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Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 391

An hour later, Diana appeared at the entrance of the Winnington residence.

She hadn't contacted them ever since James proposed she married Clifford Pabian.

But now, her parents, husband, babies, work, designs, and everything she could think of... Kayla had taken away so many things Diana cherished.

Though Diana was still not strong enough and couldn't do much to Kayla right now, she could still do something small. She would start small and accumulate all of it, like ants, and take Kayla down eventually.

The first step involved the Winningtons.

The first thing Diana cherished, that Kayla had taken to ensure her own survival, was Diana's own parents. Thus, Diana would slowly ensure that Kayla had a taste of that too!

It was now late autumn. As Diana stood in the doorway of the Winnington residence, she looked at the wildflowers around her; they were there the last time she came to the residence. There were traces of them being trampled by something heavy, yet the flowers stood strong, tall, and vigorous; like a warrior that only got stronger after every experience.

As she thought of her and the flowers' fate, Diana smiled.

She could be defeated and crushed, but she would never concede defeat.

At this moment, her expression was completely different from the usual. She appeared like an angel who had descended on earth, beautiful and ephemeral.

When some of the servants saw her, astonishment flashed in their eyes. They turned around happily and ran toward the living room, shouting, "Master, Madam! The young miss is back!"

James quickly emerged from the living room. He wasn't at work today and was dressed in traditional clothes; his attire gave him a gentle and elegant

appearance. His features were exquisite. Though he wasn't young anymore, it was obvious that he had meticulously maintained his appearance.

The roundness of his face, his eyes, and his mouth... They looked almost identical to Kayla.

The more Diana studied his appearance, the more alarmed she felt.

Perhaps it was time to discover what had happened when she disappeared as a child. She was only three years old when James lost her, so there must be some hidden agenda.

She was...suddenly intrigued by what happened to her as a child.

"Ugh! Why is it you?" James's disgruntled voice interrupted Diana's thoughts.

She looked up to see displeasure clear on his face.

"It was me all along," Diana knew the servants had made a mistake, but she already intended to talk about Kayla anyway. "It's not my fault Kayla looks so much like me."

James didn't like to hear this. "It's obvious you're the one who looks like Kayla. You made yourself a substitute, which was how you married into the Fulcher family. Don't you know that?"

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He couldn't stand to see Diana's dazzling appearance.

Of his two daughters, Kayla was the only one with the right to be so beautiful!

Diana was nothing.

How dare she claim that Kayla looked like her!

"Stop bringing up the Fulcher family. I've already divorced Julian," Diana replied calmly, as if she hadn't taken James's words to heart and was merely recounting a fact.

James was surprised. "D—divorced... You've divorced?"

That was great news!

Why hadn't Kayla told him that?

James quickly took out his phone to call Kayla, but Diana had already seen the look on his face. Before he could dial the number, she pulled out her phone and opened the picture Jayden had sent to her, and showed it to James.

"Look at this first. Then you can make your call."

On the screen, Kayla's appearance was ninety percent similar to Diana's. However, James was familiar with his daughter's face; it only took him a glance to know that Kayla had applied makeup to her brows and face on purpose to achieve this effect.

But... Diana had already divorced Julian. Why did Kayla need to imitate Diana?

Diana knew James was easily suspicious, and she raised her brows slightly before asking, "So tell me. Does she look like me, or do I look like her?"

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James couldn't speak, and that was exactly the reaction that Diana wanted.

She calmly analyzed him and said, "For Kayla to do something like this, I'm sure it's because there was a need to imitate me."

But as to why Kayla had done so, Diana also wanted to know the answer. This was one of the reasons she had come here to the Winnington residence.

The fact that Kayla frequently imitated Diana gave rise to a vague uneasiness from the bottom of Diana's heart.

She needed to figure this out.

James and Kayla had little contact lately, so when he heard Diana's words, he began to mutter rapidly in his heart. He immediately ran to the courtyard and dialed Kayla's number.

Diana followed closely behind, clearly intent on listening.

James glared at her. It was good that he had chosen to change places, but Diana wouldn't leave and stuck closely to him and his phone.

The call soon went through.

James glared more viciously at Diana, but when he started talking, he smiled brightly.

“Kayla, when will Mr. Fulcher come to our house to ask for your hand in marriage?”

Kayla’s heart skipped a beat. “Dad, what are you talking about?”

