

Spoiled 1421

Chapter 1421: Visit Teddy Carter

Until the "line disconnected" prompt sounded in the phone, Teddy Carter finally failed to suppress his emotions and hurled his phone onto the bed with fury.

His initially sorrowful expression gradually revealed a trace of coldness.

In the end, he picked up the phone next to him again and sent out a message.

"Alright, I agree to meet you."

...

Charlotte Thompson received the message while she was drinking coffee in Justin Battleson's office.

Gazing at the message displayed on the screen of her phone, Charlotte's eyes softened into a ripple of amusement.

"After work, we won't be leaving together. I'm going to meet someone."

Setting the coffee cup aside, Charlotte lifted her gaze toward Justin Battleson, who was walking in her direction.

Upon hearing her words, Justin's brows twitched as he sat down beside her, curiosity evident in his voice:

"Going to meet someone from Melissa Tanner's studio?"

Earlier today, Charlotte had mentioned Zara Ward to Justin, so he instinctively assumed the person Charlotte was going to meet could only be her.

But Charlotte shook her head. "I'm meeting Teddy Carter."

"Teddy Carter?"

This name was far from unfamiliar to Justin. "What are you meeting him for?"

"He's been fired from the company," Charlotte replied.

Currently, Justin was pretending to be severely suppressed in front of the board of directors, so he wasn't necessarily aware of such matters like employees getting fired.

As Charlotte uttered these words, Justin's face revealed slight confusion—but he quickly pieced things together.

"Something to do with George Robbins?"

Charlotte thought for a moment. Although she felt her next words might be somewhat inappropriate, she still chose to speak them: "Yeah, sort of. To put it simply, George Robbins made him wear the green hat."

However, upon hearing this, Justin's brows furrowed deeply.

Charlotte went on to share with Justin all the things she had overheard outside the office.

"Now, for Florienna Ellis, Teddy Carter holds no remaining value. And I've discovered another interesting detail."

Charlotte rested her chin on her hand, her fingertip idly tapping against her cheek.

"In the newly opened online store by Florienna Ellis, aside from the collaboration designs between my work and the Worsen brand, the best-selling clothing pieces... there are issues with them too."

Charlotte certainly understood that Justin wasn't interested in dealings involving Florienna, so she didn't bother pulling out her phone to show the web interface—she simply explained it to him.

"I'm familiar enough with Teddy Carter's design style to confidently say that the clothes in question are absolutely his creations."

Of course, Charlotte casually mentioned it, without much emphasis.

She could tell Teddy Carter genuinely liked Florienna. Offering his artistic designs to her wasn't beyond what Teddy might willingly do.

"Teddy Carter was the first to take sides and support Florienna after she voiced her stance. If someone like him suddenly turned against her, it would undoubtedly cause an uproar."

Moreover, Teddy Carter had sacrificed his job for Florienna, only to receive such a humiliating betrayal in return. Even if Teddy wasn't an ordinary man, enduring such a thing wouldn't be easy.

While Charlotte felt a sliver of sympathy for Teddy in her heart, she ultimately didn't see him as pitiful.

After all, Teddy Carter had previously given Florienna special treatment, enabling her to parachute into the company—a deed no decent person would have done.

On top of the matter with Elijah Walker and the collaboration with XTZ, Teddy being used and then coldly betrayed by Florienna counts as a fitting case of karma, doesn't it?

Chapter 1422: Fallen and Fascinated

"What's there to see anyway? Just make a phone call instead."

Justin Battleson understood the gist of the situation, but he still didn't agree with Charlotte Thompson going to meet Teddy Carter.

Besides, with the evidence they currently had, it was more than enough to take down Florienna Ellis, and even George Robbins. Teddy Carter's involvement wouldn't significantly affect the outcome.

What Justin didn't expect, however, was Charlotte tilting her head slightly before speaking with an air of obviousness:

"Because I'm petty."

Charlotte raised her brows at Justin, pursing her lips as she said, "Before, Teddy Carter and Florienna Ellis were spreading rumors around the office about me and Elijah Walker. Now plagiarism is one thing, but I still hold a grudge for that!"

"You!"

Justin couldn't help but lightly flick Charlotte's nose when he heard this, his smile soft and indulgent.

"So, if you ever do something bad behind my back and I find out, I'm definitely going to hold it against you for the rest of my life," Charlotte took the chance to grab Justin's fingertip, her expression carrying a hint of playful threat.

