

Kissed AOM 2051

Chapter 2051

Stella had never left a good impression on Beatrice, and she disapproved of their relationship. At this moment, it became clear that the discord between Melody and Lucas was due to Stella's meddling. Melody was jealous.

"Let's do this, Edmund," said Beatrice after a moment of silence, coming up with a solution. "Go find Stella and tell her that I, as a senior, want to treat her to a meal. See when she's available to grace me with her presence."

The implication was clear-Beatrice intended to personally handle the matter with Stella. Edmund silently mourned Stella in his heart for a few seconds. "Yes, Madam, I'll go right away."

Leaving the Riveras' residence, Edmund drove to Stella's filming location and located her agent. Just as Stella finished her scene, upon hearing that Edmund had come, she felt particularly delighted. 'Lucas must be worried about my health, and he sent Edmund to check on me.'

"I need to quickly touch up my makeup." Stella changed her clothes at the fastest speed possible and went to find Edmund with a beaming smile. "Where's Lucas? Didn't he come?"

"Mister Lucas didn't come, Miss Stella. Today, it's Madam Beatrice who specifically asked me to find you," Edmund replied.

As soon as Stella heard Beatrice's name, the smile on her face instantly vanished, replaced by surprise and wariness. "Madam Beatrice? Why would she want you to find me?"

"The Madam wishes to have a meal with you. She just doesn't know when you'll be available, so she sent me to inquire," Edmund conveyed Beatrice's intention accurately. Upon hearing that Beatrice wanted to have a meal with her, Stella became even more astonished. From a long time ago, Stella had known that Beatrice did not like her.

Over the years, she always felt that if it were not for the presence of Beatrice, she would be the next in line as the Rivera family's missus. Certainly, it would not be that mysterious Melody who seemingly popped up from nowhere.

"Miss Stella, why so silent? Don't you want to join the Madam for dinner?" Edmund observed Stella's prolonged silence before speaking again, "The Madam rarely dines with outsiders. Once she invites someone, declining will upset her."

With these words, Edmund made it clear to Stella that Beatrice specifically requested her presence at the meal. Whether she liked it or not, she had to attend.

In reality, Stella would not have genuinely refused. Even if she did not like Beatrice, she was still Lucas's grandmother. Stella could not afford to offend the elders of Lucas.

"Stop joking, Edmund. It's an honor to have a meal with Madam Beatrice! I'm delighted. I'm just curious about why she decided to invite me to dinner." Stella smiled, probing for information. Edmund knew the reason Beatrice invited her to dinner, but he certainly would not reveal it directly. "Miss Stella, I'm not sure about that. Why don't you ask the Madam herself during dinner?" Aware that Edmund closely followed Lucas, Stella understood that his lips were sealed on certain matters. Some things, no matter who asked, would remain undisclosed.

"Alright. Regardless, Madam Beatrice is an elder. I can't let her invite me to dinner. How about this? I have time tomorrow evening, and I'll invite Madam Beatrice for dinner," Stella suggested. Edmund nodded. "Alright, I'll take note of that. However, I can't make decisions for the Madam. I can only convey your invitation. Once she decides, I'll call you again."

Leaving the film set, Edmund returned to the Rivera residence and conveyed Stella's words to Beatrice.

Chapter 2052

Beatrice snorted after hearing it. "It's not like I'm missing a meal because of her. Go tell her to come to the house. I'll personally cook for her," remarked Beatrice. "Yes, Madam!" Edmund respectfully acknowledged Beatrice's instructions, then conveyed the message to Stella.

Stella felt that things were not as simple as they seemed, but she could only maintain a polite smile as much as possible.

When Beatrice sought her out, it was definitely not just for a meal. Surely she had something in mind to talk about, was it not?

"Alright, I understand. I'll finish work tomorrow night and go visit Beatrice," Stella replied.

The next day...

Stella instructed her manager to reschedule all the appointments. After finishing work on the set, she took great care in dressing up, arriving early at the Riveras' residence.

