

Spoiled 1381

Chapter 1381: Encounter Again

Charlotte Thompson thought that she didn't have anything particularly important to take care of that afternoon, so she agreed to Annie Anne's request.

Glancing at the time on her watch, Charlotte said, "There's a restaurant nearby that I think is pretty good—you'll probably like it. I'll send you the location, and we'll meet there then."

After saying that, Charlotte started looking for the restaurant's location on her phone and sent it over to Annie Anne.

"Alright, see you in a bit! I have so much to tell you," Annie said cheerfully.

It seemed like Annie was still on set, as there were some chaotic background noises, but her tone carried a newfound lightness.

After all, the happiest moment for working people is always when the workday ends.

After hanging up, Charlotte stood and headed toward the restaurant.

Because her office wasn't far from the restaurant and it was already past lunch hour, Charlotte lazily thought she'd take a chance and didn't bother making a reservation.

However, to her surprise, the restaurant was exceptionally busy today, and when Charlotte arrived, there wasn't a single free table available.

"How long would I have to wait?" Charlotte asked the receptionist at the front desk.

"About half an hour to an hour," the receptionist thought for a moment before carefully giving Charlotte an estimate.

"That long..." Charlotte's brows furrowed slightly as she mentally chided herself for not making a reservation in advance.

Since Annie hadn't arrived yet, Charlotte decided to contact her and suggest switching to another restaurant.

But just as Charlotte turned around, to her surprise, she spotted a familiar face.

"Mr. Prickly?"

As the man behind her removed his sunglasses and looked up, his eyes met Charlotte's directly. Even though only part of his face was visible, Charlotte instantly recognized who he was.

After all, Campbell Prickly's striking features were hard to ignore. Although Charlotte had only met him once before, he wasn't someone you could easily forget.

When Campbell saw Charlotte, there was a fleeting glimmer in his eyes. Then, glancing around, he raised a finger to his lips, signaling for her to keep quiet.

It was then that Charlotte realized the man before her was a famous celebrity. If her earlier exclamation had inadvertently attracted attention, it would only cause trouble for him.

Feeling a bit apologetic, Charlotte flashed Campbell a sheepish smile.

Fortunately, the front desk was separated from the dining area, so her voice hadn't drawn any unwanted attention.

Campbell looked at Charlotte with a calm smile on his face.

"I didn't expect to run into Miss Thompson here. Are you here for a meal as well?"

Charlotte nodded. "Yes, but unfortunately, I didn't make a reservation, so there aren't any tables available. I might have to wait quite a while, so I'm thinking about going somewhere else instead."

As she spoke, there was a faint hint of regret on Charlotte's face. She had initially wanted to recommend the restaurant's signature dishes to Annie, knowing they'd suit her taste perfectly.

"I see, that's indeed a bit unfortunate," Campbell said with a soft sigh. Then, he added, "Actually, I did make a reservation. I would've invited Miss Thompson to join me, but I'm meeting a few other friends as well, and I figured it might make you feel uncomfortable."

Chapter 1382: Coincidence

Hearing this, Charlotte Thompson shook her head repeatedly, secretly letting out a sigh of relief.

She had only met Campbell Prickly once and exchanged a few words. If they suddenly sat together for a meal, anyone would feel awfully awkward.

Meanwhile, as the two were chatting, the restaurant door swung open again, and in walked Annie Anne, wearing a mask.

Charlotte was facing the restaurant doors, but Campbell had his back to them. So when Annie entered, the first thing she saw was Charlotte chatting with a tall man.

She paused for a moment but soon greeted Charlotte and walked straight to her side.

"Your friend?"

Annie asked Charlotte casually, without immediately turning her head. It was only after her question that she looked toward the man across from Charlotte.

Of course, Annie instantly recognized Campbell Prickly. Though half her face was covered by her mask, the astonishment in her eyes was unmistakable.

"Miss Anne." Campbell nodded toward Annie, his gaze brimming with amusement.

Unexpectedly bumping into her idol again, Annie struggled to suppress the giddy smile threatening to spread across her face. She leaned closer to Charlotte, tapping her waist lightly with an elbow.

"What's going on here? How come Campbell Prickly is here?"

"Mr. Prickly is here for a meal at this restaurant; we just happened to run into each other," Charlotte explained casually. But as she thought about how Annie wouldn't be able to dine here, guilt crept into her heart.

