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Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 571

Diana's traces were completely erased the very moment she left the studio. Julian's heart raced as he stared at Kayla, his gaze bearing the smallest hint of patience.

James, on the other hand, was utterly terrified by the current situation.

Kayla had spoken so confidently before, saying she would defeat Diana and come out on top. Never in James's wildest dreams did he imagine she would achieve it by preventing Diana from participating and threatening Julian!

He never once entertained the notion that threats would work for Julian to marry Kayla.

Did she forget just who Julian was?!

James felt like an ostrich as he wished he could burrow his head into the ground and not be discovered by Julian.

Yet, he didn't think Kayla would actually call out to him.

"Daddy," she said cheerfully, as if she hadn't just narrowly escaped being killed in cold blood by Julian. "Julian promised to marry me!"

James dared not say much, much less utter a single word. He tugged on Kayla's sleeve nervously as he stole a quick glance at Julian.

"B-But... Diana..."

"What about her?" Kayla's tone suddenly grew sharp. "Are you worried about her?!"

James was shocked by her tone.

"No... I mean... I just thought it's better to take decisive action and never let her return!" His head was shrunk back like a frightened turtle, but he spoke the most ruthless words the world would ever hear. "That way, she won't be able to threaten your position anymore."

Kayla's face visibly brightened, and James continued, 'If Julian can't have Diana, he'll definitely show more sympathy toward you.'

After all, the two sisters looked very similar. The scar on Kayla's face wouldn't be visible as long as she covered it. With that, Kayla wouldn't look any different than Diana in Julian's eyes... Right?

Even Kayla, cruel as she might be, was startled by James's harsh words.

"You can be so ruthless."

Fortunately, she wasn't Diana and the Winningtons didn't forsake her.

James was deeply embarrassed, and dared not let Julian see him. Despite that, he couldn't help but ask, "What do you think?"

At that, Kayla smiled eerily. "Just wait and see. This time, Julian will definitely marry me!"

With Julian's support, the entire process of the exhibition accelerated significantly.

At his behest, Kayla became the champion. Holding the trophy, she looked at the flashing lights aimed at her from all directions and smiled with pride. "I have something to announce to everyone."

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, she stretched out her hand and reached toward Julian. "Julian, come here."

Julian was displeased; but considering Noel's words, he reluctantly walked towards Kayla. Today, he had paid particular attention to his attire as he was going to meet Diana.

He wore a rare silver-gray suit and a matching pair of round-toed Italian handmade leather shoes, and even donned glasses with gold rims that he rarely wore. He looked incredibly elegant, and as soon as he stood up, he became the most eye-catching presence in the crowd.

The more Kayla looked at him, the more satisfied she was.

"Darling...!" she shouted loudly, and the surrounding flashes aimed at her multiplied.

Julian frowned, his face filled with resentment. He had never thought the word “darling” could be so nauseating. It was a world of difference compared to when Diana called him that.

Naturally, he didn’t respond at all.

But then, Kayla ran a few steps towards him and affectionately hooked her arm through his. “Darling!”

It was grating to the ears.

Every word she spoke was more disgusting than her previous ones.

He could barely hold back anymore and hissed, “You’re going too far.”

She should know the consequences of provoking him!

Of course Kayla knew, but she had no retreat now.

She clung tightly to him, afraid he would slip away from her embrace.

“Julian, I’m not asking for too much. My request is simple. I want you to fulfill your promise when I return to the country-that you would marry me.”

Narrowing her eyes, she went on, “Announce it to all the media and journalists, right in front of all the cameras, and declare to the people of Richburgh that you’ll marry me!”

Julian’s eyes suddenly turned dark with rage. “Kayla!”

But she had already thrown caution to the wind, so what else did she have to lose?

“Julian, have you forgotten what’s on the line?” Kayla taunted as a mad glint appeared in her eyes. “Diana is still in my hands!”

Julian’s Stand-In Wife chapter 572

Julian had a lot of faith in Noel’s abilities to handle things; and yet, the latter claimed that try as he might, he couldn’t find a single trace of Diana.

Compared to before, Kayla was much more thorough this time.

“I used to call you stupid all the time, but I’ve really underestimated you,” Julian said as he looked steadily at her, his gaze as sharp as a knife.

However, Kayla didn’t avert her gaze and met his eyes evenly.

This time, she was directly threatening him to his face; a clear show that she was determined to make him agree. She undoubtedly wouldn’t let Diana go so easily.

However... Julian refused to fulfill her request.

