

Mr. Scott 161

Chapter 161

Melanie stood at the door until the talk ended before entering.

She saw the stain from the tea being spilled onto the table.

It must be Cedric who had spilled it when he smashed the cup.

She paused momentarily before speaking with her head slightly lowered, "Chairman Scott, this is the market value of LeapCo in these recent three months."

Cedric looked at her calmly and asked, "What do you think about the business trip to Prime City this

time?"

Melanie answered professionally, as usual, "Not bad."

"I heard they have vacancies in Prime City," said Cedric as he looked at Melanie.

Melanie's heart skipped a beat as her eyelashes fluttered.

She thought Cedric would be easier to get along with than Stella.

He only showed his displeasure in the beginning when Eugene brought her home back then.

After that, he said nothing about other things.

Even when Eugene insisted on getting Melanie a job in the company and Stella stopped them, Cedric just made Melanie sign a contract.

Melanie was in her 20s and thought Cedric agreed to Eugene and her relationship, so she signed it willingly.

However, it seemed Cedric had planned everything for a long time.

He knew Melanie would not be marrying Eugene.

Businessmen were always known to have their minds on one thing—profits. Cedric was the best example.

Melanie was taught by Eugene personally, so Cedric wanted to end her career if she left. He would make her unable to use anything the Scott family had provided her.

Since Cedric treated her like this, Eugene's thoughts were easy to guess.

Melanie felt heartbroken. She looked at Eugene, who was beside Cedric.

Eugene seemed to have sensed her gaze and lifted his head. He glanced at her before looking away.

He interrupted Cedric and asked, "I heard Prosper Group and Farris Group have been competing for land. Do you have the confidence to get it?"

Cedric snorted. "I didn't know you cared about Prosper Group."

Age took a sip of his te

Oxdric wanted to drink his tea, but half of the tea in his teacup had spilled out.

His forehead creased, and he was displeased.

After cleaning that cup, Melanie quickly reacted and got him a new cup of tea.

Cedric and Bugene had work to discuss, so Melanie left sensibly and closed the door.

“Melanie, can you tell me Chairman Scott’s preferences?” Viola noticed she seemed calm and stopped her from leaving with a smile

Then, she said, “I don’t think it’s appropriate for you to do this whenever he comes. After all, you don’t work on this floor anymore”

She seemed reasonable yet was trying to tell Melanie she had nothing to do with Eugene.

When Melanie returned to her office, Vana brought over a stack of documents. “Melanie, has Chairman Scott left?”

Melanie said, “Not yet.”

Yana’s expression turned gloomy.

After Bugene scolded her, she had to amend the table. Melanie glanced at her and reminded her, “Finish it quickly.”

However, Yana stared at Melanie with a pleading gaze, wanting Melanie’s help. “Melanie...”

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Melanie did not stop organizing her documents as she said with her head lowered, "I have something on later, and Eugene doesn't like his staff doing this."

Yana knew this was inappropriate and returned to her seat gloomily.

Melanie arranged the documents submitted to her in the past few days when she was not in the company. It was almost time to get off work when she was done.

She wanted to rush to the hospital to visit her grandfather.

When she was at the hospital, she noticed Stephen.

Albert was still on his bed, hooked to a drip. When he saw Melanie, he beckoned and greeted her.

Melanie put down her bag and greeted Albert before looking at Stephen. "Why are you here again?"

Stephen had just driven her home that morning.

"I wanted to visit Albert and happened to bump into the busy dean. So, I took over and accompanied Albert," Stephen's voice was gentle. He happened to see the drip finishing and closed it before changing to a new bag.

Melanie bit her lips and thanked him, "Thank you."

Albert's condition was almost the same as the day before. Melanie went to the doctor's office for an update on his condition.

The caretaker arrived, and she had a lunch box with her. It was the meal the dean had specially

instructed for Albert.

Albert could only eat soft foods. After getting the doctor's permission, Melanie fed him his dinner.

Albert looked at Melanie, feeling sorry and bad. It was so obvious that Melanie found it challenging to

ignore him.

She could only look away.

However, Albert regained a little of his energy after the meal.

He grabbed Melanie's hand with his wrinkled hand. His voice was hoarse. "Mel, I shouldn't have said that to you,"

"Your mother has disappointed you." Albert could not stop himself from thinking about what Dylan had said during the call.