“Are you still acting all shy?” James said. “I know all about it! Diana has already divorced Julian.”

After saying that, he paused for a moment before prodding, “Didn’t he do it for you?”

“What nonsense are you talking about?” Kayla pouted, afraid that James would see through everything.

After all, Kayla relied on Julian’s kindness toward her to obtain glory and favor in the Winnington family.

If James knew what was happening, she would probably lose her position in the family, much less achieve the goal for her mother to enter the Winnington family formally.

James immediately laughed. “Either way, that’s a good thing! I’m sure Julian will soon see how wonderful his second marriage will be!”

After saying that, James rolled his eyes at Diana, as if she wasn’t one of his daughters.

If it weren’t for their similar features, Diana would really doubt this man to be her birth father and assume she was probably adopted. He repulsed her, and a bitter feeling surged in her heart when she looked at him. It made her more determined to discover the truth about what had gone wrong when she was a child.

It seemed she would soon need to officially face the time of her childhood that she previously refused to touch.

As for the beautiful second marriage James had mentioned, Diana had long since been prepared for that and was ready to deal with James’s attitude.

As long as s

love and hate.

On the other end of the phone, Kayla smiled shyly and said, “Dad, you haven’t even checked our horoscopes yet! Make sure not to tell anyone, okay? Julian wants to keep a low–profile.”

At the mention of Julian, James became respectful.

“Okay, I got it.”

Then, he asked, “But Kayla…”

“What is it?”

“Don’t you look more like Diana now with your makeup? Why did you do up your brows to be the same as hers?”

Kayla’s heart thumped wildly in her chest. “H–How did you know about my makeup?”

“That’s not important,” James said, very persistent this time. “Answer my question.”

He had to find out exactly how Julian was treating both his daughters.

He couldn’t afford the slightest mistake.

The Winnington family’s glorious future was at stake!

Meanwhile, Kayla started to get anxious. She hadn’t expected James to be so well–informed, and laughed weakly. It was really hard to explain why she was imitating Diana’s appearance. After much deliberation, she finally decided on what to say.

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Kayla started off carefully, “In the future… You might see me imitating her more.”

James was an old–school veteran at tricks, so he could immediately tell that something was wrong with Kayla’s words.

Diana tried to lean closer at this moment, but James shoved her away and jumped on a table, and quickly asked Kayla, “Kayla, tell me the truth. The reason you didn’t tell me about Diana and Julian divorcing... Was it because he didn’t do it for you?”

Kayla saw that it was pointless to try and hide it any longer, so she nodded and said, “Yeah.”

The joy James felt deflated immediately.

He was afraid.

He was afraid that the person Julian really liked was in fact Diana, and that he had bet wrongly.

Kayla didn’t know about his greed and his thoughts, so she continued, “But you only need to understand that Julian’s mine. I’ll make sure to give you a son-in-law who’s willing to spend all the money you want for our family. That’s all you need to know.”

James didn’t speak; the only sound coming from the phone was his breathing. It seemed her words hadn’t deterred him as much as she had hoped.

Kayla steeled her resolve and called out, “Dad?”

James was startled by her voice. “Huh?”

“You’re not mistaken,” Kayla said, making it clear.

Otherwise, she might be limited by the situation in the future; this would only lead to even more annoying problems.

“Julian likes Diana more than me now.”

In fact, it would be accurate to say that Julian didn’t even like Kayla at this point. Julian’s feelings for her were based entirely on his gratitude for her saving him when they were children, but Kayla didn’t explain this in detail to James.

However, her voice was somewhat threatening when she continued, “But not long ago, you threatened Diana and forced her to marry Clifford Pabian...”

At the sudden influx of information, James was somewhat confused, Kayla was displaying an attitude that was different than usual, which irritated him. However, he didn't have time to lose his temper as he heard Kayla continue, "You know about the news that Luke Pabian died, don't you?"

James nodded without much thought. "Of course."

Kayla grunted. "I'll tell you the truth of the matter. Clifford killed Luke personally, and it's because Luke hurt Diana. Clifford did it to prevent Julian from venting Diana's anger on them and implicating the Pabians."

But even after Clifford had done so, his family's influence still dwindled rapidly in Richburgh. His falling family wasn't a secret at all.

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Kayla paused for a moment before saying, "Now... That tells you Diana's position in Julian's heart, right?"

