

Mr. Scott 421

Chapter 421

Before they could head to the hospital, Eugene's phone began to ring. He stepped aside to answer the call. Watching him walk away, Viola said to Melanie softly, "Melanie, if you're in a hurry to go to the hospital, you can go first. I'll wait for Eugene and we'll head over later."

Seeing through her intentions, Melanie turned around blankly and left.

Viola watched her leave and then quietly explained to Theodore, who was beside her, "Peachie is Melanie's younger sister. No matter how angry she seems, deep down, she's still worried about her. It's better to let her go first."

Theodore nodded thoughtfully. "That makes sense."

Viola smiled again. "I'll wait here for Eugene."

Realization dawning upon him, Theodore patted his forehead and said, "I'll go to the hospital with Melanie first. I don't want to disturb you lovebirds, in case you end up forcing me to be the third wheel again."

He turned and left while muttering to himself. The woman was quite possessive, sending him away even after doing the same with Melanie.

Melanie arrived at the hospital first, and Theodore followed shortly after. After greeting each other, he went to the office while Melanie proceeded to the ward.

Peachie was receiving intravenous therapy again. Her palm-sized face was devoid of any color, and her lips were cracked, showing signs of dehydration. She was dressed in a large hospital gown that hung on her like a sack

Peachie saw Melanie and smiled. "How do you feel today? Does it hurt?" Melanie asked.

Peachie shook her head. "No."

Melanie did not mention Dylan in front of Peachie at all. Being obedient, Peachie did not insist on seeing her mother either. However, the two sisters were not particularly close, so there was not much for them to talk about.

After sharing the incident with Melanie last night, Peachie went back to her reserved and reticent self today.

Melanie sat with her for a while before getting up. "I'm going to look for the doctor."

Peachie's long-term hospitalization was inevitable. Even though Melanie was not particularly concerned, some things needed clarification.

Coming up to the office door, she heard Theodore's voice as he said, "We'll cover Peachie Chapman's medical expenses and do our best to cooperate with the hospital for her treatment.

Melanie's brows furrowed. Just as she was about to enter the office, she heard him continue, "The entire foundation is concerned about this matter, and you're aware of the situation with the foundation. The Jepton company is also involved."

"That's natural. Peachie Chapman is the first patient in the hospital to be sponsored. This has also attracted the attention of many other foundation members. We all know this."

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Melanie knocked on the door. Theodore turned around, his expression changing when he saw her. "Why are you here? Weren't you going to stay with Peachie?"

Melanie replied, "I heard about the foundation just now. As Peachie's current guardian, I want to get more information on it. Is that okay?"

“Sure, that’s okay. I’ll send you a detailed report later,” Theodore said.

Melanie stayed to ask the doctor some questions before returning to the ward. When she came back, Eugene and Viola had already arrived. Only Viola was in the ward while Eugene was nowhere to be seen.

Viola sat by Peachie’s bed. Her head was lowered as she was cutting some fruit for her. Peachie sat on the bed, face still pale. When she saw Melanie enter, a hint of shyness appeared on her face.

Hearing footsteps, Viola turned around and saw Melanie. Putting on a faint smile, she said, “Melanie, why weren’t you in the ward just now? Peachie is still a little girl. What if something happened?”

She handed the fruit to Peachie, who hesitated for a moment before accepting it.

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Viola smiled as she looked at Melanie. “Peachie, I heard that you missed me. Now that I’ve come to see you, are you happy?”

Peachie looked up at Melanie. Seeing no signs of displeasure on Melanie’s face, she nodded. “Yeah.”

Viola noticed Peachie’s reaction and paused for a moment. Turning to Melanie, she hesitated for a moment before saying with a slight frown on her face, “Melanie, don’t look so stern. It might scare the little one.”

Melanie was dressed in a white shirt and a pair of black trousers today. She did seem to give off a somewhat serious aura.

“Also, I notice Peachie listens to you a lot. When I give her something to eat or ask her a question, she always looks at you, as if she’s unsure how to respond,” Viola said, a smile playing on her lips. It looked somewhat fake, though—like a mask.