Sure enough, as soon as Annie heard Charlotte's explanation, her eyes lit up.

But in the very next second, Charlotte poured buckets of cold water on Annie's excitement, snuffing it out entirely.

"But I didn't make a reservation ahead of time, so the restaurant doesn't have any available tables now. We probably won't be able to eat here," Charlotte said.

Annie instantly gave Charlotte an exaggeratedly pitiful look, blinking as if she'd committed some grave offense.

Still, after a moment's reflection, Annie figured it was already lucky to bump into Campbell here by chance. Hoping to dine with him would simply be asking too much.

"I didn't expect Miss Thompson and Miss Anne to be so close," Campbell remarked, shooting a glance at his watch and then apologetically speaking up.

"The time for my meeting with a friend is coming up; I won't disturb Miss Thompson and Miss Anne any further."

After exchanging goodbyes, the three went their separate ways.

Campbell headed into the restaurant, while Charlotte and Annie turned to leave.

"Oh my god, when I was shooting at the film studio before, I never had this frequent luck running into Campbell Prickly. But somehow, in just a few short days, I've bumped into him twice! How amazing is that?!"

Annie exclaimed as she grabbed Charlotte's hand and spoke excitedly beside her.

"Isn't he going to star in the same movie as you next? You're going to act with your idol. How does that feel?" Charlotte teased lightly, smiling as she glanced at Annie.

"Of course, I have to work even harder—I can't embarrass myself in front of my idol," Annie said firmly, raising her elegant brows at Charlotte.

But the next second, the smile on her face collapsed.

"As much as seeing my idol makes me happy, it's ultimately just spiritual sustenance. What I need more urgently right now is filling my stomach with material sustenance," Annie lamented dramatically.

Saying this, Annie grabbed Charlotte's hand and pressed it against her stomach.

"Feel it! Feel it! It's already caved in flat!"

Chapter 1383: Robbery

"If I hadn't reserved a table in advance, the two of us wouldn't have ended up standing out here on the street."

"Sigh!"

Charlotte let out a long sigh, then asked Annie what she wanted to eat.

Annie thought for a moment and then winked at Charlotte. "How about we go for hotpot?"

"Hotpot? Wasn't it not too long ago that someone swore up and down they were going on a diet, staying far away from high-calorie foods like hotpot and barbecue? And now you're already craving hotpot?"

"One hotpot meal won't make me fat." Annie mumbled under her breath, which was met with a doubtful look from Charlotte.

Annie scrunched up her nose at her, then linked arms with Charlotte while lowering her head to search on her phone for highly-rated hotpot restaurants nearby.

"Come on, I just really want hotpot. What do you think? Hurry up and take me, Lady Charlotte!"

"Alright, my lady, as you wish!" Charlotte chuckled softly, then followed Annie's lead as they walked forward.

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"So about Florienna, are you just planning to let her do whatever she wants?"

While Charlotte and Annie were eating and chatting, the conversation naturally shifted to the current situation at the Riley Group.

Florienna was someone Charlotte had mentioned to Annie before.

"No need to rush."

Charlotte answered calmly, "The partnership with the Worsen brand hasn't reached its final deadline yet. Whether there's some big play coming is something we'll only know when the collaboration officially ends. Honestly, I think the bigger a splash they make, the better."

That way, it'll be easier to uproot certain people from the company completely.

"You know, Florienna really is something else. She parachuted into the company, doesn't know how to keep a low profile, and yet she gets more and more arrogant. Does she really think her backer is unshakable?"

Recalling the stories Charlotte had shared about Florienna's antics, Annie couldn't help but laugh out loud.

Charlotte shook her head, but she had no desire to continue discussing such topics.

"By the way, Annie, do you want to come back with me to visit the kids? They haven't seen you in so long—they really miss you."

Annie froze for a moment at Charlotte's suggestion, but she didn't immediately agree. A hint of hesitation crept into her gaze.

At that moment, her phone, placed off to the side, started ringing. Seeing who was calling, Annie hesitated briefly before choosing to answer.

"I'm with Charlotte right now. In a bit, we're going to see Annie and Grace, so you don't need to come pick me up."

Annie's response was brief and to the point, and she hung up right after.

"That was Oliver?" Charlotte asked.

Annie nodded and replied, "He went to the film set looking for me earlier, but I wasn't there, so he called. Oh, by the way, I was thinking about picking up some gifts before visiting the kids. Is that okay?"