“The only person I want to marry in my life is Diana,” he said firmly, never taking his eyes away from Kayla. “If you insist on marrying me, it won’t end well for you.”

Kayla was prepared for Julian’s future retaliation. “I know that, but I still want to marry you.”

That was her ultimate goal.

If she didn’t persist until the end, she wouldn’t know what else to do with her life anymore.

Only by becoming Mrs. Fulcher and receive the admiration and envy of others could she have a sense of being alive.

“If you don’t marry me, you’ll never save Diana’s life!”

Richburgh wasn’t that big. Where could Kayla possibly have hidden Diana?

No matter how much Julian racked his brains, he couldn’t find an answer.

He grew increasingly anxious.

“I need to ensure Diana’s safety first.”

Only after confirming her safety, and...

If Diana truly was in Kayla’s hands, then he could consider Kayla’s request.

Since leaving the villa, the chauffeur had driven Diana around to several places.

The route was winding, and didn't seem like the way to the exhibition.

She pulled out her phone, intending to use navigation. However, she quickly realized that her phone signal was being blocked.

It suddenly dawned on Diana that something wasn't right. But this chauffeur was from the Fulcher family, so why on earth would he deceive her?

Diana pondered momentarily before asking, "Where are we going?"

The chauffeur smiled, still maintaining a respectful demeanor as he replied, "We're going to the old mansion. Madam called me this morning and said she wanted to attend the exhibition with you. She asked us to pick her up."

"Grandma?" Diana didn't understand. "Why didn't she contact me first?"

Looking at the time, it was already getting late. Diana's current situation aside, this didn't seem like Madam Fulcher's way of doing things.

To her surprise, after a series of twists and turns, the chauffeur did indeed pick up Madam Fulcher. By now, the exhibition had already started. Yet, their car was still parked at the entrance of the old mansion.

Diana grew slightly anxious, but the chauffeur claimed that the car had broken down and arranged for another vehicle to pick them up.

"Alright."

Originally, Madam Fulcher wanted to call her own chauffeur. Upon seeing how this man had already taken care of everything and that Diana was clearly distressed, she didn't want to waste any more time and simply got into the car with Diana.

However, after a long time of driving around, they still hadn't arrived at the exhibition venue.

Diana took out her phone to check the time, only to realize that her phone still had no signal.

It was strange. She remembered having a signal when she got out of the car to meet Madam Fulcher. Why did it go off every time she got into the car?

Quietly, she took out Madam Fulcher's phone and turned it on. To her surprise, the phone also had no signal!

"Sir," Diana called out to the unfamiliar chauffeur, "how much longer until we reach the exhibition?"

He didn't reply. Instead, he turned up the air conditioning. Soon, Diana noticed something unusual about Madam Fulcher.

From the moment they got in the car until now, Diana had only exchanged two sentences with her.

After that, she remained seated without saying a word.

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"Grandma!"

Diana wanted to touch Madam Fulcher to see what was wrong, but then she realized that she didn't even have the strength to turn her head.

"S-Sir..."

She strained to look at the chauffeur, only to see a sinister look and a sly smile on his face. Her heart beat wildly in her chest, but at this point, no amount of vigilance would help her escape her current situation.

She could only grip Madam Fulcher's hand tightly in the last second before losing consciousness.

"We can't pry this woman's hand apart!"

In her dazed state, Diana could hear someone shouting loudly in her ear. There was also another trying to pry her hand away repeatedly, but she held onto Madam Fulcher without budging an inch.

She absolutely couldn't let go!

Not only that, but she also needed to muster all her strength and effort to open her eyes as quickly as possible.

It wasn't until two hours later that she regained some of her consciousness.

“Grandma...” The first words Diana uttered upon waking up were to call out to the older woman.

At this moment, Madam Fulcher had also woken up. Although she was still groggy, she instantly understood their situation.

“D-Diana...” She held onto Diana’s hand. “The exhibition... You invited me to the exhibition. Why did we end up here?”

Diana was surprised. “Did you receive a message saying that I invited you?”

Madam Fulcher nodded. “The message you received, was it me voluntarily offering to accompany you?”

Diana nodded. “Yes...”

It was clear someone was setting them up.

‘ I wasn’t cautious enough,’ Diana apologized, “and I dragged you down with me.”

Back then, after they had gotten into the car and realized the route was strange and that there was no signal on their phones, they should’ve gotten out or just stayed at the old mansion instead...

