

## Read Novel Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 661-670

### Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 661

Julian naturally had a way to bring the plummeted stocks back up. But who exactly was the person behind the scenes causing trouble, and how far did this troublemaker's reach extend in Fulcher Inc.?

With the year end approaching, Diana hadn't received many orders so the studio was relatively idle. Julian wasn't at home as well. With nothing to do, she decided to have the driver and the bodyguard take her to the mall for a bit of shopping.

Last time she went out, she had forgotten to buy lucky charm decorations.

She told herself that this year, she needed to buy more lucky charms to place around the house in hopes they would ward off the year's misfortune.

Holding up the lucky charm decorations, she sensed she could foresee a future of happiness. The thought brought a joyful smile to her face.

Today, Diana was wearing a single-velvet long coat and pants. It was loose in style but not bulky, instead accentuating her gentle and slender figure. She looked as if she had stepped out of a fairytale, and her appearance drew a lot of attention when she stood in front of the shelves.

After getting kidnapped last time, she had developed the habit of having bodyguards with her at all times.

Now, she didn't mind being seen.

Yet as she stepped out of the supermarket, holding her purchases and waiting for the driver to open the car door for her, somebody suddenly pulled her arm.

It was Simon Channing!

The beauty mark beneath his eye was his trademark. The moment Diana saw it, warning alarms blared inside her.

"Why are you here?"

The last time Diana parted ways with Oliver at the hotel, she had told him about her encounter with Simon and requested that he have a talk with Simon about it.

But now, here he was again!

“Who were you expecting? Julian?” Simon asked, a sinister undertone in his words.

Diana sensed the hostility in the air and remained silent. She saw Simon’s smirk, and his fan moved around in his hand, as if he was playing with her.

It felt as if he was being handsy with her.

Feeling extremely uncomfortable, Diana took a step back. To her surprise, he advanced forward until she was forced out of the car’s range and was quickly surrounded by seven or eight burly men.

This man had deliberately forced her to retreat to lure her away from her own car!

“What’s the meaning of this?” Diana demanded with a hard look, furious.

Simon kept his eyes fixed on her, and his smile widened.

“No need to be so nervous. I only wanted to invite you somewhere as a guest.”

“As a guest?” Diana started to feel increasingly anxious.” Where are you taking me?”

Before she could finish her sentence, she suddenly felt darkness closing in on her.

He had covered her eyes with his hand!

A man other than Julian was touching her!

Diana’s face flushed with fury, and she immediately began clawing and hitting wildly, shouting, “Don’t touch me! Don’t touch me!”

In the heat of the moment, she fiercely bit down on his arm, drawing blood.

She had never been so vicious before.

She had bitten down with such force that the metallic taste of blood filled her mouth. She had actually broken through the skin on his arm!

How much strength did she use...?

The hands covering her eyes disappeared, and her vision cleared for a moment. Diana seized the opportunity to shout. "Help! Guards!!!"

Where were her bodyguards?

Why hadn't they come yet?!

"Stop shouting," Simon said calmly, not the slightest bit bothered about the blood dripping from his arm. "He's coming along too."

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Diana turned around and confirmed her suspicion. Simon had indeed brought seven or eight people with him. Compared to them, she had no chance of winning with only one bodyguard by her side. As for the driver, Simon's men had already forced him to leave the hotel with the car earlier on.

Without realizing it, she was already isolated and at Simon's mercy.

Diana couldn't help but feel frustrated at the situation she was in. "What exactly do you want, Simon?"

"I told you, I want you to be my guest." The persistence in his eyes was akin to a pesky wad of chewing gum that couldn't be shaken off no matter how hard you tried.

Luckily, Diana still had her phone with her.

She quickly took it out and dialed Oliver's number, threatening him, "I'm going to tell your brother!"

Her tone was fierce, but it only made Simon chuckle. "Go ahead, tell him."

His real brother was still away on a business trip.

With that thought, a shadow crossed his eyes.

Diana, who was focused on making the call, clearly didn't notice the change in Simon's expression. Soon enough, her own expression changed.

Oliver didn't answer her call.

Ever since he told her that he no longer liked her, it seemed like he had taken the initiative to keep a considerable distance from her.

And now, he wouldn't even answer her calls.

