

## **KINDA SWEET 571**

### Chapter 571: It's Up to Me

Suddenly, Max chimed in, "It's up to me to decide if I owe you anything. You don't need to explain anything to me."

Laura didn't know what to say.

She felt a little frustrated, but at the same time, warmth welled up within her from the bottom of her heart.

Just at this moment, there was a shrill scream coming from their left.

The two of them looked over their shoulders, only to see a middle-aged woman dripping with jewels bursting into the restaurant.

She rushed to a table and slapped a young girl's face hard in a domineering manner.

"You bitch! How dare you seduce my husband! I'll beat the shit out of you!"

Her high-pitched voice suddenly attracted everyone's attention.

With a bright red face, the man sitting next to the young girl got up to stop her, growling, "What are you talking about? She's one of my clients."

"Client?" The middle-aged woman got angrier, "You must be her client in bed, aren't you?"

"You!"

The young girl covered her cheek in embarrassment and bit her lip. "Mr. Caveney, let's talk over our cooperative project next time! I think I'm gonna leave now."

After that, she got up to leave.

However, the middle-aged woman grabbed her.

"Oh, you wanna leave? Let me tell you something. Don't you ever think of getting out of this restaurant alive if you don't break up with my husband today!"

"Enough!"

The man gave the middle-aged woman a resounding slap across the face. After that, he paused for a second, clenched his teeth, and turned around, apologizing to the young girl.

"I'm so sorry, Miss Nordhoff. You go first. I'll come to your company to talk over the project with you later."

Her face grim, the young girl shot a glance at the man and said indifferently, "Don't bother. It'd be better

for you to take care of your family affair first, Mr. Caveney!"

After that, she strode out in a huff.

"You bitch! Don't go! You..."

"Enough! Is this not embarrassing enough for you?" The man grabbed his wife and noticed the people around staring at them in a strange way, feeling awkward.

"You bastard, Devon Caveney! How dare you slap me, you jerk! What did you say to my dad back then when you married me? Now you're successful, and my dad is dead, so this is how you treat me, you ungrateful bastard..."

The middle-aged woman vented her anger on him because the young girl left. She pulled at his clothes, cursing.

Anger simmered inside the man as his wife was making a scene, and he flared up the moment he heard her saying, "... to my dad back then when you married me..." Now that she touched his sore spot, he grabbed his wife's wrist, shoved her away, and roared, "Enough! Lillian Page, cut it out or I'll divorce you!"

The middle-aged woman was shoved to the ground. She was stunned for a second, and the next

moment, she started to wail, didn't care how embarrassed she looked.

The man's face darkened in an instant and he snapped, "Stop making a fool of yourself!"

After that, he strode away.

Laura looked back.

The steak in front of her had cooled off, so she put down her fork and knife and wiped her mouth.

"That woman is impossible. Were I her husband, I would divorce her for sure."

Max was calm, but a faint sneer crossed his eyes.

"Maybe, but have you noticed the watches the man and the young girl were wearing?"

Laura raised her eyebrows.

Max went on, "They're wearing the latest his-and-hers watches by Cartier. Either of them is worth at

least one hundred thousand dollars. They're business partners, but they're wearing matching watches.

It's too much of a confidence."

Laura hadn't noticed that a while ago. Now that Max brought it up, she also remembered the young girl

drew back her left hand as she got up just now.

Laura couldn't help frowning, "So you mean that man cheated on his wife?"

Max shook his head and smiled. "Not sure. When a marriage goes wrong, both people are to blame.

That woman..."

Suddenly, he paused, stared at Laura, who was waiting for him to continue, and raised his brows.

"Have you had enough?"

Slightly surprised, Laura nodded.

Then Max called the waiter to pay the bill.

After that, they left the restaurant and went to the parking lot.

Eager to know what Max wanted to say just now, Laura asked, "What did you want to say about that woman?"

However, Max didn't answer her this time but knocked her gently on the forehead, "It's none of your business. Stop being so nosey."

Laura covered her forehead with a grimace, staring at him in disbelief.

When had this man...

... picked up this bad habit?

How dared he knock her on the head? Did he take her as a child?

The two of them went into the parking lot and got in their car.

Just as Max started the car, a stealthy figure came into their view.

It turned out it was the middle-aged woman who was making a scene in the restaurant.

Cursing, she stuffed a ball of plastic bags into the exhaust pipe of a BMW.

Laura chuckled regardlessly, "You were right. She is a real handful."

Max gave a nonchalant smile.

The middle-aged woman blocked the exhaust pipe, got up, and turned around, only to see Max and

Laura sitting in the car across from her.

She widened her eyes in anger and snarled, "What are you looking at? Don't tell me you've never seen

anyone doing this! Men are all big assholes, including you! Hey, gigolo, just stick to whores and let off

this poor student! You'll pay for your deeds!"

She then got into another car aside and left.

Both Max and Laura were stupefied.

After a while, Laura burst into laughter.

"Hahahaha..."

Sulking, Max turned to scowl at her.

Laura had an innocent look, especially when she had no makeup on.

She was dressed simply in a white shirt, a pair of shorts, and white sneakers today to have a good time in the amusement park, and also threw her hair up into a high ponytail, so understandably, she looked like a student indeed.

However, it was one thing that the middle-aged woman was wrong about Laura's age, but it was another not to have recognized her.

"Hahahaha..."

The more Laura thought about it, the more amusing she found the situation was. Hysterically laughing in the seat, she said, "Don't take it to heart. It was a compliment, gigolo! Haha! This is so funny!"

Max looked sullen, his eyes glinting as he saw her laughing, but said nothing.

The car started and pulled out of the parking lot slowly.

Eqitin was an economically developed city. As the night fell, the whole city was lit up by flashing neon

lights. Finally, Laura was done laughing. She took out her phone and saw no unread messages, relieved.

It was already 10 when she arrived home.

Laura had a fun day in the amusement park. Oddly, she was not in a bad mood now, even though it was that man she had spent the day with.

Chapter 572: A Peaceful Night

Max sent Laura back to her apartment and left without lingering.