Although Beatrice politely offered to cook for her, Stella could not readily accept. Going at mealtime might appear disrespectful to the elder, but arriving a bit early allowed her to present an image of being considerate and sensible.

At the entrance of the Rivera residence, Stella touched up her makeup in the car and adjusted her clothes before getting out and ringing the doorbell.

The servant who opened the door was not surprised to see Stella outside. Politely, the servant invited her in. "Miss Stella, please come in. Our Madam has been waiting for you for a while," the servant said. Stella flashed a radiant smile and said, "Great, then I'll trouble you to lead the way."

As she walked into the residence's courtyard, Stella took out a bottle of branded hand cream from her bag and handed it to the servant. "Taking care of Grandma Beatrice and Lucas is surely hard work. This hand cream is from a foreign brand, a gift I received. I found it to be excellent, so you can give it a try."

Gentle persuasion was a common tactic.

Stella used small favors to win over the servants of the Riveras. This way, she could have her own eyes and ears at home if she wanted to know about Lucas' situation.

However, the servant leading the way just glanced at the hand cream she handed over, then waved it off, saying, "No need, Miss Stella. I'm a rough person and never use such things. You can keep it for yourself."

Stella did not expect her attempt to please to be rejected. She managed her facial expression, barely keeping control.

Forget it, then.

She put the hand cream back into her bag, pretending that the previous conversation never happened, and followed the servant into the house. At that moment, Beatrice happened to come down from upstairs, her smiling face carrying a hint of aloofness.

"You're here so early, Miss Stella. Isn't work keeping you busy today?" Beatrice remarked.

"Madam Beatrice, it's been a while. Your complexion is still so good!" Stella immediately put on a sweet smile upon seeing Beatrice. "Considering your age and having to cook for me personally, I felt a bit embarrassed. I postponed some work and came early to lend a hand and help you out."

Beatrice smiled with a hint of sarcasm. "It's rare to see Miss Stella with such generosity, taking an old lady's invitation seriously. However, you came here so early! As a host, I haven't prepared anything. It caught me off-guard, to be honest."

"Oh? Well..." Stella was taken aback, not expecting that her attempt to show up early would be criticized. Seeing her speechless, Beatrice did not press further. She sat on the sofa and looked at Stella indifferently.

Stella felt extremely awkward. She felt it difficult to even conjure up her best acting smile.

When she seemed embarrassed enough, Beatrice chuckled. "Stella, look at how nervous you are. I was just teasing you. You coming early is indeed welcome!"

Chapter 2053

Beatrice's words eased Stella's tension.

She quickly smiled and said, "Um... I'm truly honored that you invited me for dinner, Madam Beatrice. However, as a junior, it's really embarrassing to have you, an elder, cook for me. How about I help as well?"

Stella placed her bag aside, intending to follow Beatrice to the kitchen to prepare dinner together. Beatrice, however, extended her hand and calmly gestured to stop her. "No need. You're a guest. How can I let you do the work? Moreover, there's a rule in our Riveras-not everyone can enter the kitchen."

At this point, Beatrice paused for a moment, smiling solemnly. "In the Riveras, only the mistress of the house and the servants are allowed in the kitchen."

Stella's face stiffened. She finally understood Beatrice's intention in inviting her.

Beatrice was using this situation to remind her of her status, to make her realize who she truly was.

"Alright, serve Miss Stella some tea! I should go prepare dinner for our guest now."

Beatrice got up and headed toward the kitchen.

A maid approached Stella. "Miss Stella, please have a seat and try our family's tea!"

Stella's expression was extremely unpleasant. Whether it was Beatrice or the family's maid, every word and sentence served as a reminder that she, Stella, was just a guest in the Riveras. She gritted her teeth in silence and sat in the living room with the maid.

No matter. She had a long way to go. She would push Melody out of the picture, marry Lucas, and become the true mistress of the Riveras. Everyone here would know the real Madam of the Riveras by then!