Diana couldn't say she was devastated, but she felt a bit uncomfortable. Someone as warm as Oliver had changed right as she was in a difficult situation.

Was it her fault?

Was she wrong to repeatedly and explicitly reject him?

Seeing her conflicted expression, Simon guessed her thoughts.

"Stop calling. He won't answer your calls anymore and won't care about your life."

She belonged to Julian, after all.

Oliver may appear warm, but as Nina once said, how could a child raised in a prominent family be genuinely innocent?

What they usually showed to others was just the side they wanted to display.

This direct statement took Diana aback. "...Perhaps that's for the best."

With that, she put away her phone and disregarded Simon's astonished expression.

"Let's go. I'll accompany you as your guest."

Since she had no help now and Julian was out of the country, she might as well go along with Simon and see what he really wanted.

"I didn't expect you to be so brave," Simon mused.

He thought she would start crying out of fright or get upset because of Oliver's sudden change in attitude towards her. But in reality, she remained calm-as if nothing had happened, as if she was really willingly going with his invitation.

Even the fear she used to have when she saw him before was gone.

Simon couldn't help but find it a little annoying. "Aren't you afraid of me?"

"I am," Diana replied honestly. "You're unpredictable, but you helped me last time at the hotel. After thinking it over, I realized you're not such a bad person."

This was the first time someone had viewed Simon in this manner.

Not such a bad person...?

In the many years Simon stayed among the Channings, many people had cursed him, calling him a b\*stard and saying he was inferior. Some even called him crazy, claiming he was sinister and unbearable.

Even Diana had expressed fear and unease when she saw him before.

"Back then..." Simon started somewhat awkwardly, as he lifted the arm that Diana had bitten to scratch his nose. "Didn't you also curse me and call me crazy?"

That was at the hospital.

"You were attacking people indiscriminately," Diana replied, glancing at him, "and at that time, I hadn't seen just how wicked people's hearts could be."

Later, after experiencing so much...

Diana had seen how unrepentant her parents were after digging up the grave of her babies, and how her birth mother had cursed her relentlessly at their doorstep.

She also saw how her own blood sister was willing to do anything to harm her, all for the sake of having the title of Julian Fulcher's wife.

There were even attempts to drug her and make her incapable of bearing children...

It was hard to believe that even between family members, things could escalate to such an extent

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With this thought, Simon's previous actions seemed less significant. However, he certainly couldn't be considered a good person.

For now, Diana had no way to escape his grasp.

"I'm turning twenty-two soon," she suddenly blurted out, hoping to reduce her fear of him in this way. "As long as you don't touch me, I'll go along with you."

She simply couldn't accept any man aside from Julian touching her. That awful feeling was like getting bitten by ants; it wasn't deadly, but her whole body tingled with disgust. The sensation gave her goosebumps, and she felt as if her skin was being peeled off.

"When?" Simon asked.

"Huh?"

Diana had already gotten into Simon's car and was putting some distance between them; that made her a bit more relieved. And with that, she was less afraid of Simon.

"Your birthday." Simon's hand was still on his nose, and he was looking absentmindedly at her. "When is it?"

Diana paused; she had no idea what this man was up to now. There hadn't been a single pleasant encounter with him, and she didn't want him to spoil her birthday too.

"It's still a long way off." Diana sounded depressed. The next moment, she became more cheerful, admiration and anticipation glazing her eyes as she added happily, "But Julian's birthday is coming up."

In the same instance, she recalled his tired appearance from last night. Her heart ached again. "You've ruined my good luck charms."

Her voice was low, and there was a sudden sting in her nose when she saw the torn lucky charms.

She missed him.

She missed Julian.

Tears rolled down her cheeks and onto the paper, causing the characters to smudge and the items to wrinkle.

Simon furrowed his brows and snatched the lucky charm from her by force. "It's just a lucky charm! Big deal! I'll just have someone buy you a thousand of them!"

His words sounded generous, but due to his excessive force, he had torn the lucky charm Diana had picked out with great care in half.

At that, her tears flowed even more fiercely.

The uneasiness in her heart grew. Like an enraged tiger, she shouted angrily at Simon, "I don't want you to buy me a thousand of them! You've ruined my and Julian's luck! You owe me and Julian our luck!"