‘Don’t blame yourself,’ Madam Fulcher said kindly, clearly seeing through Diana’s thoughts. “That chauffeur was a familiar face. If I’m not mistaken, he worked at the villa for over two months. It’s understandable that you didn’t have your guard up around familiar surroundings and people.”

But Diana didn’t think the same way.

“This isn’t the first time it happened. That’s how Mr. Carter had the chance to drug me. I never expected the same method would be used again!”

Was Kayla also behind this?

But Diana wasn’t pregnant now, so she posed no threat to Kayla. The only possibility that gave Kayla a reason to do this might be the photo she posted on her social media that day...

And yet, Julian doted on Kayla so much. Would a single photo be enough for her to take such a huge risk to kidnap both Diana and Madam Fulcher?

While she was thinking about this, that sinister-faced man appeared in front of them again.

“She’s awake!” Diana heard him shout.

Diana looked up sharply and hissed, “Who are you talking to?!”

This sinister-faced man’s name was Hans Lemmington. He ignored Diana and continued speaking to someone on the phone, saying, “She’s awake.

Should we let her take the call?”

The person on the other end said something, and soon, the phone was put to Diana’s ear.

“Diana.”

It was Julian’s voice!

Was he here to rescue her?

Diana immediately lit up, and she exchanged an excited glance with

Madam Fulcher. The two didn’t even bother speaking and simply listened to Julian as he said, “Diana, I’m going to marry Kayla. Don’t disturb us anymore in the future.”

Diana wasn’t surprised about their marriage, but getting married at this critical juncture was undeniably baffling.

‘I don’t believe it!’

As soon as she said that, Diana heard Julian let out a relieved breath.

She quickly understood. There must be something more to it than this!

Still, she didn’t have time to think about why she felt so relieved at his reaction. She seized every second she had to talk with him and yelled, “Julian! Grandma’s with me right now! We’ve been tricked and brought to some unknown place!”

“Grandma’s with you?!”

This was completely out of Julian's expectations.

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 574

On Julian's side, the situation was even more trickier than he initially imagined.

To have placed the two most important women in his life in danger at the same time... Kayla's boldness had truly reached another level!

As he tried to shove down his anger and restrain himself, veins popped on his forehead from the strain. Even the veins on his hands turned purple as he turned to the woman beside him and hissed through gritted teeth, rage lacing his tone, "Kayla!"

However, there was no fear on her face. 'Grandma likes Diana, so it's only natural she goes with her.'

Madam Fulcher was getting on in age, and she very well couldn't handle so much stress as in this commotion.

Seeing how confident Kayla acted, Julian's heart grew even more chaotic.

Fortunately, at that moment, Diana suddenly shouted from the other end of the line, "This seems like a luxurious hotel!"

She was relaying information to Julian.

His woman was truly clever, and that finally comforted Julian somewhat as his heart settled a bit. He was about to continue speaking when Kayla snatched the phone away forcefully.

Diana's reaction had been out of her expectations. Kayla hadn't expected her to be able to stay calm and think straight when Julian was forced to say those things.

She even managed to relay information to him!

But what did it matter?

After all...

The information Diana provided was all wrong!

Concealed under her veil, Kayla's lips curled into a mocking smirk. Her eyes were filled with scorn as she looked at Julian and said, "A luxurious hotel? You can try your luck at finding her if you want."

It would be impossible for Julian to find her.

After all, his men had searched through all the hotels in Richburgh, regardless of how big or small it was; yet, they still hadn't found a trace of Diana.

And now, learning that Madam Fulcher was also with her...

It was another card up Kayla's sleeve!

"Julian," Kayla said, and her expression had now twisted as she pressed her hand against the phone to mute her words. "You better tell Diana we're getting married tomorrow!"

Tomorrow?!

Kayla wasn't giving him any time to react or think at all.

Closing his eyes, Julian suppressed the fury that ran through his veins and took back the phone.

"I know. I arranged that hotel," Julian said, deliberately piercing Diana's heart with his words. He had to make sure that he said enough to satisfy Kayla and ensure the safety of Diana and his grandmother.

Diana was visibly stunned. "But..."

The way she and Madam Fulcher had been brought here had been dodgy. She still couldn't believe that Julian would do something like this.

'You have no motive or reason to do this to me.'

"Diana," Julian said in a deeply mocking tone. "Why do you think Grandma is with you? It's because she favors you. If I had left her at the old mansion, no doubt she'd try to hinder my marriage to Kayla. She'd ruin my plans and upset Kayla even more."

That was impossible!