"Something bad?"

Justin slightly lowered his head as he leaned in, closing the distance between them. His hands rested on either side of Charlotte, trapping her within his arms.

"When exactly have I done anything bad? Someone here seems to know better than I do, huh?"

With a faint smile playing on his lips, Justin's words came out smoothly, his lips moving ever closer to Charlotte's face.

Charlotte froze for a moment when she heard this, but suddenly realized something. Looking slightly embarrassed, she reached out and gave Justin's shoulder a playful shove.

"You! You're so annoying!"

But seeing Charlotte's coquettish glare, Justin felt half of his body go numb, as if her gaze alone had made him completely helpless.

The Charlotte before him always had countless ways to captivate and ensnare him.

Unable to resist, Justin leaned down even further, just about to touch Charlotte's cheek, when suddenly a voice came from just outside.

"Sister Charlotte... there's a call from XTZ."

Apparently, someone had left the office door slightly ajar when they came in. So when Coco knocked, she naturally ended up pushing the door open, revealing the scene on the sofa inside.

Coco immediately covered her eyes with one hand while fumbling to shut the door as she fled in a panic.

"I'm so sorry!"

Coco's apology and the sound of the door closing rang out simultaneously.

Still covering her eyes as she bolted out of the office, Coco, oblivious to the scene in front of her, inevitably ran into something hard, letting out an "ouch" of pain.

She thought she had run into a wall, but when she opened her eyes, she realized Michael Richard was standing in front of her.

"What's wrong with you?"

"Why didn't you tell me that Mr. Battleson's office door wasn't closed?!"

Michael and Coco spoke almost in unison, before both froze for a moment. Coco, hugging the files in her arms, huffed at Michael and said:

"It's the same thing as last time! Sister Charlotte was in Mr. Battleson's office, and you didn't tell me either." Coco wrinkled her nose, wondering how she kept finding herself in situations like this.

Recalling Justin's expression when she entered the room earlier, Coco could feel a chill running down her spine.

What if one day she got fired for having even a single stray hair arrive at work before her feet did?

However, faced with Coco's questioning, Michael simply looked completely baffled.

Chapter 1423: I Am the Real Fool

"Let me just ask you, Coco—have you ever bothered to ask my permission before barging into the office?"

Michael Richard, like Coco, is Justin Battleson's assistant. He's the one handling many of Justin's mundane daily tasks.

As such, his own office is naturally located on the same floor.

Anyone who needs to see Justin often ends up coming to Michael first, but there always seem to be certain individuals in the company who don't follow the standard protocol.

One of them happens to be the person standing right in front of him: Coco.

"I—" Coco started, but quickly realized he was clearly in the wrong. He could only rub his forehead in frustration and, before leaving, threw in a parting comment, "You could've reminded me, though!"

Michael was at a loss for words. What was this nonsense?

Meanwhile, Charlotte Thompson had already slipped out of Justin's grip after Coco shut the door behind him. Staring at the now-closed door to the office, Charlotte heaved a silent sigh and rolled her eyes in exasperation.

How could she forget to properly close the door?

Could this be karma for trying to scheme against others? And now she herself had fallen right into the pit she dug.

While Charlotte's expression held a hint of helplessness, Justin's face was clouded with frustration.

Why was it that every time he wanted to get intimate with Charlotte lately, someone or something always interrupted?

Justin clenched his molars tightly in irritation.

...

The office debacle was nothing more than a fleeting interlude. After Charlotte left Justin's office, she naturally returned a missed call from XTZ.

Mr. Carter spoke to Charlotte on the phone, addressing not only the long-term collaboration between the two companies but also the ongoing public scandal surrounding Charlotte.

"Thank you, Mr. Carter, for postponing the launch," Charlotte said, expressing her gratitude over the phone.

Mr. Carter's hearty laughter could be heard through the receiver:

"It's a minor gesture, really. Besides, if it weren't for you, I wouldn't have uncovered the issues in our marketing campaign."

"But taking this route at the start did somewhat tarnish your company's reputation, and I deeply apologize for that," Charlotte said apologetically.

"If Miss Thompson truly feels she owes us something, perhaps in the next collaboration, you could design some outfits for us—free of charge?"

"It would be my honor."

...

While on the phone with XTZ, Charlotte had already left the company and was en route to meet Teddy Carter at their agreed-upon location.

The rendezvous spot was a café not far from Riley Group's headquarters.