Only then did Simon realize just how much she cared about the special significance of the lucky charms during the new year, and that she cared a great deal more about Julian.

Anger surged within Simon. Frustrated, he yelled, "Stop the car!"

He mustered his strength and crumpled the lucky charm into a ball, and threw it out of the window. "Screw your luck!"

Diana was struck speechless.

How could she forget?

Simon was the most unpredictable person in this world.

And yet, she had actually cried in front of him.

That wasn't the way to protect herself!

She had to find a way to ensure her safety before Julian returned.

She contemplated her options for a while. Facing the man's sinister gaze, she began, "You..."

Simon raised an eyebrow, waiting for her to say something that would make him angrier so he could throw her out of the car window too.

“What?!”

“You...” Diana swallowed harshly and continued, “You shouldn’t throw litter out of the car window.”

Considering the long hesitation in her words, he never expected her to say that.

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For a moment, it was obvious Simon was holding in his laughter. However, that quickly disappeared.

Nevertheless, Diana caught a glimpse of it. In the end, it still bothered him that she had mentioned the hospital earlier.

“I’ll throw whatever I want, and I’ll hit whoever I want. Who are you to interfere?!” he snapped.

Oddly enough, his arrogant tone and expression... At this moment, they resembled Julian even more.

Diana’s heart skipped a beat and she warned herself not to overthink, but her uneasiness deepened.

Thinking about the torn lucky charm, she remained silent throughout the journey. Due to the long journey and her prolonged thoughts about Julian last night, she dozed off, her body swaying back and forth. It wasn’t until the car stopped that she slowly opened her eyes-only to be greeted by Simon’s gloomy face.

“Get out!” he yelled.

Diana was startled by his attitude. She noticed that despite Simon’s fierce manner of speech and sinister grins, it was hard to distinguish the ill intentions behind them.

Actually... He was similar to an obedient child.

For example, he hadn’t tried to touch her again after she told him not to.



Somehow, Diana found him to be quite similar to Julian. She felt more at ease and less anxious than before.

As she exited the car, her feet landed on golden ginkgo and vibrant red maple leaves. The path crunched beneath her footsteps, indicating the thickness of the fallen leaves. Such a thick layer of leaves also indicated that this place was far from Richburgh. It was colder in Richburgh, and the trees there had long shed their leaves.

This place seemed to be on the outskirts or a suburban area. The city center wouldn't allow such a thick layer of leaves to accumulate, and they would usually be cleaned before reaching this point.

Last time, Kayla had chosen a similar place to keep Diana and Madam Fulcher hostage. However, her choice was the epicenter of such an environment—a desolate residential area. It was much gloomier and scarier than where Simon had brought Diana.

Still, Diana immediately put her guard up. “Are you planning to kidnap me?”

Simon was speechless. Last time at the hotel, he had seen this woman display courage and brilliant resourcefulness. She managed to reach Julian despite his betrayal and her petite size, and didn't shed a single tear despite sustaining numerous injuries.

It was truly, absolutely...

A complete contrast to her current behavior.

Diana didn't understand why Simon seemed to be angry again. There were dark clouds on his face; he was mocking her while expressing disdain and disgust at the same time.

In the end, all his pent-up emotions boiled down to one sinister phrase.” This is the Pabian family's residence.”

The Pabian family?

A chill ran down Diana's spine. She took several steps back in shock, staring at him with disbelief.

“What did you say?”

Seeing her getting shocked and quickly trying to feign a calm expression, Simon's interest was roused. He brightened, amused.

"This is the Pabian family's residence," he repeated.

He looked at Diana with a sigh. Originally, he wanted to see the horror on her face. Instead, he noticed the tiny fuzz behind her ear. He couldn't help but be momentarily stunned. He even foolishly touched his own ear, feeling nothing. It was the first time he had seen such a thing on someone else. It looked very fuzzy, and it made Diana appear even more adorable.

At that moment, her face seemed to have become even more exquisite.

A strange sensation spread in Simon's heart. He averted his eyes quickly, and he suddenly became furious.

"The Pabian family's residence! I've already repeated it so many times! Are you deaf?"

Diana was stunned. Even if she couldn't hear, must this man be so irritable? His random outburst even dissipated some of her fear of Luke and the Pabians.

After a while, her complexion returned to normal and she regained some of her composure.