"Of course." Charlotte nodded in agreement.

Per Annie's suggestion, the two of them wandered around a shopping mall, picking out some small gifts and toys for the kids, and then headed to the kindergarten to pick them up.

They arrived early at the kindergarten, so there weren't many parents waiting outside yet. However, Annie seemed excited to see the kids again. She got out of the car early and stood by the kindergarten entrance.

But just then, a scream shattered the quiet.

"Help! Robbery! Somebody help!"

Chapter 1384: Accident

Charlotte Thompson's gaze was drawn to the sound.

When she looked up, she saw a woman not far away shouting loudly, while a man clad in black and wearing a mask was running forward in a rush.

As he ran, he seemed a bit nervous, glancing behind him. Charlotte, just getting out of the car, was startled and had no idea what was happening.

But as she looked up, she noticed the direction the man in black was heading toward—right where Annie Anne was standing at the entrance of the elementary school.

Annie was looking down at her phone, seemingly texting someone and naturally oblivious to the person running toward her.

"Annie!" Charlotte quickly called out to warn her, but it was a little too late.

By the time Annie reacted and looked up, the man was already in front of her.

Realizing someone was in his way, the man in black swiftly swung his arms, shoving Annie aside and causing her to fall hard to the ground.

Perhaps because of Annie's position, it affected the man's pace, and he stumbled slightly after shoving her.

This hesitation led to several vigilant parents nearby pinning him to the ground.

Charlotte quickly walked over to Annie's side. Seeing Annie clutching her knee, she asked worriedly, "Annie, are you hurt?"

Annie had just been discharged from the hospital not long ago, and her injuries had only recently healed. Now, being shoved and falling to the ground again—what if she got hurt again? It would be terrible.

Though Annie frowned deeply, she shook her head to reassure Charlotte that she was fine.

Looking down, however, she noticed that the skin on her arm had been scraped.

"It's nothing, don't worry."

Annie said casually, then turned her attention to the man in black, who was being restrained. As their eyes met, she noticed an odd flicker of surprise in his gaze.

But Annie didn't register this small detail. Her eyes soon fell on the wallet discarded on the ground, and she leaned down to pick it up.

At this moment, the woman who had seemingly been robbed of the wallet ran over while panting. Her face, filled with anger, made no effort to conceal her fury as she looked at the subdued thief on the ground.

"People like this are just despicable!"

The woman gritted her teeth, her fingers digging tightly into her palms.

"Is this your wallet?" Annie asked, stopping the woman and holding the wallet out to her.

The woman took one look and quickly nodded. "Ah, yes, yes, that's my wallet. Thank you so much."

Annie shook her head, but as she reached out to hand over the wallet, the woman noticed the scrape on Annie's arm. Letting out a startled "Oh no," the woman immediately began searching her pockets and pulled out a band-aid.

"You're hurt. Here, use this to cover the wound."

Annie was briefly taken aback but did not refuse. She thanked the woman with a polite smile.

By then, the police had arrived to take the man in black away, with the woman following them to the station.

"Who would have thought that getting pushed like this would result in me doing a good deed," Annie said with a laugh.

But her words made Charlotte frown deeply.

"You're certainly optimistic, but your injuries haven't even fully healed yet. What if something worse happened when you fell like that?" Charlotte said with obvious worry.

"You make me sound so fragile," Annie teased with a light-hearted wink, her tone cheerful and playful.

Chapter 1385 Curiosity

At this moment, the crisp voices of children came from the kindergarten:

"Mommy! Auntie Annie!"

Annie turned her head and saw a few little ones running toward them with delighted expressions.

Smiling warmly at them, Annie quickly stepped forward and gathered all the little darlings into her arms.

"Mommy."

Olivia looked at Annie with surprise and wrapped her arms around her waist, snuggling into her embrace like a spoiled little kitten.

The usually shy Olivia only ever behaved this way when she saw Annie.

Annie gently stroked her daughter's cheek, her gaze brimming with tenderness.

"It's been so long, Auntie, and you've gotten even prettier!" Grace said with a big grin, looking at Annie. Hearing this, Annie reached out and pinched Grace's little cheek.

"You little rascal, where did you learn such sweet-talking flattery after all this time?"

"It's not flattery! I'm speaking from the heart!" Grace immediately put on a pitiful look, as if a bit dissatisfied with Annie's "misunderstanding."