Charlotte had recently crossed paths with Teddy at the office. Back then, he had still been looking relatively composed.

But in less than two days, Charlotte now found Teddy's complexion pallid and utterly worn-out. Deep, dark circles hung under his eyes, his chin dotted with sparse stubble. A heavy air of despondency seemed to shroud him entirely.

"I didn't expect the formidable leader of the design team, Mr. Carter, to end up looking like this," Charlotte remarked.

As she spoke, Charlotte slid into the seat across from Teddy.

"Yeah, I always thought I was the clever one... Turns out, looking at myself now, I'm the real idiot!"

Teddy's lips curled into a bitter smile, and he propped his face up with both hands, trying to conceal the emotions slipping across his features.

But to Charlotte, his pitiful state didn't stir even the faintest ripple in her heart.

"Teddy, I didn't come here to listen to your sob story," Charlotte said coldly.

"You only want to use me to go after Florienna Ellis! Isn't that right?"

Teddy chuckled grimly. He wasn't a fool.

Chapter 1424 Disgraced and Discredited

Teddy Carter had been used as a tool for too long, so when Charlotte Thompson spoke those words, he was already well aware.

"So, I wonder if Designer Carter would be willing to help me with this favor?" Charlotte looked calmly at Teddy in front of her, speaking softly.

She didn't elaborate further, simply waiting quietly for Teddy's response.

"Then I want to ruin them completely!"

In that instant, it seemed as though Teddy released all the anger in his heart, the clenching of his jaw revealed just how long he had been enduring it.

"Ruin them completely." Charlotte murmured these words, as if something amusing occurred to her, and a subtle smile crept onto her lips.

"Exactly, I want to ruin those two despicable people, especially Florienna Ellis! How can she be so unscrupulous and shameless?"

Teddy's emotions grew increasingly agitated, and by the end, his voice shook violently, not knowing if it was due to anger or a belated sadness.

But subsequently, it all vanished within Teddy's deep breaths.

"As long as you can achieve that, no matter what you want me to say or do, I can do it."

Teddy's eyes were still faintly tinged with red, and as he spoke to Charlotte, his tone grew gradually darker.

"If you want to ruin them completely, there are some things you can say yourself."

Charlotte looked at Teddy with a calm expression, and her words served merely as a subtle reminder to him.

Teddy's expression seemed momentarily dazed until something seemed to flash across his mind, and a hint of wild joy appeared in his eyes.

The fist clenched on the table continued to tighten, knuckles making a cracking sound.

He didn't speak, but the expression on his face and the actions of his hands were enough to guess what he was thinking at that moment.

"I just enjoy chatting with smart people like Mr. Carter."

Charlotte smiled brightly, for now, the final piece of the puzzle had fallen into place, and this grand play seemed ready to begin.

Since there wasn't much to say between them, Charlotte prepared to leave after discussing the matter with Teddy, but before she could stand up, Teddy called out to her.

"You should know the truth behind what Florienna accused of being plagiarism."

Charlotte didn't respond, just quietly looked at Teddy, waiting for his next words.

"Why would you rather endure all the insults and exposure on the internet these days, instead of directly presenting the evidence to counter Florienna?"

Teddy voiced the doubts in his heart.

He didn't think Charlotte had remained inactive for so long just to wait for him as a pawn.

Suddenly, a flash of insight crossed Teddy's mind, and he looked at the seated Charlotte with disbelief.

"You..."

Teddy opened his mouth, but couldn't find the words to continue, only the shock in his eyes reflected his current thoughts.

"What's wrong?" Seeing Teddy's reaction, Charlotte's expression showed a bit of innocence.

But Teddy chose to shake his head, leaving the topic as it was.

"You want both Florienna and George Robbins to be completely ruined, and those are also the two people I want to deal with."

Charlotte answered the question Teddy had just raised.

Chapter 1425: Not Even as Good as the Ancients

"You need to cast the fishing net into the pond to catch any fish. Some things require patience."

Finally, Charlotte stood up and spoke to Teddy Carter.

"Of course, the choice is yours now. What you want to do is entirely up to you."

Charlotte paused for a moment, looked up at Teddy Carter, and asked, "Did you ever give Florienna Ellis a set of design drafts?"

"If you're talking about the ones she used for her online shop, let me tell you, no, those weren't from me. She stole them from me."

Teddy Carter answered Charlotte's question calmly.