Julian was the most respectful person Diana knew. How could he joke about his grandmother's life and bring them here, of all things? Even if he had wanted to do so, he could've done it without needing to drug them to keep them bound!

As if afraid she wouldn't believe him, Julian quickly continued, "And... At the exhibition you value the most, Kayla became the champion. She could only win so quickly and brilliantly if you didn't participate."

Diana remained silent.

She still remembered the look in Julian's eyes a couple of days ago.

It was so intent that it made her heart restless.

Had that really been her imagination?

"Then..." Diana asked. "Why did you make me move back to the villa?"

"Hah," Julian scoffed. "I already told you. I feared Grandma would interfere with my marriage to Kayla. Didn't I use the same distraction when we argued about getting a divorce? I'm sure you remember. The better our relationship appeared, the more at ease my grandmother would feel about me and Kayla. But this time, I wanted to give her the most unique wedding in the world. I need everything to go smoothly, so I arranged for you and Grandma to be brought elsewhere as I carry out my plans."

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 575

'This time, I won't allow anything to interfere with my marriage to Kayla!' Julian exclaimed, his words echoing loudly in Diana's ears.

His words were like a hammer ramming ruthlessly against Diana's heart, causing a slight wavering deep in her heart containing her desire to start over. The doubts she had harbored about his words just moments ago shattered.

Diana could only hear the roaring of blood in her ears as she felt her heart gradually break into tiny pieces once again.

She shouldn't have...believed the look in his eyes...

After all, Julian was the best at deceiving people.

“So,” she took a deep breath, clenched her teeth, and her grip on Madam Fulcher’s hand trembled as she hissed, “You’d disregard Grandma’s safety for Kayla’s sake?”

To confine them here in exchange for the peace of Kayla’s wedding must mean that Julian truly loved her.

His love for her was genuine.

Julian’s expression twisted with pain at each word he was forced to say. “Yes.”

He had achieved such heights in his career, and held a large amount of power and wealth in his hands. He even held the economic lifeline, yet...he never expected all of that not to matter-in spite of everything, Kayla managed to defeat him!

“Kayla saved my life. From the moment she did, I belonged to her. So... Forget about Grandma. If I can make Kayla happy, I can disregard anyone!”

Ultimately, all the kisses and gazes he had shown her these past few days were just an act!

Three years... Hadn’t three years of acting been enough?

Diana’s eyes reddened. Her nose tingled, and she bit her lips harshly. She could still feel the phantom pain of the broken skin on her mouth before.

“You said you’d apply the medicine to me every day...” Diana said, her voice trembling involuntarily. “Was that also a lie?”

“Diana, you’re so stupid,” Julian sneered. “I deceived you for three years, but you still developed feelings for me so easily?”

Diana suddenly laughed self-deprecatingly. “Yes, I’m stupid. I thought I could take the initiative and become a substitute for Kayla to have you play right into my hands. But I never expected...”

Never expected...

No matter what happened, how many storms they endured, and how cruel a life he was burdened with, she couldn’t help but fall for him time and time again.

It hurt!

Her heart once again felt like it was being ripped apart.

She endured the pain, harshly biting the wound on her lip, where...

His warmth still lingered.

It was only now that she realized it wasn't warmth-rather, a chill that remained.

It was a chill that held a murderous intent, flowing from her lips to every inch of her body.

"Congratulations on your wedding," she said, her words dropping as tears fell.

Diana knew that the story between her and Julian had truly come to an end here.

Yet, some things needed to be said.

"Julian, you only know that Kayla saved your life, but did you know I saved your life too?" Diana asked. She spoke like a terminally ill patient, laying out all her secrets at this moment so as not to leave no regrets.

Julian felt his heart stutter violently at that unexpected revelation.

It was as if something flashed in his mind at her words. Startled, he asked, "W-What...did you say?!"

Everything since he met Diana, from his proposal in front of the Winnington family's gate, was vivid in his memory.

There was never a moment when he recalled needing her to save him.

And yet, he did mention feeling a sense of familiarity with Diana before...

Were her words true?

"Did we really meet before, a long time ago?"

"Yes," Diana confirmed. "In Yale village."

It was the rural village she grew up in, and was also the place Julian never wanted to mention as he had been forced to participate in the heir training in the past.

It was also where the cave Kayla had saved his life in was.

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 576

Yale Village!

It was the same place Kaylad had saved his life!

Why would Diana mention this place?

Instantly, Julian's hand started to tremble.