The day's shoot for Melody ended early, and she rushed back home upon receiving a call from Beatrice asking her to come home for dinner. As she entered the house, she spotted a pair of women's high-heeled shoes at the doorway.

'Such high heels...' Melody thought. 'They aren't worn by anyone in the Rivera household. Has a guest arrived?' Melody curiously stepped into the living room only to find Stella sitting on the sofa. How did she end up here?

"Miss Melody, you're back!" Stella lifted her head, spotted Melody, and stood up with a smile.

"Miss Stella, what brings you here?" Melody forced a smile, offering a greeting that revealed her displeasure at seeing Stella.

Stella approached, intimately linking arms with Melody. "I came for dinner. Grandma had Edmund invite me to the set yesterday, saying she wanted to cook me a meal today! Melody, tired from a day of shooting? Sit down and rest! I'll have the servant make you some tea right away!"

Grandma? Grandma Beatrice invited Stella to the house? Moreover, Stella's attitude seemed as if she were the mistress here!

Melody was not clear about the relationship between Beatrice and Stella, but having been in the Rivera household for a while, she had not experienced Beatrice personally preparing dinner for her.

It was a surprise that Grandma Beatrice went into the kitchen herself to cook for Stella. It seemed that Grandma Beatrice quite liked Stella.

Chapter 2054

"Oh, did Grandma Beatrice say so? Miss Stella, please feel free to indulge. Make sure to eat more later." Melody pursed her lips, maintaining a calm expression.

Stella smiled, arching her eyebrows. "Absolutely! I must eat more of Grandma Beatrice's dishes! She still treats me just as she did before. When I was little, I used to come to the Rivera household often to play with Lucas. At that time, Grandma Beatrice would often buy us candies to enjoy!"

Indeed.

Stella and Lucas had grown up together, so Beatrice must have known her for a long time. Moreover, given how attractive she looked, she must have been pretty in her

childhood. Facing such a delicate little doll, Grandma Beatrice must have watched her fondly.

Oddly enough, Grandma Beatrice did not play matchmaker for Lucas and Stella.

If they had been together, she would not be here.

Melody could not figure it out and decided not to dwell on it any longer.

"Miss Melody, you and Lucas have been married for quite some time. You must've tasted Grandma Beatrice's home-cooked meals by now!" Stella stared closely at her expression, sensing a momentary awkwardness on her face.

Stella pretended to be surprised, covering her mouth. "Oh, my! Melody, really? After all this time, Grandma Beatrice hasn't cooked for you yet?"

Melody furrowed her brow. She could sense that Stella was subtly trying to showcase the strong bond between herself and Grandma Beatrice, both openly and behind the scenes.

No matter. They could enjoy being friends with each other. It was none of her concern.

Melody curled her lips, revealing a faint indifferent smile. "Since you and Grandma Beatrice get along so well, please have a nice chat with Grandma Beatrice later. I'm a bit tired now, so I'll go back to my room to rest. Excuse me."

With those words, Melody headed upstairs. She was genuinely tired, and her mood was a bit irritable.

Stella watched Melody's retreating figure, a hint of jealousy flashing in her eyes. How could that Melody boldly go up to Lucas' room? Who did she think she was?

Stella had no right to compare herself to the relationship that Lucas had with Beatrice. While she did grow up with Lucas, their family background was nowhere near the level of the Riveras. Their ancestors were merely friends of friends, a distant connection.

Moreover, since she was a child, Beatrice never liked her. She often stopped her from playing with Lucas.

Later, when she entered the entertainment industry and needed connections, she sought help from Lucas. Although Beatrice turned a blind eye to it, Stella knew that Beatrice had spread rumors behind her back, stating that the Riveras would never allow a woman from the entertainment industry to enter their gates. This rule was clearly aimed at her.

Melody had entered the entertainment industry and was filming, yet that old woman had not kicked Melody out.

