

Spoiled 651

Chapter 651: Defeated by a Woman

Upon hearing this, Harper Gibson looked at Justin Battleson with amusement, and then nodded in agreement, saying, "Indeed, it's too terrifying."

With slightly pursed lips, he let out a few low and pleasant chuckles from his throat. He then said, "Big bro, you don't resemble your old self at all with this behavior."

He sighed lightly and shook his head regretfully, saying, "The old big bro used to be decisive and unwavering. Now you're defeated by a woman and can only drown your sorrows in drink with us."

Upon hearing these words, Justin Battleson slightly frowned and irritatedly loosened his collar a little, revealing a hint of his fair collarbone.

Throwing back a mouthful of alcohol, he glanced at Harper Gibson and sneered, "Harper Gibson, you don't even have a girlfriend, what do you know?"

As his words fell, the smile on Harper Gibson's face became slightly stiff.

Adam Ross sat on the sidelines, taking delight in their discord. Fearing he might catch fire, he intermittently sipped his drink, trying hard to be unnoticeable.

Harper Gibson was slightly stunned for a moment, then smiled again, amusingly saying, "The focus is on you... According to your words, the legendary Miss Thompson is at the Red Dream Clubhouse across the street."

He lifted his gaze, a hint of mockery flashing in his eyes, he softly said, "Big bro, would your future self sit here drowning in drink, afraid even to face her?"

The latter remained silent, deep in thought.

Seeing that his words had some effect, Harper Gibson's gaze deepened. He continued to fan the flames, saying, "Big bro, Adam and I are both watching. Are you going to back down?"

In the quiet atmosphere, the sound of Harper Gibson's half-laughing voice could be heard.

"Afraid?"

"Scaredy-cat?"

"Big bro, I look down on you."

Something seemed to have thoroughly angered Justin Battleson. He suddenly stood up from the couch, giving Harper Gibson a squinted glance, his voice full of menace.

"Harper Gibson, watch this, I'm going over now."

Having spoken, he briskly walked around the table and left.

Harper Gibson and Adam Ross exchanged a glance, gleefully seeing the same schadenfreude in each other's eyes.

Meanwhile.

Inside the Red Dream Clubhouse.

The design department manager was tasked by Charlotte Thompson to keep the atmosphere lively. As the atmosphere was just getting exciting, many people finally started enjoying themselves.

From afar, one could hear the sound of lively drinking games and laughter.

Charlotte Thompson was quietly sitting at the end of the couch, unconsciously smiling at those sounds.

She took a sip of her red wine, a few stains of crimson liquid clinging to her lips. Under the dim light, she appeared inexplicably seductive.

Leaning comfortably, Charlotte Thompson half-closed her eyes and enjoyed the atmosphere.

After a while, she noticed something was amiss.

The originally lively clubhouse had become quiet at some point, nearly as quiet as a pin drop.

She wrinkled her nose in confusion, lazily opening her eyes. Under the dim light, a tall figure stood directly in front of her, casting a shadow over her.

The fingers holding the wine glass curled slightly, she looked at the man with profound eyes in front of her, slightly taken aback.

The latter looked back at her deeply, seemingly noticing the crowd's silence as well. He turned his head slightly, his voice deep, "Everyone, just enjoy yourselves. After all, it's rare for designer Thompson to book a venue."

Upon hearing this, Charlotte Thompson leisurely put down her glass, her lips curling into a smile, "Mr. Battleson, there seems to be a hidden meaning in your words."

Seeing Justin Battleson himself had come, everyone in the design department was somewhat apprehensive of him. After exchanging glances, their eyes filled with disappointment and they unconsciously quieted down a bit.

Chapter 652: Coming for Reconciliation?

After all, fun is fun, but I still need my job.

Everyone started to quietly drink, glancing toward Justin from time to time with curiosity. The man had his back to them, and while his face was not visible, it was apparent that he was in conversation with someone.

Footsteps sounded from outside the door, and Harper strode in.

Seeing Justin's back, his thin lips curved slightly.

He understood that this man preferred gentle persuasion to strong coercion.

He raised his eyes and spoke loudly to the crowd: "Everyone, after seeing Mr. Battleson you might feel a bit restrained, but it's all okay. The Blue Tone Club on the opposite side has been booked as well. Please move there and feel free to have fun!"