He never thought Melanie had suffered so much.

Albert's hand that was grabbing Melanie's shuddered, and he muttered, "I'm sorry. It's my fault for not educating her well enough."

He seemed agitated upon saying this, and Melanie chuckled. Grabbing Albert's hand, she comforted him gently, "No. Please don't say that. You raised me, and you're my closest family member."

Albert's eyes shimmered from tears. Melanie's grandmother died when Melanie was five, and he had never married any other woman.

He had brought up Melanie alone.

Although Melanie never mentioned it, he knew she yearned for her parents' love.

He could imagine how Melanie had been hoping for Dylan's love.

In the end, Dylan stabbed Melanie in the back, and he had helped Dylan do this.

He felt bad and did not let go of Melanie's hand. "Your mother told me everything. She's so muddle-headed."

Melanie heard her grandfather's words and was alarmed. Her forehead creased.

After a while, she muttered, "Don't think too much about this. I'll settle it."

She finally coaxed her grandfather to sleep and left after adjusting his bed.

Her conversation with her grandfather was personal. Stephen left the ward with the caretaker right

when Albert was about to shed tears.

Seeing that Melanie had walked out, he asked gently, "Is everything alright?"

Melanie nodded. "I'm fine."

Although she said so, she did not look good and was a little pale.

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Stephen looked at her with concern as he said gently, "You can tell me anything if you want to."

Melanie tried to force a smile. "Thank you for accompanying us all day. You must not have eaten yet. I'll buy you dinner."

She wanted to avoid talking about her grandfather to Stephen. Stephen looked at her deeply.

He changed the topic and asked Melanie, "You seem to be getting along well with Xander?"

Melanie nodded. "He's a nice person."

"You must be the first person to say that." Chuckling, Stephen recalled Xander's personality before saying, "Maybe because you and him are alike."

Melanie had never thought they were alike. She felt Stephen was trying to find a topic to talk about, so she went along with it.

Only a few restaurants were nearby, and it was crowded because of dinner time. Almost everyone eating there were patients and their family members.

Stephen and Melanie went to a mall nearby.

Melanie did not have much of an appetite. She asked Stephen, "What would you prefer to have for dinner?"

Stephen looked at her. "Let's have beef stew. It's simple and tasty."

Unexpectedly, Stephen's phone rang as soon as they entered the restaurant.

He excused himself apologetically before going out to answer the call.

Melanie asked the waiter for the menu and took out her phone.

She had been busy looking after her grandfather after work and had her phone on silent mode inside her bag.

After taking it out, she noticed she had an unanswered call and two message notifications.

Both were from Yana, asking where Melanie was.

Melanie called Yana back. Yana picked it up as soon as the phone rang. She was still working overtime in the office and sounded sad. "Hello, Melanie. Why did you call?"

Melanie said, "You called me this evening. What's up?"

"This evening?" Yana was startled and said, "Oh, Mr. Scott came to the office to ask for you this evening. I thought he was looking for you because of something urgent."

Eugene had come to look for her.

Melanie frowned. "Why was he looking for me?"

"I don't know. Mr. Scott didn't say anything when he heard you had gotten off work."

Stephen came back when he hung up the call. His brows were knitted, and he did not look quite happy.

Taken aback, Melanie asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing. Simon invited me for a meal," said Stephen as he sat opposite Melanie and took the menu. "Have you ordered?"

Stephen, Simon, and those guys were best friends who grew up together.

However, Stephen had slowly distanced himself from Eugene for some unknown reason.

Melanie looked at the table and said, "Simon might be looking for you because of something urgent. Why don't you have dinner with him instead?"

Stephen shook his head. "It's okay. He has been bored lately and wants me to accompany him. You've lost much weight after that business trip to Prime City."

Melanie said, "Not that much."

Chuckling, Stephen said, "Xander will return to Jepton in a few days, and we can have a meal together. What do you think?"

Melanie was fine with it. Stephen said nothing more and ordered the food according to Melanie's preferences.

Stephen was indeed considerate and did not mention anything about her grandfather. Instead, he asked Melanie about the exhibition she went to with Xander.

Stephen seemed to admire her more after talking about the finance exhibition she and Xander were working on. "I knew you had a talent for this."

Melanie got into this industry because of Stephen's encouragement.