"You cheeky little thing. You're nothing like your mommy in that regard," Annie teased, knowing Grace was just putting on an act. She ruffled Grace's hair lovingly.

"Auntie Annie, Mommy said you're shooting a new show right now—is that true? Does that mean we'll be able to see you on TV again soon?"

Chad tilted his little face up, staring at Annie with a look of pure anticipation. Usually quiet and composed, Chad, it turned out, was quite the devoted fan of television and movies.

Annie nodded, and Jack immediately clapped his hands in excitement, cheering, "That's awesome!"

"And this time," Annie said, leaning down slightly with her hands on her knees to get closer to the children, "you won't just see your auntie on TV..."

Annie's words naturally fueled the children's curiosity even more.

Standing off to the side, Charlotte seemed to recall something upon hearing Annie's words. She froze for a moment, about to speak, but Annie beat her to it.

"This time, you'll even get to see your mommy on TV."

"Really?" The children's faces lit up with surprise, and they all turned their gazes toward Charlotte expectantly.

Under the children's eager stares, Charlotte couldn't help but feel bashful.

"Is the director really going to use that scene?" Charlotte blinked and whispered to Annie hesitantly.

Charlotte had indeed made a cameo in the production, but due to a sudden prop collapse during filming—and considering she wasn't a professional actress—she had assumed the director might simply include that scene as behind-the-scenes footage for promotional purposes.

After all, she had only gotten the cameo role because she bore a strong resemblance to Riley.

"Of course he'll use it—you've already filmed it. Why wouldn't he?" Annie replied with certainty, though her eyes gleamed with a mischievous sparkle.

The exchange between Annie and Charlotte only deepened the children's curiosity, and they eagerly crowded around the pair, bombarding them with questions about what had happened.

"Don't just stand around here; let's head back first. Then I'll tell you all about what's been happening on the set lately," Annie suggested.

Chapter 1386: Much Better Than Riley Thompson

Annie Anne was holding the children's hands, ready to take them home.

It was at that moment Olivia Thompson noticed the wound on Annie Anne's arm.

The smile on her face disappeared instantly, replaced by worry. She grabbed Annie Anne's hand and asked urgently, "Mommy, how did you get hurt?"

Olivia's question caught the attention of all the children, and Annie Anne did not try to hide the wound on her arm.

"Mommy accidentally fell and scraped it. It's just a little cut."

Annie Anne didn't mention the robbery she had encountered on the way earlier, but Olivia still had a worried expression on her face.

She stood on her tiptoes, her face on the verge of crying.

This made Annie's heart ache, so she gently pinched Olivia's cheek. Then she remembered the band-aid the woman had given her earlier and pulled it out from her pocket, handing it to Olivia.

"It's just a small scrape, really nothing serious. How about Olivia helps Mommy put the band-aid on?"

Olivia took the band-aid, but before applying it, she bent down close to Annie Anne's wound and softly blew on it.

"Mommy's boo-boo, fly away. The wound will heal faster too."

Olivia's delicate and caring gesture brought a tender look to both Annie Anne's and Charlotte Thompson's eyes.

Olivia carefully applied the band-aid to Annie Anne's arm, the concern and sadness on her face completely unconcealed.

Annie Anne couldn't bear to see her beloved daughter feeling so sad because of her. She reached out, gently hooked Olivia's chin, and said softly, "Look, Mommy's brought you a gift."

Annie Anne got into the car first and then handed the bag from the back seat to Olivia.

Olivia blinked her eyes and pulled out an adorable bunny plushie from the bag. Its long ears drooped sweetly, and its eyes were hidden underneath—a style clearly loved by children.

"It's Bunny."

When Olivia saw the bunny plushie, a smile indeed appeared on her face.

This was the bunny plushie Olivia had wanted for a long time. However, the last time Annie Anne took her to buy it, it had been out of stock. Although Annie Anne had bought other toys for her back then, she had never forgotten about it.

So today, when Charlotte and Annie went shopping at the mall, Annie purposely sought out the store and finally managed to get this limited-edition bunny.

"Thank you, Mommy."

Olivia gave Annie Anne a sweet smile, prompting Annie to kiss her cheek affectionately.

Afterward, Annie Anne also handed out the gifts she had prepared for the other children. Clearly, each had been chosen based on their preferences, and the children were each overjoyed.

On the way back to the villa, Charlotte Thompson and Annie Anne were chatting and laughing with the children.