Melanie lowered her gaze, maintaining a neutral expression. "All children know the story of Snow White. They know not to accept things from strangers easily. Her looking at me for approval is a sign of her awareness and a means to protect herself."

Viola's smile froze on her face. "That's good."

Melanie nodded. "Yes, it's a good thing, indeed. In the world today, there are many people with ill intentions. Instilling a sense of safety in kids from a young age is important."

Viola's face turned pale in an instant, and she also dropped the fruit in her hands.

Melanie's words just now were clearly a veiled insinuation.

Viola bit her lip, choosing not to continue the conversation. However, her complexion had turned unpleasant.

Footsteps approached the door, and a tall and handsome figure appeared in the doorway.

Viola's gaze flickered for a moment before she called out, "Eugene, have you dealt with your matters?"

Eugene's gaze lingered on Peachie, who was on the hospital bed, for a moment. He then casually withdrew his gaze. "Can we leave now?" he asked in a deep voice.

Viola's brows were furrowed slightly. She looked back at Peachie and seemed to be hesitating, but in the end, she decided not to reach out to hug her.

Shen turned to Melanie and asked cautiously, "Can I hug her, Melanie?"

Gaze lowered, Melanie merely replied, "Why are you asking me?"

Viola looked like she had bitten into a lemon as she replied softly, "I was afraid you wouldn't agree. As you just said, children don't have much autonomy. Whatever adults say is what goes. That's why I asked you first."

Melanie remained indifferent to Viola's explanation even though it was sound. It was evident to whom that explanation was directed.

The corners of her lips twitched. "I just told her to be cautious of bad people. Why take it so seriously? She already said she likes you. I can't possibly think you're a bad person, can I?"

Peachie did not understand the conversation between the adults and looked around in confusion. In the end, she closed her mouth quietly and said nothing.

Viola sighed. "Melanie, it's better to be gentle in front of children."

She then casually looked toward Eugene and whispered, "Peachie always looks to see how you're feeling whenever she talks to me. It might not be good if she ends up growing up introverted."

Melanie's eyes narrowed slightly.

Viola's emphasis on Peachie's obedience and reliance on her was insinuating that Peachie's words were not to be completely trusted as she always listened to everything Melanie said.

Melanie's gaze was lowered, her long lashes obstructing part of her view. Melanie's mind was filled with all kinds of thoughts. She realized she had underestimated Viola. When it came to these matters, she was smarter than anyone else.

Chapter 423

"Melanie, did I say too much?" Viola's voice interrupted Melanie's thoughts.

Melanie's jaw tightened for a moment before she reigned in the indifference on her face. She replied, "You've already said all the things that you should've and shouldn't have said. What difference does it make now?"

A strange expression flickered on Viola's face. She instinctively turned to look at Eugene.

Eugene did not look at her. Instead, he picked up Peachie's medical record from the cabinet next to the bed, flipped through a couple of pages, and then put it back.

The cold and imposing aura emanating from him was somewhat intimidating. Peachie shrank under the blanket with her eyes fixed on him.

After a moment, he slowly looked up at Melanie. There was not much emotion in his deep and meaningful gaze as he watched her quietly.

Melanie's heart sank. Without letting her emotions show on her face, she met Eugene's gaze and asked, "Do you also want to teach me how to get along with my sister, Mr. Scott?"

She had particularly emphasized the way she said 'Mr. Scott'. It was a show of her discomfort.

Viola's gentle words had been delivered with a hidden edge, and it was her attempt at provoking the situation. Unfortunately, Melanie did not have evidence at the moment.

Meanwhile, Melanie was composed on the surface, but her thoughts were roiling underneath. Her eyes appeared colder than usual.

Eugene's deep and steady voice sounded in a seemingly casual manner. "Have I taught you so little?"

Melanie furrowed her brows and saw him sneer next. "Of all the things I've taught you, what have you mastered?"

"I brought you to Hearth City to handle the mess George left. Instead, you're causing even more trouble."

Eugene's dark pupils reflected Melanie's face. His lips parted as he said lightly, "You can't even handle your family matters properly, and now you feel like the whole world is treating you unfairly? Melanie, you really place yourself on a high pedestal."

