

**Mr. Scott 271**

Chapter 271

Eugene's words seemed to carry a prickly coldness. Melanie looked at him, suppressed her emotions, and then said, "Who I'm with is none of your concern." Her tone was indifferent, lacking much emotion.

Eugene's expression remained indifferent as he sneered. His voice was low and cold as he repeated, "None of my concern?"

"Melanie, you came here for your grandfather, right?" Eugene's words made Melanie freeze.

She stared at Eugene tightly and asked, "What do you mean?"

Eugene's gaze was steady. With his tall stature, he raised a brow slightly when looking at Melanie. He gave off a distant and unapproachable air. Void of any emotion in his tone, he said, "Just a reminder, he'll only be in Jepton for two days."

The 'he; Eugene referred to was evident. Melanie slowly came back to her senses. Howard was Eugene's uncle.

She quickly brainstormed. She did not have much of an impression of Howard. She only recalled Stella seemingly having a strained relationship with the Hel family while Eugene seemed to be on good terms with them.

Howard was unwilling to see her, but as long as Eugene would help, he could take her to see Howard. Melanie's expression turned unpleasant, but she immediately responded. She looked up at Eugene and asked, "What are your conditions?"

Melanie understood Eugene. He was not one to mention irrelevant matters. A mocking smile flashed in Eugene's eyes as they narrowed, reflecting Melanie's appearance.

A moment passed before he spoke up, tone cold and composed, "You overthink. What do I have to do with any of your business?" After saying that, he withdrew his gaze and walked into the hall.

Melanie's eyes flickered. She was about to follow him when a petite figure suddenly

intervened. Viola stood in front of her. The smile on her face had disappeared, and her gaze on her had turned unfriendly.

"Melanie, you heard what Eugene said. He doesn't want you here. Why don't you leave first?"

The sarcastic remarks Stella made and Eugene's complete disregard for her upon seeing Melanie made Viola uneasy. She decided to vent her frustration directly on Melanie.

Faking a smile, she said, "Melanie, I still need to go in and accompany the chairman. I won't be sending you out."

Melanie looked at Viola's arrogant expression, her eyelashes drooping lightly. "Miss Shaw, I hope you remember that you're LeapCo's secretary and not a receptionist at Jepton Hotel."

She scrutinized Viola, her gaze finally stopping at the V-neck shirt she was wearing underneath. With a hint of mockery in her tone, Melanie reminded, "And even if you were a hotel receptionist, there would still be dress code requirements."

Viola's face stiffened at the comment. She was about to retort, but Melanie had already left.

Melanie was not in a hurry to leave once she was outside. With Howard staying in Jepton for

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only two days, time was tight. She stood at the hotel entrance, her brows furrowing as she fell into thoughts.

Just then, Xander called, and Melanie answered. The first voice she heard on the other end was Yvonne's, asking, "Mel, when are you coming back? We're planning to go for some duck." Melanie

checked the time, and it was already 8:30 pm. "You guys go ahead. I have something to attend to," she replied.

"Are you still not done tidying up the house?" asked Xander this time. He had probably snatched the phone from Yvonne since Melanie could still hear Yvonne muttering in the background.

"It's impossible to finish cleaning an old house in a day. You don't need to rush."

"I know. I'm waiting for someone," Melanie replied, looking at the neon lights flickering across the street. She could not help but let out a soft sigh.

To be honest, she felt quite powerless.

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At the very least, she had never imagined her grandfather's matter to be linked to Eugene.

Xander sensed something off in her tone and walked a bit farther away, distancing himself from Oliver and the others. He asked, "What's going on?"

Melanie hesitated a bit before saying, "I'm waiting at Jepton Hotel to meet Dr. Hel. Dr. Wells mentioned he's a renowned neurology expert, and he's also Eugene's uncle."

Xander's brows creased slightly at that. Yvonne happened to come over then. When she saw Xander's serious expression, she asked, "What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Xander said before turning around and going back to the room.