Stella sat on the sofa, contemplating her next move. She could not afford to waste this rare opportunity at the Riveras' residence.

"Lucas, you're back!"

Melody had not even reached her room when she heard a joyful voice coming from downstairs.

Chapter 2055

Melody paused and turned her head.

Downstairs, Stella saw Lucas returning and quickly walked toward him. "You're finally back. I've been waiting for you here for a long time!"

Lucas' gaze hardened when he spotted Stella, clearly not expecting her presence. "What are you doing here?"

Lucas had no idea that Stella was invited to have dinner at their house.

"Grandma Beatrice invited me for dinner. I thought she'd tell you!"

Stella's gaze caught Melody still standing at the staircase, and she quickly reached out to help Lucas take off his coat. "Come on! Take off your coat, it's warm inside. I'll hang it

up for you." She looked like a proper lady of the Riveras, waiting for her husband to come home, helping him with his coat.

"No need." Lucas sidestepped, skillfully avoiding her hand.

Melody, standing on the stairs, happened to witness this scene. She could not quite describe the feeling in her heart, so she quietly went back to her room.

They could get cozy however they wished. She was not afraid of Beatrice finding out about their marriage. After all, it was not her responsibility if it got exposed!

With the maid's assistance, Lucas changed his shoes and turned to Stella. "How long have you been here?"

"I've been here for quite a while!" Stella pursed her lips shyly. "Lucas, Grandma Beatrice is so good to me. She even cooked dinner for me. I wanted to help, but she wouldn't let me." "Since Grandma invited you, you don't have to be so cordial. Sit here for a while. I'll go upstairs and change clothes," Lucas absentmindedly spoke before heading upstairs.

He had noticed Melody going upstairs.

Although Stella did not get to take off his clothes, their actions were indeed a tad ambiguous. That woman might have misunderstood them.

Lucas ascended the stairs, pushing the door open and stepping inside.

As soon as he entered the room, he caught sight of Melody emerging from the bathroom, draped only in a bath towel. Her fragrant shoulders and beautiful back radiated a luminous whiteness. Melody had not expected him to come upstairs and instinctively pulled the towel a bit higher, hands protecting her chest. "You... Why did you come in here?"

Lucas snapped back to reality, sneering, "This is my room. Is it strange for me to come in?"

Melody tried to retort but felt that his statement was not entirely unreasonable.

Indeed, this was Lucas' room, and he had every right to enter. Just because she had seen Stella and Lucas being so intimate downstairs, she assumed they would chat for a while, so she rushed upstairs without changing after her shower.

Who would have thought that Lucas would come up so quickly and make things awkward?

Melody pursed her lips, unwilling to face Lucas in such attire. Hastily grabbing some change of clothes from the bed, she turned and headed back into the bathroom to get dressed.

Once she changed, Melody emerged with a towel still on her head. "Miss Stella is still downstairs. Why did you come up so fast? Don't you need to spend some time with her?" "Oh? Are you so eager for me to be with Stella?" Lucas squinted, observing her as she dried her hair.

Seated at the vanity desk, Melody absentmindedly combed her hair, avoiding eye contact with his icy expression. Seeing them together made her quite uncomfortable. It felt like she was being cheated on.

"No, I just thought you two were getting along well just now, and I assumed you must have a lot to talk about. I figured you'd chat for a while longer," Melody said as she chuckled awkwardly. "I thought it would be considerate to go back to my room, not wanting to disturb you and not wanting to be a third wheel."

Her words cast a shadow over Lucas' face.

Chapter 2056

'Why does she keep pushing me to another woman? Does she have no heart at all?' thought Lucas. Lucas walked over to Melody with a darkened expression. It was obvious he was in a bad mood.

"It's true that I've known Stella for many years, and I've explained everything to you. There's nothing more I can say if you still don't believe me there's nothing more. Melody, don't forget you're my wife right now. Do what you're supposed to do, and don't reveal anything in front of Grandma and Grandpa. Play your role well!"