Although his tone was calm, there was a casual condescension in his words.

Melanie felt as if the air had been ripped from her lungs.

Eugene was an astute person. From the short conversation between Melanie and Viola, he had already deduced what Melanie was thinking and sided with Viola. He also took the opportunity to mock and ridicule Melanie.

The embarrassment of being slapped in the face made Melanie clench her fists slightly. Still, she kept her eyes on him, her inherent stubbornness stopping her from lowering her gaze.

After a while, she shifted her gaze to Viola, who was beside him.

Viola was looking at Eugene. Though not obvious, there was a hint of a smile in her eyes.

"Eugene, don't say it like that," she coaxed him softly.

Viola looked up, smiled at Melanie, and said in a manner that seemed like she was trying to console her, "Melanie, please don't mind him. That's just how he talks."

Melanie's expression turned cold. Viola's words were clearly implying that she was in the wrong.

There were other patients in the ward, and conversation buzzed around them. Melanie closed her eyes, took a small breath, and said nothing more.

Arguing over these matters without evidence was pointless. Without evidence, everything she said would be wrong, and she would be unjustly accusing Viola.

Chapter 424

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Melanie's fingertips were pale from how tightly they were curled up. The smell of disinfectant permeated the hospital ward, and each breath felt like a weight on her chest.

She avoided meeting Eugene's gaze. She did not want her frustration to be too obvious. Eugene was too smart, and she could not hide anything from him.

Glancing at Peachie's IV drip, Melanie muttered some things before grabbing her bag and preparing to leave.

Viola looked at her. "Melanie, where are you going?"

Melanie replied, "To the hotel." She then left without looking back.

Viola frowned and then looked at Peachie, who was lying in bed. She sighed helplessly and whispered to Eugene, "Eugene, wait for me here. I'll go check on Melanie. She must be angry."

Once outside the ward, Melanie's emotions finally settled. She knew finding evidence implicating Viola and Dylan would be difficult given Viola's provocative attitude.

However, if Viola had indeed been whispering into George's and Dylan's ears, then she was indirectly the cause of her grandfather's suffering. Melanie could not let that go so easily.

Lost in her thoughts, Melanie failed to notice the person following her.

It was not until she exited the hospital and reached a nearby alley did Melanie hear eerie laughter behind her. "You're George's daughter, right?"

She halted and turned around, only to see the thugs she had encountered at the branch office not far behind her.

Melanie was immediately on her guard while still maintaining her calm. She took two steps back and said, "You've got the wrong person."

One of them had a phone and was comparing Melanie's features with a photo. He then threw the phone in front of her. "Dare you say the person in the photo isn't you?"

On the phone was unmistakably a photo of Melanie. It was taken surreptitiously at a hospital in Jepton.

The guy had a sly look. He had tanned skin and wore a large gold chain around his neck. His gaze on Melanie was malicious.

"We're your dad's friends. He said his daughter is doing well, so how about you show some respect and give us some money? That shouldn't be a problem, right?"

These men looked to be roughly the same age as George, but they exuded a more streetwise savviness. They were clearly accustomed to a life outside the mainstream.

Disgust marred Melanie's features at the mention of the man. "I have no relation to him. You've got the wrong person."

"Wrong person? We've been waiting at that crappy company every day. That old turtle swore his son-in-law was wealthy and told us to look to him for money, but we haven't seen a dime."

"Anyway, you're his daughter. Showing some filial piety won't hurt."

The guy was about to reach out and grab Melanie when she suddenly raised her voice. "You think I won't I'll call the police?"

“Sure, go ahead and call them.” One of them even whistled mockingly.

Cornered right out of the hospital, Melanie’s mind raced for an escape plan. They were at the mouth of an alley now, and on the other side was a place selling things. However, it was separated by a busy road.

As Melanie was contemplating her next move, a yelp came from behind them. She sharply turned around to see Viola standing not far from the alley, her face filled with terror. A black cat was by her feet, but it quickly scurried away as everyone’s attention shifted to it.

Only a pale-faced Viola remained. She was frozen in place, staring anxiously at Melanie.