Melanie waited outside the hotel for a while. She made up her mind before leaving. When she arrived at the villa, the group had returned and were gathered around the coffee table. They were engaged in conversation.

Yvonne sat alone playing games on the side, enjoying the lively atmosphere. She liked the company and had decided to stay there after meeting up with Reny last night.

Melanie, still holding the stew that had cooled down, asked, "Anyone want stew? I bought it from the north of the city. I can heat it up."

"Yes, but why did you go there again?" Yvonne put down her phone, stood up, and helped Melanie prepare the stew.

"To tidy up the house over there."

"Do you have a house in the north of the city?" Yvonne asked.

"It's an old family home," Melanie replied as she took the stew into the kitchen. She poured it into a bowl before placing it in the microwave.

The aroma of the stew quickly wafted through the air. Reny, who had seemingly arrived unnoticed, stood at the doorway while sniffing. "That smells amazing."

Without turning her head, Melanie said, "Could you go ask how many people want stew?"

Reny responded and turned toward the living room. Yvonne's phone suddenly rang. When she looked down at the caller ID, the smile in her eyes instantly vanished. She whispered to Melanie about answering a call before taking her phone and leaving.

Alone in the kitchen, Melanie stared at the light of the microwave and got lost in thought.

"Don't worry." A deep, magnetic voice interrupted her thoughts, bringing her back. She turned to see Xander at the door, his face as calm as ever. "Howard will be in Jepton for two days. I can help you ask him too."

Melanie paused. "Do you know him?"

“Family connections,” Xander replied vaguely.

Even though Melanie and Xander had known each other for a long time, she rarely ever heard him voluntarily mention his family. She knew Xander was related to Stephen, though. He was likely from a well-off background.

The corners of her lips lifted into a faint smile. “Thank you.”

Xander’s gaze lingered on her for a moment before he swiftly looked away. “You can talk to me if you need anything. After all...” he started casually and paused for a bit before continuing, “Stephen did ask me to take care of you.”

The mention of Stephen reminded Melanie that she had not seen him in a while. However, she did not dwell on it. She knew Stephen was busy helping his family, often traveling out of town.

The microwave beeped, signaling that the stew was ready. Melanie was about to ask if Xander wanted some when Yvonne rushed in, holding Melanie’s phone. “Mel, you have a call.” Melanie lowered her eyes to see that it was Stella calling. She did not know why she was calling her at this moment. She stared at the blinking screen, not making a move.

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The phone continued ringing for several seconds before it ended. Melanie took her phone and left the kitchen. Yvonne asked her, “Mel, aren’t you having the stew?”

Melanie replied, “I’m good.” She had not actually had dinner that night, but she was feeling a little

queasy and simply had no appetite.

At Jepton Hotel, LeapCo’s gathering had just ended. Holding her phone in hand, Stella sneered, “Satisfied?”

Eugene was seated across from her, his gaze cold and indifferent. There was no expression on his face as he asked, "I should be asking you that."

Despite being in her 50s, Stella had taken good care of herself and still looked youthful. She gazed at Eugene with disdain. "Eugene, don't forget that I'm your mother. You think I can't handle a house for you?"

"I've said I won't let her into the family. There is just no way. Don't think I don't know what you're thinking!"

Stella pointed at Eugene, her tone gradually turning harsh. "You really take after your father, liking those low-born women!"

"Stella!" Cedric suddenly stood up, his face dark as he stared at Stella. "You should watch your mouth!"

Stella scoffed. "Cedric, I'm already giving you face in front of these outsiders. Don't forget how you got to where you are today."

Eugene looked on indifferently at the tense atmosphere between them, as if he were accustomed to it.

Stella and Cedric continued arguing about their never-ending grips. As tempers flared, Stella pointed at Eugene and said, "Cedric, look at your good son. He's just like you, someone who enjoys playing with rubbish! You're both equally foolish!"