Laura had a sound sleep that night.

Since she had fulfilled her childhood dream of spending the whole afternoon in an amusement park, she dreamed of her childhood that night.

At that time, the Davies family just moved away from Eqitin, and her father was still alive. They were living a happy life.

On one occasion, Laura heard from her classmate that her father had taken her to the amusement park to ride on a merry-go-round, and Laura was green with envy.

When she went home, she badgered her father into taking her to the amusement park.

After the Davies family left Eqitin, they went to a city in the south and started a small business.



Since he was just getting started, her father was busy almost 24/7 all year around and had little free time.

However, he still agreed to make his daughter happy.

He also promised that he would take her to travel abroad if she got full marks in the final exam.

Overjoyed, Laura worked very hard every day.

She was over the moon at the thought that her father would take her mother and her to travel abroad and that the family was happy together.

However, something unexpected happened.

Laura never expected her father to die in a car accident on the day of her exam.

She would never forget the scene where she stood in the doorway of her house with her school report with full marks in her hands.

Now the sweet home no longer existed, to be replaced by her mother wailing, neighbors who were helping or looking on, and the icy and mangled body of her father's.

Laura didn't remember what exactly she went through back then.

Her memory of that period of time was vague.

All she could remember was that her tears and the rain mixed together, clouding her eyes.

What she could remember was how she and her mother struggled to survive.

The perpetrator of the car accident did pay fair compensation, but it was used to make up for the business losses caused by her father's death.

Fannie had been a housewife and lived an easy life since she got married.

Now that the backbone of the family was gone, she had to support her family and afford the education fees for Laura, who was only ten at that time, so she had no choice but to look for a job.

However, it was difficult for a woman, who hadn't worked for a dozen years, to get a job at once.

Fannie was well-educated, but it had been too long since she had left the workplace, and now she was good at being a good housewife, instead of dealing with all kinds of papers or report forms.

Therefore, she actually ended up being a nanny or sometimes a housekeeper.

Laura remembered very well her mother had aged badly during those days.

A woman, who had used to be stunning, aged gracelessly overnight in hardship

But Fannie made no complaint.

No matter how hard life was, she went back home late at night with candies, or new clothes of the current season.

She always took Laura in her arms in bed, coaxing her gently.

She would say, "My baby, be a good girl. I'm working hard but it's all right. I'd do anything to make you happy."

Laura didn't understand why Fannie would stick to such a job at that time. As a little girl, she knew little about this world.

One of the few things she was clear about was that her father was gone. No one would let her ride on his shoulders, or lift her up, or make her laugh anymore.

Besides, life was not so good as before, even though Fannie tried so hard to offer the best to her.

The food she ate, nevertheless, got worse day by day, and so did her life.

But Laura was sensible. She could tell something was going on, but she never complained.

She didn't quite understand why Fannie worked so hard every day, but realized she had to be understanding. Whenever her mother said no, she just put down the toy she had longed for obediently.

Until one day, a strange woman came to her school and called her out in class.

She told her that her mother fainted at work.

Fannie was rushed to hospital, and it turned out she suffered acute myocarditis.

Later, Laura found out her mother also had severe myocardial infarction besides that.

All this happened after her father's death.

From then on, choked back all her tears and grief, Fannie always showed the positive side to Laura.

Fannie supported her family with her warm but weak body, letting Laura know she still had her mother

despite her father's death. Fannie told her she was no inferior to others, nor was she worse than any

other kid.

It was at that time that Laura burst into tears.

It was at that time that she began to fear for real.

She was afraid.

She was afraid that she would lose her mother after losing her father.

Therefore, Laura accepted Diego with pleasure when he appeared in their life, even if he was

pretending to be a kind and generous man at first.

Laura was aware that Fannie had worked so hard to support their family, and that her health couldn't afford such hard work anymore.

Thus, Laura was happy to accept a stranger in her life.

As long as her mother was well and healthy, anything would be fine.

However, life didn't work that way.

Even adults failed to see through others' disguises sometimes.

How could a child see through an adult's evil intention?

After Fannie married Diego, it had been less than a year before their peaceful and happy lives ended and Diego showed his true color.

He was an alcoholic who gambled and goofed around.

He didn't work, and made Fannie wait upon him like a maid when he got home.

Fortunately, he had inherited some properties and they scraped by on rental income.

Fannie sometimes worked as a home tutor. She wasn't good at math, but was always good at English.

She would help kids in the neighborhood with their English to make some money.

The days passed gradually and they made it through.

Laura had thought that was the nadir of her life.

But unexpectedly, fate would always strike a heavy blow against one out of the blue.

Laura could never forget that night.

It was a stormy night when Diego stumbled into the house suddenly.

Chapter 573: She Wouldn't Force It

Diego was soaked to the skin since he didn't have an umbrella.

Both Laura and Fannie were shocked to see him like this.

Before they could even figure out what was going on, they saw him rushing into his room and

rummaging the drawers for money.

Stunned, Fannie and Laura didn't know what to do, nor did they dare to ask him what was going on.

Diego looked everywhere in the house but didn't even find a coin. He rushed up to Fannie and seized

her by the collar, asking, "Where's the money? Where did you hide the money?"

It was then that Fannie realized Diego had become addicted to drugs,

which was the worst thing that could ever happen to a family in this world, because a drug addict was

irrational.

Laura realized it too, terrified.

She was fifteen that year.

Luckily, Fannie sent her to a boarding school in the city to prevent Diego from hurting her.

Since her school adopted close management, no one, including her parents, was allowed in during weekdays unless under exceptional circumstances.

Laura and Fannie had been scared during those years.

And that was also when Fannie's health declined.

Things hadn't taken a turn for the better until Laura came back to Equin to attend a drama school.

The past flitted through her mind like a movie.

However, Laura was, oddly, calm when she recalled those painful experiences in the past.

It was as if those memories were gone with the wind.

Truly, she went through it, and it was all history now, so there was no need for her to worry again.

Laura woke up late the next day.

Maybe because she had been dreaming the whole night, Laura didn't feel refreshed when she got up.