Feeling genuinely alarmed, Viola took a couple of steps back as if trying to make a run for it.

With a stern expression, Melanie was about to speak up when the young thug next to her quickly ran past her and grabbed Viola’s arm. He pulled her back.

Smirking, he said, “I just saw these two together. Perfect timing.”

Terrified and panicked, Viola had no choice and instinctively grabbed Melanie’s hand. In a trembling voice, she said, “Melanie, please tell them that I’m just here for a business trip I don’t know anything.”

Chapter 425

The thugs found Viola’s frightened appearance amusing. “Why so scared? We’re just making friends. We’ll take good care of you,” one of them sneered.

Looking at the greasy and ugly faces in front of her, Viola felt disgust along with her fear. She retorted, “I have a boyfriend. If you dare touch me, my boyfriend won’t let you off.”

The young man who had pulled her over mocked, “In that case, call your boyfriend over. I’d love to see who’s the one who’ll be let off easy.”

Viola was still gripping Melanie's hand tightly due to fear, ignoring the pain she was causing. In an attempt to calm her, Melanie held Viola's other hand, urging her not to provoke the thugs any further.

However, instead of calming down, Viola shook off Melanie's hand. She took out her phone from her bag, saying, "I'll call him over. Just wait—"

Before she could finish her sentence, someone slapped the phone out of her hand and onto the ground.

The thug smirked. "Call him over for what? So that he can watch how you'll entertain us? Hmm?"

These thugs were no strangers to illegal activities. One of them grabbed Viola's sleeve. With a forceful pull, the sound of fabric tearing echoed through the alley.

Viola screamed and attempted to kick the thug, but with her limited strength, she failed to land a hit

Instead, the thug seized her and tore the sleeve of her right arm, exposing her pale skin. The thugs' expressions changed as they stared at her bare arm.

Amid her struggles, Viola, both frightened and anxious, looked back at Melanie. Her eyes were full of pleading. "Melanie, quickly make them stop!"

Melanie frowned. How could she make them stop? Nevertheless, she did not dwell on it for long since she could not let these people harm Viola.

Melanie pulled Viola behind her, her expression cold as she glared at the lead thug. She attempted to conceal her fear as she said, "You want money, right? I'll give it to you."

"

The thugs exchanged glances and halted their actions. The lead thug said, "Shouldn't you have said that earlier? We wouldn't have needed to get rough with you earlier."

He reached out to touch Melanie's face, but she quickly dodged.

Hiding behind Melanie, Viola seemed to be in a daze as she asked, "Do you know them? Why are they asking you for money?"

Melanie was on the verge of breaking down into laughter. Viola's focus was peculiar at this moment. Despite being in the midst of danger, she was still trying to set traps.

Before Melanie could respond, the shrill sound of police sirens echoed in the distance, and it was approaching rapidly. Having sensed things were going south, Melanie felt a slight relief upon hearing the siren.

She had already dialed the emergency number in her bag when she sensed danger earlier,

Melanie had set her emergency contact after the previous incident when George caused trouble at the hospital.

When the thugs heard the police sirens, they suddenly panicked. After muttering a few curses under their breath, they forcefully pushed Melanie and Viola aside before running away.

Quick on her feet, Melanie shielded Viola behind her and protected her from being bumped into by the fleeing thugs. In the end, Melanie got run into harshly a few times.

It was not until the alley fell quiet again that Melanie frowned slightly. Her shoulder had not fully healed yet, and the impact from the thugs bumping into her might have aggravated her injury.

She turned to look at Viola behind her and asked somewhat impatiently, "You okay?"

Chapter 426

The incident happened so suddenly, and Viola was taken to the hospital. There were red marks on her fair skin, left behind by the thugs' rough handling when they tore her clothes.

Given the circumstances, Melanie could not leave. She followed her to the emergency room. The door was closed, and Eugene was accompanying Viola inside.

Melanie herself was hurt when the thugs collided with her. She was about to turn away when Theodore, who was beside her, hesitated before asking, "Where are you going?"

Melanie moved her arm slightly. "To the orthopedic department."