Melody's hand, which was combing her hair, froze for a moment. She let out a bitter laugh and said, "Don't worry. When have I ever let you down in playing the role of your wife? It's you who should not keep an eye on Miss Stella lest she expose our secret to Grandma."

"Always sharp-tongued as usual. I guess that's your only skill!" Suddenly, Lucas leaned in and held Melody's chin. Her skin was soft to the touch, and there was a lingering fragrance as she had just taken a shower.

Melody's expression in the makeup mirror seemed particularly stubborn. She snorted gruffly. "Hmph! I can say the same about you!"

The atmosphere between the two was still tense when they were in the room. However, as soon as they descended the stairs, they immediately acted sweetly to each other. Lucas then held Melody's hand, causing her to be momentarily stunned.

Lucas cleared his throat and said seriously, "Why are you looking at me like that? I'm just doing it to make our act more believable. You're an actress now, so shouldn't you be better at acting than me?" Unexpectedly, Melody did not argue with him. Only she knew that she had misunderstood something, but unfortunately...

The two women downstairs had different expressions.

Beatrice saw Lucas and Melody holding hands as they descended the stairs. The more she looked at Melody, the more satisfied she felt. She was determined to dispel certain unwarranted thoughts in the minds of some people regarding her granddaughter-in-law.

Stella naturally noticed this, too. She had anticipated Beatrice would not summon her for anything good. Indeed, it was all to make her see the scene before, hoping to discourage her.

Stella had to admit that she was indeed provoked. The scene of Lucas firmly holding hands with Melody truly infuriated her. She felt like a knife was cutting into her chest watching them so close together. Beatrice watched her every move, so Stella could not do anything. She forcefully suppressed the resentment in her heart, put on her best fake smile, and approached with feigned enthusiasm. She pretentiously linked arms with

Melody, saying, "Melody, I've been waiting for you downstairs for quite a while. Why did it take you so long to come down?"

Melody instinctively pulled away, feeling goosebumps all over. Why did she find the voice of this big celebrity so sickeningly sweet? Nevertheless, she replied, "Oh... I was talking to Lucas and lost track of time."

Stella mentally snorted, but she maintained her fake smile. "Ah, I see! By the way, Grandma wouldn't let me help in the kitchen either. I've just been sitting here, waiting to eat. How embarrassing is that? Melody, why don't you go and talk to Grandma for me? She's too kind to me!"

Stella deliberately said to Melody, hoping to make her believe that Beatrice genuinely cared for her.

Beatrice glared coldly at Stella, her tone was incredibly gentle as she then spoke to Melody, "Melody, come here."

Beatrice, annoyed at Lucas standing there without offering tea to the guest, said, "Lucas, quickly have someone serve tea. It's so rare for Miss Stella to come here. We wouldn't want her to think that we're not hospitable, would we?"

Stella was not stupid. She could naturally discern Beatrice's attitude toward her. She awkwardly faked another smile, released Melody's hand, and ushered her toward the elderly woman's side. Lucas watched as Melody obediently walked toward Beatrice. He raised his chin slightly and signaled the servant to serve tea to Stella in the living room.

"Melody, in our house, only the host is allowed in the kitchen. It's not appropriate for guests to go in and help with cooking, right?" asked Beatrice cheerfully. She affectionately patted Melody's hand, showing her fondness for her. "Melody, come, help me in the kitchen!"

Melody did not actually understand the hidden meaning in the old lady's words, but she nodded obediently and followed Beatrice to the kitchen.

Melody would rather help Beatrice in the kitchen than witness Stella throw herself at Lucas. After all, out of sight, out of mind.

Chapter 2057

Beatrice's words were obviously intended for Stella. After all, she knew Lucas the best. He would not have waited until then if he had feelings for Stella. The two have known each other for a long time, and Lucas had always been indifferent to Stella. In fact, he did not like her at all.