"Why did you bring me here?"

Simon shot her the look one would give an idiot. "To be a guest, of course."

Didn't he already say it before?

Diana almost choked on nothing.

A guest in the Pabian family... That wouldn't be a pleasant experience.

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Now that Diana was here, she could do nothing about it. All she could do was hope that Julian would return to Richburgh as quickly as possible.

Just the thought of him being so far away dimmed her heart. Even her eyes lost their brilliance.

Simon sensed it. He found the long silence uncomfortable, and muttered, "Don't worry. No one will hurt you."

Diana shot him an unexpected look, which annoyed him." What are you looking at?! If you keep looking, I'll tear off your ears!"

His sudden aggressiveness took Diana aback. She truly couldn't understand the twisted thought process of this little freak. Still, it seemed he had no intention of hurting her. With that in mind, she followed him inside.

After the incident with Luke, the Pabian family moved away. They were undoubtedly too afraid to linger under Julian's watchful eye, so they took the initiative to move to the outskirts, far away from the city center of Richburgh.

The area was more spacious, precisely because it was remote.

However, the Pabian family residence was rather small. The European-style villa only had three floors, with three rooms on each floor. It seemed not many people lived here.

After Diana entered, she realized it wasn't that there were a few people living there-rather, Clifford was the villa's only residence!

To think he moved out from the city center all by himself.

"Where are the rest of the Pabians?"

Simon deliberately asked, "Are you referring to Luke?" He shrugged casually. "He's dead."

Of course Diana knew he was dead! And it was all because he lusted after her and got dealt with personally by Clifford.

The revelation made her all the more anxious.

Didn't that mean...that Clifford was equivalent to a murderer?

Was she now a guest in the lair of a murderer? And this murderer had a grudge against her, too...

The more she thought about it, the worse she felt. She silently repeated Julian's name in her mind a hundred times, and her face finally regained some composure.

But because she had repeated it so many times in her mind, she slipped up and said it out loud. "Julian."

Simon was startled to hear her calling Julian's name.

Coldness spread through him, and he hissed through his teeth, "Do you miss him that much? Is he all you think about? If

Was there something wrong with her thinking about her husband?

Though he wasn't currently her husband due to their divorce, who else would she think about if not him?

"Oliver's genuine feelings for you were all in vain!"

Oh, so Simon was defending his brother Oliver and found the situation unfair to the latter.

Diana looked at Simon, suppressing the strange feeling in her heart. "There was nothing between me and Oliver. We've never crossed any boundaries, and we've never had mutual admiration. He's the kind of person who can let go of things. He wouldn't care if his feelings were reciprocated, and he wouldn't feel like he wasted anything."

Whether she liked Oliver or not was one thing.

Whether she approved of him as a person was another.

"Oliver's a kind and gentle man. Other people are the ones petty toward him and hold grudges, but he wouldn't worry about them."

When she said these words, she fully acknowledged Oliver. Apart from love, she approved of everything about him.

After listening, Simon glanced subtly into the living room, where the man himself stood behind in silence.

Upon hearing Diana's words, Oliver kept retreating, as if he had seen something terrifying. He muttered softly, "I'm not as good as you say..."

He wasn't the man Diana said he was.

In fact...

He was much more despicable than she could imagine.

Ultimately, he didn't take another step forward. Instead, he turned around and walked through the back door, leaving the villa.

Diana didn't notice, but Simon saw it clearly. He smiled meaningfully and texted Kenneth Channing—the current Channing patriarch—about what had just happened.

“Diana...?” Kenneth repeated her name silently after reading the text. The smile on his face gradually faded, and he tensed.

At the same time, Diana sneezed.

She wondered, was Julian thinking about her?

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But at this moment, Julian wasn't thinking about her.

Rather, he was fully engrossed in his work, and his eyebrows were furrowed deeply. Upon investigating the shorted stock market, he also discovered two major parasites within Fulcher Inc..

The problem was, these parasites were cunning enough to give birth to numerous smaller parasites. They were like ants, devouring everything slowly but surely in their attempts to hollow out Fulcher Inc.

More interestingly...

These parasites were the Channing and Pabian family.

Julian looked at the documents Noel had just compiled, his eyes filled with shock. In an instant, Oliver's evasiveness towards Diana and the force the man used to press his chest in the hospital room flashed before his eyes like a clear movie.