It was a happy meal, and Melanie's mood was better.

She had to return to the ward to look after her grandfather. However, just as they walked to the mall entrance, they saw someone familiar with a cigarette between his lips and scrolling through his phone.

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It was Simon,

Melanie's forehead creased slightly, and she wanted to excuse herself to go to the parking lot first. However, Simon had lifted his head lazily,

When he saw Melanie with Stephen, he squinted and snickered before laughing.

"Stephen, you've been rejecting my invitation because of this woman?" Simon's way of putting things made them feel uncomfortable,

Stephen rebuked, "Simon, stop it."

Simon shrugged, looked at Melanie, and lifted his eyebrow. "Melanie, when are you going to give Stephen an answer? It isn't nice to keep him waiting like this."

Melanie asked calmly, "When have I ever kept him waiting?"

Simon's despise was obvious, yet he said nothing sarcastic in front of Stephen.

Then, he said coldly, "Alright. Whatever you say."

After they were a distance away from Simon, Stephen apologized to Melanie, "Mel, I'm sorry.

It wasn't the first time Simon had been sarcastic to her.

Even Melanie did not know when she had provoked him.

However, it was understandable. If even Eugene did not take her seriously, why would his friends

have to?

When Melanie thought about this, she smiled self-deprecatingly. It was her fault for trying to blend into their circle previously.

Stephen drove Melanie to the hospital before heading home to deal with some matters.

Albert had just woken up from his nap in the ward. Melanie was wiping his face gently. Then, she reminded the caretaker of a few things before leaving again.

Halfway back home, she received a call from Eugene.

He only said a few words, "Pick me up now."

Frowning, Melanie pulled over at the roadside and called Eugene back.

It rang for a long time before Eugene answered.

He sounded impatient. "Why are you calling me?"

Melanie paused for a while before asking, "Where are you?"

"Forest Hills." Eugene seemed to be in a lousy mood. He hung up after he said that.

Melanie understood what had happened.

The Scott family's mansion was at Forest Hills, and Cedric had brought Eugene back home.

Bugene might be looking for her because he needed her to help him deal with his parents.

Eugene only thought of her when he was in trouble.

Melanie sat in the car for a while before stepping on the accelerator, She made a detour to the Forest Hills.

When she stepped into the living room, she saw Eugene sitting on the sofa with a cold expression.

Stella and Cedric did not look pleased either as they sat opposite him.

Upon hearing the noise, Eugene lifted his head, and his gaze fell on her.

Then, he stood up and said, "I'm leaving."

Stella glanced at Melanie. However, she disliked Melanie, so she looked away in displeasure.

Meanie walked out of the house with Eugene. He reeked of alcohol. Upon reaching the car, she sat in the driver's seat.

Eugene said nothing and rested as soon as he got into the car. The scent of his cologne and the smell of alcohol filled the air, assailing Melanie's nostrils.

They had a safe drive.

Only when they were in the basement parking did Eugene open his eyes.

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Melanie said, "We've arrived."

Eugene did not move. Maybe his voice was a little hoarse because he had drunk some wine. "Are you in a rush to meet Stephen?"

His tone was calm, and Melanie could not hear any emotions in it.

She was slightly taken aback. "Did Simon tell you this?"

Other than Simon, no one else would care about what she was doing.

"It seems that you have feelings for Stephen." The basement was dark, and so was the car.

Melanie's poor night vision blurred her view of Eugene's figure. She only knew where he was but could not see his expression.

She could hear Eugene clicking his tongue in disgust. "Melanie, Stephen is from a well-to-do family with an educational background. Families like his despise cheap women the most."

It took Melanie some time to process what Eugene meant. '

She closed her eyes, feeling her chest hurting. Trying to speak out, she asked, "Am I cheap?"

Eugene's voice still sounded indifferent. "Who knows? I was just reminding you."

He got out of the car after saying that.

Melanie watched as he turned at the corner of the corridor. Her grip on the steering wheel tightened,

Eugene's words were imprinted in her heart.

To him, she was cheap.

It made her wonder if he had always thought of her that way.

Was that why he had been playing with her feelings?

It took Melanie some time to snap out of her emotions. Her cold hands were warm again.

Eugene sure knew how to break her heart.

He knew her soft spot.

When Melanie returned home, she still felt weak.