When they arrived at the villa, Annie Anne naturally started telling the children about Charlotte's experience filming the drama on set.

"Mommy really acted in a drama with that auntie who looks so much like her?" Hank Thompson asked with a shocked expression, blinking at Annie Anne in disbelief.

"Mm-hmm. But your mommy is much more talented than her. Some people might even think your mommy is the professional actress," Annie Anne whispered mischievously to Hank.

Although she felt that this comment might not be entirely appropriate, Annie Anne harbored no fondness for Riley Thompson, so she didn't bother to conceal her feelings from the children.

Chapter 1387: Picking Her Up

"Of course, Mommy is the best; she's excellent at everything she does."

Grace Thompson swung her little legs to and fro beside them, then proudly tilted her chin upward, as though Annie Anne's praise had been directed at her rather than Charlotte Thompson.

"When I grow up, I want to be just as amazing as Mommy."

Yet, seeing Grace bask in Annie Anne's admiration, Jack Thompson's face darkened as he muttered, "But this doesn't seem quite right."

"The director suddenly asking Mommy to play a role—isn't it just because she looks like the woman in the show? Doesn't this feel like a publicity stunt?"

Jack grumbled, visibly upset ever since he learned the reasons behind Charlotte filming the drama.

"Exactly! Mommy is one of a kind—nobody else compares," Chad Thompson chimed in.

The children were well aware of the online buzz and controversies surrounding her.

Seeing their earnest defense of her, Charlotte responded with a soft laugh, explaining, "It was Mommy who agreed to help the director out. It's really no big deal."

Still, she couldn't entirely ignore the provocation from Riley Thompson's camp, though to Charlotte, it was little more than a trivial matter.

However, when Annie Anne mentioned that the scene Charlotte acted in would likely be included in the final cut, Charlotte started contemplating whether she should proactively reach out to the director.

She understood the director's motive—to generate more exposure for the drama—and was also well aware of the likely impact of the footage.

Charlotte feared that if the scene were released, it might spark even greater controversy.

She decided she would try contacting the director again, suggesting that her appearance be limited to the behind-the-scenes extras.

Noticing the subtle shift in Charlotte's expression, Annie Anne seemed to immediately grasp her thoughts.

"Don't worry, I'll talk to the director for you," she said.

Annie Anne added, "Even if the director is willing to release the scene, I doubt Riley herself would want that particular segment—the one where you two share screen time—to be broadcast."

After all, Riley had been completely outclassed by Charlotte.

When a professional actor's skills can't measure up to those of a designer, doesn't it make them a laughingstock?

Just then, as Annie Anne was playing games with the children, Justin Battleson returned—and trailing closely behind him was Oliver Hudson.

Oliver had followed Justin here for one obvious reason: Annie Anne.

When Annie Anne caught sight of Oliver, her expression froze for a moment. Then, she straightened up from the couch and turned to Charlotte, saying, "It's getting late; I'll visit you and the kids another time."

"Mommy."

Olivia Thompson hugged her bunny plushie tightly as she stood up. Reluctantly, she looked at Annie Anne ahead of her, and then her gaze shifted to Oliver Hudson nearby.

Although Oliver's face remained impassive, the warmth and softness in his eyes were unmistakable.

Olivia blinked her eyes, then buried the lower half of her face against the plush bunny's fuzzy head.

Annie Anne bent over to plant a gentle kiss on Olivia's cheek.

"Whenever Annie misses Mommy, Mommy will come back to see you," she promised.

It wasn't that Annie Anne hadn't considered bringing Olivia back to live under her care.

But Olivia had grown up beside Charlotte since she was little and spent her days with the other children, forging deep bonds with them.

If Annie were to take Olivia away alone, she feared the child would end up feeling terribly lonely.

Chapter 1388: Stop messing around.

Besides, Annie Anne knew that she had to be filming now and couldn't always stay with Annie.

If she brought Olivia Thompson back, she'd likely end up all alone.

So, after a brief discussion with Charlotte Thompson, they decided that it might be better for Olivia to continue staying with Charlotte for the time being. Once Olivia grew a bit older, Annie could bring her back.

"Hmm hmm, Annie will always miss Mommy, and Mommy should miss Annie too." Olivia blinked her big, bright eyes, gazing at Riley Thompson.

Like a little bunny that stirred affection, this sight softened Annie's heart unbearably. She hugged Olivia tight and showered her with several kisses before reluctantly letting go.

