a faint fishy odor. Once again, he squeezed another pump of hand sanitizer, meticulously attending to each finger.

At that moment, the restroom door swung open.

Charles entered with a somber expression, observing Christopher's compulsive handwashing. He couldn't resist teasing his brother. "You're really going all out, Chris. Spending the entire night peeling shrimp for Ms. Bella must be a nightmarish task for a clean freak like you. I wonder if you'll dream about washing your hands tonight."

Christopher paid no heed to his taunts, gracefully pulling out a few tissues and lowering his fair eyelids, elegantly drying his hands.

“Chris, it’s been many years. I thought you might have learned some remarkable skills in a foreign country.” Charles sneered disdainfully. “Turns out, you’ve become quite adept at bootlicking.”

“Oh, Charles, are you jealous?” Christopher smirked, unfazed. “After all, in front of Bella, you don’t even have the chance to be a bootlicker, do you?”

“You!”

“Compared to your futile attempts to get closer to Bella, it’s evident that being a bootlicker like me holds more value.”

Charles choked at the remark, laughing with fury. “Haha... No wonder Dad never liked you. Your brain is indeed abnormal. Being a person is not enough for you. You want to be a lapdog!”

“In this world, where people laugh at poverty but not at immorality, achieving the goal is the most important, no matter the means.”

Christopher tossed the crumpled paper towel into the bin and smiled. “Since we were children, you’ve always been too proud to say more than a few words to me. Why the sudden change tonight? Could it be that you’re anxious to watch my relationship with Bella take off? Seeing your grand plans fall apart, do you feel like you can’t even compare to a lapdog like me?”

“Chris! Don’t get cocky too soon! I’m telling you, Dad will never approve of you being with Ms. Bella! Do you think you even have the right to compete with me?!” Charles was genuinely agitated this time.

“Whether I’m worthy or not has never been up to you to decide.”

Christopher turned slowly to face the furious man. His deep eyes narrowed slightly, and he pushed up his gold-rimmed glasses. “When it comes to Bella, victory is inevitable for me.”

As expected, the conversation reached a breaking point. Charles, consumed by anger, slammed the door and left.

Christopher's smile faded as he clenched his fists tightly.

At that moment, his phone vibrated in his grasp. He coldly answered, "What?"

"Mr. Iverson, there's something you need to hear, but please remain calm."

His secretary paused for a moment before speaking in a hushed tone, "Mr. Salvador showed up at Yara Park's gate. He came alone, without anyone else!"

Christopher's dark eyes contracted as he replied in a chilling tone, "Alright."

At this moment, Justin, dressed in a thin suit, stood alone under the streetlight opposite Yara Park.

Although Hatchbay was by the sea, the night wind was chilly in the fall. It slipped through the cuffs and collar of his suit, penetrating to his core.

This marked his third time standing here, waiting for Bella.

However, the state of his mind this time was entirely different from the previous two occasions. The subtle anticipation had transformed into an indescribable longing, silently burning in his heaving chest.

Justin had considered what he would do if he couldn't see Bella tonight. His pride as her ex-husband told him not to reach out to her. Anyone with a bit of self-respect could not endure repeatedly subjecting themselves to such humiliation.

Therefore, he decided to wait and keep waiting.

Bella would eventually come out, and he would see her.

Chapter 328

Justin just wanted to catch a glimpse of Bella.

Suddenly, the gates of Yara Park eased open. Justin's heart tightened abruptly. Every nerve in his body stirred, and his tall frame leaned forward.

His gaze was focused, firmly locked in the direction of the gate. He held his breath for a

moment.

However, when Christopher appeared in his line of sight with a smirk and strolled over casually, Justin felt his heart sink.

Justin observed with cold detachment as Christopher walked up to him.

"Mr. Salvador, it's late, and there's no one around. Isn't it impolite and inappropriate for you to show up here in the middle of the night without an invitation?" Christopher looked at him mockingly.

Justin's handsome face remained calm, and his thin lips curled into a sneer. "My presence here has nothing to do with you. Since when was Hatchbay owned by the Iverson family?"

"Justin, are you always this insolent? Have you always been a sore loser?"

Christopher sneered with extreme disdain. "I know why you came, and I know what you're thinking. You're regretting that you chose Rosalind over Bella. Now that you realize you've been played by Rosalind and have woken up to your own foolishness, you want Bella back. You're unwilling to lose everything and look pathetic. What do you think Bella is a tool to fill your emptiness? You've hurt her deeply. Do you think she'll still be waiting for you?"

Justin's Adam's apple moved up and down as bitterness rose at the back of his throat.

"Bella already has someone new by her side, near and far. If you want to have any ideas about Bella again, you should ask whether I agree and if she can tolerate you." Christopher adjusted his glasses. His gaze was chilling.

"It's not your place to say these words, Christopher."

Justin tilted his chin slightly. The intense desire for victory burned like a fierce fire in his heart. "Even if I regret it, even if I want to start anew with Bella, she should be the one rejecting me. Everything you say in front of me is invalid."

"Justin."

"Justin!"

Christopher furrowed his brows and no longer cared to hide his hostility toward this man.