Hearing this, everybody looked at each other once again.

They knew what the Red Dream Clubhouse and Blue Tone Club were, and to book both places at once.

What a broad gesture.

Actually, it was not really the case, as the Blue Tone Club was run by his people, mentioning booking it was a passing remark.

Harper smirked slightly and looked around as the crowd flocked out of the room. After the last person left, he turned to the now empty room, and curved his lips in satisfaction.

He left some room for the two of you to enjoy a private world. The rest is up to you.

Thinking of this, he laughed softly to himself and then strode out, pulling Adam by the arm.

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Charlotte watched as the guests disappeared like flowing water, her pupils dilating slightly.

She raised her head to glare at Justin, her teeth gritted, "What on earth are you doing? Where have the people I invited gone to?"

Hearing this, Justin turned to look at her with slight confusion.

Apart from them, not a single person was left in the room.

A trace of surprise flashed in his eyes. Just as he was about to deny, he felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

He pulled it out, and it was a message from Harper with a straightforward OK symbol.

Understanding what was going on, he slightly raised his eyebrows, then the emotions in his eyes receded, and he put his phone back in his pocket.

He glanced at the woman on the sofa, her arms crossed over her chest, giving off a defensive aura.

She leaned back and snapped, "Mr. Battleson, I understand that my proposal doesn't meet your expectations, but it's after work hours now. There's no need for you to monitor me here."

She sneered and turned her head away, refusing to look at him.

Feeling helpless, Justin rubbed his forehead and explained, "Charlotte, you know I lost my temper too."

After a slight pause, he continued, "Don't let others interfere with us, okay?"

With a few simple words, Charlotte's anger was miraculously gone.

She pursed her lips and looked back at Justin, caught in a moment of indecision.

Justin, a man of such high status, had never bowed his head to anyone.

She was about to reconcile and give him a way out.

But before she could speak, he added another sentence.

"Charlotte, to be fair, you should seriously consider Adam Ross's idea too. After all, the Ross Family are not some ordinary folks."

Justin's eyes flashed complex emotions and he continued, "And how do you know that Chad and Jack don't want to go back?"

As his words hung in the air, Charlotte seemed to freeze instantly.

If Charlotte were dynamite, his words had ignited the fuse.

Her eyes widened after a few seconds and her face changed instantly. Her softening expression hardened once again.

If someone appears overly friendly for no obvious reason, they usually have ulterior motives.

Charlotte now fully understood what this meant.

Her fists clenched, she glared coldly at the man across from her, her voice deep with suspicion, "Justin Battleson, did you come here to reconcile?"

Hearing this, he paused for a moment and then frowned.

"Charlotte, you really should start considering it."

Chapter 653: Impermeable to Oil and Salt

His voice faltered, and Justin Battleson added another sentence.

His tone was extremely complex: "You are well aware, there's no escape from these matters, sooner or later you'll have to face them."

Upon hearing this, Charlotte Thompson fell silent for a few seconds, her hand on her knee clenching tightly.

For her now, bringing up anything about Chad Thompson or Jack Thompson was akin to touching her raw nerves.

She would not allow anyone to harm her children.

Closing her eyes briefly, Charlotte scoffed coldly, laughing at herself sarcastically, and said, "Justin, you don't have to tell me all this. Whether I run away or face it, what I hate most is people standing in front of me, dictating my affairs."

She lifted her head and downed the crimson liquid in her glass in one gulp. Wiping the chill off the corner of her mouth with her fair fingers, Charlotte looked at the silent man in front of her with cold eyes.

She gave a pale smile and pointed towards the door.

"Mr. Battleson, I've booked the entire Blue Tone Club today."

Pausing slightly, she continued, "I don't welcome your presence here, so, please leave."

She openly ordered him to leave.

Justin Battleson fell silent for a few seconds, then looked at her with a complex expression. "Charlotte, I understand you less and less."

She didn't respond, only sat silently, stroking the back of her hand, her voice devoid of all emotion.

"You never understood, did you?" pausing, she continued, "The lofty Justin Battleson, why would you condescend to understand the inner thoughts of others?"