Unfortunately, Stella was too deep in her delusion. Thus, Beatrice had it in her mind that she would make it clear to her that she would never allow her to marry into the family.

After casting a seemingly benevolent glance at Stella, Beatrice led Melody away protectively.

Stella discreetly glanced at the old lady and Melody's retreating figures before inviting Lucas to sit on the sofa with her.

Even though Lucas grunted in agreement, he chose not to sit next to her. Instead, he settled on a nearby armchair.

Stella felt a bit unhappy, but it did not matter. They were the only two in the living room, so what difference did it make if they were seated far apart?

'Finally, we're the only ones here! As long as I bring up the experiences we've shared in the past, it'll surely rekindle Lucas' affection for me. Who cares about Melody? Lucas and I are meant for each other!' thought Stella.

With that in mind, Stella sweetly said, "Lucas, do you remember the first time we met when we were kids..."

"Mister Lucas, this document needs urgent attention, and we need you to review it personally."

Edmund suddenly appeared. He swiftly strode over to Lucas as if Stella was invisible, handed him the iPad in his hand, and interrupted Stella's attempt to reminisce about the past. "Excuse me," said Lucas simply to Stella.

Stella immediately nodded with a smile. "I know you're busy with work. Go ahead, I won't..."

"Miss Stella, please be quiet-now."

Edmund once again stopped Stella from continuing her nonsense. Moreover, he was quite blunt in the way he handled her.

Stella's expression turned extremely unpleasant. 'He's just a subordinate. How dare he interrupt me? Hmph! He'll be the first thing I get rid of once I become Lucas' wife.' Unfortunately, she did not realize that Edmund would have never dared to disrespect her unless he had Lucas' tacit approval. After all, Edmund had always been respectful to Melody.

Meanwhile, in the kitchen.

"Melody, do you think roasting the chicken or making it into soup would be better?"

Beatrice did not really ask Melody to come in and help with the cooking; the Riveras could certainly afford to hire servants and cooks.

Chapter 2058

Beatrice wanted Stella to taste the food decided by Melody to make that ignorant woman thoroughly aware of Melody's position in the family.

After some thought, Melody suggested without reservation, "Let's go with the soup. I heard Grandpa coughing the other day, so chicken soup will be good for his health. As for the dessert, how about we go with something light like apple crumble? What do you think, Grandma?"

Looking at the sensible Melody and caring so much about both herself and Cedric, Beatrice felt even more delighted. "I think that's a wonderful idea! I'm sure your Grandpa will be very happy to know you care so much about his health!"

Melody's cheeks turned rosy, making her even more charming. "Grandma, caring for you and Grandpa is the least I should do!"

Beatrice, increasingly satisfied with her granddaughter-in-law, said, "Your Grandpa and I will be able to die peacefully when the time comes as long as you and Lucas get along well with each other." Melody quickly grasped her hand and said, "Grandma, what are you saying? No, no, no. You shouldn't say such things!"

She panicked a little too much, causing her spit to fly all over the place as she spoke. She immediately regretted it.

"Grandma, I didn't mean to spit all over the place..."

"Hahaha! Oh, my silly little girl."

Beatrice's hearty laughter echoed from the kitchen.

'That old woman appears so kind all the time, so why does she turn into a witch whenever she's with me?' wondered Stella.

Stella stretched her neck to see what was going on in the kitchen but could not make anything out. The smile on her face almost froze, while Lucas continued to read his company's document.

"Lucas..." She shifted her position, preparing to get closer, but Lucas stood up. He impatiently adjusted his tie, and Stella stood up as well.

However, Lucas coldly said, "I need to attend a video conference. Miss Stella, please wait here. Edmund, come with me to the study."

With that, he turned and walked away.

"Yes, Mister Lucas." Edmund did not spare Stella a glance even until he went upstairs.

The vast living room quickly became empty, leaving Stella alone. She picked up the nearby cushion and pummeled it a few times. Her actions caused quite a commotion, prompting a maid to run over to see what had happened.