Unaware of her arm injury, Theodore asked, "Are you injured too? Why didn't you say anything earlier?"

Melanie bit her lip. How could she have? To whom should she have spoken to? Viola was busy crying, and Eugene was too preoccupied with concern for her. What difference would it have made even if she did say something?

Theodore sighed lightly at her silence. "Eugene and I were leaving the hospital when we heard the sirens. His face turned so dark that it was frightening."

Melanie replied, "So, he thinks I was the one who instructed them?"

Theodore's face flushed with embarrassment. "Not exactly."

It was already quite evident whether or not he thought so. Melanie could not help but mock herself silently, 'Look at that. Even Theodore can tell Eugene's skepticism toward me.'

The door to the examination room was pushed open, interrupting Melanie's thoughts. Theodore stepped forward. "How are you? Are you okay?"

Viola still looked a bit pale in Eugene's coat. She was clearly still shaken. She shook her head and then glanced at Melanie. Meeting Melanie's composed gaze, she hesitated before lowering her head timidly.

Chapter 427

The atmosphere turned awkward. Theodore glanced at Melanie and then at Eugene. "Since everything is fine now, we can rest assured. Melanie, you--"

He intended to suggest Melanie go and check her injuries, but before he could finish, he was interrupted.

Still protecting Viola, Eugene's sharp profile snapped toward Melanie. His expression was cold, and his gaze contained its unusual indifference as it swept over Melanie. "The police will be here soon to investigate. Those involved aren't allowed to leave."

This statement was clearly directed at Melanie. She tightened her jaw as her brows furrowed. "Are you warning someone?"

Eugene's gaze shifted, his dark eyes carrying a chilling sharpness. "Do you think it's directed at you?"

Melanie gritted her teeth and swallowed the pent-up frustration in her chest.

The police arrived soon after. After questioning Melanie and Viola, they said, "We've gathered enough information. We'll investigate this matter promptly and take the necessary actions."

"How will you handle them if you catch them?" Viola whispered.

"It depends on the severity of the situation. Detention or sentencing is both possible."

Viola was taken aback, her head snapping up. She glanced at Melanie hesitantly before averting her gaze. However, that glance was enough to reveal her thoughts.

After the police left, Melanie's tone turned sharp as she asked, "What are you trying to imply with those furtive glances?"

"I, I..." Viola instinctively turned her head to look at Eugene and murmured softly, "I didn't mean anything. I just heard what the police said, and I got a bit worried."

Melanie chuckled, but the chill in her eyes did not dissipate, "Worried? What are you worried about?"

Viola's hesitant demeanor seemed more like an accusation against Melanie.

Chapter 428

A burning anger had been building up in Melanie's heart ever since they encountered the thugs outside the hospital. However, Viola had insisted on cleverly hopping into the fray.

Unable to endure it any longer, Melanie lowered her voice. Her tone carried a cold and muted undertone as she warned, "Viola, you know exactly what happened just now.

"Playing the victim is your choice, and I have no words to say about that. But if you insist on throwing false accusations my way with your pity show, don't think I'll just endure it."

Viola had gotten involved in the scuffle earlier, and Melanie initially did not want to get entangled with her. However, now that the blame had been directly dumped on her head, she might become an easy target for further exploitation if she were to continue keeping silent.

After saying her piece, the suppressed anger in Melanie's chest forced her to lift her gaze and look at Eugene. There was undisguised anger in her clear eyes.

Melanie heard her resolute voice continue, "Mr. Scott, if you want to stand up for your girlfriend, it's best to open your eyes wide first. Don't be so quick to pounce on people and brandish that Scott family arrogance."

Melanie had not learned much in the years since she became chief secretary of LeapCo, but controlling her emotions was something she excelled at.

It had been a long time since she last got this angry, and her face was slightly flushed from the agitation as her chest rose and fell slightly.

Eugene's gaze was profound, a sharpness lingering in his gaze as he finally paused on

Melanie's face. He was never one to display his emotions openly, and there was only a faint trace of pride apparent.

He was considerably taller than Melanie, and when he lowered his eyes to look at her, the imposing pressure he emanated was quite intense.