James had heard of Luke's death, but he never imagined that there was such a hidden agenda behind it.

Clifford... The man was Luke's blood father! Just because Lucas had hurt Diana and angered Julian, Clifford had been ruthless enough to end the life of his own son personally?!

As for James... What had he done to Diana all these years?

He had bet on the wrong person!

Absolutely wrong!

"Kayla, be honest with me." James felt his legs weaken. He could barely stand as he asked his daughter straight, "In the past three years Julian gave our family money... Is it because of you, or Diana?"

At the change in James's tone, Kayla couldn't help but laugh mockingly on the inside.

This man truly did prioritize his interest first and foremost, huh?

The moment he had his hands on a little insider information, he was no longer enthusiastic about calling her name lovingly.

The more he spoke, the more Kayla tensed. She avoided his question and instead replied, “Stop thinking nonsense. You know better than I do what you’ve done to Diana over the years!”

She no longer spoke as politely as she once did, and threatened James without any hesitation. “Just admit it! There’s no other way for you except to stay on the same boat we’re in. You need to support me to marry into the Fulcher family and become the next Mrs. Fulcher. You have no other choice!”

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Kayla traced the table slowly. Her damaged vocal cords made her sound creepy as she continued, “Well... You can try to back out, I suppose. But I wonder, what will happen to you if I tell Julian everything you’ve done to Diana in the past?”

“Are you threatening me?!” James asked, his eyes widening incredulously.

“Yes. What of it?”

Compared to his angry tone, Kayla’s voice was calm yet steely.

James had never experienced this side of Kayla. The Kayla he remembered had always been well-behaved and never spoke to him with such an attitude.

But today, he was seeing a different side of his daughter.

“Kayla Winnington!”

Kayla couldn’t help but shiver when she heard James’s roar. She wouldn’t have said so much if she hadn’t been forced to. If she didn’t bring James to her side and make him stay, she feared something would go wrong in the future.

For now, she needed to pretend to be strong, so she didn’t let her voice waver.

“If there’s nothing else, I’m hanging up.”

James wanted to speak more, but the next second, all he could hear was the dial tone.

She...!

James was furious to the point that his vision faded to black for a moment. He wanted nothing more than to call Kayla back home and demand her explain what the hell was going on!

James swayed on the spot, about to fall backward; however, Diana caught him before he could collapse.

“Are you okay?”

With someone holding him up, James grabbed the pillar beside him and slowly straightened up. He opened his eyes with much difficulty, shooting Diana a complicated look.

“...I’m fine.”

In order for Diana not to hear his conversation with Kayla, he had deliberately run far away from her. Despite that, Diana was able to run to him and catch him in time.

A warmth James had never felt before spread through his body quietly, and he suddenly regretted it...

He regretted doing so many ridiculous things to Diana.

Yet, Kayla was right. He had no right for regrets.

With that thought, James’s face turned cold and he brushed Diana’s hand away.

“Go away! I don’t need you to care!”

Diana made a face like she had choked on something, and let go of him.

James wasn’t prepared for the sudden loss of support; he almost fell backward again.

“Ugh! You’re all rebellious women!” James grunted in anger as he hurriedly grabbed the pillar again, giving Diana a vicious glare as sharp as a knife.

Diana, however, shrugged in an unconcerned manner. "You told me to let go."

But based on James's words, there must have been some conflict between him and Kayla on the phone just now. He wouldn't have said those words otherwise, which were clearly referring to her and Kayla.

It was only a pity Diana hadn't been able to hear their conversation.

Diana clicked her tongue at the thought. Just as she was about to say something, Kate's voice rang out. Darling, are you back? Come and let me look at you. Have you lost weight recently?"

Diana turned around and said, "Sorry to disappoint you."

When Kate saw clearly who it was standing before her, discomfort flashed across her face.

"Ah... It's you, Diana."

"

Kate sighed, and seemed to rack her head before managing to greet Diana properly. "Why are you here?"

"Nothing. I just came to see you two."

She had resigned and received her last drawn salary from Esteem Creations. Now that she didn't have her babies, she wasn't too worried about her future survival. Right now, her pockets were filled with money.

Came to see them?

With what, her eyes?

James was confused. He really wondered how on earth Julian could give up Kayla for Diana, a girl who had grown up in the countryside.

She didn't have any manners at all!

Diana only talked big all day!