Charlotte smiled and said softly, "Mr. Battleson, please go."

A few seconds later, the man's hand clenched slightly by his side, then abruptly relaxed.

With a sarcastic laugh, he turned and strode away.

At that moment, Charlotte seemed to hear a faint phrase.

"Impervious to reason."

So soft it was almost inaudible, like a feather harshly scratching her heart.

Charlotte's eyes fell to her lap where they lingered, after a while, she finally scoffed bitterly.

"Impervious to reason?"

She slowly poured herself more wine, her slender, pale fingers holding the glass and gently swirling it.

In the incredibly quiet room, her bitter whisper echoed.

"How would you understand?"

How could he understand these years of her lonely suffering and hardships?

Charlotte scoffed at herself. She lifted her head and downed the glass of wine.

One glass after another, they flowed effortlessly down her throat without pause.

Not until all the bottles in front of her were emptied did she finally slump and set the glass down tiredly, leaning back listlessly.

Lifting her head, her eyes were hollow.

Even with all this alcohol, she still couldn't get drunk to forget her sorrows.

After sitting for an unknown length of time, she finally glanced at the time displayed on her phone.

It was already ten o'clock at night.

Feeling a headache coming on, she paid the bill and left the club alone.

Looking across the street, she could still hear the laughter and chatter from the Blue Tone Club, colorful lights seeping out through the cracks in the door, painting the heavy night, but they brought a sense of boundless loneliness.

Lowering her gaze, it seemed to have started drizzling outside.

Charlotte's mind was unusually clear, she walked into the drizzle, opened the car, and got in.

She hesitated for a few seconds, then started the car and drove away.

The roads were still filled with cars. Not far ahead, traffic was backed up, moving at a snail's pace.

A wave of impatience welled up in Charlotte's heart, she honked her horn and the jammed traffic finally moved a bit forward.

A few traffic police officers were on duty at the end of the congestion. One of them stepped forward in the rain and knocked on her window.

Chapter 654: Drunk Driving

Lowering the window with a wave of her hand, Charlotte Thompson heard the traffic officer raise his voice, "Please present your documents."

At his word, Charlotte's eyes flickered, and she immediately turned to dig out her ID and driver's license from her bag.

After the officer finished reviewing them, he handed them back to her. Bending over, his nose twitched as he glanced at Charlotte with a hint of caution, asking, "What's that smell... have you been drinking?"

Upon his words, only then did Charlotte react.

Her heart skipped a beat, her pupils slightly dilating as she guiltily averted her gaze.

How could she have forgotten about this, she had squandered all her elementary school's traffic safety lessons.

Touching her nose with a touch of annoyance, Charlotte eventually nodded her head truthfully, admitting her mistake: "Yes, I had some drinks, I forgot about drunk driving."

The traffic officer's eyes bulged at her words.

Driving while this drunk?

That's outrageous!

The officer promptly had Charlotte sit in the passenger seat, and getting into the car, he drove straight to the detention center.

Charlotte was forcibly detained in the station. Sitting on the harsh, cold bench, she sobered up quite a bit.

As she had admitted her mistake voluntarily, the officer didn't give her a hard time, although he did thoroughly lecture her for over an hour.

Afterwards, he asked Charlotte for her family's phone numbers.

Charlotte flipped through her contacts, her fingers hovering over Justin Battleson's number for a few seconds, before sliding down to give the officer Jordan Thompson's number instead.

Not long after, the door to the police station was pushed open, with Jordan Thompson rushing in, clumsily wearing flip-flops.

Spotting Charlotte on the bench, his pupils somewhat dilated as he worriedly asked, "Sis, are you okay?"

Shaking her head, Charlotte looked up to see Jordan bolting towards the police officer behind the desk, starting to berate him, "How can you handle things like this, my sister is a law-abiding citizen, what is this about arresting people without cause!"

At his words, Charlotte's heart leapt in her chest.

She helplessly ran her hand through her hair, interrupting, "Jordan, what are you doing?"

After a slight pause, she admitted resignedly: "They didn't arrest me without reason, I did break the law by drunk driving."

"Drunk driving?!"

Jordan looked shocked, his eyes wide with surprise, "Sis, what got into you, to even start drunk driving?"