Though Charlotte was a bit surprised to hear this, on reflection, this outcome wasn't entirely unexpected.

However, given Teddy Carter's attitude toward Florienna Ellis, it seemed unlikely he wouldn't have just given her the designs. Florienna could have easily obtained them another way, yet she chose the most extreme approach.

After realizing that the answer aligned perfectly with her suspicions, Charlotte left the café quite satisfied, leaving Teddy Carter alone, seemingly lost in thought.

After meeting Teddy Carter, Charlotte didn't immediately return to the villa but chose to visit Mr. Thompson instead.

As soon as Charlotte stepped into the yard, Felix Thompson, who was playing a game on his phone outside, looked up and saw her.

The next moment, Felix immediately closed the game on his phone and strode quickly over to Charlotte.

"Let me see—did you get hurt anywhere?"

Felix's inexplicable behavior startled Charlotte a little, but she still cooperated, turning around a few times in place.

"What's wrong, Sixth Brother?" Charlotte reached out to steady Felix's arm, stopping him from making her keep spinning.

Charlotte blinked her eyes a couple of times, trying to regain her balance.

"I'm not hurt at all."

"No way! They didn't do anything to you?"

Felix looked at Charlotte with a serious expression. From his words and the look on his face, it was as if Charlotte had just been kidnapped and only recently released.

Perplexed, Charlotte blinked her eyes and asked, "Sixth Brother, what are you talking about? How could I be hurt? What happened?"

"You still have the nerve to ask what happened! Didn't you see all the news from last night? It caused such a stir! How can you pretend like nothing happened? And why did you go back to work? Didn't anybody throw things at you on the road or suddenly jump out to attack you?"

Seeing her sixth brother's exaggerated reaction, Charlotte suddenly realized what he was talking about.

Charlotte patted the back of Felix's hand on her shoulder and gave him a reassuring smile.

"Sixth Brother, what are you thinking? This isn't ancient times anymore. In a society governed by law, where would you even find people like the ones you're describing?"

"What do you mean, where? Some people's behavior is worse than that of people from ancient times." Felix retorted in dissatisfaction.

Just as he was about to say more, a voice came from behind him—Jake's voice:

"Old Six, what are you mumbling about all by yourself in the courtyard?"

Felix's tall frame entirely shielded Charlotte's petite figure, so from the back, it really did look like Felix was talking to himself.

At that moment, Charlotte poked her small head out from behind Felix's embrace.

"Fourth Brother!"

"Charlotte!"

Jake first looked surprised, then quickly reacted just like Felix, striding over to Charlotte.

Chapter 1426: Little Ancestor

Charlotte was worried that Jake might start questioning her as well, but he simply reached out and lightly pressed down on the top of her head.

"The stuff online is such a mess right now. You scared me half to death."

Jake looked at Charlotte with a worried expression, but she pulled his hand away and lifted her face slightly, a faint dimple blooming on her cheek.

"Fourth Brother, saying all this to me now feels a little late, doesn't it?"

Hearing her words, Jake quickly pulled Charlotte into his arms and affectionately ruffled her hair.

"You little troublemaker, always blaming us! You were the one who insisted the family shouldn't intervene, right? Do you know how worried we all were yesterday when the news blew up?"

Charlotte hadn't returned to the Thompson Family home yesterday, completely unaware of how furious everyone had been after discovering the news online.

She had even given them prior instructions not to act rashly. So at first, despite their anger, they could only pace back and forth in the living room.

Eventually, the online rumors grew overwhelming, and Mr. Thompson could no longer tolerate it. He stepped in and suppressed the information directly.

"Fourth Brother..."

Charlotte, now stuck in Jake's embrace, felt her hair had been turned into a total bird's nest.

"Back already?"

Thankfully, a pair of hands rescued Charlotte from Jake's grasp.

When Charlotte turned her head, she saw James standing beside her. He reached out and carefully smoothed her long hair, as if handling a prized doll, before speaking leisurely:

"Come on, Grandpa's been waiting for you to come back."

James took Charlotte's hand and led her into the villa.

At home, aside from Jake and Felix, everyone else had gone out. James had just returned as well.

Mr. Thompson was reclining on a chair in the backyard garden, eyes closed in repose, with the butler standing quietly nearby.

When the butler spotted Charlotte approaching, he cast her a smile. But in the next second, Charlotte gestured for him to stay quiet.

The butler moved aside, allowing Charlotte to walk up to Mr. Thompson.