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Diana snapped her fingers; the moment she did so, several people rushed into the place and placed a field of potted plants before Kate.

“Cyclamen, Begonia, Medinilla Magnifica, Rhododendron...”

Kate was stunned when she saw all the flowers before her. These were all flowers she recently wanted!

But because Cyclamen die very easily in the hot summer weather, the prices were speculated to be ridiculously high come autumn, especially for flowers of excellent quality with strong roots like the ones before her now. They were estimated to be worth a lot of money.

But now, several pots of top-quality cyclamen were before her.

Kate glanced at the begonias and how they had remained beautiful as ever in this season. It didn't take a genius to figure out that the people who cared for these flowers had been reluctant to give up their lovingly cared for flowers and bring them here.

Then there were the Medinilla Magnifica and Rhododendrons; they were so beautiful, all who looked at them would feel so nostalgic and would never be able to forget how lovely the petals looked!

Kate was dazzled by the sight before her. She had never seen so many excellent quality flowers together in one place.

If one wanted to buy all these flowers in one go, they would probably only be available at an auction.

Also, to gather so many beautiful flowers, one would have to spend a lot of money.

But now, Diana had simply snapped her fingers, and the flowers all appeared before Kate.

Kate's eyes shone brightly. The more she looked at the flowers, the more she liked them.

“It's all for you,” Diana said after giving Kate enough time to admire the flowers. “I saw a lot of flowers in the front yard where you lived before, but some of them were missing, so I found a few for you.”

Compared to the dazzling flowers all put together in front of her, Kate was even more amazed that Diana knew about her love for flowers.

After marrying into the Winningtons for so many years, she kept a low profile about her hobby of growing flowers. She had been afraid others would ridicule her and say that it was a hobby for people of poor origin, and look down on her for it.

In the past, when Kayla had discovered her hobby, she had warned Kate to keep a low profile on it.

Kate thought Kayla had said those things for her sake, so she did as told. She decorated herself in fine jewelry instead, as though it would help her blend in better with the wealthy ladies in their circle.

Diana was the first person to send her flowers.

Diana's gentle and warm eyes seemed to know everything, but in a more sophisticated way. She didn't deliberately expose the unpleasantness in one's heart.

"Only those who love flowers will understand how precious they are. If you put it together with your other ordinary flowers, most people wouldn't be able to tell."

With those words, Kate's worries dissipated instantly. Suddenly, she felt a warm desire in her heart and wished to be closer to Diana.

She subconsciously looked at James, only for him to snap at her, "Since when did you like to grow flowers?"

Kate's face dimmed immediately.

After all these years, he wasn't even half as observant as Diana.

For the first time, she felt that her husband might not love her as much as she thought.

Instead, it was her daughter, who had been lost as a child, ignored and taunted by everyone upon her return, who had shown her great care and supported her actions.

This sincere care Diana showed was even more than Kayla's...!

Kate gathered up her courage and gently took Diana's hand.

"Can I really plant these?"

"Of course," Diana replied without hesitation. "If you don't believe me, you can ask any of the ladies in your circle if they know what flowers these are."

Kate suddenly gained some confidence.

"Thank you."

Finding all these flowers must have taken a considerable effort, and being able to see through Kate's hobby needed even more effort than that.

"B-Back then..." Kate suddenly stammered a little as she spoke. "I shouldn't have agreed with

and forced you to marry that old man from the Pabians..."

Diana smiled. "Will you still force me to get a divorce?"

Kate couldn't say anything to that.

She knew she would.

Because Kayla wanted Diana to get a divorce. your father

Diana smiled; in the first place, she never expected Kate to say no. But for the moment, Kate's willingness to admit her previous wrongs, even slightly, had been worth the effort Diana had put in.

After all, to sow discord was to attack the mind and heart.

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This was already considered a good start.

Kate was even more overwhelmed when she saw Diana's expression.

"Diana, I..."

"It's fine," Diana said, cutting her off. "I've already divorced Julian. If you don't believe me, you can ask James."

Kate jerked back and looked at James, who gave her an affirmative nod in reply.

Kate didn't know if she should be happy or not, and she felt conflicted. For the first time in her life, she felt her heart ache for the terrible things Diana had experienced in life.

"Y-You're divorced... What will you do about your future?"