"When you saved me, how old were you? Where exactly in Yale village?" he asked.

The conversation was becoming stranger by the minute. Did Diana somehow discover the fact that Kayla had impersonated her and took credit for saving Julian's life in Yale Village?

The realization sent Kayla into a sudden whirl of anxiety.

She had gone all out this time and even involved Madam Fulcher, intending to make that old hag suffer with Diana.

However, her entire plan revolved around her golden ticket of having saved Julian's life. She held on tightly to this lifeline, betting Julian wouldn't kill her because of this and that she could get off scot-free no matter what she did.

But now...

Diana had mentioned Yale Village!

Had Kayla's lie been exposed?

Multiple emotions ran through Kayla at this point. There was uneasiness, shock, and also fear. Her gaze on Julian turned anxious as she snapped, "Julian! Get to the point!"

She pressed her hand against the phone again to mute the phone, interrupting Julian's talk with Diana as she pointed to the clock. "You have thirty seconds left. If you talk about anything other than our marriage, I'll make sure Diana gets hurt!"

Never in his life had Julian been threatened in this manner before.

However, it was extremely effective-because Diana's life was on the line.

Julian couldn't care about anything else at this moment. He pushed the remaining thoughts of Yale Village out of his mind, and his demeanor toward Diana changed immediately.

"Don't talk about irrelevant things! So what if you saved me? Kayla also saved me. I won't change my mind about marrying her because of that, Diana. Just give up on that idea!"

Diana never expected that after revealing her final secret and clarifying everything, it would only invite doubt and suspicion from his end. He firmly believed she wanted to use the debt of saving his life to challenge Kayla's position.

It had been the right decision for her to have thrown away the photo last time...

'Diana?'

Hearing only silence from the other end, Julian thought something had happened to her, and his heart clenched tightly. He felt a fierce storm sweep through him, leaving his body and soul ravaged painfully, like a tree that had withered up and lost all its leaves during fall.

His grip on the phone tightened as his fear grew.

But luckily, Diana only responded with a simple, "Hmm..."

Julian immediately felt the weight in his heart lighten.

He took a deep breath and glanced at the time that was ticking away.

He needed to continue saying things that would make Diana believe he was marrying Kayla, as the latter had demanded. The purpose was to deeply wound Diana's heart and to bring Kayla the joy of revenge.

The more his words hurt, the happier Kayla was, and the safer Diana and Madam Fulcher would be.

Julian understood Kayla's intentions; yet as Diana was firmly in her grasp, he had no choice but to say things that went against his truest feelings.

'What else do you want to say?'

In the end, it was Diana who spoke up first.

Julian felt a pounding headache behind his eyes, and he almost choked as he said, "It's nothing... It's just..."

Kayla pointed at her watch.

Time was getting shorter.

He almost blurted out the words pent up in his chest for a long time, but he managed to stop himself and instead said, "I just thought of how truly stupid you were. From the moment I forced you to get an abortion, you should've understood that I didn't have any feelings for you. Everything I did was for the sake of assuring Grandma. But you? You took my words seriously, so much so that even after losing the babies, you still came when I invited you to move back into the villa. Just admit it, Diana. You love me."

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 577

Clenching his teeth, Julian then uttered the cruel words, "But I don't love you, Diana. I never did."

'What were you thinking, Diana? He never loved you! That's why a familiar driver brought me out of the villa. That's why he made sure I never made it to the exhibition to put pressure on Kayla. That's why he trampled all over my expectations of winning the exhibition! That's why he happily invested a hundred million in my business... It was all to make Kayla happy-not me!*

Even yesterday, when he pretended to be jealous upon seeing her giving an umbrella to Oliver, it was all a prelude to today's kidnapping!

"Julian..." Diana hissed through gritted teeth, her cheeks aching from the pressure of grounding her teeth together. Her eyes were devoid of tears, but the pain that struck her was stronger than the sensation of death.

His words were like a knife that was slowly sliding into her, piercing her inch by inch.

“Do you truly feel nothing for our babies?”

She could forgive him for treating her poorly and toying with her, and even loving Kayla. However, she couldn't forgive him for mentioning their babies with that indifferent attitude!

Only five seconds remained on the clock, which meant there was time for just one more sentence.

Julian could hear the despair in Diana's words, but he still replied clearly and firmly, “Not one bit!”

Julian truly didn't care about her or their babies-not even one bit!

It was just like what he had said back at the factory.