"Open my eyes?"

Eugene sneered, his gaze dark and alight with anger. "Melanie, you've been living comfortably too long. Have you forgotten the benefits you gained at LeapCo? You wouldn't have earned the amount you received there in half a lifetime if not for me.

"Do you know how much damage your vampire-like parents have caused the company?"

"And now you're telling me to open my eyes?" Eugene's tone grew more impatient and was as cold as a knife. "The time I should've opened my eyes was when I brought you into LeapCo."

"Eugene," Melanie's voice trembled as she said his name while standing in front of him. She had to tilt her chin up to see the look in his eyes clearly.

In her reddened eyes, a fleeting moment of confusion passed. Her voice was suddenly stuck in her throat. "In what way have I wronged you? Tell me. Is it the company or your family?"

"When have I ever not sucked it up and done as you wished?" she questioned, enunciating every word.

The floodgates holding back the emotions she had been suppressing for so many years suddenly burst open with the questions. The grievances and doubts she had been keeping

hidden for so long surged like a flood, almost engulfing her.

She never understood how Eugene could change his mind about her so easily.

She struggled to hold back tears that prevented her from seeing Eugene's face clearly. Years of accumulated grievances had her feeling acrid and bitter.

"Do you think that I should just accept being your servant without complaint because you showed me charity?" Melanie's voice got lower as she continued, her voice weighted with endless exhaustion and numbness. "Eugene, can't you be less harsh? I'm also in pain."

It had rained in Hearth City yesterday, but today, the weather was fine. The sun was shining bright.

Melanie sat in the taxi in a daze as she watched the billboards flash by outside. Emotions that were long-buried had suddenly erupted, and it was as if it had drained all her strength. Her limbs and joints felt weak.

She reached up and touched her forehead, her hand covering her eyes.

How ridiculous.

It turned out that all these years, she had been nothing but a joke—a complete and utter joke.

Chapter 429

In the hospital corridor, people were coming and going. Viola opened her mouth as if wanting to say something, but upon seeing Eugene's expressionless face, she felt an instinctive fear pierce through her.

She had never seen Eugene so angry before. The intense cold aura surrounding him kept everyone at bay. However, when she thought about what Melanie had just said, her heart tightened. She gritted her teeth and called out to him.

However, Eugene's face remained stern. His sharp gaze suddenly turned toward her. Viola's words got stuck in her throat.

After a moment, she dryly said, "Don't be angry."

The sharpness in Eugene's eyes did not reduce in the slightest. He just nodded gracefully and replied heavily, "The doctor asked you to go for a CT scan. Go."

Facing Eugene's gaze, Viola felt as if her heart was suspended in midair. She did not dare say anything and just went for the scan.

After she left, Theodore hesitated to look at Eugene, who eventually snapped at him, "If you have something to say, then say it."

"Don't you think what you said to Melanie just now was a bit too harsh? She was injured too. I saw her cradling her arm the entire time. It must've hurt. You were so harsh. After all, she's just a lady."

Before he could finish, Eugene's cold and stern voice cut him off, "Are you feeling sorry for her?"

Theodore waved his hands repeatedly. "No, I'm just speaking the truth."

"No one needs your version of the truth."

Eugene's expression was cold and stern, his black eyes exuding a chilly air. His tightly pressed lips revealed the extent of his bad mood.

The results from the police came out that evening. The group of people were troublemakers from Hearth City and were on good terms with George. One of them had won a few thousand dollars from George in a game of cards, but George had not paid up.

When they called to remind him about it, George claimed that his daughter in Jepton had a lot of money and that her boyfriend owned a company. He told them to find his daughter if they needed money and that they could ask for as much as they wanted.

These people were usually jobless and engaged in petty crimes. Now that they had a legitimate reason to extort money, of course, they seized the opportunity. Armed with the information provided by George, they camped outside the LeapCo branch office every day.

When they saw Melanie, they immediately recognized her and decided to take advantage of the situation to intimidate her.

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The truth was revealed, and there was a subtle look on Theodore's face when he said, Eugene, you went too far this time. Melanie was also a victim, and you misunderstood her. No wonder she was driven to tears."