Diana was surprised to hear such words from Kate. She hadn't expected these flowers to be so effective. She had previously designed some clothes for a prominent elderly customer named Mr. Crawford under her old brand D&J, and he had given her these flowers.

Diana didn't have anywhere to plant them, so she left the flowers at the older man's place to be cared for. Before coming to the Winnington residence today, she remembered the flowers' existence and called for someone to pick them up.

She didn't expect that catering to Kate's taste would make such a big difference.

"This is the first time you've shown care for me," Diana said bluntly to Kate's face.

As expected, a flash of guilt crossed Kate's face.

Kate felt the guilt gnaw into her.

Diana had been kind to Kate despite the horrible treatment she had received in the past, but Kate had never really treated her as a daughter. Even right now, Kate could only think about how soon she could share these flowers with Kayla.

She wasn't a good mother, not in the slightest.

"It's fine," Diana said, taking advantage of Kate's lost expression as she took the latter's hands. "Just show me more care in the future, and that's enough. We're mother and daughter, aren't we? There's no conflict. that we can't overcome."

Kate felt deeply moved by Diana's words.

This child was kinder and more forgiving, far beyond her imagination!

“I will. Of course,” Kate said, almost stumbling over her words.

However, James pulled Kate back from Diana and snarled, “What do you mean, you will? Have you lost your mind after receiving these rotten flowers that you can’t tell the difference between yes and no?”

He now knew Diana’s value, but Kayla was absolutely right. Even if he had realized how much Diana was worth, he no longer had the right to switch sides and stand with Diana.

He could only continue to stand with Kayla and help her deal with Diana... And help Kayla marry into the Fulcher family, instead of playing the role of a loving father–daughter pair with Diana.

Kate was stunned by James’s words and actions. She wanted to retort, but she saw the smile on Diana’s face. Her gentle, warm eyes were bright, and they sparkled like stars in the sky.

Diana looked...really beautiful.

She possessed the kind of beauty and elegance that was impossible to describe with words; Diana basically embodied every single good trait Kate and James had.

To be fair, Diana did look much better than Kayla.

However, Kate refused to admit this fact, even now. Without realizing it, though, she had subconsciously made space in her heart for Diana.

The smile remained on Diana’s face. She looked toward the door, and immediately, another group of people entered. Diana had responded to James’s malice with a smile the entire time, and now, she said calmly to him, “This is for you.”

Before him lay a plaque that Master Winnington had inscribed.

It wasn’t common knowledge, but even though the Winnington family had relied on James currying favor with the Fulcher family to survive, Master Winnington had not favored James.

Master Winnington's calligraphy was famous all over the world; while several other branches of the family had plaques the old man had made personally in their homes, only James didn't have one.

It was also one of the reasons his relatives ridiculed him. They laughed at him, saying that though he devoted himself to the family, it didn't matter if the old man didn't like him. At this rate, he would be kicked out of the Winnington family sooner or later.

James was seen as someone who busied himself for the family, but he never received any perks despite his efforts.

Yet

now, the thing he wanted most and the recognition he yearned for... The plaque seemed to give him some solace.

It was to the point that he started shedding tears the moment he looked at it.

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The plaque Diana gave to James had undoubtedly moved him deeply; just as the flowers had done to Kate.

"How did you get this...?"

The plaque had Master Winnington's own inscription underneath it. James's name was also on it.

It clearly meant that the inscription on the plaque had been meant for James.

"That's not important."

Actually, it had been thanks to Mr. Crawford that Diana was able to have this plaque. It seemed Mr. Crawford had been close to Diana's grandfather, whom she had never met. When Diana requested Mr. Crawford to send the flowers over, she happened to mention James in the passing. Mr. Crawford had sent the plaque together with the flowers.

However, she didn't bring up Mr. Crawford's existence to James and said, "Hang it up wherever you like."

Although it was a gift from Diana, the inscription on it was indeed done by Master Winnington. If they hung it up in James's courtyard, no one would be able to say anything against it.

This meant that James would no longer have any reason to be ridiculed by his relatives, which dissolved the huge knot that had been in his heart for what seemed like forever.

Regardless, it also added to his pain and anguish. After all, he had pushed Diana out of the family with his own hands...

That, and the fact that he needed to prioritize Kayla's plans right now.

Even if this gift was satisfactory and meaningful, he couldn't show his happiness too much.

"Well, it'd take up unnecessary space if I don't hang it up," James said as he called out to two of his men.