It was also Diana's fault for being so stupid...enough that she would remain involved with him for so long. Her stupidity made her believe that simply flaunting affection between her and Julian would anger Kayla, and that if she destroyed Kayla's face, Julian wouldn't be able to accept this reality and would refuse to face anything that was related to her.

Yet, the truth was...

Diana was just a pawn in their hands.

The smallest existence in the vast sea.

No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't shake Julian's determination for Kayla.

She remained silent and the call ended; all that could be heard was the empty beeping sound on the other end.

Julian's heart was just as empty.

There was no light in his eyes.

Even if he could ensure Diana's and Madam Fulcher's safety, he had thoroughly wrecked Diana's heart.

He had basically ruined every moment of kindness he had ever shown her. He had crushed those wonderful memories to dust and pulverized them with his own words. He had grounded her feelings to nothing and blocked off any possibility of a future for them, tossing it into the deep abyss.

“Julian,” Kayla said in delight, handing him the microphone. “Now’s the time to announce to all of Richburgh that we’re getting married!”

Merely saying those words wasn’t enough. She wanted Julian to make a promise to her in front of the many reporters present.

There was a television in the room Diana was in, and it was turned on. The live broadcast of the exhibition was on it. It wouldn’t have warranted a live broadcast if it was just an exhibition. However, since Julian announced his and Kayla’s engagement on the spot, it became a sensational event where viewership was at an all-time high.

Diana and Madam Fulcher leaned against the edge of the bed, their hands and feet bound with ropes. Madam Fulcher glanced at Diana, looking like she wanted to say something, but ultimately hesitating.

She had heard parts of the conversation on the phone earlier.

“I...” Madam Fulcher lowered her head, unable to hide her disappointment toward her grandson as she whispered, “I don’t know how to face you.”

“This isn’t your fault, Grandma,” Diana said with a smile, but there was something broken in her eyes. “I don’t blame him, and I certainly don’t blame you.”

If she had to blame someone, it would be herself.

She had ample time and opportunities to draw a clear line between them.

Even after they had obtained their divorce certificate, they had little contact for a considerable amount of time.

Ultimately, she willingly walked into his trap and became a stepping stone for his and Kayla’s marriage—a tool to please Kayla, and a joke in that woman’s eyes!

Diana wasn't even worth enough to be a substitute; Julian only loved Kayla, and there was no one else in his eyes!

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 578

Even though Kayla had ruined her throat, Julian was still willing to listen to her speak with that horrible voice. That's why he chose to stay by Kayla's side when both she and Diana had been hospitalized.

Though Kayla's appearance had been thoroughly ruined, Julian hadn't held Diana accountable. However, that was only because he wanted to handle things in a more appropriate manner for Kayla's sake.

Things were never like what Diana had assumed. Julian hadn't sought comfort about Kayla's disfigurement from Diana and deluded himself...

He had simply been wholly willing and devoted to Kayla since the very beginning.

Diana felt like a thousand needles were poking her palms. She had been holding onto Madam Fulcher's hand for so long, and slowly loosened her grip when she realized that.

Suddenly, a sound came from the door, and it swung open. Hans walked in, and on Kayla's orders, he brought a remote control to turn on the television.

"Watch it," Hans instructed coldly before walking out of the room once more.

On the television, Julian was smiling as he announced their engagement. Tomorrow, they would have a grand celebration.

How exciting.

Madam Fulcher was on the verge of tears from sheer anger, but she held them back because Diana was present. If she cried, Diana would be even more upset.

There was a slight discomfort in Madam Fulcher's heart, and she had been holding it in. She wanted to say something to Diana, but when she saw the scene of Julian announcing his engagement on the television, she swallowed her words.

Actually...

She found it hard to believe that Julian, whom she had raised, could be so heartless. But she didn't dare bring up this topic with Diana, let alone talk to her about it.

They could only silently watch the television together as Kayla presented a bridal veil for Julian to place on her head after the announcement.

They were truly well-prepared.

Fortunately, Diana had her own preparations.

With the end of the exhibition, there should have been a major incident in the Winnington family's fashion company. The last time she visited Winnington Fashions, she noticed the inconsistent quality of their ready-to-wear garments. If the garments were mass-produced and entered the market, they would inevitably face backlash in terms of quality.

It was why she worked so hard to ensure Kayla's participation in the exhibition.

However...

Diana never intended for Kayla to become the champion.

But now that Kayla had, the more renowned she became with Julian's support, the more orders Winnington Fashions would receive. The more orders they got, the higher the chances of them not keeping up the quality of their work and facing significant setbacks.