Eugene stood up expressionlessly. He glanced at the two who were still quarreling coldly and said in a voice that could freeze, "I just don't like others casually touching my things, that's all."

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His mood was sour, and he gave off an aura that warned strangers to keep their distance. Seeing Eugene in this state, Viola felt a bit uneasy.

She deliberately stayed behind after the banquet, hoping to wait for Eugene and see if she could get him to introduce her to his parents. Even though Stella's attitude toward her was not good, Viola had heard that Stella initially could not tolerate Melanie either.

Stella only gradually accepted her after they continued to interact with one another more.

Viola figured if Melanie could achieve that, why not her?

She bit her lip, put on a faint smile, and approached Eugene. She attempted to link her arm with his. However, Eugene avoided her.

Viola was momentarily stunned before exclaiming in disbelief, "Eugene, what's wrong with you?"

Eugene's steps came to a halt. He stopped and looked at Viola with dark eyes. "Did I do something to upset you?" she asked, expression aggrieved.

Faint creases appeared on Eugene's forehead. "I'm thinking about something else." He then added, "I'll bring you home first."

Viola acknowledged with a soft hum and lowered her head without saying anything else.

Whenever Eugene took her out, he would send her home regardless of how late it was. Viola was not an innocent woman. She had hinted at Eugene before, but he always claimed it was not the right time.

Melanie set her alarm for six in the morning. Even though Xander had promised to help her, Melanie could not just sit back and wait without doing anything.

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When she arrived at Jepton Hotel, it was not even seven o'clock. There were not many people on the road at this hour. Melanie parked her car at the hotel entrance.

Her inquiry with Dr. Wells had informed her that Dr. Hel was scheduled to arrive at the hospital at nine, so he should leave around 8:20 am.

Melanie brought a loaf of bread with her. Sitting in the car, she had just taken a bite when she received another debt collection message from Dylan. To her, Dylan's messages were now no different from spam.

Melanie had promised to give her 500,000, and she indeed intended to fulfill that promise- just not at this moment.

Dylan kept claiming that George would sell Peachie if he did not get the money, but when Melanie checked with Theodore, she received a different answer. Peachie was currently staying at the hospital with a caregiver. 1

It was on the day she received Dylan's call to go to the bank that she suddenly remembered Theodore's existence. He was an acquaintance from when she was in Hearth City, a friend of Eugene.

Melanie was no longer as upset about Dylan's deception. She simply did not want Dylan to disturb her grandfather again.

At 8:20 am, Howard came downstairs. Melanie pushed open the car door, stepped out, and came to stand before Howard. She greeted the man politely and sincerely, "Hello, Dr. Hel. We met last night."

Howard looked at her with furrowed brows. "I informed you about your grandfather's condition last night, and my suggestion is to opt for conservative treatment."

"But I did some digging, and there are many successful cases of surgery in similar situations," Melanie said, holding her grandfather's medical records and test results. She handed them over. "You haven't looked into the details yet. Please take a look."

Howard's face showed clear displeasure. "Miss Smith, I don't know if you're genuinely concerned about your grandfather or just putting on a show for someone, but please don't waste my time.'



“What do you mean by ‘putting on a show’?” Howard wore glasses, and his expression was solemn.

However, when he assessed Melanie, his gaze carried a hint of annoyance. “Miss Smith, I know about your relationship with Eugene. You should be aware of my connection with him.

“Unfortunately, if you think you can change the opinion of the Scott family toward you through me, then you’re gravely mistaken.”

The anxiety Melanie felt slowly cooled when she heard what the man said. She withdrew the materials she had handed over, looked at Howard, and said, “Dr. Hel, I don’t know what misunderstandings you’ve come to hear, but you should also know that as a doctor, no one ever jokes about the life of their family members.”

She nodded again. “I’m sorry for wasting your time.”

Then, she turned and left, her straight back appearing frail yet determined.

She sat in the car for a while before driving to the hospital. Her grandfather’s condition was still the same. When Melanie went in, the doctor happened to be making rounds.