"You two, go and hang it up."

The plaque was soon hung up in the foyer for display.

James looked up at the plaque with mixed feelings. For a moment, he was tempted to show Diana some

kindness.

But then he remembered Kayla's words, and had no choice but to banish those thoughts from his mind. He couldn't afford not to listen to her.

If Julian discovered all those outrageous things he had done to Diana before, it would be disastrous!

But...

With a twinkle in his eyes and a calculating look on his handsome face, he said to Diana, "Won't you stay for dinner?"

This was the first time James had asked Diana to stay; she knew it meant he was more or less satisfied with

what he had received.

“Sure.”

And so, the three of them sat down together for the first time in a long time as a family.

Lucy stood in the back kitchen and watched through burning eyes how harmonious the atmosphere was for the three of them. She was practically spitting fire by now, and when she served the food, she couldn't hold herself back from sending angry looks at James.

But this time, James ignored them all.

He knew he couldn't try to mend his relationship with Diana, for fear that Kayla would rat them out to Julian. Still, at this moment, he couldn't help but exude a different attitude from how he usually acted.

“Go ahead and eat,” James said as he pushed the plate before him to Diana.

Even though he wasn't helping to put food on her plate, it was far better manners than he had displayed before.

“There's also foie gras,” Lucy said. There was anger hidden in her eyes, but she had a bright smile on her face; it was the exact same as Kayla's usual hypocrisy.

Diana watched Lucy quietly as she ate. This woman had come over seven times in total during this meal; five times of those total, she made physical contact with James.

Diana didn't believe for a second that there was nothing between them.

“How was the food, Miss Winnington? It's been a while since you've been here for dinner,” Lucy said.

The way Lucy spoke and the title she referred to Diana by were implying that Diana was merely a guest.

Yet, it was clear Diana was the host while Lucy was just a servant.

“What's there to ask about when one comes home to eat?” Diana said with a smile as she picked up a napkin to wipe her mouth.

Diana's eyes seemed to flutter distractedly; when they landed on Lucy, there was a chilling aura in them.

"Besides..." Diana trailed off as she set down the napkin and tapped on the table. "If I'm not happy with the food, it means the food wasn't good. At most, we'll just have to change the chef and kitchen butler. It's impossible for me, a member of this household, to leave just because I'm dissatisfied with the food, isn't it?"

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Wasn't Diana implying that Lucy was just a servant and that she was dispensable? And that Diana, Kate, and James were the rightful owner of the house?

That little b*tch!

Lucy cursed Diana in her mind and shot a fierce glare at the latter. She wanted to slap that little girl in the face so much right now!

James could tell that Lucy was furious, but he didn't dare to expose anything before Kate. He put down his utensils and cleared his throat, giving Lucy a pointed look. The two held gazes for a while before Lucy finally turned around quickly and left.

James ate a few more bites before he too quickly left the table.

Throughout the whole meal, Kate continued eating quietly as if she hadn't seen anything.

Sometimes, Diana wondered whether her mother was really stupid or was just pretending to be.

However, now was clearly not the time to have a heart-to-heart talk with Kate, much less ask her such a personal secret.

"I'm done," Diana said, pushing her plate away. She turned to Kate and added, "I'll take a look around our yard first while you carry on eating. I haven't had the chance to look at it."

Diana had deliberately used the words "our yard" to lessen the gap between them.

Kate, who had just gotten a gift she liked, didn't feel uncomfortable about it. However, she also wasn't that overly enthusiastic. With an attitude that was obviously much better than how she had treated Diana before, she simply agreed. "Alright."

As soon as Diana left, she put down the utensils in her hand and clenched her fist tightly, her nails digging deep into her palm. Her expression darkened as a terrifying and gloomy look settled on her face.

In the villa's yard, James and Lucy were hiding behind the flowers Kate had planted.

"Don't be angry," James said as he held Lucy. "Baby, don't you know how I feel about you by now? Diana gave me a plaque my father inscribed, you know? With that, I can now hold my head high before my brothers. That's why I kept her for dinner. If we're talking about who I'm closer to and will dote on, I definitely prefer our daughter, you know? Otherwise, back then, I wouldn't have made the decision to have Diana-"

Crack!

Diana had accidentally stepped on the wilted flower branch by her feet, and the crisp sound rang out in the silent night. It gave away her hiding spot, so she stepped out awkwardly.