Slowly, Mr. Thompson raised his hand, prompting Charlotte to quickly place the prepared teacup by his side.

He took a sip and spoke in a low voice:

"So it's my ungrateful little troublemaker after all. You finally came back. I thought once you had Justin over there, you'd completely forgotten about your grandfather."

"Grandpa, how do you even know it's me?"

Charlotte was curious how Mr. Thompson could recognize her with his eyes still shut. Kneeling halfway beside him, she grinned as she asked.

"Just by the sneaky way you walk, I can tell right away."

Mr. Thompson snorted softly, then took another sip of tea.

"I only wanted to give you a surprise, Grandpa."

Charlotte clung to the wicker chair, laughing beside Mr. Thompson.

At that point, Mr. Thompson opened his eyes slightly and glanced at Charlotte. Then he curled his fingers, aiming them at her forehead. Seeing this, Charlotte instinctively closed her eyes and shrank her neck in anticipation.

But in the end, Mr. Thompson couldn't bring himself to knock her hard. He simply used his fingertip to gently poke her forehead.

"Do you have any idea how worried I was about you yesterday with all the trouble you stirred up? Do you know how bad those online entertainment news stories are for you? Yet you forbade us from intervening?"

Chapter 1427: This Is Not Right

"I'm sorry, Grandpa. I was being inconsiderate." Charlotte promptly admitted her mistake.

However, her decision not to let Justin and the members of the Thompson family intervene to suppress the news was precisely to ensure that these matters continued fermenting online.

But now, both sides had stepped in and suppressed the news. Although only fragments of it could still be found online, for the general audience, this resolution made the truth of the incident more convincing than letting it constantly brew unchecked.

"How's the situation being handled now?"

Mr. Thompson, supported by Charlotte, rose from his recliner.

"Everything's ready."

Charlotte followed Mr. Thompson into the living room. However, as Mr. Thompson sat down on the sofa, his expression did not ease.

"Charlotte, I know you have your own plan, but in this situation, I think what you did was not entirely correct."

Hearing Mr. Thompson's words, Charlotte raised her head and gazed at his stern face, seemingly having already guessed what he was about to say.

So, Charlotte chose to speak first:

"Actually, I already have sufficient evidence in my hands. If I had wanted to refute the plagiarism accusations directly, I could have responded on the very night the news broke. Yet, I chose to let the matter escalate."

Part of the reason Charlotte chose this delay was indeed to push public opinion to its peak. Another reason was to force George Robbins' side to expose themselves.

George Robbins had to believe that he had successfully intimidated Justin and her. Only when he let his guard down would Justin be able to deliver the fatal blow.

Charlotte suspected that Mr. Thompson's dissatisfaction likely stemmed from her prolonged silence, which had led to an overwhelming flood of malicious comments.

Later, upon further reflection, Charlotte also realized that the matter affected not just herself but also the Thompson family—her grandfather, her uncle, and her brothers.

Her own reputation had been tarnished, and as a member of the Thompson family, the situation naturally brought a certain degree of negative impact to the family.

However, when faced with Charlotte's explanation, Mr. Thompson shook his head and said, "No, that's not it."

His reaction left Charlotte genuinely puzzled.

Had she done something else wrong?

"Your mistake lies in the response you posted on your social media yesterday. How could you write nothing but 'Truth prevails'?"

Mr. Thompson looked at Charlotte with an exceptionally grave expression and delivered this remark, leaving Charlotte momentarily stunned.

Something definitely felt off.

"Even if you couldn't immediately produce evidence to refute the claims, you shouldn't have just posted such a brief and powerless statement like 'Truth prevails'!"

As he continued speaking, Mr. Thompson looked at Charlotte with frustration as though she were an iron that refused to become steel.

"You obviously have the evidence to prove your innocence! That should give you confidence. You should've fiercely criticized that kind of person in the post, completely refuting everything she said! That's what it means to be a child of the Thompson family."

Before Charlotte could respond, Felix chimed in to support Mr. Thompson's words.

"Charlotte, your post yesterday almost made me explode with anger—just four plain and simple words! Do you know how much mockery it sparked? At the time, you should've just come to me to help you craft a post..."

Felix suddenly paused, as though something came to mind, and he turned directly to look at James, who was seated on the sofa.

Chapter 1428: Sense of Happiness

"Charlotte, you should have Fifth Brother post a clarification on Weibo for you. His knack for sneaky comebacks is unmatched."