So that was it!

The Channings and the Pabians had actually joined forces.

And Oliver... He had abandoned his legitimate career as a doctor and returned to the Channing family. He did those things as preparations to take over his family!

Julian's eyes revealed a touch of admiration, followed by disdain. Then, worry.

"Diana!"

As if awakened from a dream, he turned around and picked up the suit from the hanger behind him, putting it on as fast as he could. As he walked out, he called out to Noel. "We don't need the luggage. Immediately book the next available flight to Richburgh!"

Noel was puzzled, but seeing the improperly buttoned suit on Julian's body, he dared not say a word and immediately made the arrangements.

Meanwhile, Diana had stopped sneezing.

The person she had been thinking of didn't miraculously appear before her.

Instead, it was Clifford; he was looking at her with what was neither a smile nor a frown.

"Mrs. Fulcher, welcome."

He didn't address her as Diana or Miss Winnington.

Diana breathed a sigh of relief. It seemed Clifford hadn't made Simon bring her here out of a grudge against her for what happened to Luke. The target of Clifford's interest was Julian, who was backing her.

It was why he emphasized her identity as Mrs. Fulcher.

Diana breathed a sigh of relief inwardly.

At the same time, she glanced at Simon, as if trying to convey her gratitude.

He had assured her that nothing would happen to her today, and now, she believed him.

Simon was inexplicably perplexed by her gaze, though it gave him a strange feeling akin to a spring breeze brushing past him.

It was quite an ominous feeling.

It almost made him pick up a chair and smash it on Diana.

In the end, he didn't do anything.

Instead, it was Clifford who spoke to him first. "Simon, what happened to your arm?"

Simon was taken aback. Only then did he notice bite marks on his arm. He hurriedly pulled down his shirt and said, "It's nothing. I got bitten by a little tiger on the way here."

Diana was speechless at his answer.

She no longer felt that she was overthinking; Simon's way of speaking was strikingly similar to Julian's!

It was the way Julian, who had feelings for her, spoke.

On the same basis, Simon...

Seemed to be interested in her.

Diana was startled by her own deduction and stared at him intently, as if trying to prove something.

The more she looked, the more she felt that he strongly resembled Julian.

If it weren't for Clifford interrupting her train of thoughts, she would've asked Simon if there was any connection between him and the Fulcher family.

"Mrs. Fulcher."

Diana thought of Clifford as an unpunished murderer, so she felt uneasy when the man addressed her.

"Yes?"

She maintained a dignified composure on her face, but inside, she had already chanted Julian's name multiple times in an attempt to stay calm.

"Mr. Pabian, please continue."

“I heard that Julian treasures you so much, he even knelt on the ground before all the prestigious families in the city, all for you.”

Diana didn't want to listen to anyone bringing up this matter, especially not now.

She immediately retorted, “No, that was just a result of the circumstances.”

“Ah, I see,” Clifford said. “It seems his feelings for you are far from what is rumored.”

Diana was about to nod, but then she heard him say, “It seems Julians' feelings weren't comparable to Luke's.

Before Luke passed away, the person he wanted to see the most, the person he was most concerned about and couldn't let go of...was you.”

Upon hearing this, Diana felt a shiver run down her spine. Her face even turned a few shades paler.

Just as she was about to speak, Clifford added in a seemingly mocking tone, “Since Julian doesn't care about you that much, why don't you stay and keep Luke company tonight?”

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To think Clifford dared attack her so openly!

Diana immediately suspected that he probably held one of Julian's weaknesses. Otherwise, he wouldn't have the guts to treat her like this.

With that thought in mind, she decided not to resist.

When she was by Julian's side, she was a petite woman who needed to be pampered and comforted. Once he wasn't around, she was a strong and independent woman.

Diana furrowed her brows slightly, her gaze appearing particularly sharp. She made an effort to calm herself down.

“Sure.”



If she agreed to Clifford's demands, Julian wouldn't be threatened no matter what cards Clifford held. All she had to do was wait for Julian to come back. He had promised to return before the new year, and now, there were only two days left until New Year's Eve.

She could endure for two more days. Julian would surely take her away from here.