The results of the examinations conducted on her grandfather were out, and there was not much change in various indicators. Dr. Wells called out to Melanie, “Have you seen Dr. Hel?”

Melanie lowered her gaze and remained silent for a moment. “Are there any doctors available besides Dr. Hel?”

“Yes, but Dr. Hel is an authoritative expert, and the success rate with him is undoubtedly higher.”

Dr. Wells’ words echoed in Melanie’s mind. She raised her hand to pinch her forehead and then took out her phone. She dialed Xander’s number.

Xander immediately answered, and Melanie heard his somewhat tired voice.

“Xander, when can you help me contact Dr. Hel?”

“I might need to have another discussion with him.” Xander paused before adding, “I’m on my way to the hospital. We can talk when I get there.”

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While waiting for Xander to arrive, Melanie saw Dr. Wells swiftly head downstairs with two interns. She speculated that it was probably Dr. Hel who had come.

Yesterday, Dr. Well’s social media featured not only a photo with Dr. Hel but also several reposts of the hospital’s public account reports. Authoritative experts were popular everywhere, especially in neurology and brain–related surgeries.

Dr. Wells had been looking forward to meeting Dr. Hel for a long time.

Dr. Wells was almost at the elevator when he suddenly seemed to recall something. He turned back a few steps, lowered his voice, and said to Melanie, “The seminar is starting in 15 minutes. Dr. Hel should be resting downstairs now. If you want to try your luck, you can go.”

Melanie was momentarily stunned. She looked at Dr. Wells, but he was already hurrying off.

Melanie took a moment to understand what Dr. Wells was suggesting. She stood up, instinctively glanced at her grandfather in the ward, and realized that she could not delay his situation any longer.

She also knew her grandfather would not want to remain in bed like this forever. He was a proud person.

Melanie lowered her gaze, made a decision in her heart, and then walked toward the conference room Dr. Wells mentioned.

In the conference room on the second floor, Howard was originally discussing a case with another doctor when his phone suddenly rang. Despite being interrupted, he maintained his serious expression and initially considered rejecting the call.

However, after seeing the caller ID, he patiently answered the call.

Melanie could not be sure what was said on the other end of the line as Dr. Hel's expression became increasingly stern. In the end, he even rebuked, "Sarah, you know I detest people telling me these things!"

Sarah sighed somewhat helplessly. "Howard, we know each other. It's just a small favor, and she's desperate to save a life. Why be so rigid?"

"I won't help, no wonder who your friends are. This is my principle! If there's nothing else, I'm hanging up," Howard said coldly and promptly ended the call.

Coincidentally, a doctor at the entrance suddenly called out, "Dr. Hel."

Howard looked up, his expression increasingly serious. "What's the matter?"

An intern came over and said, "There's a family of a patient outside looking for you. They want you to check on a patient's condition."

Howard was known for his strictness in the medical field but also had a reputation for being compassionate. Many regarded him as a medical role model.

"Sure, let the family member in," he said.

Just as he finished speaking, a steady female voice came from the entrance. "Dr. Hel."

Howard looked up and saw Melanie standing there.

His eyebrows furrowed, and he said in a not-so-friendly tone, "Why is it you again?"

Melanie's gaze dropped slightly, and she said slowly between breaths, "Dr. Hel, I want to apologize for my attitude this morning. I sincerely request that you check on my grandfather's condition personally.

"I've seen several surgeries conducted for patients with conditions worse than my grandfather's. I implore you to look at him."

Her attitude was extremely humble now, and Howard's brows gradually unfurrowed. Dr. Wells had indeed briefed him on Melanie's grandfather's condition.

However, Howard had also heard from Stella that Melanie was a cunning woman who had been trying to get close to Eugene to leverage the family's influence and elevate herself.

Seeing him remain silent, a complicated emotion flashed in Melanie's eyes. However, she lowered her gaze and concealed these emotions.