Unable to change into her pajamas, she entered the bathroom after kicking off her high heels.

The warm water poured from her head, and Melanie let the water flow down her face as if to wash away her humiliation.

She had flawless skin, which turned pinkish because of the warm water.

Melanie could only hear Eugene's words of humiliation ringing in her ear upon seeing her pinkish skin.

With an expressionless face, she lathered the bath gel on her skin silently.

Her pinkish skin turned red, yet she did not stop.

Droplets of water fell on her red skin, but Melanie had no idea if it was the water or her teardrops.

She rubbed her arms until she was tired.

In the end, she squatted by the wall and hugged her legs as she buried her head between her knees. She let her hair drape over her legs messily.

She might have used too much strength when she rubbed her skin, so her arms were still red the following day.

She glanced at her arms and decided to wear a long-sleeved shirt.

When she was at the office, Yana greeted her tiredly.

She had been amending the table all night and was exhausted.

When she saw Melanie's attire, she asked in a strange voice, "Melanie, aren't you feeling warm wearing long sleeves?"

Melanie lowered her eyelids and replied, "I'm allergic to UV rays."

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"Hmm? Why didn't I hear you mention this before?" Yana was curious. Instead of answering, Melanie

asked, "Are the meeting materials ready? We'll need them later."

Yana's attention was immediately diverted, and she began preparing the documents.

When the meeting ended around ten o'clock, Melanie had just come out of the meeting room when she saw Viola standing outside. She thought Viola was there to use the meeting room and turned to

leave, but then Viola called out to her.

Melanie stopped in her tracks. "What's the matter?"

"I..." Viola bit her lip and then looked at her with eager eyes. "Melanie, didn't you promise to tell me the chairman's preferences yesterday?"

Melanie had not expected her to ask her about this and paused for a moment before replying, "Now is not a good time."

It was still working hours, and Melanie had just finished the meeting with a pile of unorganized documents in her hands.

However, Viola thought Melanie was deliberately making excuses and immediately grew dissatisfied.

Still, she reminded Melanie gently, "Melanie, perhaps you aren't able to get along well with the chairman. But don't worry, I'll be sure to remember his preferences."

Melanie understood what she was implying, but she was genuinely busy at the moment and did not bother.

"If you really want to know about the chairman's and his wife's preferences, it would be better for you to ask Eugene directly."

Viola's expression turned unpleasant. Melanie's words seemed to have deliberately touched on her sore spot. No matter how she hinted at the man, he did not show any intention of taking her home.

However, she quickly adjusted her expression and looked at Melanie with a hint of grievance and sadness as she whispered, "Eugene is too busy. He asked me to ask you. He said you know everything and that I should come to you for anything I don't understand."

Melanie paused. "Come find me during lunch break.

"I

True to her enthusiasm for any matters relating to Eugene, Viola came to Melanie right on the dot with a smile on her face. "Melanie, let's have lunch together!"

Melanie knew she was in a hurry, so she just responded with an indifferent hum.

Yana had been waiting for Melanie, and when she noticed Viola approaching her, she guessed they had something to discuss. So, she bade Melanie farewell before leaving with the others.

"You've got a pretty good network, Melanie," Viola commented. Her words seemed intentionally

directed at Melanie since everyone at LeapCo knew Melanie was known for being stern and impartial. She had very few good relationships with people because of this.

Melanie had been eating at the company cafeteria recently. Viola looked at the ordinary employee meals and frowned. "Melanie, how about I treat you to a meal outside? There's a popular restaurant nearby."

Melanie declined, "I'm good."

“I know you’re in a bit of a special situation now, but you shouldn’t neglect yourself,” Viola frowned as she whispered.

She appeared cautious, as if afraid that others might overhear their conversation. This created an overly intimate atmosphere.

However, Melanie stepped back slightly and said calmly, “Stop wasting time. It’s none of my business whether you want to please the chairman or marry into Eugene’s family. No need to flaunt it in front

of me.”

Melanie did not lower her voice when she said that. Although there were not many people around, a few overheard what she just said. Viola did not expect Melanie to be so direct.

She looked flustered but also pale as she awkwardly looked at Melanie. “Melanie, why are you saying

that?”

“Is there anything wrong with what I said?” Melanie’s emotions remained unchanged. She was already taller than Viola, and with high heels on, she appeared even more imposing.