As the night fell, however, Diana became less composed. When Clifford mentioned accompanying Luke, he meant accompanying his memorial portrait...

At this moment, she was alone on the villa's third floor. She looked out the window; the surroundings were pitch black.

The villa, situated on the city's outskirts, felt like an isolated island.

And she was in the center of this island.

The terror in her heart grew stronger.

Luke's memorial portrait was placed right in the middle of the table, and it felt like he was staring straight at her.

Even if Diana was bold, she dared not neglect it. She feared Clifford would devise a sinister scheme to deal with her once and for all.

Before Julian could reach her, she had to ensure her own safety.

That was the only method she could come up with, so that Julian wouldn't be threatened ever again.

Diana gritted her teeth and tried to distract herself by thinking about other things, and not pay so much attention to Luke's eerie memorial portrait.

By doing so, she instantly understood Julian's intentions when he arranged for Kayla to be locked up in the mortuary.

Diana was only facing a memorial portrait, but she was already so frightened. She couldn't imagine what it felt to be Kayla back then, faced with a room full of corpses!

Julian...was truly sinister.

Thinking about him, the goosebumps on her body finally settled down and she relaxed a bit. She reminded herself of Simon's words; he said they wouldn't harm her. She had to believe in that. Otherwise, tonight...

Since she had to stay with this treacherous-looking memorial portrait the whole time, who knows if her heart might stop suddenly at any moment!

She couldn't overthink and frighten herself to that point.

As long as Julian came back...

As long as he returned, everything would be fine.

Diana reassured herself repeatedly. It was just spending a night with a memorial portrait to appease Clifford's anger!

She could do it!

Finally, tired of crouching in the corner, she crossed her legs and assumed a meditative posture. She lifted her head and looked at the sky outside the window.

Diana tried to keep her spirits up. Madam Fulcher used to say that the deceased would become stars and guard their loved ones from where they were in the heavens.

So, she had three guardian stars.

One was Madam Fulcher, and the other two were her babies.

With this thought in mind, the night didn't seem so difficult to endure.

But in the late hours of the night, when the moon and stars were scarce, the light in the room suddenly went out without warning.

At the same time, the memorial portrait on the table seemed to shake. Diana was terrified to move even an inch.

She finally felt fear stab her heart.

Clifford was such a ruthless man. Did he really want Diana to accompany his deceased son's portrait, and nothing else?

Diana wanted to reach for her phone and call Julian, but then she remembered that Simon had taken her phone away after she couldn't get through to Oliver.

Her hands were empty as she retracted them, and her heart felt even emptier.

She was now like a timid bird, where even the slightest noise made her nerves jump.

And in this quiet and eerie atmosphere...

The door opened with a sinister creak...and a tall figure of a man stood outside.

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Judging by the height and build of the figure, it wasn't Clifford.

Instead, the figure seemed somewhat familiar.

Thinking that, Diana wasn't as afraid anymore and shouted loudly, "Is that you, Simon?"

Against the light, she couldn't see anything except the tall silhouette. However, the figure clearly stiffened for a moment.

She thought it was because she had guessed correctly, and continued, "I knew you'd come back for me!"

After hearing her words, the figure still remained unmoved. The surroundings were still dark, and Luke's white memorial portrait seemed to flicker in front of her, as if it had a light source.

However, the figure in front of her remained still.

Was it not Simon? Was it instead the person she least wanted to see right now, Clifford?

The marriage arranged between Diana and the old man of the Pabian family, which Kate and James had mentioned once, resurfaced in Diana's mind at that very instant.

If the person who had come really was Clifford, could she survive the night?

Diana began to feel afraid. The nausea and fear she had experienced when Luke molested her on the subway came rushing back. She wished she could break the glass and jump out of the room!

In fact, she tried to do just that. Only, she couldn't find any suitable tools at hand. In her desperation, she decided to smash the glass with her own hands.

But then came a loud shout. "What are you doing?!"

The voice was too familiar, and it was one that she missed so much.

Even though they had only been apart for just a day, it felt like forever.

Diana turned around in surprise and choked out, "Julian?"

With a click, the lights came on.

Who else would it be if not Julian?

Diana ended her foolish attempts of smashing the window with her hands, and rushed towards him in ecstatic joy. Much to her shock, Julian stopped her.