"Annie has to listen to Mommy Charlotte,"

Annie lightly tapped Olivia's nose and spoke softly, though a trace of melancholy couldn't help but surface in her gaze.

At that moment, Annie felt like a deeply unqualified mother.

She offered Olivia a smile, said goodbye to the other children, and then straightened her clothes before walking toward Oliver Hudson.

"I'll leave now. I'll come visit you again when I have time."

As she neared Oliver, Annie naturally reached out and looped her arm through his. Charlotte Thompson noticed this, her gaze flickered slightly, though her expression remained unchanged.

After exchanging a nod with Annie, Charlotte watched their retreating figures with an air of contemplation.

Noticing Charlotte's subtle shift in mood, Justin Battleson wrapped his arms around her from behind and rested his chin gently on her shoulder.

Because of the angle of his head, Justin's cheek brushed lightly against Charlotte's chin in an affectionate gesture.

"What's wrong?" Justin asked softly.

Charlotte shook her head slightly. "I was just thinking about those things from the past."

The memory of the profoundly scarred and tormented Annie Anne back then—the one Charlotte knew—made the scene she'd just witnessed feel almost like an insubstantial illusion.

In the years they'd known each other, while Charlotte couldn't claim complete understanding of Annie's personality, she had a fair grasp of her thoughts through Annie's usual words and behavior.

Annie being with Oliver Hudson like this—was this truly what Annie wished for?

Still, Charlotte quickly dismissed these lingering worries. Since this was Annie's choice, no matter what, Charlotte would support her.

"By the way, most of the collaboration with Worsen brand is almost complete. We're perfectly on track to send it off before the final deadline."

Charlotte turned slightly in Justin's arms and spoke leisurely.

"Thank you for your hard work," Justin said affectionately before planting a kiss on Charlotte's forehead.

Her hair brushed against his skin, tickling Charlotte lightly and making her shift uncomfortably.

Charlotte tucked her chin instinctively, trying to slip out of Justin's arms. But with his cherished person held close, Justin couldn't bear to let go—his hands tightened around her waist slightly.

Charlotte reached out to pry at Justin's hands clasped around her waist, but he took it a step further by gripping her hands firmly instead.

"Stop teasing,"

Charlotte chuckled at Justin.

But when she turned her head, she noticed a few children sitting on the sofa, their wide eyes curiously fixed on Justin and Charlotte.

Chapter 1389: What Does Mr. Battleson Want to Talk About?

For a moment, Charlotte Thompson's face was tinged with a blush as radiant as the setting sun.

She glared playfully at Justin Battleson, her brows slightly furrowed, and scolded, "Let go of me, the kids are watching."

Hearing this, Justin turned his head to glance at the few little "light bulbs" shining nearby. He raised an eyebrow, but without saying anything, Hank Thompson was the first to shift his gaze away.

"Ah, what a lovely day it is today!"

The other children followed Hank's lead, dramatically averting their gazes in exaggerated fashion, while muttering irrelevant remarks to themselves.

Even though Justin and Charlotte had been in a committed relationship for quite some time, such intimate gestures were fine when they were alone in private.

But for Charlotte, these blatantly affectionate displays in front of the kids still made her feel somewhat embarrassed.

Flustered, Charlotte quickly pushed down Justin's hand and wriggled out of his embrace.

Seeing Charlotte's bashful expression, Justin felt even more delighted. He lowered his head and sneaked a quick kiss on her cheek before finally releasing the arm he had wrapped around her waist.

"You!"

Charlotte lightly bit her lower lip, then pressed the back of her hand against her slightly burning cheeks and hurriedly turned to leave.

"I'm going to wash some fruit."

What Charlotte didn't notice as she turned away, however, was that the children, who had outwardly averted their gazes earlier, were now once again focused intently on her without her realizing it.

The kids exchanged glances with one another, their faces breaking into smiles of shared joy.

But Justin, as he looked at the group of little rascals in front of him, couldn't help feeling a bit annoyed.

After all, Charlotte was far too shy in front of the kids. If he had known, he would've made sure to leave these little troublemakers at Stardust Garden for longer.

It felt like it had been ages since he and Charlotte had shared any real one-on-one time together.

Hmm, in a few days, he'd find some excuse to send all the kids away.

As if sensing the intentions hidden in Justin's gaze, the kids immediately stifled their grins. Quietly, they grabbed their toys and marched upstairs one by one like soldiers on a mission.