He did not mention Viola, but her face had already turned pale.

Eugene remained silent, his gaze lowered as if he was lost in thought. His sealed lips and stoic demeanor revealed a lack of emotion.

Meanwhile, Melanie was unaware of what was happening on their end. She was already on the plane back to Jepton. Upon returning to the hotel earlier, she booked the earliest flight back to Jepton.

When she arrived at Jepton Airport, it was already past ten o'clock. As soon as she stepped out the gates, she saw Yvonne waiting for her. When Yvonne spotted her, she waved and called out to her, "Over here."

Melanie lugged her suitcase as she made her way over. Her mood was still low, but her face was covered with makeup, hiding all signs of it.

"You picked a good time to come back. It's Reny's birthday today. She was telling me this morning how she wished you were here," Yvonne said. "Since you've just arrived, we might still catch the tail end of the celebration."

Melanie had intended to go home and rest, but upon hearing that today was Reny's birthday, she decided to follow Yvonne to the villa.

At the villa, everyone was still awake. There was a cake on the table, and when Reny saw Melanie, her eyes lit up. "Come on! I haven't cut the cake yet. We've been waiting for you. I just talked to the boss on the phone, and he'll be back soon too."

Chapter 430

Melanie recalled Yvonne mentioning on the phone earlier that the patriarch of the Solomon family had been hospitalized and that Xander had to go back to accompany him. However, as soon as Reny spoke, there was a rustle at the door. The next second, Xander walked in.

"Now that everyone's back, we can cut the cake!" Yvonne said and immediately turned off the lights in the room.

Melanie had not been prepared and panicked out of reflex the moment the lights went out. Then, a faint, familiar fragrance surrounded her the next second.

"When did you come back?" Xander's low voice sounded.

Melanie relaxed. "I just arrived. I heard your grandfather is sick?"

Xander acknowledged her question with a hum. "He's in the intensive care unit now."

Their voices were hushed in the darkness. The singing of the birthday song soon drowned out their conversation, and they said nothing else.

In the dim light, Melanie could vaguely see the flickering flame. Her mind drifted for a moment, but she quickly gathered her thoughts. It was uncertain what she was thinking, but for a moment, she felt like she could not recall anything.

Reny cut her birthday cake before the clock struck 12. Since they were all adults, there was not much interest in the cake. Once it was over, everyone scattered into small groups, each occupied with their own activities.

Melanie and Xander went outside the villa. Chuckling, Xander handed her a piece of cake. They've probably cleared the house. Just have a bit of this."

Melanie looked at him. "You came back on a plane this afternoon, so I guess you didn't have dinner yet. Plus, you don't seem well. Did something happen?"

Xander had keen eyes, and Melanie pursed her lips in a bittersweet manner. "Is it that obvious?"

If

"I just looked at your eyes. They can't hide anything," Xander said.

Melanie had cried when she broke down in the afternoon, so she felt a bit uneasy now. However, she had put on makeup, which only barely concealed the traces. Yvonne did not notice anything, but Xander did.

Melanie accepted the cake but remained silent. She just bit her lower lip lightly.

It was late, and both Melanie and Yvonne stayed at the villa for the night. However, Melanie had trouble sleeping all night.

The next morning, Yvonne looked surprised at her dark circles. "What did you do last night?"

Downstairs, Xander was also present.

He held a tablet in his hands and was reading the news. When he heard them come downstairs, he looked up and frowned. "Didn't sleep well last night?"

"My shoulder is a bit sore. It didn't feel right no matter how I tried," Melanie replied.

This was not a lie. She had not had the chance to go to the hospital for a check-up, and the spot where she was hit during the collision was aching.

Xander glanced at her shoulder. "If your shoulder hurts, go to the hospital—"

Before he could finish, however, Oliver came out from the kitchen. Frowning, he asked Melanie with concern, "Is your shoulder still not better?"

"What's wrong?" Melanie asked.

Straining his head, Oliver said, "There was supposed to be a contract today that I wanted you to handle. Since you're not feeling well, I'll take care of it myself."

Melanie paused. "What contract?"