"Mr. Scott, the director is inside now." A voice suddenly came from outside, and Melanie hesitated.

Someone outside must have said something as one of the doctors in the meeting room suddenly slapped his forehead. "Oh, I forgot. I have an appointment with someone from LeapCo to discuss cooperation on a previous public welfare inspection project today."

LeapCo was currently involved in a public bidding process, so they were working on building a positive public image.

The director, Leone, was about to leave when Eugene, who had been standing by the door, entered. His gaze swept over Melanie, and then he turned to Howard and called out in a low voice, "Uncle."

Howard nodded, the displeasure on his face diminishing slightly. "The charity event you mentioned yesterday, you intend to collaborate with Paramount Hospital?"

Eugene nodded. "The process is already underway."

Realizing what was happening, Leone asked, "So, Mr. Scott is Dr. Hel's nephew?"

Howard's expression was stern. "Charity check-ups are not trivial matters. It's a substantial scale. You've worked hard."

Leone smiled and waved his hand.

Despite not expecting Eugene to suddenly appear at the hospital, Melanie could care less about him now. When she saw that the conversation was about to be diverted, she spoke up again, "Dr. Hel, can I take up some of your time?"

Howard looked at her. Due to his perpetually stern expression, he seemed quite serious. Checking the time, he said, "I'm sorry, the seminar starts in five minutes. I don't think I have the time."

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"And besides, instead of spending time here with me, why not spend more time with your grandfather? He's getting older. There's no need to use up medical resources unnecessarily!" Sarah's phone call just now had soured Howard's mood, and he could not help but vent some of his frustration on Melanie.

Thinking of Sarah's words, Howard became angry again and immediately made his way to the nearby lounge.

Due to Howard's recent outburst, the conference room was now very quiet.

Melanie stood awkwardly in place with Eugene by her side. Feeling a bit embarrassed, Leone gently touched his forehead and asked Eugene, "Shall we go to the office to talk?"

"Sure," Eugene replied indifferently.

The man then turned to Melanie and said with some hesitation, “Miss, could you please go back for now? We’re about to have a meeting here.”

Doctors were gradually entering the conference room.

Melanie bit her lip and prepared to leave. She could not help but feel a bit bewildered. As she walked past Eugene, she suddenly heard him say in a flat tone, “I warned you not to think too highly of yourself.”

Melanie’s steps faltered, and she glanced sideways at Eugene, who had an indifferent expression.

After leaving the conference room, Melanie felt like all the strength had left her body. She turned to a corner of a wall, took a moment to collect herself, and then called Xander on her phone.

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The phone rang for a few seconds before connecting. Pinching her brows, Melanie asked, Xander, can you still reach Dr. Hel over there?"

Melanie was not sure about her own feelings at the moment. She felt like she might have messed things up.

There was a pause on Xander's end before he replied, "Sorry, I'll try to figure something else out."

He had just received a call telling him that Howard had declined to help.

The pressure in Melanie's heart suddenly flared. She rubbed her temples, her voice tinged with self-blame and bewilderment, "Xander, what should I do? How did I mess up something so important?"

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Melanie sat on a bench in the hospital corridor, her face devoid of color. She was not sure when the call on her phone was disconnected.

Howard's words echoed in her mind repeatedly, alternating with images of her grandfather lying in a hospital bed, tubes protruding from his body.

Melanie's throat felt as if it were being tightly squeezed. Even expelling a breath required a significant effort. Her face was cold to the touch, and she numbly reached up to caress her cheek when she felt some dampness. Was she crying?

She stared at her moist fingertips and got lost in thought. Eugene was right. She had indeed thought too highly of herself, believing that she alone could move Eugene and improve her grandfather's condition.



How could that be possible?

Melanie's shoulders drooped, her long hair falling and obscuring her view and expression. She heard footsteps approaching her and smelled a familiar, cool scent mingled with disinfectant. It permeated her senses.