Knowing she was in the wrong, Charlotte remained silent hanging her head.

The duty officer in front of them watched Jordan leisurely, and the latter flushed, going on to formally apologize.

In the end, he cautiously asked, "Officer, it's quite late now, can we leave?"

At his words, the duty officer snorted coldly, "Seeing how you are no more dependable than your sister, you two are causing me a headache... Sit back down on your chair and call someone else."

At those words, Jordan's face changed instantly. He looked at the officer with tearful eyes, pleading, "Officer, can you let me off this once, I'm really reliable..."

Seeming to not care for his babbling, the officer simply lowered his gaze back to his newspaper.

"Officer, look at my ID, I am an adult!"

The officer continued to ignore him.

His face falling, Jordan ended up dialing Henry Thompson.

Before long, Henry resolved the matter with a single call. Although, both Charlotte's and Jordan's cars were impounded, with the officer ordering Jordan to come back and retrieve them the next day.

Left with no choice, the two of them trudged forward, shivering in the cold wind.

Having just rained, the cold air still carried a damp scent. Charlotte sniffed, tightening her coat around her, suddenly feeling an overwhelming sense of irony.

She had inexplicably gotten herself into a drunk driving incident, even dragging Jordan down with her, forcing them both to walk home.

Chapter 655: I Can't Accept It

The two of them walked side by side, silently treading on the wide, deserted sidewalk.

Across the sidewalk was a river stretching as far as the eye could see.

Almost like she was possessed, Charlotte Thompson stopped by the river, gazing at the bright moon reflected in the water.

The water's surface glimmered. She leaned on the railing, bending slightly to look down.

A fresh, slightly fishy sea breeze blew into her face. Exhausted, Charlotte closed her eyes, taking a deep breath.

Jordan Thompson stopped beside her, turned and looked at her.

Evidence of fatigue was clear in the dark circles under her eyes and on her face.

Jordan bit his lip slightly and said in a low voice, "What happened, Sis?"

Upon hearing this, Charlotte opened her eyes.

They were bloodshot.

Lowering his gaze, Jordan heard Charlotte softly say, "Adam Ross came to see me. He wants to take the children back to recognize their ancestors."

As the words fell, there wasn't much surprise in Jordan's eyes.

From the moment Adam Ross suddenly showed up, he had a vague premonition.

He fully understood how important it was for a large family to carry on their lineage.

He sighed lightly and said, "But Sis, you can't deprive the children of their right to recognize their ancestors. Some things are destined."

He closed his eyes, "Fate and identity, you can't escape them. They have their own path to follow."

"You can't keep them tied to you forever."

Charlotte bit her lip, shook her head slightly, her voice trembling slightly, "Jordan, you know me better than anyone else, you know what I can't let go."

Charlotte bit her lower lip and shook her head vehemently. Then, unexpectedly, she choked up. She fought back tears as she said, "Jordan, four years. The children have been with me for four years."

"Although we're not related by blood, they're my own children in my eyes. If Adam Ross really takes the children and cuts off our mother and child relationship without hesitation ..."

She was deathly pale, shaking her head, and almost broke down crying.

"Jordan, I would die. I can't bear it, I just can't."

Not four days, not four months, but four years of alternating spring and winter.

How was she supposed to let go?

She couldn't continue, and a wave of unstoppable tears followed.

Charlotte rarely lost herself like this. Seeing her sobbing uncontrollably made Jordan panic a little. He fumbled for a crumpled tissue in his pocket and handed it to Charlotte, his voice desperate, "Sis, don't cry, Sis. This isn't decided yet..."

Having said all this, Charlotte still cried and Jordan decided not to pacify her anymore. He sighed, "Sis, if you need to cry, cry it out. Just remember, the children are waiting for you at home."

At his words, Charlotte paused for a moment.

Right, when she got off work today, she only informed Jordan. The children wouldn't go to sleep without seeing her.

She glanced at her wristwatch, her eyes something of urgency.

It was almost midnight.

She hastily wiped her tears and quickly said, "It is very late now, let's go home."

Given the time, walking home wasn't realistic, so they stood by the road for a while before seeing a taxi.

Upon arriving home, Charlotte ran upstairs. As soon as she walked into the living room, several drowsy children immediately perked up. Their eyes glimmered as they ran with little steps to swarm around her.