"Oh dear, I accidentally knocked the cushion to the floor. I'll pick it up right away." Stella squeezed out a smile, picked up the cushion that had been pounded to the ground, and gently patted it. The maid simply nodded and turned away, showing little concern for Stella as a guest.

As soon as the maid turned away, Stella's face immediately darkened. 'Even a mere servant is disrespecting me? Beatrice must've instructed her to do so! That old lady will be better off dead soon!' Meanwhile, in the study....

Lucas sat still in his chair. He drummed his fingers lightly on the desk.

The air in the room became heavier, causing Edmund to feel suffocated.

As soon as Lucas mentioned the video conference, Edmund knew he would not be able to escape the consequences that were about to come.

"Is there anything you want to explain?" Lucas finally spoke, and a chill immediately ran down Edmund's spine.

"What do you mean, Mister Lucas?"

Edmund carefully recalled all the work he had done. He had completed them as usual and on time, except... Lucas raised an eyebrow, "Have you forgotten who you work for? Let me ask you, who do you report to?" Edmund lowered his head. "You are, Mister Lucas."

Seeing Edmund realize the issue, Lucas finally eased back, and the invisible pressure lifted from Edmund. "So why didn't you inform me before Grandma sent you to bring Stella home for dinner?"

Chapter 2059

Edmund bowed and explained, "Mister Lucas, it was Madam Beatrice who forbade me to tell you. I..."

Lucas scoffed. "Don't bother with my grandparents' orders next time something like this happens. You're to inform me immediately! Alright, you can go now."

After Edmund left, Lucas leaned against the desk, sighed, and furrowed his brow. He was well aware of his grandmother's thoughts, but he could not bring himself to ignore Stella completely. Years ago, Stella's father had done him a great favor. On his deathbed, he left only one wish-for him to take care of his only daughter, Stella.

He agreed, and he had to live up to his word.

...

As the servants brought out the final dish to the dining room, Lucas still had not come down yet.

"That brat! All he cares about is work. Does he think the company will go bankrupt if he rests for a while? What's the point of employing so many people if he can't even take some time off?" grumbled Beatrice. Beatrice deliberately glanced at Edmund, who remained indifferent. Lucas' words had fully sobered him, and he learned to do nothing when Beatrice asked him to do something.

Suddenly, Stella leaned in, saying softly, "Grandma, it's so challenging for Lucas to manage such a large company. Everything has to be approved by him, and it surely won't function properly without him. Please don't worry. I'll go upstairs and call Lucas down. No matter how urgent his work is, it shouldn't come in between his meals. After all, it's important to take care of one's health." Melody wanted to go call Lucas, but upon hearing Stella's words, she hesitated mid-step. Since someone had offered, she might as well let her do it.

'Lucas would probably prefer seeing Stella anyway,' thought Melody with her gaze lowered to hide the complications she was feeling.

Beatrice snorted. "Miss Stella, you're our guest today, so how can we let you run errands? Melody, go and call Lucas down. He usually listens to you. Hurry up."

Beatrice looked at Melody affectionately, which was completely different from the cold and mocking gaze she reserved for Stella.

Every word and action of Beatrice was a warning to Stella.

Melody quickly called Lucas down. They came down the stairs hand in hand again. Lucas was gripping her hand so tight that it was starting to hurt her.

"Hey, Lucas..." She leaned into Lucas's ear, wanting to say something.

Lucas instinctively lowered his head and turned to the side. "Yes?"

"Go easier on my hand. It hurts..."

Lucas glanced at her and loosened his grip somewhat, but it was still tight enough to cause discomfort. Melody could not understand why he held her hand so tightly.

'Is this guy afraid I'll run away if he lets go?' thought Melody.

When they got downstairs, Beatrice could not help but complain, "You're always busy with your company's affairs all day long. We have a guest right now, and you can't even come down to accompany her?"