"Hi."

James was speechless.

That was close! It was a good thing he hadn't finished his sentence!

If he did, he would have a bigger problem with Diana. At the moment, he had some sympathy towards Diana

because of Julian, and even had some intentions of trying to curry favor with her.

However, Lucy wasn't afraid or even surprised. In fact, she even seemed a little smug.

It would've been better if Diana had found out about them earlier.

It saved her and James time from needing to avoid Diana when they were together. She had no qualms about hanging off James in this situation.

Now that James knew Diana was the woman Julian actually loved, he didn't want to continue having a bad relationship with her. He even wanted to shove Lucy away, but Lucy held on tighter and refused to budge.

"No!" Lucy spat. "So what if Diana saw us? She's a good child, isn't she? She definitely wouldn't tell Kate."

It was almost as if she was trying to flatter Diana.

She was calling Diana a good girl so it would tie Diana down, not to do anything to upset Kate, and then hide

the affair she witnessed before her for them.

"I have no intention of telling my mother anyway," Diana replied calmly.

Now wasn't the time.

Diana looked at them calmly. "But is it possible to talk to my mother about the hidden story behind my disappearance when I was a child?"

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James's expression changed drastically at Diana's words.

"W-What hidden story?" he stammered.

Lucy's eyes flashed with anger.

"Stop making things up, Diana!"

"I haven't even said anything about it. How would you know if I'm making it up or not?" Diana asked with a mocking laugh.

As she stood there, she looked like a charming existence that had emerged from an ancient painting. She seemed calm, but she exuded a fairy-like aura around her that made it impossible for all who looked at her to disrespect her.

There was also a majestic and dignified light around her, one that incited admiration in many.

Lucy subconsciously compared Diana to Kayla and couldn't help but lament deeply in her heart. They should've just killed this little b*tch back then! Had they done so, Diana wouldn't turn out to be such a threat!

Lucy's eyes were so vicious that it was impossible to ignore.

However, Diana wasn't the slightest bit afraid. She looked at Lucy and said calmly, "I'm still waiting for your reply, Lucy."

Lucy remained quiet, and Diana continued, "Did you get so worked up because you knew what I was talking about?"

Lucy felt her breath hitch.

Oh... She had fallen for it!

Diana had set her up for this!

"The Fulcher family has taken care of you well for the past three years, haven't they?"

That was the only thing Lucy could say now, her face red with anger.

It was true that Diana's current temperament and the reason she had turned out this way had much to do with the Fulcher family. However, the biggest reason for her change was herself.

After she divorced Julian, Diana stopped worrying about the pros and cons of the situation and no longer underestimated herself.

"More than that, I'm just talented."

While she was stuck in the boonies, her talent for design had given her plenty of opportunities to give herself much needed exposure to the outside world.

She had her fears and concerns when Julian had first proposed to her. More than that, she had accepted his proposal with grace.

She had believed from the bottom of her heart that if she worked hard enough, she would eventually gain the same footing as him and that he would always love her.

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Later on, she realized that his so-called love at first sight and marriage proposal had all been a lie. Julian's wealth and power were far beyond her imagination.

When she thought about this, she couldn't help the self-deprecating and bitter look that came to her face.

When James saw her expression, he instantly misunderstood it and assumed that Diana had seen through everything, and that she was mocking him.

"Just what the hell do you know?"

James knew that he was thoroughly defeated in this confrontation.

For a moment, he even saw the image of Julian in Diana. The overwhelming pressure he usually felt from the man gradually spread from her body, giving him the subconscious desire to surrender unconditionally.

Because of the fact that Diana had grown up in the countryside, James had been short-sighted.

Now, the young lady before him was no longer that naive countryside girl.

In fact, it was clearly justifiable how Julian had fallen in love with Diana.

James was seriously regretting the fact he had listened to Lucy in the past, and deliberately lost Diana when she was only three years old.

Otherwise, he wouldn't be in the position he was in now and be threatened by Kayla.

How had he missed the vicious ambitions of the mother-daughter pair at the beginning?

Alas, it was too late to say anything. He had no other choice but to stay in the same boat they were on now.

So far, everything had only been speculation on Diana's end. After seeing James's reaction, she knew that her guesses had been more or less spot on.

"As a child..."

Diana's tone was light, as though she was talking about someone else's misfortune. In fact, she was as calm as someone talking about the weather.