However, as soon as Felix said this, he was met with a "friendly" glance from James.

Felix immediately clamped his mouth shut and retreated quietly to the side.

"I actually think those four characters carry a lot of weight, and besides, our Charlotte isn't one to stoop to dealing with petty people." James smiled, looking at Charlotte, which made her blink bashfully.

When Charlotte posted "clear self stays clear," she hadn't given it much extra thought.

She'd always found those lengthy statements celebrities and influencers write too cumbersome, and since she didn't feel like typing too much, those four characters seemed just perfect.

Besides, with all the slaps in the face coming up one after the other, wouldn't they be far more interesting than some clarifying Weibo post?

"Even so, we can't just let this slide so easily."

Jake coughed lightly, clearly still displeased, and said coldly, "Someone dared to try framing our Charlotte? Unbelievable audacity!"

"Exactly! How is Justin Battleson running his company? How could he let a measly VP act so brazenly?"

Mr. Thompson interjected, his tone questioning. Charlotte, however, shook her head and sat beside him.

"That George Robbins is just a pawn being manipulated by others."

Hearing that, a flicker of deep thought crossed Mr. Thompson's expression.

"I've heard some things about the Battleson Family. Are they the ones behind this?"

Charlotte nodded slightly, prompting a cold snort from Mr. Thompson.

"Humph, their household is a mess, and they want my precious granddaughter dragged into it too? That boy Justin—I swear, if it weren't for his grandmother, I'd teach him a bloody good lesson myself!"

Seeing Mr. Thompson this indignant, Charlotte decided not to persuade him further. Instead, she silently spared a moment of pity for Justin, praying he'd steer clear of the Thompson family.

But, as fate would have it, Justin was already en route to The Thompson Villa, blissfully unaware of the danger ahead. He even sneezed along the way.

After Charlotte arrived at The Thompson Villa, Felix promptly informed the rest of the Thompson siblings.

Not long after, her other brothers began trickling in, one by one. Even Henry and Joshua, who'd originally been preoccupied at work, had returned to the villa.

The brothers naturally gathered around Charlotte, bombarding her with questions. While each of them assured her on the surface that they wouldn't secretly take action or cause trouble for anyone,

it was hard to say what their true intentions were once they turned away.

In no time, Justin arrived at The Thompson Villa to pick up Charlotte.

Mr. Thompson, who had been itching to teach Justin a lesson the moment he saw him, was quickly distracted when Justin unexpectedly brought the children along. Suddenly, all of his attention shifted to the kids, leaving Justin momentarily off the hook.

Although Mr. Thompson had let Justin off this time, Charlotte's other brothers weren't so forgiving. Felix and Jonathan, in particular, were eager for round two, cracking their knuckles and dragging Justin outside for what was clearly a quest to restore their dignity.

As for the outcome? Charlotte didn't need to guess.

Looking around at everyone in the villa, Charlotte felt a tide of warmth and happiness flooding her heart.

Chapter 1429: A World for Two

"Mommy, Mommy, let's play a game together!"

At that moment, Hank and Grace both walked over, each taking one of Charlotte's hands, leading her toward the center of the living room.

"Slow down, don't trip!"

Charlotte watched the excited children, quickly following their eager steps.

After playing together all afternoon, Charlotte and Justin naturally stayed for dinner. The atmosphere was harmonious and joyful—a scene that would undoubtedly make anyone envious.

Initially, Charlotte thought Justin had brought the children along just to let Mr. Thompson see them. Only later did she realize that Justin's intentions seemed not so simple.

Because later in the evening, Justin used the excuse of time to have the children stay overnight at The Thompson Villa, while he took Charlotte away.

"Why are you leaving them behind?" Charlotte asked, sitting in the car while adjusting her seatbelt.

Justin, who was about to close the car door for her, leaned halfway into the car, one hand bracing against the seatback.

"Of course, it's for a little... quality time, just the two of us." Justin kissed Charlotte lightly on the cheek before moving around to the driver's seat to start the car.

Charlotte touched the spot where Justin had kissed her with her fingertips, then turned her head to look at Justin beside her.

"Where are we heading?"

"You'll find out soon," Justin replied with a mischievous smile before starting the car.

Unexpectedly, Justin was being tight-lipped, but his playful approach naturally stirred Charlotte's curiosity.