Nicole knew Laura had come home late last night, so she didn't come to her apartment early this morning, and she brought some chicken soup for her.

After washing up, Laura was reading the gossip column on Twitter as she ate the soup.

Suddenly, she paused.

Sitting on the sofa, Nicole was packing up things Laura would need today. She asked out of curiosity seeing that, "What's wrong?"

Laura just ate a spoonful of soup. Before she could swallow it, she choked and coughed.

She shook her head immediately, "Nothing."

However, Nicole came over to her regardless.

She saw an eye-catching headline on the trending list that read,

"Angelic Beauty Laura Davies Meeting Golden Bachelor At Night. Are They Doing It?"

Nicole widened her eyes in astonishment.

There were two fuzzy pictures below the caption, in which Laura and Max were coming out of the restaurant together.

Max was blurred on the picture, probably because the paparazzi didn't want to offend someone so



powerful, while Laura was fully shown.

Therefore, one could tell the woman in the photo was her, even if she was wearing a mask and lowering her head with her hair down.

"Laura..."

Laura rubbed her forehead in depression.

"It's alright. Things like this happen all the time. Didn't they take a picture of Stephen and me together the other day?"

Laura managed a smile. Although she said she didn't care, obviously, she was cursing in her mind.

Nicole knew what she was thinking, and laughed.

"Laura, shall we tell Maria?"

Laura's face darkened and she shook her head.

Maria might have long known it since the news was trending.

But if she asked her about what had happened yesterday, Laura didn't know what to say.

Should she tell Maria that Max was suddenly stung by conscience and took her to the park?

If she did, Maria might let her imagination run away with her.

Laura sighed helplessly and shook her head. "Forget it. Let's leave it alone and get going now."

Nicole nodded.

Laura's work today was to do a promotional shoot for a product she endorsed.

Now that she was an A-list actress, many manufacturers asked her to promote their products.

Maria intended to improve Laura's popularity, so she didn't renew the contracts with those

manufacturers of daily necessities, which Laura had signed with when she was still a starlet.

Now she only chose to work with luxury brands.

For instance, she would be shooting a series of photos for a high-end skin care product today.

Laura and Nicole got downstairs and drove straight to the studio.

The photographer and makeup artist was already there when they arrived. Today, Laura had to do

some shooting for the propaganda posters and the brochures. It was a lot of work and time was

precious, and no one could afford to waste any second.

Laura rushed straight into the dressing room after jumping off her car.

They had been shooting all day long finally finished work at 6.

After a long day, Laura was exhausted.

Nicole made her some herbal tea. It was when Laura sat down and took a sip that she told her, "Laura, Maria just called, saying she just made a statement on behalf of you."

At first, Laura didn't know what Nicole was referring to. After a few seconds, she realized that she was talking about the gossip online.

She thought for a moment and reached out her hand, "Give me my phone."

Hearing that, Nicole took her phone out of a bag and handed it over to her.

Laura clicked open Twitter, seeing that Maria had already posted a clarification via her account.

Maria had no idea that man was Max, and took him as some male friend of Laura's.

Laura had promised before that she wouldn't be in a relationship in the near future, and Maria trusted her.

Then Maria called, and it was Nicole who answered the phone and told her that Laura was working, so

Maria just hung up and made a statement online.

Laura read it and found nothing wrong, so she heaved a sigh of relief and quit Twitter.

When she removed her makeup, she said goodbye to the staff and left with Nicole.

Meanwhile, Lily was lurking online and saw those photos, her heart sinking.

The others might not recognize Max, but she could, because they had just met yesterday.

Even if Max was blurred, she could still tell from his clothes that it was him.

So they spent a whole day together?

Lily's heart skipped a beat when she thought about it.

She was aware that Max didn't love her, and she didn't care before.

As long as she could be with him and marry him, she didn't care if he really loved her, and she wouldn't

force it.

Chapter 574: A Playboy

Before this, Lily had always believed that Max was nothing but a playboy, who would never really love a

woman.

Therefore, Lily could accept it, as long as she could become the one and only Mrs. Nixon.

But today, she found that she was wrong.

Other people might not tell that Max was truly in love with Laura, but she could.

That wasn't fair.

How could that man, who didn't even bother to spare her a glance, fall for another woman in the blink of an eye?

Was she really worse than her?

Lily begged to differ!

She refused to give up Max. The thought was like a spark, and it would ignite a big fire once triggered.

She gritted her teeth and clenched her fists, her eyes fixed on the photo on the screen.

After a long time, she took a deep breath, picked up her phone, and made a call.

"Hello. Reach out to this person and ask him to do something for me..."

Meanwhile...

Laura had no idea that she was targeted by Lily now.

Maria let her have a few days off because she would be shooting that suspense comedy film with

Stephen soon.

So Laura decided to spend some time with her mother in the hospital.

St. Peter's Hospital, the hospital Fannie stayed in, was one of the best hospitals in the world, with

world-class medical facilities and excellent patient care.

Besides, Max hired the best caretaker for Fannie, so Laura didn't have to worry about her mother.

The only thing bothering Laura was the heart Fannie needed.

Since she had an extremely rare blood type, it was almost impossible for her to find a suitable heart for transplant.

But if Fannie didn't have a heart transplant, a heart attack could happen to her anytime, just like an evil spell cast upon her, and thus take her life at any moment.

Laura couldn't accept it if that happened, so she always wanted to cure her mother.

This day, when Laura was on her way to the hospital, she received a phone call from Natalia.

She was surprised to see the caller ID.

After all, Natalia seldom contacted her because now she was busy taking care of her children and her business at the same time.

As Star Entertainment's actress, Laura usually had Elsa and Maria do her work for her, and it had been a long time since Natalia got involved personally.

Did she call to tell her something now?

Laura hit the answer button with curiosity.

Hardly had she answered the phone than she heard Natalia's smiling voice, "Hey Laura, I heard that Mrs. Davies doesn't feel well and staying in a hospital. Is she alright?"

It was impossible to hide her mother's illness from the company she worked for, so Laura had no intention to keep it a secret in the first place.