"Thinking about getting your grandfather to undergo surgery?" Her body tensed when she heard Eugene's cold and steady voice.

His words lacked any emotion. Melanie slowly lifted her head and looked at him, a tear still clinging to the corner of her eye. When she raised her gaze to meet Eugene's indifferent expression, she saw an emotion in his dark, inscrutable eyes that she could not quite understand.

He looked down at her condescendingly. "Do you want to?"

A moment passed, and Melanie's bewildered mind slowly began to work before she hoarsely asked, "What are your conditions?"

She stared at Eugene, her beautiful eyes devoid of their usual liveliness. They resembled a deep and unfathomable icy pool, calm and ripple-free. Eugene's eyes narrowed slightly as he casually replied, "This is a problem for you to settle. Why do you think I'd help you?"

Melanie's face was already pale. When she heard what Eugene said, she showed no reaction and just continued to gaze at him.

Eugene's eyebrows twitched. He stared at her for a moment before reaching out to pinch Melanie's chin.

Calmly, he said, "I'm not a philanthropist, Melanie."

His fingertips were gentle, and there was a subtle force in the hand gripping Melanie's chin. Melanie's face was tilted upward with the force of his grip. She understood what Eugene was saying,

He would help her, but the condition was that she had to satisfy him and make him willing to help her.

After Eugene left, Melanie lingered alone in the corridor for a long time before returning to the ward to see her grandfather. She happened to witness the nurses turning him over and

thought how he looked like a puppet being pushed around by them.

He now spoke very indistinctly. Standing at the door, Melanie could only hear vague sounds of agreement.

It was heart-wrenching to listen to.

She could not bear to watch any longer. It was not until the nurses left the ward that Melanie gathered herself and went in again.

Despite her efforts to mentally prepare herself during this period, every time she saw her grandfather in this state, those carefully constructed psychological defenses would just collapse once again.

While massaging her grandfather, Melanie noticed that his nails had grown long. She took out a nail clipper and trimmed them for him.

As she looked at his hands—the hands that had once held her, combed her hair, and taught her to write—she realized how dry and stiff they were. They were like withered wood.

While cutting her grandfather's nails, her vision suddenly blurred. She could endure Howard's reprimands and Eugene's humiliation, but looking at her grandfather, emaciated and connected to tubes, she could not hold back her emotions.

Why did it have to be like this? Why did it have to be her?

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A teardrop fell onto her grandfather's hand. The old man seemed to sense it and looked at Melanie, making an effort to say, "M-Mel..."

He wanted to reach up to wipe away Melanie's tears but could not lift his hand. In the end, he could only repeatedly utter Melanie's name.

Melanie knew she had lost control of her emotions, but right now, she truly could not hold back the surging bitterness in her heart. She was exhausted and felt like letting go, but she had no choice.

She could only endure and push through with all her might.

She felt her grandfather pull down her fingers and slowly write something in her palm.

'I'm sorry.'

Every time her grandfather called her Mel, he wrote another apology in her palm.

Later on, when the caregiver reminded Melanie that her grandfather should not get agitated, she gradually stabilized her emotions. However, her grandfather still held onto her hand.

After calming her grandfather, she left the hospital. It was evening, and Eugene's call came in. Melanie hesitated for a moment before answering, only to hear his indifferent voice say, "GT. Come by yourself."

He hung up without caring to hear Melanie's response.

Staring at the dark screen of her phone for a while, Melanie drove to GT. She was numb and devoid of much emotion.

GT was owned by a playboy within the circle. The first floor featured a lively lobby, booths, a bar, and a vibrant dance floor. On the second floor were several private rooms specifically designated for the wealthy young heirs and heiresses.

The room where Eugene and his friends often gathered was dimly lit. When Melanie pushed the door open, someone inside was just popping open a champagne bottle. Foam spilled from the bottle, and a few droplets happened to land on Melanie's face.