Gradually, Charlotte noticed that Justin seemed to be driving toward the outskirts. Not long after, Justin's car stopped on a small path.

As soon as she saw the scenery outside, Charlotte quickly unbuckled her seatbelt.

Justin had brought her to a small hillside. Whether seen from a distance or standing atop, it did indeed seem modest. From this vantage, one could only catch glimpses of faint neon lights far off in the city below.

There were no city lights here; in fact, there was nothing at all. If not for the car's headlights illuminating the area, this place would have been pitch dark.

Yet Charlotte took a deep breath, then looked up at the night sky before her.

Hank had never felt as though the sky could be this close—so close it seemed one could stretch out a hand and touch the stars above.

Thousands of stars shimmered like grains of sand scattered across the ink-black ocean, flowing and weaving luminous paths. As Charlotte lifted her gaze, the delicate glow of the stars mirrored in her eyes, carrying a quiet chill.

At that moment, Justin stood beside Charlotte. He reached out to gently hook her slightly chilled fingertips into his palm.

"How did you know I wanted to look at the stars?"

Charlotte turned to look at Justin beside her, unable to hide her joy.

"You told me yourself. How could you forget so soon?" Justin gazed at Charlotte with a doting smile. His words left Charlotte momentarily confused.

"I told you myself?"

Charlotte blinked, seeming unsure of when she had mentioned such a thing to Justin.

But as scattered memories surfaced in her mind, Charlotte's mouth opened slightly in surprise.

Chapter 1430: Accompanying You Through Mountains, Rivers, Lakes, and Seas

"That was such a long time ago. How do you still remember it now?"

Even Charlotte Thompson herself couldn't recall when exactly she had mentioned to Justin Battleson about her desire to return to the countryside and gaze at the galaxy of stars on a quiet night.

As a child, Charlotte had always lived in the countryside with Aunt Watson. To her, those days were the most beautiful Chapter of her life.

The bustling and chaotic city made everything seem distorted, but the countryside restored things to their simplest, truest form.

Charlotte remembered how, in those days, her favorite pastime was sitting on the edge of the fields, counting the brightest stars in the sky.

When the night deepened, Aunt Watson would light a lantern and come searching for her.

As soon as Charlotte turned her head, she could always spot that lantern, glowing as though it would burn forever, guiding her toward home—her home.

Recalling those serene memories, Charlotte felt a faint sting rise at the tip of her nose.

"Honestly, if I could, I'd want to stay there forever."

Charlotte chuckled softly and sighed. "If only... but it's already out of reach."

At that moment, Justin lowered his head and gently pulled Charlotte into his embrace, though he didn't dare use too much strength.

"It's true, no one can return to the past."

Whispering near her ear, Justin said softly, "But in the future, no matter what, I will always stay by your side. If you wish for it, I'll travel with you through the mountains and rivers, and together we'll behold the misty waves across countless landscapes."

Charlotte pressed her cheek against Justin's shoulder, blinking her slightly reddened eyes. In the end, she blinked back the tears that lingered there.

"Alright."

In the tranquil night breeze, the two held each other tightly, as the ever-gentle moonlight cast a faint glow around them.

Not long after, Charlotte was the first to let go of Justin. Just as she looked up, intending to continue stargazing, her expression grew puzzled while staring at the night sky ahead.

"Something feels... off," she murmured.

Charlotte blinked, confused. Just moments ago, wasn't the sky filled with stars? Why could she now only see a few drifting clouds?

"Looks like it's overcast?" Justin had also noticed the change in the weather.

The once-gentle breeze had turned sharp and chilly at some point, cutting through Charlotte's thin clothing almost instantly.

Charlotte glanced at the moon, only to see its faint outline peeking hesitantly from behind the drifting clouds.

Her joy at seeing the moon lasted less than a second, vanishing completely at what followed.

A light plop sound broke the silence, and Charlotte felt something wet land on her forehead. It only took her a moment to understand what it was.

"Why did it suddenly... start raining?"

Before Charlotte could finish her sentence, the drizzle quickly turned into a downpour. She instinctively used her palms to shield her head, but Justin had already draped his jacket over her before she could react.

"Let's get to the car."

Justin grabbed Charlotte's hand and quickly led her toward the car.

By the time they got into the vehicle, the rain outside had already eased up a little.

Thankfully, neither of them ended up too disheveled.

"The weather these days really changes in the blink of an eye. Just a second ago, it was clear skies, and now it's completely overcast."