She lowered her gaze and looked at Viola. “Viola, what right do you think you have to behave so smugly in front of me when you’re relying on that card Eugene gave you?”

Melanie’s words left Viola white as a sheet. She bit her lip, staring at Melanie as if she had just uttered something extremely humiliating.

Melanie looked away and turned to leave. Viola did not follow her, and Melanie paid it no need. She

had made herself clear.

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Melanie had underestimated Viola. During the late afternoon break, Viola appeared at the office door again, holding a notebook in her hand. Her eyes were still red, clearly indicating she had been crying.

Standing in front of Melanie, her voice sounded nasally and muffled as she said, "Melanie, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have spoken like that at lunch."

Melanie furrowed her brows and looked up at Viola. She seemed sincere. "I won't do that again. I just wanted to understand the chairman's preferences to avoid mistakes in the future,"

Her explanation seemed reasonable, and her attitude was right. Moreover, it was break time now. Most people were still in the office, making it awkward for Melanie to say anything more. She nodded and took Viola to the outdoor balcony.

Viola listened attentively, and Melanie remained indifferent. What else could her reaction be? It was nothing more than the preferences of the chairman's parents which had taken her a long time to piece together. Viola was learning it all in one go.

Melanie found it somewhat relaxing, however, which was not bad.

Melanie made the last point, checked her phone, and said, "It's time to get back to work."

"Melanie," Viola called out, hands gripped around the notebook. She continued gently, "You..."

She hesitated for a moment, and her next words never came. Melanie knew what she wanted to ask—how did Melanie learn about Cedric's and Stella's preferences?

Looking into Viola's inquisitive eyes, Melanie calmly replied, "It wasn't Eugene who told me."

Viola breathed a sigh of relief. After thanking her, she left with her notebook.

Melanie stood on the balcony for a while. Through the glass wall, she watched the vehicles come and

go downstairs with a calm expression.

Indeed, Eugene was not the one who disclosed Cedric's and Stella's preferences to her. Eugene had been busy dealing with LeapCo back then, and his relationship with his family was strained.

She foolishly believed that by winning the favor of Eugene's parents, they might lend a helping hand to Eugene.

Thus, her knowledge of their preferences was just the result of her repeated failures. Unfortunately, Eugene had perceived her actions as opportunistic.

After spending some time on the balcony, Melanie finally went back inside. She organized the files she had not had a chance to deal with earlier during work that late afternoon. Among them were several that needed to be submitted for Eugene's review.

She thought for a moment and called Yana. "Do you have anything to do right now?"

"I need to go to the finance department. What's up, Melanie?" she replied.

Melanie shook her head and decided to take the files upstairs herself. When she arrived at Eugene's office, he was engrossed in some documents. Melanie placed the files she was holding on his desk and said lightly, "I need your signature."

Hearing her voice, Eugene looked up for a moment. "Leave them here."

Knowing that the documents had to be submitted to the finance and operations departments, Melanie asked softly, "How long do I need to wait?"

Eugene looked at her again, gaze dark. "I'm busy right now."

"Then, I'll come back later," Melanie replied.

Just as she said that and was about to turn around, she heard Eugene's deep voice directed at her. "Did you scold her?"

The 'her' he referred to could only be one person.

Melanie's expression remained unchanged. "Is telling her the truth considered a scolding?"

There was no emotion in Eugene's dark eyes as he looked at Melanie. "Is there any truth left in your words?"

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Melanie did not evade him and just maintained eye contact. "You just don't think there is."

Eugene remained silent, but his expression clearly showed his disbelief. Melanie did not want to argue with him over this issue and just said, "I'll have Yana come up to get the files later."

Her grandfather had been in the hospital for a few days, and his condition had improved a lot. At least he could speak much more clearly than before. However, talking about Dylan still stirred up the old

man's emotions.

Melanie had asked him several times about what she said to him, but he always waved his hand, unwilling to say more. He only sighed involuntarily.

Melanie did not press him further. She looked at his latest test results, feeling much relieved. "They're mostly normal. Just rest for a couple more days."

Her grandfather had become much thinner, and the white hair on his temples had become more

prominent. After leaving things to the caregiver, Melanie went to look for the doctor with the results.