The reason Laura didn't tell everyone was that neither Maria nor Natalia asked her about it.

Later, Maria learned about it by chance, and Laura just told her everything, so she was not in the least surprised that Natalia knew it too.

Laura nodded, "She's doing OK. Why?"

Natalia smiled, "Nothing, it's just that I'm leaving for Othua on a business trip, and there might be more heart suppliers over there. So I assume I may get more new information for you there. Do you want me to ask about it?"

Laura was overjoyed to hear that.

It was just like winning a lottery, and how could she turn down such a great offer?

She nodded immediately, "Yeah! Thank you so much."

Natalia noticed the excitement in Laura's tone and said with a smile, "I should be leaving next week, and I'll contact you as soon as I get some news."

"OK," replied Laura in a shaking voice. She knew Natalia well. If Natalia hadn't got some helpful information, she wouldn't have called her.

Natalia might have already learned something exactly, so she called Laura to confirm it.

Laura's eyes grew misty. It was after a while that she managed to calm herself down and said, "Thank you, Natalia."

Natalia chuckled, "Not at all. I'm not helping you for nothing. Now you're the most popular actress in Star Entertainment, as well as our biggest income source. We would definitely help you so that you can focus on your work and make more money for us."

Apparently, Natalia said this to relieve Laura's anxiety.

Laura was grateful for how considerate Natalia was being.

She replied in a choked voice, "I see. Don't worry. I'll work harder and make more money."

"OK, that's all I wanna hear."



The two of them made some small talks and hung up.

As soon as Natalia put down her phone, someone knocked on her office door.

Rosa walked in with a cup of coffee.

After Natalia stopped acting, she had been working at Annie International, and she kept Rosa and had her work for her.

Natalia would teach and advise her at work.

Rosa, who had used to be an attendant who did some menial work for big stars, had already become an experienced and capable assistant now.

Rosa was extremely grateful to Natalia for her “promotion”.

Just because of that, she was even more guilty about what she had done to Natalia before.

Seeing Natalia hanging up, she gave a shy smile, "I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mrs. McCarthy."

Rosa called Natalia by her name in private. However, Natalia was in charge of the whole Annie International now, instead of the Public Relations Department.

So Rosa called Natalia Mrs. McCarthy out of respect at work.

Seeing Rosa coming into her office, Natalia raised her head with a smile, put her phone aside, and replied casually, "No, not at all."

She took a sip of coffee. Suddenly, something popped into her mind and she said, "By the way, I'm leaving next week, and I'll be dealing with the work here online. If something happens, tell me at once."

Rosa nodded immediately. "Sure."

Natalia passed a name list on the desk to her.

"Here is a list of the people attending the movie festival next week. Send it to their agents and the PR Department. Tell the nominated actors to get ready and fly there as far as possible and set their egos aside for now."

Rosa opened the folder and skimmed through the name list.

Then she looked up at Natalia and smiled, "I'm afraid Mr. McCarthy can't go."

Nathan McCarthy?

Natalia frowned.

"Why?"

Rosa replied, "He's been busy working for a sci-fi movie lately. The other day I passed his office and

heard him and the screenwriter talking about it. Presumably, he'll request permission to start this project from you soon."

#### Chapter 575: A Risky Venture

"It seems that he has put a lot of effort into this, so he may not attend the movie festival at this point."

Natalia frowned slightly as she heard what Rosa said.

Truly, it was an important occasion, but as a famous director, Nathan didn't need that publicity, so it didn't matter if he attended it or not.

However...

Did he want to make a sci-fi movie?

What did that mean?

Everybody knew that in recent years, most sci-fi movies had flopped, as if an evil spell was cast on them.

None of them made money.

For this reason, the audiences, the directors, the actors and actresses, as well as the investors, almost everyone had given up on sci-fi movies.

This was not a problem that could be solved by a talented director or a good actress. Basically, it was a technical barrier that couldn't be removed in a short time.

But Nathan said he wanted to make a sci-fi movie at this moment?

Was he out of his mind?

Natalia rubbed her temples and said to Rosa, "When did you hear him talking over it?"

Rosa thought for a moment.

Then she replied, "About three or four days ago. I heard it when I walked by his office one day at noon."

Now Natalia was even more worried.

Her intuition told her that she could never change Nathan's mind, as long as he had made the decision.

He was stubborn as a mule.

Thinking of that, Natalia waved her hand feebly. "Alright, I see. You may leave now."

Rosa nodded and left.

As expected, shortly after Rosa walked out of her office, Nathan came in with a huge pile of materials, grinning.

Natalia's eyelids twitched the moment she saw him, and the cup in her hand almost slipped down onto the floor.

"Natalia!"

Nathan walked in with a fawning smile.

Meanwhile, Natalia knew at once he came for the movie at the sight of the grin.

He was such a pain in the ass.

But Natalia said nothing, waving at him and signaling him to sit down.

"What's up?"

Nathan had signed a contract with Annie International last year and worked as the chief director.

In other words, Natalia was his boss.

Hearing her, Nathan replied with a smile, "It's not a big deal. It's just that... I need to talk to you about something."

Probably because he was also aware that making a sci-fi movie was a risky venture, or even an unreasonable one, Nathan sounded guilty as he spoke.

Natalia was anxious a little while ago, but now she saw Nathan hemming and hawing, and she got amused.

What on earth made Nathan, a well-known director, look guilty like this?

So Natalia leaned back in her chair, stared at him with composure and asked with a smile, "Well? What is it? Tell me about it."

Nathan rubbed his hands together, hesitated for a moment and explained, "So, lately, I've been planning a project together with Maddox, and we've worked out a script outline and a theme. Do you wanna take a look?"

She nodded.

Nathan pulled out a few pieces of paper from a pile of documents rapidly and handed them over to her.

Natalia scanned through them.

Compared to a TV series script, a movie script was much more concise.

Only a character introduction and a brief plot introduction were included.

The rest of the contents had to be presented by the director.

Natalia said nothing after she finished reading the outline.

Honestly, for a homemade sci-fi movie, it was a decent script. After all, nobody else had achieved anything in this area.