Unexpectedly, their voices turned into a duet.

Justin suddenly lifted his gaze, and when Bella walked towards him in anger, his heart uncontrollably pounded violently.

"Bella, why are you dressed so lightly? It's chilly out here..."

Christopher's eyes darkened abruptly, and the harshness dissipated. His gentle undertone resurfaced.

Just as he was about to greet her, he saw her rush past him like a gust of wind, not pausing in

front of him.

At this moment, Bella and Justin locked eyes. It was as if an invisible barrier surrounded them, completely isolating Christopher from them.

They stood there in a standoff, doing nothing, yet it gave the distinct impression that there was no room for a third person between them.

Christopher tightened his fists. The cold air in his lungs transformed into sharp knives that twisted his internal organs painfully.

The animosity hidden behind his dark eyes gradually twisted into murderous intent.

“Mr. Salvador, you’re touring Hatchbay again, huh? Every time you come around, you have to linger around my doorstep. Is it because Yara Park has a nice view? Have you thought of it as a landmark?” Bella, with one hand on her slender waist, asked aggressively.

Justin’s heart was still trembling. He fixed his gaze on her and caught himself saying, “The scenery here is quite nice.”

Bella thought to herself, ‘The scenery is quite nice?! Is this man missing some brain cells? Can’t he hear the sarcasm in my voice?!’

“Heh, then next time, I’ll arrange a local guide for you and take you on an in-depth tour of Hatchbay. Don’t keep hanging around my doorstep. This isn’t a tourist attraction!”

Bella could no longer tolerate this man. She gritted her teeth and said, “Leave here immediately. I won’t be seeing you off!”

Justin continued to stare at her blankly, his reddened eyes dimming. Then he said softly, “ Alright, goodnight.”

Bella froze. 'What?! Goodnight?! This man came all the way here, and all he said was goodnight? What is wrong with him?'

The next moment, Justin, as if resolving something, turned around and headed toward his car.

"Justin, wait!"

Chapter 329

Justin's heart fluttered as he turned away from Bella, an uncontrollable smile playing at the corners of his lips. Yet, in that very moment, courage failed him, and he couldn't bring himself to face her.

Christopher's lips were pressed tightly together. There was a storm in the depths of his eyes. Despite the tumultuous divorce between Bella and Justin that had turned their world upside down, he still sensed the subtle, tangled emotions lingering between them, subtly pulling at the threads that bound them.

"Justin, since you're here, speak your mind before you leave."

Bella's expression was cold as she took a step forward and stared at Justin, who stood with a perfect posture. "Don't sneak around like a thief. I'm afraid I'll have nightmares tonight."

A hint of bitterness rose in Justin's throat as he turned to face her, each word spoken deliberately. "It's nothing. I've just been suffering from insomnia these past few days."

Bella frowned, unable to comprehend the inevitable connection between his visit to Hatchbay and his insomnia.

'Could his insomnia really be related to me?' Bella thought.

Bella was speechless. 'How could he blame everything on me? To be fair, I didn't mess with him!'

“If you have insomnia, try sleeping pills or counting sheep. Coming here won’t solve anything.”

“It’s already solved.”

Justin locked eyes with her. “I think I’ll be able to sleep well tonight when I get back.”

With that, he turned away again and left.

Bella stared blankly at his somewhat desolate figure until the black sports car vanished completely into the night. Only then did she vent her frustration.

“What a psycho!”

Back in the sports car, Justin suddenly felt an overwhelming wave of exhaustion. His encounter with Bella had left him emotionally drained. As he gripped the steering wheel, he felt a profound exhaustion engulfing him.

The air inside the car crackled with restlessness as he watched Bella and Christopher disappear beyond the gates of Yara Park.

With trembling fingertips, Justin picked up his phone and dialed Ian’s number.

“Mr. Salvador, any instructions?”

“Investigate.”

“Pardon?” Ian was utterly confused.

“Look into the relationship between the Thompsons and the Iversons, as well as the relationship between Bella and Christopher.”

Justin gritted his teeth. "Bella is not a woman easily captivated. I don't believe their relationship is as Christopher described."

"Yes, sir! I'll get right on it!"

Ian felt a hidden joy. His tone was suddenly more cheerful. Mustering his courage, he mumbled, "If you had trusted the young madam earlier, how could she have left you? Those pests wouldn't be bothering her then..."

"Say one more word, and you're reporting to the most remote branch of Salvador Corporation!" Justin gritted his teeth.

Ian immediately apologized, "I'm sorry, Mr. Salvador! I know I messed up!"

Bella had long known about the fact that Justin showed up unannounced at the entrance to Yara Park. Initially, she did not want to bother with it. Regardless of whatever that contemptible man was up to outside, she simply wanted him to face some hardship.

Unexpectedly, Christopher had gone out to confront him. With the intention of preventing one problem from escalating into another, Bella had to step in and personally untangle the

mess.

The brief incident did not impact the cordial family gathering, and the dinner concluded in a peaceful ambiance.

Wyatt, accompanied by Quentin, returned to the study. He secretly called Asher and Axel over.