Before Charlotte could say anything, the children started asking questions excitedly.

Chapter 656: Mommy Don't Cry

"Mummy, why did the police uncle take you away?"

"Mummy, did we run out of money, so you had to steal to support us?"

The speaker was the usually mischievous Grace Thompson.

Charlotte Thompson laughed lightly and flicked her on the forehead, chiding, "What on earth are you thinking about, kiddo?"

Afterwards, she explained, "Mummy had a bit too much to drink and drove, which is considered drunk driving. That's why the police uncle took me to the station and gave me a talking-to."

She gave her children a reassuring look and then comforted them, "Mummy's right here and perfectly fine."

Upon hearing her words, all the children's eyes widened in surprise.

Cyrus Thompson, being the eldest, was more informed about the severity of drink-driving. He frowned and scolded, "Mummy, you're an adult. You should know better than to drink and drive. Not only will the police uncle scold you, but accidents can happen."

"Yeah," Hank Thompson chimed in with wide eyes and pouted lips, "It's so dangerous. What would we do if something happened to you, Mummy?"

Charlotte pursed her lips and listened quietly to her children lecturing her, a warmth slowly creeping into her heart.

Once Hank had finished speaking, the smallest one, Chad Thompson, who was tugging at Charlotte's sleeve, spoke up in a worried tone, "Mummy, you can't do this again. You have to go out safely and come back safely because we will always be here waiting for you."

Forever?

Charlotte turned to look at Chad, who was pursing his little mouth, and Jack Thompson, who was nodding in agreement.

As for her, 'forever' was too far away.

Adam Ross would be waiting for them to return, to recognize their ancestors and find their roots.

Thinking about this, the tears that Charlotte had held back just a half an hour ago welled up once again. Before she could say anything, they fell down her cheeks in a heavy stream.

Dripping onto the back of her hand, they were incredibly hot.

Seeing this, all the children froze. They anxiously exchanged glances and tried to offer some comforting words, "Mummy, did we upset you? Don't cry, Mummy. We'll stop talking."

Thinking they might have said something to upset Charlotte, they tried all means to comfort her.

The closest to her, Chad, seeing her like this, had tears welling up in his eyes as he immediately embraced her. His soft, lotus-like arms wrapped around Charlotte's neck.

His fluffy head rubbed against her pale and tear-streaked cheek, his voice choked with emotion.

"Mummy, don't cry. We're all here. We'll always be with you."

An inexplicable emotion swelled up from within her, as if all the anxiety and distress of the past few days were erupting all at once. Sobbing hard, Charlotte turned and hugged Chad's small body.

Behind them, Jordan Thompson stood in silence.

He knew why Charlotte was crying. Seeing both mother and son crying, he couldn't bear to look at them and turned his gaze away, his eyes slightly reddening.

Charlotte was right. Nobody knew better than him how much she didn't want to part ways.

Jordan had spent the second most time with the children next to Charlotte. He alone knew how terrified Charlotte was of losing the children she considered more precious than her own life during those nights when she fought desperately to pull them from the jaws of death.

After some time, Charlotte's cries subsided. She let go of Chad, wiped the tears from his face, and tried to smile through her own tears, "Mummy's okay. All of you should go to bed now."

Standing up, she signaled Jordan to take the children to bed.

He nodded and led the children away.

Teary and somewhat dizzy, Charlotte lumbered to her room, closed the door behind her, and collapsed onto her bed.

Chapter 657: Taking it for Granted Once Achieved

The children silently followed Jordan into the room. After a few brief words of caution, Jordan yawned wearily, turned, and closed the door behind him.

Just a few minutes later, Hank, who had been listening to Jordan's fading footsteps from the doorway, raised a brow. He then turned to beckon his eldest brother, who stood behind him with his arms crossed.

"Big brother, Uncle Jordan has left. Let's get going!"

A tone and attitude that suggested some mischief was afoot.

Surprisingly, Cyrus did not mock him this time, instead gesturing toward the door, and they both followed Hank out.

With the lights in the sitting room off, they tiptoed across the quiet space, heading straight to Chad and Hank's room.