However, if they really made the movie based on the script, Star Entertainment had to invest a fortune to make the movie faithful to the spirit of the original script.

Archie was wealthy, and Annie International had enough budget, but that didn't mean they could squander their money.

ROI was a major concern when it came to business. Natalie was indeed the boss of Annie International, but she couldn't just ignore other people's opinions and invested a significant amount of money into Nathan's project just because she appreciated and trusted him.

She put down the papers, stared at Nathan and asked, "You haven't made any sci-fi movies before, have you?"

Nathan shook his head.

"Then why do you want to make a sci-fi movie now?"

Nathan looked regretful as Natalia asked this question.

"I'll just be honest with you. Do you know Sepp Lonnegan, the director who passed away last year?"

Sepp Lonnegan was a minor celebrity in the directing circle. He focused on animated and art movies.

Natalia had watched one of his works before and was impressed with his sensitivity.

His work wasn't perfect but one had to admit that he had the potential to be a famous director.

Natalie had wanted to sign him back then.

However, before she could take the action, she learned that Sepp suddenly died of exhaustion at home.

Few outsiders knew about Sepp's death because he wasn't well-known enough, and his death didn't make any difference in the industry.

But his death created much of a stir in the circle.

Being a director was a hard job.

Admittedly, it was a rewarding occupation, but one could hardly imagine what a new talent would go through before he became famous.

Natalia felt a twinge of regret when she learned of his death. He could have been so successful, but ended up dying at an early age out of exhaustion at work.



She had been in depression during those days, but she recovered after some time.

Now Nathan mentioned him again, and Natalia realized it had been a whole year since he had passed away.

She felt as if the world was like a fleeting show.

Natalia shook her head and brought her attention back, asking, "I remember him. Why?"

Nathan's brow furrowed, looking upset.

"Actually, we were friends. Although he was over ten years younger than me, it had been years since we knew each other. He was a director full of creative ideas, but unluckily, he was born at the wrong time. Besides, he was kind of lofty, so he hadn't realized his aspirations."

"The script outline you're reading now was actually his idea. Of course, I know what you're worried about, because I was worried about the same thing back then when he said he wanted to make a sci-fi movie."

"As an experienced director, I can't just make whatever I want to make or express whatever I want to express without caring about the practical condition or the audience's feelings, so I tried to talk him out

of this."

Chapter 576 We Should Do It

"It wasn't until he said those words that I was impressed and realized he was indeed a great director in

Ambario. That's why I admire him."

Then Nathan repeated to Natalia the words that Sepp had said to him.

When Natalia heard it, she was also impressed.

It was hard to imagine that such words were said by such a young director.

Nathan said, "Over the years, our science fiction movies have been no match for those of other

countries, because we don't have state-of-the-art technologies or advanced ideas. He wants to be the

first director to break the barriers and show the kind of science fiction movies that we made to the

people from the other side of the planet. He wanted them to know that we too aspire to the universe

and can make good movies in this field."

The whole office fell silent after hearing what he said.

Natalia leaned back in her chair and was silent for a long time.

Nathan didn't rush her. He just put all the budget lists and a list of everything they needed in front of

her.

After a while, Natalia said, "You should go. I have to sleep on it."

After all, she had to invest a hundred million dollars and couldn't be sloppy.

Nathan knew it would be hard to convince Natalia right away, so he didn't push her. He stood up, nodded, and turned to leave.

After Nathan left, Natalia went through the materials carefully.

It was two hours later when she finished reading.

Natalia stretched her body and walked around her office.

She had to say that from what she just read alone she could tell that Nathan was serious about this project.

She didn't know if he was doing it for his friend's dying wish or if he really wanted to contribute to his country's movie industry.

Anyway, she now thought it was a viable project.

Natalia thought about it and called Archie.

Archie was in a meeting at the headquarters of McCarthy Properties. When he received her call, he

raised his hand to stop his coworkers who were reporting data, stepped aside, and picked up his phone

in a soft voice, "Hey, Lia."

Natalia rubbed her forehead in her chair and said with a smile, "Am I interrupting your work?"

Archie said in front of the executives who were waiting for him to hang up and continue the meeting,

"No. I finished my work and was about to call you."

The executives were speechless.

Natalia smiled, "That's good. I'm a little hesitant about something and wanna know your opinions."

"Well, go ahead."

Natalia then told Archie about the project.

Archie didn't comment but asked her, "What do you think?"

Natalia hesitated and told him what was on her mind.

"It's risky, but if it does succeed, not only will we make a lot of profit, but it could very well be a

milestone in the history of science fiction movies."

Archie curled his lips slightly.

Then he said without hesitation, "Then let's do it."

"What?"

Natalia didn't expect him to agree so quickly and was surprised for a moment.

"Wait, did you get my point?"

Archie gave an extremely doting and confident smile.

"Yes, but since you said it might be great, we should do it."

"But what if it failed? It's a lot of money, and I don't think people have confidence in this subject anymore, so very few people will invest in it. Annie International needs to cover everything."

Archie kept smiling as if he didn't even take it to heart.

"We have to do it just because it's too risky."

Natalia was a little confused and didn't understand what he meant.

Archie sighed.

"Didn't you say it would be a milestone in the history of science fiction movies? Who has the courage and strength to do it except Annie International? If we are afraid of the risk, even if it has only a ten percent chance of success, it can never work."

Natalia was shocked.

Archie continued, "Even if we lose, we tried and won't regret it. What do you think?"

There was silence on the other side of the phone.

After a while, he heard Natalia's voice.

She chuckled and said with mixed feelings.

"Archie, I really..." Natalia smiled and paused for a moment before saying, "I love you."

Archie squinted happily at her words.

In the meeting room, the executives who were waiting in their seats for their boss to hang up the phone

and continue the meeting didn't hear what Natalia said on the phone.

They just saw a weird and gentle smile on Archie's cold poker face.

...

They shuddered in unison.

Archie glanced back at them and said on the phone, "I gotta go."

Natalia nodded, "Well, then I'll do it?"

"It's up to you."