Winnington Fashions itself had a weak foundation. If they sent out so many orders with potential quality issues, they would undoubtedly face a wave of returns and numerous negative reviews like a sea.

What awaited them would be their downfall.

Kayla's aspirations would also crumble.

With James's personality, he would inevitably increase investments and production at this moment. When it was time to face the wreckage left behind by those decisions, one could only imagine how serious the consequences would be.

James's position in the Winnington family would be greatly affected. Kayla would lose her right-hand man.

There might even no longer be a place for James in the Winnington family.

With that, the resentment of her babies, who had been dug up by their own maternal grandfather, would at least be avenged-even if just a little.

As for Kayla...

Diana had originally intended to use Julian to defeat Kayla mentally, but she didn't expect to become a laughingstock in their eyes instead.

"Diana." Madam Fulcher sensed her unstable emotions, and felt deep sorrow. Her eyes trembled slightly as she said. "Do you believe what Julian said earlier?"

Diana shook her head at first, but then nodded instead.

At this point, she didn't need to dwell on whether those words were true or false. She only needed to know that Julian had again chosen Kayla over her, which was more than enough.

"I raised Julian, and his respect for me..." Madam Fulcher hesitated momentarily, but then her gaze became determined, and she continued," It's impossible for it to be nonexistent."

It was even more impossible that Julian, who knew of her underlying illness, would drag her and Diana out of the comfort of her own home and to an unknown place.

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Diana agreed with this point.

But Julian probably didn't care as much for her compared to Madam Fulcher, and his obsession with Kayla seemed to have reached a maddening level.

"I don't dare make any baseless speculations anymore," Diana said.

Ultimately, her trust in him was completely shattered by disappointment after disappointment.

Madam Fulcher naturally noticed Diana's feelings. Instead of immediately discussing the phone call with Julian, she calmly brought up Diana's birthday. "Do you remember the sign saying 'Dogs like Julian are not allowed inside'?"

Diana was surprised at the abrupt change in topic, and a faint bitterness resurfaced in her heart.

"Yes, I do."

Madam Fulcher smiled kindly and said, "Julian made it himself and placed it at the door because he knew you didn't want to see him. He did it so you could have a peaceful birthday in my home."

Diana felt her determination waver; the shattered parts of her heart seemed to piece themselves back together slowly by some magical force.

' Despite the sign at the door, Julian still entered the old mansion.'

Diana knew this. She had returned that day and had a conversation with him, after all.

She had been curious at the time. Could Julian not see such a large sign? How did he manage to endure the insult?

And now, she got her answer straight from Madam Fulcher.

"He said that as long as you're at ease, it didn't matter if he became a dog." Madam Fulcher's face visibly brightened as she went on. "You see, he quite enjoys being your lapdog."

"...Please don't tease me,' Diana muttered, clearly stunned.

How was it possible for Julian to have said those words?!

He was a proud and dignified man, esteemed to the point that the entire Richburgh would revolve around him with just a wave of his hand!

How could he utter such self-deprecating words?

Especially to Madam Fulcher, someone he was so close to...

“Julian didn’t care if he was compared to a dog. On that day, he entered the courtyard of the old mansion early and watched you celebrate your birthday with us from a distance.”

No wonder Diana felt like she was being watched the entire day!

Diana felt goosebumps all over her body. She never imagined that Julian would become a person like this when she wasn’t with him.

This was much more touching than any of the words he had said to her face, as these actions that had truly happened felt incredibly genuine to her; she didn’t need to speculate about the truthfulness of his words. She just needed to know and remember that when she didn’t spend with him and didn’t know what he was doing, he had once treated her so gently and treasured her.

Diana’s heart softened even more. “And then?”

Her trust in Julian was slowly being repaired.

Madam Fulcher looked pleased with Diana’s question. “And then, Julian turned the scenes of you being with us that day into a video. He had someone put his face in the middle of the video and... Hahaha...”

At this point, Madam Fulcher burst into laughter.

It piqued Diana’s curiosity. “And what happened?”

“Are you that impatient to know?” Madam Fulcher asked teasingly, deliberately building up suspense.

Diana subconsciously wanted to retort, but thinking about that glorious man and her entanglement with him, she corrected her habit of saying one thing and meaning another. “Yes, I am.”

She was impatient to confirm Julian’s feelings.

Impatient to tell Julian again that their fate began in Yale Village, which was a long, long time ago, so long that she almost missed this childhood connection with him.