The lights in the private room were dim, making it difficult for her to see where Eugene was. Just when she was about to step back and call him, the entire room suddenly lit up, causing Melanie to squint her eyes instinctively.

Simon's casual and playful voice echoed. "Hey, Melanie?"

When she opened her eyes, she saw Simon sitting on a high stool next to her, his eyes playfully assessing her.

"I thought you had a backbone. Why did you rush over with just one call from Eugene?" he sneered. "You're so obedient. Does Xander know?"

Simon had been with Eugene when he called Melanie, so he knew it was Eugene who asked her to come. However, he still harbored resentment from the last time Melanie embarrassed him, so he deliberately taunted her.

Melanie was not in the mood to deal with Simon. She focused her gaze on Eugene, who was

sitting in the corner staring at his phone expressionlessly. Even Simon's words did not manage to grab his attention as he did not even lift his head.

Melanie did not know what Eugene was occupied with. She lowered her gaze and walked slowly toward him. When he heard the footsteps, he finally looked up.

He glanced at Melanie and asked in a low voice, "Not happy to be here?"

There was indeed no expression on Melanie's face. She had just come from the hospital and was still worrying about her grandfather. There was hardly any room for other emotions. "Why did you call me here?" she asked.

Eugene paused for a moment, his emotionless gaze fixed on Melanie. He casually asked, "What do you think?"

Melanie understood. Eugene was waiting for her to express her sincerity. After all, she was the one seeking his help for her grandfather's sake. He had also made it clear that he needed to be satisfied. She could only speculate how she could satisfy him.

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Her chaotic thoughts were interrupted by the ringing of her phone. Melanie checked her phone and saw it was Yvonne calling. She wanted to answer the call outside, but the lights in the private room had been turned off again.

Due to her poor eyesight, she did not dare to move around carelessly and had no choice but to answer Yvonne's call there.

"Come clean! Where are you now?" Yvonne's excited voice suddenly came through.

Melanie hesitated and replied, "I'm outside."

Yvonne responded, "Oh, are you with Xander? Give him the phone. We've been calling him, but he hasn't picked up any of our calls! We need him for something."

"I'm not with him," Melanie said.

Yvonne sounded puzzled. "Then why isn't he answering the phone? We called him several times. Hey, do you know where he went?"

Melanie furrowed her brows. Xander was not the type to intentionally ignore phone calls. She thought for a moment before suggesting, "Maybe he's busy right now."

When she said that, she then recalled the seriousness of Xander's tone earlier when he mentioned that Howard would not help. She rarely heard Xander speak with such gravity. However, she had been too focused on her own emotions at the time to pay attention to him.

Melanie pursed her lips and whispered to Yvonne, "I'll give him a call."

After ending the call with Yvonne, Melanie was about to call Xander when she heard Eugene's emotionless voice say, "You care that much about him?"

Melanie's phone screen was still showing the contacts list when Eugene's indifferent voice continued, "How far have you two progressed?"

He was referring to Xander. Melanie lowered her eyebrows and remained silent. She had explained the situation with Xander to Eugene many times, but he never listened. What she wanted to know now was how she could satisfy Eugene and get his help for her grandfather.

Seeing that she was refusing to respond, Eugene sneered quietly. He then pushed a wine glass toward her, lifted his chin arrogantly, and said, "Do I have to teach you what to do? You should be aware of the consequences of acting foolishly."

Melanie was momentarily stunned but quickly understood that Eugene was warning her about her grandfather's situation. She looked at the glass and stayed silent for a moment. Then, she picked up a bottle of wine from the side and poured a glass for Eugene.

Knowledge of wine table etiquette was essential in the business world. Melanie recalled how she had been completely ignorant of these rules when she first accompanied Eugene to social events and how he had patiently taught her.

Melanie lifted the bottle with both hands, poured the wine, and placed the bottle back down in front of Eugene. However, she accidentally brushed against the nearby wine bottle, causing the liquid in the glass to sway.