After hanging up the phone, Archie returned to the conference table and his gaze turned cold. He looked at everyone and sat down.

The executive who was reporting just now immediately approached and continued to report.

They sat upright as if nothing had just happened, but they were all curious.

At the same time.

Natalia understood what Archie meant.

Yes, this project required a lot of money and was very risky. Annie International was the only one in the industry that had the money and strength to do it right now.

If they succeeded, it would be a great step forward.

If they failed, they wouldn't regret it. Someone had to do it sooner or later.

If no one took the first step, no one else would dare to make a science fiction movie and the subject would always be looked down upon in the country.

With that in mind, Natalia called Nathan and told him she wanted to talk to him and the screenwriter tonight.

Nathan was overjoyed to hear it.

He had thought he would wait for a long time and might not get good news.

Unexpectedly, he received a call from Natalia so soon.

He asked in surprise on the other end of the line, "Really? We could really do this?"

Natalia smiled, "I'm not sure, but I'm interested, and I need to learn more about it."

Chapter 577 Very Young

Nathan, of course, would not refuse and nodded, "Yes, of course."

So that evening the three of them met and discussed the project in detail.

Overall, it went well.

Nathan didn't make the decision on a whim.

He knew the risks Natalia would take if she invested in the project, and he knew that even though he

was related to Archie, he wouldn't be able to get any benefits for his own business.

So he was doing it with deep sincerity.

The three of them talked for more than two hours before they made their decision.

With more information, Natalia found that although it was risky, it was an opportunity.

As Archie had said, if Annie International was afraid to try projects with heavy investment and high



risks, other investors would be even more afraid to do it.

As a leader in the industry, Annie International enjoyed big fame and should take on the responsibility that came with it.

Finally, Natalia agreed to Nathan's project.

Because she was going abroad on a business trip next week, she only gave him part of the money and she would invite tenders when she returned.

It was decided for the time being.

After the three of them parted, Natalia went straight home.

Anne had been staying at Pinewood Manor these days.

Oliver was already one year old. He couldn't even walk steadily, but he was a little daredevil.

For example, he liked to mess up his father's study and climb on Natalia's dresser to scribble.

He muttered every time he did something bad.

Once Oliver muttered while scribbling on the floor.

Natalia and Archie were both off that day and enjoying a long overdue vacation at home.

Suddenly, they heard a small, indistinct voice.

"Da... Daddy."

Everyone froze. Archie looked at him in shock.

Oliver was still playing with his crayons on the floor and had no idea what an amazing thing he had done.

Archie suddenly leaped from the sofa, ran over, and held him up, "What did you just say?"

Oliver was less than ten months old. He looked at Archie, froze for a moment, and suddenly giggled.

Then he drooled and mumbled, "Da... Daddy!"

Archie was ecstatic!

It wasn't his first time being a father, but it was the first time he had ever heard his little baby call him

Daddy with his own ears.

He was overjoyed.

That evening, Archie was so happy that he asked the maids to make a nice dinner to celebrate.

When Natalia knew about this, she was a bit jealous.

She ran over to Oliver and gave him a hug, "Oliver, since you call him Daddy, will you call me

Mommy?"

However, Oliver ignored her.

He stared at her breast and held out his chubby little hands.

"Milk..."

Natalia was speechless.

Her face darkened.

Oliver had been weaned, but it hadn't been long, so as soon as she picked him up, he subconsciously thought he had milk to drink.

Natalia snorted in anger and gave him to the nanny.

The more she thought about it, the more upset she became.

Why?

Why did her baby say "daddy" first instead of "mommy"?

It was unfair!

Archie watched her sit there angrily and didn't say anything. He just smiled in a good mood all day.

Finally, Anne comforted Natalia and she felt better.

After Oliver was born, Anne became more mature.

Perhaps because she was growing up, she was no longer as naughty as before but considerate.

In fact, Natalia was closer to Anne than her own son, Oliver.

Perhaps because she always wanted a daughter and Anne was a girl and Archie's biological daughter.

She was obedient and sweet and Natalia liked her very much.

Anne had always treated Natalia like her own mother. Ever since she moved into Pinewood Manor, she

had been pestering Natalia every night to tell her a story and let her go only after she fell asleep.

Natalia was satisfied that Anne depended on her.

Sometimes, she looked at the sleeping little girl and couldn't help but think.

She wanted to know what kind of person Anna's real mother was.

She had heard that Anne was a test tube baby made by Amy and that, unlike other test-tube babies,

she was the first baby in the world to be born through an artificial womb.

In other words, the woman had contributed nothing but an egg.

Archie was a neat freak and it was impossible for him to put a mature embryo into another woman's

womb.

As a result, Anne, who grew up in an artificial womb, was weaker than other children when she was little.

She didn't get stronger until she was six years old.

With that in mind, Natalia suddenly had a strange feeling.

She suddenly realized she'd never really thought about one question.

Why did Archie use the woman's egg to create a congenitally weak baby at that time?

Judging by Anne's age, Archie was 22 or 23 years old back then. He was very young.

He shouldn't be in a hurry to get married or have a child.

So why would he create a test tube baby when he couldn't have a child with that woman?

Out of love? Or because of something else...

It kept haunting Natalia.

But she didn't dare to ask Archie.

She didn't think it was necessary.

After all, they are now living happily and in a way that she had only ever dreamed of. Whatever the truth was, it was in the past. Why should she uncover the scar?

Chapter 578 A Mature Woman

What's more, everyone had their past and secrets.

It was enough as long as she was sure Archie only loved her now, wasn't it?

Natalia smiled contentedly.

At the same time.

In the study.

The light was dim. Archie leaned on the leather chair behind the desk with an indifferent look in his eyes.

There was a video call on the computer screen in front of him. The man was saying something in a foreign language, but Archie just listened without responding.

The man droned on for more than ten minutes. Seeing that Archie remained silent, he asked helplessly,

"Archie, what will it take for you to ask those people to leave? It's really inconvenient for us with your people there. We don't want to expose your identity, but we can't guarantee it if your people stay there!"