Hank stealthily slid the door open and slipped inside. Once Cyrus had made his way inside, Hank peeked around briefly before shutting the door behind them.

The room was well soundproofed, so they didn't have to worry about their voices drawing the attention of Jordan next door.

Hank heaved a sigh of relief and flopped onto the soft bed.

Chad and Jack, who had been seated at the desk, turned around. There was a mutual understanding exchanged between the four with a single glance.

There was still a redness in Chad's eyes, a trace of tears clinging to his lashes, but his gaze held an unwavering strength.

Cyrus gave a soft sigh, handing him a tissue. "Wipe your tears," He gently advised.

As Chad began to wipe his tears with the tissue, Cyrus leaned back against the wall, arms crossed. A flicker of suspicion crossed his face, which bore some resemblance to Justin Battleson's. "I think mom must have been bullied, considering how emotional she got earlier."

"I agree." Hank mused, propping his chin in contemplation. After a moment, he murmured, "Mom has always been careful— she wouldn't brush off things like drunk driving. She seldom cries in front of us, but just now, she was crying so hard."

As his words fell, Chad clenched the damp tissue in his fist, lips pursed, "Who do you think it could be?"

Jack wore a look of confusion but also seriousness.

It was clear that this was no small matter.

Cyrus nodded slightly, locked eyes with Chad and they both saw the same suspicion and understanding in each other's eyes.

After a few seconds, their lips moved simultaneously and they uttered the same name.

Hank, lounging on the bed in a casual spread-eagle pose with two pillows propped against him, didn't seem surprised to hear this name.

Justin Battleson.

Given that he hadn't shown up at the apartment lately, their suspicion had only grown exponentially.

To avoid attracting attention, they kept the room light off and only the warm desk lamp lit.

The soft profile of the boys' faces hardened. Chad bit his lip in frustration, his white teeth clenched tight.

"How can he be like this! Just as I thought, he doesn't value what he has," he fumed.

Jack, on the other hand, nodded indignantly.

Even though he was their biological father, Cyrus and Hank wouldn't tolerate anyone causing their mom grief, not even him.

The children huddled together, each taking turns at badmouthing Justin Battleson.

Hank was so irritated his hair stood on end. As if remembering something, he turned to Chad, "Chad, I recall you brought a phone with a SIM card from Ashton..."

Hearing this, Chad nodded. He too, understood what Hank was proposing.

Chapter 658: Public Fury

He climbed out of bed, stood on the sleek, icy solid wood floor, and with three steps merging into two, he trotted over to his wardrobe.

Crouching, he bent down to open the lowest drawer of his wardrobe, earnestly rummaging under the sheets of paper adorned with simple sketches to find his cell phone.

It took him a few minutes to boot up his phone which hadn't been used for a long time. Chad then handed the phone over to Cyrus, prompting him to take over.

Nodding, Cyrus reached out to take the phone.

Most of the time when Justin Battleson called Charlotte, it was Cyrus who answered. After a few times, he had memorized Justin's number.

After weighing his thoughts for a few seconds, Cyrus's aesthetically pleasing fingers tapped lightly on the screen. Within a few seconds, a complete number was entered.

Under the scrutiny of three pairs of eyes, he dialed the number.

The other end didn't answer immediately. Just when the phone was about to drop the call automatically, it was finally answered.

Cyrus was slightly surprised, but quickly gathered his expression and tone before speaking coldly.

"Where are you?"

On the other end, the Blue Tone Club.

It was already late at night. After a fallout with Charlotte, Justin had returned to the Blue Tone Club. Upon seeing him, Harper leisurely raised an eyebrow before ridiculing, "Big brother, what brought you back in such a disarray? Did you run away?"

Justin shot him a cold glance before downing a drink. His voice slightly deep, he responded, "Whatever harebrained idea you guys came up with, it backfired."

Upon hearing this, the masterminds Harper and Adam exchanged puzzled glances. Adam's mouth twitching, he asked, "What did you say to her?"

Grumpy, Justin recounted his conversation while sipping his drink.

After listening, Harper's hand twitching around his glass couldn't suppress his slight shudder. A few seconds later, the box erupted with merciless laughter.

Quickly putting down his glass, Harper held his belly as if he were about to burst into tears from laughter.