"Diana! Don't think that you have a chance after Kayla killed Grandma. Let me tell you this: you're just her substitute, and that's all you'll ever be for the rest of your life!"

Diana was stunned, clearly unable to process what was happening. Her eyes widened in astonishment, as if they had been pried open forcefully, and she stared at him in utter disbelief.

Clearly, Julian's words stirred up unpleasant memories from the past. Yet, he ignored her obvious discomfort and continued, "Last time, I knelt for you and took a stab for you. In reality, it was all to prevent Grandma from getting heartbroken. But now, she has passed."

His voice was chillingly calm, as if he had just walked out of a freezer. Everything he said carried a frightening aura, with each word striking Diana's heart harshly.

"I no longer have to pretend to love you."

His final sentence was deathly calm, but there was a powerful force behind them. It instantly shattered the sweet tranquility they had enjoyed over the past few days.

Diana was completely dumbfounded, feeling as if someone had poured a bucket of ice-cold water over her head. She looked at him, her arms outstretched awkwardly. A strained smile hung on her lips.

“Julian... What’s wrong with you?”

Julian didn’t even look at her or answer her question. He simply stepped aside, indicating that she was allowed to leave the room.

When his gaze fell briefly upon Luke’s memorial portrait, deep disgust flashed in his eyes.

Yet another strange emotion was obscuring his eyes, making it impossible for anyone to discern his true thoughts.

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Diana continued to stare at Julian.

She refused to believe he would undergo such a drastic change from such a short business trip.

His gaze quickly shifted to Diana, who stood frozen in place.

Seeing how she was not moving, he snapped, “Hurry up and come out! Even if you’re just a substitute, you’re now known as Mrs. Fulcher to everyone in Richburgh. Stop messing around with other men, and don’t disgrace the Fulcher family!”

“Julian!” Diana hissed warningly.

He seemed oblivious to the anger in her tone. He raised his eyebrows, his face still cold and indifferent as he said, “Are you upset? Isn’t staying up with a memorial portrait of a man in the middle of the night enough to prove a point?”

After waiting for him for so long, all she received was blame!

Diana’s hands hung down weakly as she looked at him incredulously. She felt very much wronged. “It was Mr. Clifford who made me...”

“Then you could’ve mentioned my name to intimidate him. You could’ve done everything you could to oppose this, but you didn’t. You simply agreed without putting up a fight.”

Julian’s seductive eyes showed chilling indifference, and his eyebrows remained raised as he continued, “Given the circumstances, doesn’t it indicate that you’re so fickle that you even prey on the dead?”

Diana subconsciously raised her hand and struck Julian’s face.

Julian, who had spent a night rushing around and nursing a wound that had yet to heal, swayed slightly from the impact.

Realizing this, Diana lowered her head and looked at her own palm in disbelief.

She had actually slapped Julian...

She had actually struck the man she had yearned for day and night!

“Julian, I...”

She was about to speak, but Julian interrupted her. His face and eyes were still chillingly cold as he mocked, “What? Did I hit the nail on the head, and now you’re so embarrassed that you got angry?”

Diana’s concern, which was on the verge of bursting out, was forced back down. Her eyes grew chilly. She clenched her teeth, determined not to appear too disheveled.

“You’ll regret saying all that, Julian!”

“It’s just facts. What’s there to regret?” Julian’s retort was as sharp as a knife.

Diana couldn’t take it anymore. She practically ran past him, bolting out of the room with the memorial portrait.

Julian continued shouting after her. “Not only are you fickle, but you’re also indecisive in your fickleness. You’re willing to accompany even the dead! Even Simon... I see you’re quite fond of him too. You’re so eager for him to come to you in the middle of the night!”

Diana halted, her face pale as she turned around. Her bright eyes were clearly burning with anger as she gritted her teeth and snarled, "Julian!"

But Julian didn't take back his words, nor did he show any remorse. Instead, he closed in on her, admonishing loudly, "Isn't what I said right? If I'm wrong, then why didn't you refute me? Why did you run away?"

Diana listened to his poisonous words, her fingertips tightly pressed into her palm. Julian was truly driving her mad, to the point her face turned pale; she could only stare at him silently.

Clifford suddenly appeared and interrupted their standoff." Mr. Fulcher, there's no need to be so angry."