She wanted to tell him their bond was no weaker than the one Kayla had with him.

“Good girl.”

Madam Fulcher hadn't misjudged Diana.

She liked Diana's daring and straightforward nature. Diana was like an invincible little grass on fire, standing strong through each hurt.

“Julian, he...”

Madam Fulcher's aged and solemn voice immersed Diana in the scene once again.

“He made sure his face was always in close contact with yours, saying that it'd make you two appear affectionate and give the illusion that you still love him.”

Her own grandchild, even in love, was so cautious.

“But if his face was edited onto the video and constantly pressed against mine...” The more Diana thought about it, the stranger it seemed. “Was he supposed to be bending down and pressing his face against mine the whole time?”

What would that look like?

“He wasn't bending down. He had someone edit only his face onto the video.” Madam Fulcher replied. She then imitated Julian's tone back then and said, “My Diana is too delicate. If I edited my whole body into the video, I wouldn't be able to resist hugging her.”

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Julian had edited himself into the video.

And he even pressed his face against Diana's in it.

Furthermore, he even said he wanted to hug her...

Diana couldn't believe that Julian had spoken such silly behavior and words!

But... Madam Fulcher would never deceive her.

'Julian...'

After knowing all these things, an indescribable feeling surged Diana's heart, the feeling akin to biting into a bittersweet fruit. With just a little force, an infinite and indescribable taste burst between her teeth.

Madam Fulcher felt sore from being tied up; although she wanted to move, she couldn't. Despite her physical discomfort, she continued to look kindly at Diana and said, "Tell me what's on your mind."

'Did he really...' Diana began to say, but she swallowed harshly before finally continuing, "Did he really...like me and not treat me as a substitute?"

Seeing her lack of confidence, Madam Fulcher chuckled. "Diana, my clever girl. Can't you truly see what's in Julian's heart?"

The foolish things he did for Diana behind the scenes, not to mention his verbal confessions... Just by looking at their everyday interactions over the past three years of their marriage, one could see that Julian's feelings for Diana were extraordinary.

However, Kayla's appearance muddled their true feelings for one another.

Thinking of that wretched woman, Madam Fulcher couldn't help but sigh." If Kayla hadn't saved Julian's life before..."

This matter had become a terrible heartache for Madam Fulcher.

"If the debt of gratitude wasn't tying them down so strongly, Julian definitely wouldn't have been so blindly infatuated with her for so many years," Madam Fulcher said, glancing at Diana. "I say infatuated, but I don't think a romantic connection ever existed."

Otherwise, Madam Fulcher wouldn't have been foolish enough to deceive the person Julian loved deeply and send that woman away to another country three years ago. She wouldn't watch her beloved grandson and lover be separated by a great distance.

"Julian isn't someone who's good at handling emotions,' Madam Fulcher went on with a sigh. "It's also due to how we brought him up, especially my late husband. He was afraid Julian and I wouldn't live a good life, so he pushed for an elite education with all his might, resulting in Julian's character...which is lacking a bit in matters of the heart."

Madam Fulcher's words were sincere.

When it all came down to it, the only thing she wanted to convey to Diana was that Julian loved Diana. He loved her far more than she could imagine in the years she was unaware of-it was never just her wishful thinking.

Madam Fulcher's words brought immense comfort to Diana.

However, Madam Fulcher wasn't Julian himself. Perhaps he loved her, but the fact remained that he had done too many things to hurt her.

Diana's lips paled a little as she recalled all that had happened in the past.

She couldn't be certain whether she should believe Madam Fulcher's words about Julian's feelings for her.

But now...

Madam Fulcher's expression suddenly grew serious. "Diana, I know that it's difficult for you to believe Julian's feelings for you in such a short time, but do you believe in my feelings for you?"

"Of course!"

Madam Fulcher had treated her much better than her own parents. She was the only relative that Diana acknowledged in this world so far.

"Then work with me in this act."

Diana was taken aback and looked at their current situation. "Here?"

"Yes, here." Madam Fulcher smiled and tightened her grip on Diana's hand. "Do you remember the shares I transferred to you before?"

Diana nodded. She definitely remembered the substantial amount of money the older woman had practically bullied her into accepting

"You have to remember that those shares can be disposed of at any time if you have a need for them."

"Why are you bringing this up now when everything's fine?"

In such a tense situation, Madam Fulcher speaking to Diana like this gave Diana a sense of preparing for what's to come. She was inexplicably anxious.

Once again, she instinctively tightened her grip on Madam Fulcher's hand.