Justin's ice-cold gaze, sharp enough to kill, landed on him. After Harper barely managed to suppress his laughter, he couldn't help but advise, "Big brother, when you have some free time, you should look up some tips online. If that doesn't work, you can ask someone who's in love how to appease their lover."

"Really." Harper grinned as he tried to hold back laughter, "Even big brother isn't as blunt as you are."

Labelled as straightforward, Justin frowned but then asked, "Was there something wrong with what I said?"

The issues were obvious.

Harper was about to enumerate his mistakes when Justin's phone sitting on the table began to vibrate violently.

He glanced down instinctively. The incoming call was from an unknown number.

The phone kept ringing. Justin rubbed his temple in annoyance, leaning back without any intention to answer it.

Next to him, Adam's mouth curled into a smile as he teased, "Big brother, it might be someone you know?"

Upon hearing this, Justin pondered for a few seconds before finally picking up the call.

Before he could say anything, the young boy's somewhat immature but somewhat chilly voice came through from the other end.

"Where are you?"

Upon hearing this, Justin was slightly taken aback, a touch of surprise flickering in his eyes. He then laughed and softened his tone, responding, "Is that you, Cyrus?"

Once he received an affirmative answer, the surprise in Justin's eyes hadn't dissipated. He nodded slightly and replied with a smile, "I'm out. What's the matter?"

Back at the other end, Cyrus had flipped the phone over to speaker and placed it on the bed when he heard that nonchalant "What's the matter?"

Hank slightly widened his eyes and irritably retorted, "What's going on with you? Aren't you planning on coming back?"

That single casual phrase provoked the anger of the children around him. They started to take turns creatively "scolding" him.

Chapter 659: Daddy, You're Nothing but Shit!

On the other end of the phone line,

"Smelly daddy, bad daddy, the worst daddy in history!"

"Big baddie, baddie daddy, the worst, worst, worst daddy!"

"Daddy, you're just a pile of shit!!!"

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Justin Battleson listened as the children's soft voices took turns berating him, his face expressing an uncommon sense of bewilderment.

What could he have done to upset the kids?

Were the little ones all angry?

Beside him, Harper Gibson curiously leaned in to listen, but Justin shoved him away with an annoyed gesture.

After a lengthy period of listening, he finally began to understand the children's sentiments.

The very furious Hank Thompson, his pale, baby-faced complexion turning bright red, continued, "Do you even realize Mum was drunk driving, do you realize how dangerous was that? And you, as a man, how could you make the woman you love cry? Trash dad, I hate you!!!"

Sharply catching both the words "drink driving" and "crying", Justin's breath hitched, his heart felt like it had skipped a beat.

Charlotte...

After a few seconds, he rubbed his throbbing temples. A subtle trace of heartache was hidden in his eyes.

Nodding slightly, he opened his mouth in a hoarse voice to apologize, "I'm sorry, Hank. This time it's indeed my fault. I upset your mummy. But don't worry, I will definitely cheer her up. Trust me."

His voice was firm and the tone held a hint of undeniable authority.

Upon hearing him say this, the children hesitated and exchanged glances under the dim light, finding a flicker of doubt in each other's eyes.

Wordlessly, Cyrus Thompson opened and closed his mouth, a reluctant belief taking root at the bottom of his heart.

After Justin Battleson made several more assurances, the children finally eased their worries.

"Really? You'll really cheer Mum up?" The children confirmed again.

"Of course, I will properly cheer her up. You all be good kids and go to sleep early."

After giving several instructions, Justin finally hung up the phone.

He put down the wine glass he had been holding, his brows slightly furrowed. Thinking of the children's heated discussion, he couldn't help but chuckle a few times.

A few seconds later, Hank's words emerged in his mind again.

Charlotte was drinking and driving and had started crying.

The man beside him, Harper Gibson, recognized Justin's distress, and wisely chose not to disturb him, comfortably lounging on the couch, savouring his wine.

A grave look surfaced within Justin's eyes. He pursed his lips as if he had made a decision, stood up from the couch, quickly spoke a few words, and then hurriedly left.

Watching Justin's rushed departure, Harper shook his head with a sense of admiration at the spectacle.

Turning to look at Adam Ross who seemed lost in thought, he remarked wryly, "Indeed, love is quite fearsome."