As he spoke, he pulled Julian away. He looked at Diana before saying, "After all, she's just a woman."

"Yeah," Julian sneered, following Clifford and not even glancing at Diana. "Just a woman, and a substitute no less."

"I've heard about this substitute thing before," Clifford replied, and he seemed quite interested in the matter. "Why don't you tell me about it?"

Julian's eyes flickered with pain. It was unclear to Diana what he said to Clifford, but he ended up sighing. Loudly, he said, "Unfortunately, it's impossible between Kayla and me."

"Why?"

"Haven't you heard, Mr. Clifford? My grandmother's death was related to her. If she hadn't been so insecure about whether she was the real or fake heiress of her family and didn't get jealous so easily, we wouldn't have ended up the way we did." Julian looked into Luke's eyes, enunciating each word with regret.

Every syllable that came out of him was filled with profound bitterness. The more Diana listened, the more she felt needles were pricking her heart.

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Diana couldn't accept that everything that had happened recently was merely an act on Julian's part. She couldn't bear his absurd words.

No matter how good her upbringing was, she couldn't hold back any longer. She could only flee and rush out of the gate. This time, Clifford didn't stop her.

Julian's car was already waiting at the entrance of the Pabian family's residence. When Diana emerged, Noel immediately stepped forward to greet her.

"Ma'am."

"Don't call me that!"

Diana's face was pale, filled with anger and frustration. Instantly after, she realized it wasn't right to vent her anger at Noel just because of Julian.

Her expression gradually softened. "I'm sorry..."

She held her forehead and leaned against the car, her posture showing deep exhaustion. "I lost control for a moment."

Noel had been startled by her outburst, but he waved his hands repeatedly and said, "No, it's fine!"

No matter what he said, Diana knew she had made a mistake. She was never someone who took advantage of others. She hadn't done it in the past, and she wouldn't start now.

"After we return home," Diana began. When she saw that Noel still looked fearful, she eased her expression and went on, "I'll talk to Julian and ask him to give you a paid day off as compensation for me losing my temper."

This compensation wasn't excessive and sincere.

Noel's approval and respect for Diana deepened, and he no longer refused. He immediately smiled. "Alright, I'll follow your lead."

As a gesture of courtesy, Diana smiled back at him.

Just then, Julian and Clifford came out together.

Julian's expression turned even colder than it was possible, and he sneered, "See?"



He pointed at Diana as if he was assessing her as an object, and every word he spouted was laced with mockery.

“This woman can flirt with anyone, even my assistant!”

Clifford burst into laughter upon hearing Julian’s words.

“Mr. Fulcher, you’re joking. With Miss Winnington’s beauty, people will still flock to her even if she doesn’t do anything!”

Julian’s eyes flashed malevolently.

Garbage like Clifford had no right to insult his woman!

If it weren’t for some necessary reasons that required restraint, he would definitely bankrupt the Pabian family right this very instant!

However, he maintained the plastic smile on his face and acted as if he didn’t care about what Clifford had said. He buried his disgust deep in his heart.

“I supposed we’ll be taking our leave for now.”

Clifford took a step forward, and personally opened the car door for him. “Mr. Fulcher, please.”

Soon, Julian got into the car, with Diana following closely behind.

As soon as they sat down and their seats were barely warmed, Diana looked at Julian and demanded, “Apologize to me.”

She was asking him this for his rudeness, for the disrespectful words he had just spoken.

But Julian simply sneered, and the coldness remained in his eyes as he replied easily, “I spoke the truth, so why should I apologize?”

With a click, Diana unlocked the car door.

When Noel heard the telltale sound of the door unlocking, he felt awkward. He was about to lock the door; seeing Julian’s expression, however, he retracted his hand.

Diana observed their reactions. She clenched her fist, her fingernails digging into her palms. She stepped out of the car and hissed, "I don't want to see your ugly face."

Before closing the door, she glanced at Julian, whose cheek still bore her palm print. At this moment, she pretended not

to notice it. Her eyes were ice, tinged with deep disappointment.

"So, I'm leaving."

As soon as she said that, she slammed the car door shut.

The sound echoed loudly in Julian's ears.

Diana must be furious! Their days together that had finally improved after so long were once again ruined by him.

He sighed bitterly.

Yet, he had no other choice.