Archie slightly narrowed his eyes, and his long fingers gently tapped the armrest.

The man seemed to have lost his patience and said in anger, "Archie, it is said that the men in Ambario are the most righteous. You are now openly annexing our territory. Is this a demonstration of your integrity? Haven't we been best friends all these years? Eight years ago, I helped you..."

"Kris," Archie suddenly said.

The man froze and shut up.

He looked away and looked a little guilty.

"Archie, you have to understand me. It's hard to do business here right now. Several big companies nearby want to annex our territory. It's our last chip right now. If you take it away, I really won't have any

way back. I'll have to fall out with you for the sake of my hundreds of minions. Archie, we've been through life and death before. I really don't want to fall out with you!"

The man was almost pleading with Archie.

Archie still sat there calmly as if it was just a trivial matter.

After a while, he suddenly said, "I can give you the land."

He didn't say much tonight, but his words were shocking.

The man became excited and laughed.

"Really? You really agree to give us the land?"

Archie narrowed his eyes slightly and gave a sly smile.

"Yes, but you have to do something for me first."

Hearing that, the man's smile froze on his lips.

He said helplessly, "Archie, we're friends. Why do we have to do this?"

Archie immediately narrowed his eyes and said coldly, "Fine. If you don't want to..."

"Wait!" The man immediately interrupted him, fearing that he would go back on his word.

He was sure that since Archie was willing to give him the land, it might be something really difficult for him to do in exchange.

But no matter what Archie's demand was, he had no choice but to agree.

With that in mind, he asked, "What do you want?"

"There is a new heart with an HR negative blood type on the black market."

The man trembled!



"This..."

He frowned in a dilemma.

Archie just looked at the man. He knew the man would say yes.

Sure enough, in less than a minute, the man sighed.

"To be honest, you know that this blood type is rare. There are many people in the world who want organ transplants and the heart of this blood type will be sold at a high price."

"I do have it, but it has been reserved by a merchant. I guess you could have it. I will explain to that merchant later."

Archie knew the man must have his own way.

Therefore, he just smiled and said, "Okay, when will it be delivered to me?"

"The sooner the better. If it's slow or something happens, I'm not sure you'll give me the land. It will be delivered to Ambario in three days at the latest."

Archie finally gave a smile and said sincerely to the man, "Nice doing business with you."

The man gave a wry smile. No one knew if he was smiling at himself or at Archie.

He just said, "Me too."

After hanging up, Archie glanced at his watch. It was 10 at night.

He got up and went downstairs.

He had just reached the stairway when he saw Natalia, who was coming out of Anne's bedroom.

He froze, walked over, and asked, "Is Anne asleep?"

"Yeah."

Natalia nodded and walked over to him. She frowned when she saw that he was still wearing the clothes he wore during the day.

"I thought you took a shower. Why haven't you done it yet?"

Archie smiled, "There's no rush. It's still early."

Natalia sighed helplessly.

She straightened his collar and said, "Have you forgotten? You have to fly to Tacitus for business at six tomorrow morning. How can you get up in time if you don't shower and go to bed early?"

Archie held his breath as she got close and smelled good.

They had been together for several years and known each other too well.

Not to mention that Natalia had already given birth to a child. They were parents and shouldn't be as

close and spend as much time together as they did when they first got together.

But they were different.

Time had not kept them apart but had brought them closer.

Just like the older a good wine was, the more aromatic it became.

Natalia was the mother of two children, but she was even more attractive. She was not as shy as a

teenager but as attractive as a mature woman.

Chapter 579 A Clue

Every time she came close to Archie, he had a feeling of being seduced by her.

With that in mind, he wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her into his arms.

"Lia, don't underestimate your husband's stamina."

He bowed his head slightly and said in a hoarse voice.

His hot breath brushed past her fair cheek with a tinge of sexual tension in the air.

He didn't say anything special, but Natalia blushed.

The blush on her pink cheek was as luscious and inviting as an evening sun in white clouds.

Archie lowered his head with a smile and kissed her gently on the lips.

Natalia stiffened and felt half of her body tingling.

Before he was about to take the next step, she stopped him right there.

"Don't... We're not alone!"

Even if they didn't care about the servants, their children were there.

They were sleeping, but who knew when they would suddenly wake up?

Archie obviously understood it. He complained inwardly, bent over, and picked Natalia up in his arms.

Natalia was taken aback by his sudden movement. She subconsciously clenched his collar and

screamed, "Archie, what are you doing?"

Archie smiled, "Proving my stamina to you."

Natalia was speechless.

It was almost 10 the next morning when she woke up.

Natalia sat up, picked up her phone, and was startled.

Why was it so late?

She remembered that it was the weekend and she had promised Anne that she would go to the

children's painting exhibition with her this morning.

It was now 10. She didn't know if they could get there in time.

If they couldn't, she would break her promise to Anne, wouldn't she?

It was all Archie's fault!

Natalia blamed Archie, but she turned her head and found that he wasn't in the room.

She remembered that he had to take a flight this morning. Maybe he had left long ago.

She sat down, rubbed her sore lower back, and went to the bathroom to wash up.

Fifteen minutes later, she came out.

Natalia tried to be as quick as possible.

She didn't want to disappoint Anne, nor did she want to be a grown-up who didn't keep her word.

So she rushed downstairs as soon as she changed her clothes.

As soon as she came downstairs, she saw Anne watching cartoons on the sofa and Oliver playing with

the nanny in the toy area.

She walked over, hugged Anne, and said, "Anne, I'm sorry. mommy got up late."

Anne looked up at her and blinked. Her eyelashes were as thick and long as two little curved fans.

She said, "Mommy, what are you talking about? You're not late."

Natalia froze.

Anne handed her the ticket for the painting exhibition in her hand.

"Mommy, the time of the exhibition has been changed. It's supposed to close at noon, but it will be open until six this afternoon, so we can go there after lunch."

Natalia was a little surprised. She took the ticket and read it carefully. It said, "8:00 am to 6:00 pm."

Wait a minute.

She turned around, picked up her bag, and took out the ticket she had prepared.