The moment she left the ward, she received a call from a previous client. The hospital was noisy, so she had to step outside to take the call. When she finished addressing the client's concerns and returned to the inpatient department, she ran into Stella.

Stella cast her an unfriendly glance and said with displeasure, "I really run into you anywhere."

Melanie paused and said softly, "I won't disturb you." She turned to leave, but Stella stopped her. "

Wait a moment."

Stella handed a form to Melanie and imperiously instructed, "Go and make an appointment for my afternoon check-up."

Holding Stella's examination form, Melanie did not move and just apologized, "Sorry, I have other matters to do and can't help you right now."

Stella glanced at Melanie with her striking and piercing eyes. "What did you say?"

It was the first time Melanie had refused her, and Stella found it somewhat unbelievable.

Melanie's face remained calm as she returned the form to Stella. "Madam Scott, I'm sorry, but I can't assist you at the moment. If you need help, you can go to the information desk."

Stella did not take the form and observed the paper in Melanie's hands. She then looked up at Melanie with a mocking gaze. "Eugene dumped you and now you're putting on this farce?"

Melanie knew Stella had never liked her. Her fingertips curled slightly. Just as she was about to speak, she heard Viola's amused voice. "Aunt Scott, why did you come over by yourself? Didn't I ask you to wait for me over there?"

Right after she said that, she arrived in front of Melanie. Seeing Melanie, she hesitated for a moment,

a subtle frown appearing on her forehead as she asked, "Melanie, why are you also at the hospital? Did you, um, arrange to meet Aunt Scott?"

Melanie looked at Viola's probing expression and said calmly, "No." She took the opportunity to hand the form to Viola. "Aunt Scott needs her check-up scheduled."

Viola quickly took it. She had been trying to find a chance to meet Stella but could not get close to her. It was only yesterday when she accidentally overheard Eugene talking on the phone about Stella going to the hospital for a check-up and wanting Melanie to accompany her that she found an opportunity.

She voluntarily offered to accompany Stella, using the excuse that Melanie seemed busy lately and had family matters to attend to. Viola wanted to make her presence felt in front of Stella.

With a cutesy and ingratiating smile on her face, she turned to Stella. She said warmly, "Aunt Scott, I'll help you make the appointment."

However, her attempt to act cute went unappreciated by Stella. There was undisguised disdain on her face as she replied in a way that showed no regard for Viola, "You think I need help with my matters?"

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Viola's face instantly turned pale as she stared at Stella in a daze. Stella had barely acknowledged her ever since she met up with her in the afternoon. She thought Stella was just being a bit cold and did not expect her to suddenly be so harsh.

However, Melanie was still there, and Viola did not want to embarrass herself in front of her. Forcing a smile, she said, "I just wanted to help you."

Stella ignored her grievances completely. She lifted her chin slightly, her gaze mocking as if she were assessing an object rather than looking at a human.

Viola could not bear the scrutiny, but she tried to straighten her back and endure Stella's gaze. She could barely keep the smile on her face. She could only whisper, "Aunt Scott..."

"Aunt?" Stella repeated Viola's address, then reached out and took the form from her hand. She scoffed, saying, "You're certainly narrow-minded and lacking in any sense of propriety,"

Stella's disdainful tone was so obvious that all the color drained from Viola's face. She looked as if she had suffered a significant blow.

Melanie, who was standing by, did not react much. She did not have much of a relationship with Viola, after all,

Examination form in hand, Melanie went to look for the doctor.

After reviewing the results, the doctor commented on the good recovery and gave her several precautions. When she returned to the ward, she noticed Stephen had come again and was chatting with her grandfather.

Melanie was no longer surprised. Stephen had visited the hospital quite a few times in the past few days. He exuded an intellectual air, and her grandfather seemed to enjoy talking with him,

When Stephen saw Melanie come in, he smiled and said, "He's recovering well."

"Mm." Melanie nodded. She asked, "When did you come?"

"I just arrived." He replied before reminding her, "Joshua's birthday party is tonight. He said he

messed you but got no reply, so I came to check.”

Melanie thought for a moment and then remembered Joshua mentioning the birthday party. She nodded. “I’ve been so busy these days that I forgot about it.”

Hearing Melanie and Stephen’s conversation, her grandfather could tell that she had matters to attend to. He waved his hand, indicating that she should go and attend to them.

Helpless, Melanie checked through his medications before leaving with Stephen.