As she presented the glass to Eugene, intending to speak, she saw him emotionlessly pour the

contents directly into the trash can. His tone was casual and tinged with sarcasm as he said, "Melanie, can't you pour a decent glass of wine?"

His voice was not loud, but there happened to be a brief moment of silence in the private room. It made Eugene's words audible to everyone. All eyes turned toward Melanie. They were curious to witness the spectacle.

Several pairs of eyes were fixed on her, and even though she could endure a lot, her complexion turned somewhat pale at the attention.

When she thought about her grandfather, however, she lowered her gaze and suppressed the emotions in her eyes. Then, she picked up the wine bottle again, mustered her strength, and poured another glass for Eugene.

Eugene glanced at the glass but did not take it. Simon's playful voice suddenly interjected, 'Eugene, looks like you came here to show off to the brothers? Bringing your own personal wine pourer, huh?'

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Simon looked at Melanie and said with even more mockery in his tone, "Miss Smith, since you already have the wine bottle in hand, why not pour a glass for us too? It wouldn't be out of the way anyway."

While he sounded like he was making a suggestion, he was actually making an assertion and letting Melanie know of it.

Many people were aware of the conflict between them. Hence, they joined Simon in enjoying the spectacle. "Melanie is the chief secretary of LeapCo. I haven't had a glass poured by the chief secretary before."

"Didn't she resign? I heard her birth mother came to hold her accountable."

"So what? She used to be LeapCo's former chief secretary. It's a good show!"

The murmurs surrounding Melanie made her feel like a clown as she felt herself subjected to ridicule and mockery. The one leading this was comfortably sitting on the sofa, watching her. Simon raised an eyebrow. "Eugene, aren't you being too stingy? You won't even lend us your former secretary."

Eugene remained expressionless, and his tone was icy as he replied, "She hasn't officially resigned yet."

The implication of his words was probably that Melanie was not his former secretary.

Simon did not care. Instead, he looked back at Melanie and made a malicious comment, "Miss Smith, you must've poured drinks for many people before. It shouldn't be a problem to do the same for us, right?"

Melanie could not help but tremble. The dim lighting in the private room obscured Eugene's expression, but she could sense that he intended to humiliate her.

He knew very well that when Melanie first joined LeapCo, she was once asked by a superior, who had a grudge against her, to pour drinks for a troublesome client. That client had attempted to take advantage of her, thinking she was an escort.

Even though the situation was eventually diffused, the superior had exaggerated the story and spread word about it. For quite some time, Melanie was unfairly labeled as an escort. Hearing such things was undeniably distressing.

Hence, she would hide in her room and shed tears almost every night back then.

Moreover, when her grandfather learned about the incident, it aggravated his health problems. Someone once said that the easiest way to ruin a woman was through false rumors, and at that time, Melanie bore the burden of a tarnished reputation. She was isolated from

everyone.



To this day, Melanie refused to bring up that incident. It was a time she did not want to revisit, a time filled with echoes she did not want to hear. Eugene knew this, yet he was still using her most sensitive scar to humiliate her once again.

The crowd continued to cheer, and Melanie looked at Eugene. Suppressing the frustration within her, she asked, "Is this what you wanted to see?"

Her being mocked and treated as an escort? Was he satisfied now?

Eugene's brows furrowed slightly, indicating that he might have something to say. However, before he could speak, Melanie nodded to herself and muttered, "Alright, since it's your request, who am I to refuse?"

With that, she picked up the bottle and walked to Simon's side. She filled up his glass. Putting on an image of composure, she said, "Mr. Simon, please have a drink."

Simon raised a brow. He did not even feel bothered by this and simply looked at Melanie with a bit more disdain. Glancing at the liquid in the glass, the corner of his lips tugged upward as he said with a smirk, "Sorry, I don't drink this kind of alcohol."

It was clear that he intended to embarrass her. Melanie closed her eyes for a moment, preparing herself to speak when she heard Eugene's emotionless voice call out her name.