By the time Charlotte came back out with a fruit platter, the children were nowhere to be seen.

"Where are the kids? Where did they all run off to?"

Charlotte paused briefly, puzzled as she looked at the now-empty living room.

"Probably realized that the lights in the living room are bright enough already," Justin replied, seated on the sofa. His expression was composed, though the subtle curve at the corner of his lips gave him away.

Charlotte blinked, a bit perplexed, but as her gaze locked with Justin's, she suddenly realized what he meant.

"I just remembered there's a bit of work left on my designs. I'll head to the study," she said, setting the fruit platter down and turning to leave. But Justin was already a step ahead, hooking her arm and pulling her back into his embrace.

Charlotte's fingertips, still damp from the water, felt slightly cool as they brushed against Justin's skin.

"You're already home from work. Are you really planning to keep talking about work today, hmm?" Justin asked in a soft, teasing tone.

In the end, Charlotte resigned herself to curling up in Justin's arms. She lifted her dewy eyes to gaze at him, a faint smile tugging at the corners of her lips. "Then what does Mr. Battleson want to talk about?"

Justin's eyes darkened slightly. Leaning closer to Charlotte, he played with her fingertips, massaging them in his palm.

"What do you think?"

His voice was deep and magnetic, like aged red wine—imbued with a temptation as intoxicating as it was irresistible.

Chapter 1390: Investigate Riley Thompson's Background

Charlotte reached out to wrap her arm around Justin Battleson's neck, her gaze sweeping over his thin lips.

She raised her eyes to meet his, finding her own reflection in his deep gaze.

"How about we find some time..."

Charlotte deliberately stretched out her tone.

"Hmm?" Justin's throat moved slightly as he responded softly, as if eager to hear what she was going to say next.

"How about we find some time to take the kids to the amusement park?"

The next second, Charlotte flashed a mischievous grin, picked up a grape, and popped it into Justin's mouth before gracefully slipping out of his embrace.

"I've promised the kids several times to take them to the amusement park, but we've never had a chance. Once this busy period at the company is over, let's set aside a weekend to take the children."

Charlotte spoke with a serious expression.

Justin had caught the trace of a sly smile in Charlotte's gaze earlier, and he knew things wouldn't be as simple as they seemed.

But hearing Charlotte's suggestion, Justin didn't object and naturally nodded in agreement.

After all, there weren't many opportunities for him and Charlotte to truly spend time with the kids. Taking a day to have fun with them sounded like a good idea.

"It's settled, then."

As she said this, Charlotte stood up from the sofa, picked up the fruit tray on the coffee table, and went upstairs without delay.

Watching Charlotte's back as she ascended the stairs, Justin's expression was filled with unconcealed affection.

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While warmth enveloped the interaction between Justin and Charlotte,

on the other side, as Annie Anne stepped out of the villa, she was about to loosen her palm, which had been holding onto Oliver Hudson's arm.

However, Oliver seemed to anticipate her action, and he directly clasped her hand, intertwining their fingers firmly, leaving Annie no room to refuse.

"Let go of me. I can walk by myself," Annie said flatly.

But Oliver paid no heed to her words. When Annie tried to pull her hand away with a bit of struggle, Oliver tightened his grip on her palm and, with a slight force on her wrist, yanked her closer to him.

"Behave."

Oliver pressed his fingertips against Annie's cheek, his tone carrying an undeniable authority that could not be defied.

And yet, Annie smiled sweetly at Oliver, her other hand intentionally brushing his fingertips away, as if purposely trying to provoke him.

"I won't."

This gesture, however, made Oliver notice the bandage on her arm. He grabbed her wrist and lifted it slightly.

"What happened?"

"I accidentally fell," Annie replied lightly, withdrawing her hand as she noticed Oliver's slightly scrutinizing gaze. She raised her eyebrows ever so slightly in response.

"Don't worry. It's not like last time, where I broke an arm and a leg."

Annie didn't seem to pay attention to the expression on Oliver's face, but she appeared to recall something and addressed him again.

"Oh, by the way, I told you before, right? There's someone in my production crew who looks a lot like Charlotte—the actress named Riley Thompson."

Although Oliver gave a soft acknowledgment, it was clear he wasn't particularly interested in this topic.

"I'd like to ask you to help me look into this Riley Thompson and find out what her background is."

"Alright." Oliver responded simply, agreeing to Annie's request.