Stella was about to say it was alright when Beatrice continued, "Luckily, Miss Stella is a sensible guest and doesn't take things to heart! Otherwise, you would've been quite rude today!"

Stella forced an awkward laugh. "It's nothing, really. I know how hard it is to run a company..."

Beatrice made it abundantly clear, both explicitly and implicitly, the distinction between Stella and Lucas, reminding her that she was merely a guest.

Chapter 2060

"Please have a seat."

Beatrice and Cedric sat on each end of the long table, while Lucas Melody sat on the side, facing Stella.

Only after Beatrice dug into her food did the rest of them begin to eat. Melody stood up to serve a bowl of chicken soup to the elderly lady.

"Grandma, please have more soup. I oversaw the cook making it. We took out all of the bones from the chicken and made sure the soup had thickened before taking it off the heat. I'm sure you'll love it!"

"Thank you, my sweet child. You should eat, too." Beatrice happily accepted the bowl, took a small sip of the soup, and nodded in satisfaction. "Mh, this soup is indeed delicious. It's full of the taste of the chicken. I love how it warms my stomach, making it feel better."

Melody nodded while effortlessly picking up the shrimp that Lucas peeled and placed in her bowl.

She liked eating shrimp but was not good at peeling them. She always ended up with greasy hands and could not even get to the shrimp meat. Lucas took over this task to play the role of a loving couple with her, and she was happy to enjoy this rare treatment.

"Chicken soup is good for your health. You should have a bowl of it yourself too later," Melody reminded Lucas with a tilt of her head.

Lucas paused in peeling the shrimp and responded with indifference, "Okay."

He placed the peeled shrimp into Melody's bowl.

Melody handed him a tissue out of gratitude.

They did not need to exchange any words. All of their actions were as natural as if they were ingrained in their bones.

Beatrice was very satisfied to see them being so loving to each other, so much so that she found the particular meal especially enjoyable.

Stella, however, was unable to maintain her usual composure.

"Lucas, these roasted Brussels sprouts are so crisp and refreshing. Would you like some?" Stella tried to maintain a gracious and polite smile. She had never seen Lucas peel shrimp for another woman. She had no idea just what made Melody so great that he would willingly do things for her.

Her arm was tired from holding up the plate of roasted potatoes. Only then did she see Lucas exchanging a glance with Melody.

After that, Melody took the plate of roasted potatoes from her hand, saying, "Thanks, but my husband doesn't eat Brussels sprouts, so I'll eat them for him!"

Stella frowned. "Melody, what are you doing? I just wanted Lucas to try them. I didn't mean anything else! I've been good friends with Lucas for so many years after all. It's completely normal for friends to share food..."

Melody felt her eyelid twitch. 'This woman is truly a natural actress. But she should read the room before acting all pitiful.'

Melody was a tad unhappy. She did not have any other intention than to help Lucas eat the food he did not like.

"It's true. I don't like Brussels sprouts. Melody meant no harm. She just doesn't want you to feel awkward. After all, you're the guest, so she thought she'd accept your kindness on my behalf."

The corners of Stella's lips twitched upon hearing the word 'guest' slip from Lucas's mouth, and her face could not look any more unpleasant.

The interactions between Lucas and Melody deeply stung Stella.

Melody was enjoying her food when Lucas suddenly playfully nudged her, asking her, "Can you pass me some of the salad?"

Melody frowned and glared at him. "The salad is right in front of you. Pick it up yourself!"

'Has he forgotten that he has hands?' thought Melody.

Lucas lowered his head and whispered in her ear. "Can you be more professional? Have you forgotten that we're still acting?"

His warm breath made her ears tingle, and her heartbeat quickened.

"Thanks for working so hard for the family, honey. Here, let me get you more food!"

Melody forced a smile and served him some of the salad. Suddenly, she looked up and almost bumped into his nose.

"Honey, is this enough?"

She deliberately spoke affectionately, perhaps overdoing the acting a bit.

"Yes. Thank you, dear," said Lucas with a mischievous smile.