It said, "8:00 am to 12:00 am."

What happened?

She picked up the ticket Anne gave her and found that the two tickets were identical except for the time.

She frowned and asked, "Anne, who gave you the ticket?"

Anne replied seriously, "Daddy gave it to me before he left. He told me not to go upstairs and disturb

you. He said you were too tired last night and needed to sleep."

Natalia was speechless.

She finally figured it out.

Archie was to blame!

He made her stay up all night in bed. He was afraid that she would blame him today, so he called

someone and had the closing time postponed so that she wouldn't delay her plan.

He knew that she had always taken her promise to Anne seriously and that she would be angry with

him if he delayed her appointment with Anne.

So he changed the time in advance. As long as they made it to the painting exhibition, she would have

no reason to be angry at him.

He was so... cunning!

Natalia was angry, but looking at Anne's expectant look, she couldn't tell the truth.

In the end, she had no choice but to say, "Since we can go there in the afternoon, let's have lunch at

home today."

Anne nodded.

Natalia went back upstairs.

Fortunately, Archie did have the closing time changed so that they could make it on time.

Natalia was about to fall asleep when she received a call.

When the phone rang, she shuddered and woke up immediately.

She took out her phone and saw that the number was from Othua.

She became serious and sobered up in a second.

She picked it up, put the phone to her ear, and asked in a low voice, "Any news?"

A female voice came from the other side of the phone.

"Yes, but I can't say more about it over the phone now. I've sent some materials to the email address that you gave me last time. Check your mailbox and you'll know."

Natalia nodded, "OK."

After hanging up the phone, she immediately opened her email and saw an anonymous email.

In order to keep it confidential, the email was intricately encrypted.

Natalia had learned it before so it was not difficult for her to decipher it.



## Chapter 580 Encounter at the Painting Exhibition

Soon she deciphered the code.

She downloaded the email and quickly read it.

It said in detail about the Zircon Association and the members of the Zircon Association that were

around when Mr. K died.

There were many suspicious people with a long list of possibilities.

But whoever sent this email was obviously an expert on investigations like this. He didn't list out the

less suspicious ones and only focused on a few that were closely related to Mr. K's death.

Natalia only focused on one person.

Thin and short, he was at most 5.7 feet. He was wearing a black jacket with short hair, and was a little

pale.

His face was angular. He was average-looking and not particularly handsome or ugly. She couldn't pick

him out of a crowd.

The only difference was perhaps his eyes.

They were too special. He was thin, but his eyes were gleaming, sharp, and frightening like the eyes of

an eagle flying in the sky.

Natalia suddenly had an intuition.

She seemed to have seen those eyes somewhere.

She couldn't remember, but when she looked straight at the screen and locked eyes with those eyes,

she felt familiar,

as if she had looked directly into those eyes and crossed paths with this man a long time ago.

When was it?

She frowned and had an inexplicable headache.

She thought for a long time but nothing came to mind.

Finally, Natalia shook her head weakly and took a deep breath to shake off the vague pain.

She moved her mouse and continued reading.

It clearly stated that this man had a great deal to do with Mr. K's death.

Because an old man passing by saw this man come out of the place where Mr. K lived.

A few minutes after he came out, someone went upstairs and found Mr. K's dead body.

In short, if there was no other evidence or accidents, this man was most likely the killer.

Natalia frowned and recorded and analyzed these clues carefully.

She looked at her watch and figured Archie hadn't arrived yet, so she forwarded the email to him so he could see it when he got off the plane.

After that, she shut down her computer and sighed in relief in her chair.

Then she got up, moved her slightly stiff body, and went downstairs.

Natalia and Anne had lunch at home.

After lunch, they set off in their chauffeur's car.

The children's painting exhibition was held at the Convention Center in the city center.

There were several youth centers there. Anne's classmates often went there, so she knew well about the place.

Natalia swiped the tickets and entered the venue.

She thought it was just a simple painting exhibition, but coincidentally, she ran into two acquaintances there.

Max and Laura.

They came toward her.

Laura looked embarrassed but Max was happy. From time to time, he pointed to some paintings

hanging on the wall and explained something to her.

Natalia walked over with a smile and said hello to them.

"What a coincidence, you guys!"

They were startled when they saw her and Anne. Laura subconsciously covered her mask and hat.

Max's eyes lit up when he saw Natalia.

"Natalia, what a coincidence. You bring Anne to the exhibition, too?"

Natalia nodded and turned to look at Laura, who looked nervous.

She couldn't help but laugh.

"You don't have to cover your face. I've recognized you long before you did that."

After all, she knew Laura well because Laura had been working for her for years.

Laura breathed a sigh of relief.

Natalia looked at them and suddenly smiled, "Why are you two together? What's going on?"

Before Max could say anything, Laura waved her hands.

"Oh No no no... it's not what you think. We just happened to run into each other..."

Before she could finish, she was interrupted by Max.

He took Laura's hand directly and said, "Yes, I brought her here to see the exhibition today."

Natalia raised her eyebrows.

Laura was instantly anxious.

She wanted to explain, but she didn't know what to say.

In the end, she could only give an awkward smile, "Don't listen to him. No man would bring a lady to a painting exhibition for children."

She placed emphasis on the word "children".

Max had been strange since he took her to the children's amusement park.

He often took her to visit different places.

But what those places had in common was that they were very childish and only children would like them.

Laura had protested helplessly, but Max didn't listen and continued to do so.

Finally, she had no choice but to shut up about it.

Anyway, he had the final say and could do whatever he wanted.

Natalia guessed their relationship and said, "Go ahead. I'll leave you alone and I'll show Anne around."

Laura and Max then waved goodbye to her.

Before leaving, Max couldn't resist squatting down and stroking Anne's head. He smiled, "Anne, you're getting prettier and prettier. I'll take you out for fun when you're older."

Anne blinked and suddenly said, "You're lying."

Max froze and smiled.

"I'm not! Why would you say that?"

Anne folded her arms and snorted,

"You won't even remember me after this day. You have a pretty girlfriend. You will have a baby with her and take your new baby out for fun!"