"You're the one who lost me on purpose in order to let yours and Lucy's illegitimate child, Kayla, enter the family as the eldest lady."

"That's rubbish!" James exclaimed, his face flushed an ugly red. He was almost stomping his feet in

And as everyone knew, the more exaggerated one's reactions were, the more guilty one appeared.

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James's traditional clothes fluttered in the autumn wind, making him look even more like a ridiculous clown.

"If I wanted to bring Kayla into the family, I wouldn't need to go through all that trouble!"

He feared Diana would hold a deep grudge against him, and was now desperately covering up his past sins.

"Of course there was a need to." Diana regarded his performance with an icy glare.

Now that he had confirmed her suspicions, her feelings for James had turned ice-cold. She couldn't imagine how her own father could have done that to her. She had just been a little child, for crying out loud!

Even after he learned that she had a miserable childhood, he still stood by and did absolutely nothing.

As for Diana, she had never understood why her family had been so cold when she had reunited with them.

"After all, Master Winnington loathed b*stards and illegitimate children above all else."

Diana had done her research. Today, she was determined not to return from the Winnington residence empty-handed.

“There was no other way for you to bring Kayla into the family aside from replacing me!”

Diana’s voice was strong and powerful, resonating through the area and drowning out most of James’s pathetic attempts at half-baked explanations.

What’s more, she had even given him a plaque Master Winnington had personally inscribed today.

Alarm bells started going off in James’s head. His eyes widened as he suddenly realized something. He immediately asked Diana, “You knew the old man? Have you met him in private before?!”

Because Master Winnington wasn’t very fond of James, he hadn’t paid much attention to Diana or Kayla.

What’s more, the old man had never inquired about Diana’s return. It was a clear indication that he wasn’t interested in all the drama in James’s family.

As such, James never expected Diana to get involved with his father. Looking at her today, however, he had an inkling that Diana’s relationship with his father might be even closer than his own.

James had always been afraid of the old man, yet he still craved Master Winnington’s approval. Realizing that Diana might have had contact with the old man, James started to panic.

If Diana had said something about James in front of Master Winnington, then...!

James shuddered violently, and shot Diana a deadly glare.

However, Diana shook her head.

“No. I just have a friend who knows him, so I understood some things.”

To be honest, she had no desire for the strange and deformed affection of the Winnington family.

The affection she wanted the most was one she had found in Madam Fulcher and her babies. Yet now...all of those had dissolved into nothing.

Thinking about her lost babies, Diana turned to Lucy and glared at the latter with loathing eyes.

“I don’t care about the Winnington family. I just want to know the truth about what happened when I was a child.”

Diana was determined; James knew that if the matter wasn’t cleared up today, she wouldn’t let it drag on.

Diana wasn’t easy to fool anymore; James couldn’t figure out what was in her mind, or what exactly she knew.

James never expected the daughter he had abandoned when she was a child would have the ability to make Julian fall in love with her, as well as foster a good relationship with Master Winnington’s friend. The very same friend who the old man was willing to inscribe a plaque for James just because he asked, to boot!

He had a vague feeling that he would be completely doomed if he didn’t hurry up and help Kayla marry into the Fulcher family!

But right now, it was necessary to deal with Diana first. At the very least, he couldn’t let her know what really happened when she was a child.

“Diana!”

James looked at her, then suddenly fell to his knees!

A father kneeling down to his daughter was a big taboo in their etiquette, but at this moment, James didn’t care. He had always been able to adapt to any situation to get the perks he desired, and he couldn’t give a damn about what he had to do to make it happen.

He was teary-eyed at this moment as he wailed pitifully, “You’re right. I lost you back then, and I regretted every month of it! I reflected on my actions, and I was worried about your life. But now, didn’t you grow up well? You even married Julian Fulcher! If I hadn’t brought Kayla into our family and let everyone see how much she looks like you, do you think you’d have had the chance to marry him?”

At the end of the day, it was a fact that Julian had married Diana because he wanted Kayla. That had always been a sore spot for Diana.

Yes, that was the origin of everything that happened. Anyone could use it to attack and belittle Diana; and now, even her own birth father was now using it as an excuse to justify his repulsive acts in the past.

He lost her on purpose for his own selfish gains, but he turned things around and made it seem like his actions had enabled her to meet Julian.