Joshua’s villa was in the suburban villa area, quite a distance away. They passed by a mall, and Melanie decided to buy a gift for Joshua.

Stephen glanced at her and said gently, “You really picked up from Tander”

Melanie looked up, asking, “What do you mean?”

Stephen looked at the pen she bought and explained with a smile, “Every time Tander gives gifts, he gives penis regardless of gender”

Melanie chose the pen because she was not familiar with Joshua and did not know what to get him. It was a versatile item, and she did not expect to hear about Xander. “A pen is a pretty nice gift. It’s practical,” she replied

When they arrived at the Hewins’ residence, the sun was just setting, and Joshua was leading a few people in the yard. They were preparing for a barbecue.

Melanie walked over and handed the gift box to him, saying softly, “Happy birthday.”

Joshua did not expect Melanie to bring him a gift and was stunned for a moment before he reacted.

Just as he took the gift, a voice rang out beside them in a slow, sing-songy manner.

How considerate of you, Melanie. You're truly deserving of being the former chief secretary of

LeapCo.

He emphasized the word 'former, as if intentionally reminding Melanie o

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Melanie glanced at the man who said that indifferently and replied blankly, "Considering your level

of concern for LeapCo, you're more likely to be believed to be the chief secretary."

Simon choked for a moment and was about to say something else when Stephen interjected, "Are we having a barbecue tonight?"

Realizing that Stephen was trying to change the subject, Joshua quickly added, "Yes, the weather's been nice lately. It'll be fun to have a barbecue at night.">

The topic shifted, and Simon could no longer bring it back. He clicked his tongue, adjusted his collar, and then sat down on the nearby sofa.

Melanie occasionally added a few words to the conversation with Stephen. The discussion continued until another car pulled up outside, and Joshua smiled. "Eugene is finally here."

It was Joshua's birthday, and Melanie knew that Eugene would definitely come. Viola followed Eugene out of the car. She had changed her clothes since the hospital visit and was wearing something different from what she had on during the day.

Melanie glanced at her briefly before looking away, casually sipping on a glass of juice. She heard Simon asking Eugene, "Didn't you say you were busy today and wouldn't come?"

Eugene's voice was calm. "I finished my work and came over."

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Joshua also leaned in and said, "Eugene is seizing the opportunity to drink. We should toast to that."

"Are you hungry?" Stephen's gentle voice sounded from beside Melanie. She looked up, only to see him smile. "You've been eyeing this piece of cake."

Melanie snapped back to reality. She was still standing by the long table. Her gaze had been fixated on the cream cake in front of her due to her momentary distraction.

Stephen raised an eyebrow teasingly. "If you want to eat it, go ahead."

Just then, they heard Joshua calling them, "Stephen, Melanie, come over for some barbecue."

There were three grills prepared, but Melanie was not very interested in barbecue. She took a look around, found a corner with a swing, and took a seat.

Xander had previously added her to the studio's group chat, where occasional messages were sent. With nothing else to do, Melanie casually browsed through the chat.

Suddenly, a shadow cast over her, and Melanie looked up to meet Eugene's expressionless face.

Her throat tightened, and she subconsciously asked, "What?"

The scent of cedar emanated from Eugene as he gradually approached and leaned down, staring directly at Melanie.

Melanie's brows furrowed. She was about to say something when Eugene extended his arm behind her and picked up a coat.

In a cold, low voice, Eugene asked with a hint of a sneer, "What are you hiding from?"

Melanie knew that her recent behavior might make it seem like she was overthinking things. She looked down to hide the look in her eyes and replied, "I thought I was blocking you."

A somewhat vague smile crossed Eugene's face. "You came with Stephen?"

"You came with Viola," she replied.

As if on cue, Viola came up to them and grabbed Eugene's arm. "Eugene, would you like me to grill some meat for you? Simon just said it tastes great." She pulled Eugene away without even glancing at Melanie.

It looked like she was still holding onto the incident at the hospital earlier.

Left alone, Melanie sat there quietly. However, the host came around to where she was after circling the place.

"Everyone is having fun over there. Come join in the celebration," he said.

Since Joshua was the birthday boy, Melanie could not say no and reluctantly went over.

A considerable crowd had gathered by the three grills. As Melanie approached, she heard Viola's cheerful laughter.