"Dad, is there something you need from us?" Asher asked.

“How much do you two know about the situation between Bella and Christopher? Tell me the truth.” Wyatt shook out his robe and sat elegantly on the sofa.

The two brothers exchanged glances, and Axel promptly betrayed his older brother. “Dad, you should ask Ash! I really don’t know anything about what’s going on between Bella and Christopher!”

Asher remained composed, showing no sign of emotion.

“Ash, what’s the current status between them?”

Chapter 330

Wyatt adopted a serious, almost detective-like tone. “Bella’s only ever had shrimp peeled by you and me. When has she ever let another guy show her affection? Tonight, Christopher was going all out with his attention on Bella. He might as well have been spoon-feeding her. Also, Bella didn’t shut him down, so spill it. What’s their deal? Is Bella really into him?”

“Dad, judging from your tone, it looks like you’re not exactly Christopher’s biggest fan.”

Asher cut to the chase.

Wyatt pursed his lips without giving a clear answer.

“Christopher and Bella go way back. Now that they’ve reunited, they’re hitting it off. Bella rarely clicks with a guy without putting up a fight, plus the Iversons and our family have a good relationship. If Chris and Bella want to take things further, it might not be all bad.” Asher calmly shared his thoughts.

“When Lance came over tonight, you both knew the meaning behind it. He clearly intends to form a marriage alliance with our family. Why else would he drag his two single sons along? He’s got his eyes on Bella!” Wyatt’s eyes dropped, shaking his head. “But let me make it clear. I’m not signing off on this marriage.”

Upon hearing these words, the Thompson brothers' expression subtly changed. They had not expected their father's strong opposition to the Iverson family.

"Dad, are you and Uncle Lance going through a rough patch? Did you secretly block each other's numbers?" Axel could not resist teasing his father. "Seriously, even after falling out, you can still sit down and chat like nothing happened. If it were me, I'd definitely hold a grudge."

"How did you become a prosecutor with that brain of yours? Did you use my name to get special treatment?" Wyatt shot Axel a glance, then he continued with a serious tone, "Bella is my dearest daughter. She just escaped from the mess of the Salvador family. There's no way I'm sending her into a lion's den-that is, the Iverson family! Do you think the Iverson family is some kind of paradise? There's serious infighting going on in that family. None of Lance's four children are easy to deal with. If Bella marries into that family, she'll be constantly embroiled in family disputes, enduring endless internal strife. Moreover, Christopher is Lance's least favored son. Christopher's business abroad might be significant, but he had a rough start, and his deals might not be entirely clean. A person with such a background might want to clean up his act by marrying into our family and establishing a foothold in Savrow."

Axel's gaze lingered in astonishment, while Asher's eyes displayed a hint of self-blame under his long lashes. His lips pursed in regret.

He had dedicated himself entirely to offering his sister a new beginning, unintentionally overlooking these underlying issues. Critical considerations had slipped through the cracks in his focus.

"As my daughter, Bella can brighten up someone's life, but she should never sacrifice herself to light up someone else's world. I cannot bear to see that happen!"

A luxurious Bentley cruised toward Savrow.

Charles returned in his posh car, while Lance broke the norm by having Christopher ride with him.

The father-son pair sat in the back seat with an undeniable tension lingering in the air, hinting at a familial connection that was present but not particularly strong.

“Chris, come clean with me. What’s going on between you and Bella?” Lance questioned him with a cold expression.

“Are you prying into my love life?” Christopher half-smirked, half-teased. “For fifteen years, you didn’t bat an eye about my life in Sentania when Mom and I were living together. Now that I’m back in Savrow, it seems you’re unusually interested in every move I make.”

“Don’t dodge the question. I’m asking about your relationship with Bella!” Lance’s stern tone and angered expression were clear.

“As you witnessed tonight, my connection with Bella is quite intimate.” A glint of cold light reflected off his gold-rimmed glasses as he responded with a mocking smirk.

Lance sighed deeply. The veins on his forehead were pulsating. He issued a strict command. Starting now, you must cut off all communication with Bella. Keep your distance from her immediately!”

“Why?” Christopher asked with a smile.

“Bella is the marriage partner I’ve chosen for Charles. If you interfere now, it’ll disrupt my plans!”

“Charles is your son, and I’m not? If Bella were with me, she would still be your daughter-in-law. What’s the issue?”

“My decision is final. Charles must marry Bella. If you’re interested in forming an alliance with the Thompsons, Wyatt has a younger daughter named Amelia, born of his third wife and still unmarried.”

“So, are you saying that an unprivileged son can only marry the daughter of a mistress?” Christopher adjusted his glasses, a touch of scorn on his lips.

“Christopher! Don’t speak nonsense!”

Lance, infuriated and embarrassed, exclaimed, "You shouldn't compete with Charles. I'll give you what you're entitled to, but you shouldn't take what's not yours."

"I've heard this saying since I was a child, but up to now, I haven't received anything that truly belongs to me."

Christopher calmly closed his eyes as he sneered. "I don't want your empty promises. Go back and tell Charles to keep his feelings to himself. Bella can only belong to me and no one else. Don't even think about competing with me."