Meanwhile, outside an apartment.

A man's straight figure stood beneath a street lamp, casting his gaze upon the apartment hidden within the darkness. The cigarette flickering between his index and middle finger under the night sky.

The man exhaled a puff of white smoke.

His deep eyes were veiled behind the smoke, making it impossible to read his expression.

After a bit, the night wind gently stirred, rustling through the bare branches, causing small ripples in his heart.

After standing there for an unknown period, the man finally slowly turned around and departed.

...

The next day, at daybreak.

Stirring from bed with swollen eyes, was Charlotte Thompson. Her dishevelled hair slightly wet and stuck to her face.

Her eyes were red and swollen.

She struggled to open her eyes and sat in a daze, leaning on the pile of pillows behind her. When the warm sunlight infiltrated the curtains and spilled onto her, she lowered her gaze in a daze.

Like waking from a dream.

Rubbing her throbbing brows, she crawled out of bed, cleaned up a bit, leaned on the vanity, thought for a while and decided to take out her phone and send a message to Justin Battleson asking for time off.

In her current state, it would be pointless even if she were sitting in the office.

Not long after, her phone buzzed. A simple word response from the other end.

[Okay.]

Chapter 660: Amusement Park

She relaxed her furrowed brows and tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear, before stepping out of the bathroom.

It was the weekend, and Charlotte had slept till breakfast. By the time she got out, Jordan had already prepared breakfast.

After placing the bowl on the table, Jordan paused slightly and gave an almost indiscernible sigh, "Sis, come eat."

All the children dutifully took their seats at the table, seemingly afraid of upsetting Charlotte again. Even the usually restless Grace and Hank sat quietly and ate their food, without the usual squabbles.

The meal was exceptionally silent. Charlotte looked up at her children, a sight that softly tugged at her heartstrings.

She tightened her grip on her chopsticks, trying to keep her tone as light as possible.

She chuckled and said softly, "It's the weekend today, let's go out and have some fun after breakfast."

As her words fell, the children were momentarily stunned before they glanced at each other.

There was suppressed joy in their eyes, but also an undeniable worry.

A warmth spread through Charlotte's heart. She reached out and gently touched Chad's chubby cheek, whispering, "You don't have to worry. Mommy's in a good mood today. Let's go have some fun."

Her face wore a bright smile, though it couldn't quite mask her bitterness and fatigue.

Jordan couldn't bear to see her looking this way. He lowered his gaze and took a mouthful of food, saying, "How could a great event like this exclude me?"

He grinned, teasing, "I can be an emotionless tool, but there's a condition..."

Jordan made a gesture of counting money and sighed, "I've been running low on cash lately. Dad has frozen my card."

His words easily dissolved the tense atmosphere. Charlotte ruffled Jordan's hair and chided playfully, "It's all the wining and dining you do. You only have yourself to blame."

Unhurt, Jordan grinned and served Charlotte a piece of meat.

After breakfast, they all got ready and got into the car. Charlotte sat lazily in the passenger seat, leaning against the car window. She had put on light makeup, effectively masking her pale complexion.

Seeing the bright weather and hearing the children laughing and chatting in the backseat lifted her spirits.

Jordan started the car and turned around, asking, "Where are we going?"

At his words, Grace's eyes lit up, "Uncle, you're the best! I've always wanted to go to Disneyland!"

As she finished, Hank glanced disdainfully at his sister, "Uncle, don't listen to her. Let's go to the amusement park. That... Disneyland is too far."

Following a round of laughter, the children eventually decided by majority to go to the amusement park.

Despite a setback, Grace showed no signs of annoyance. Her delicate face was filled with mischief, "Fine then, go ahead. I'd like to see who can beat me at bumper cars."

Hank crossed his arms and huffed dismissively, "Child's play."

Meanwhile, the other three children distanced themselves, as if they didn't want their intelligence to be tainted.

Looking at the children from the rearview mirror, Charlotte felt moved.

Days like these... she wondered how much longer they would last.

Jordan immediately caught onto Charlotte's gaze. Teasingly, he replied to Hank's comment, triggering another round of laughter in the car.

Before long, the car rolled to a stop in the theme park's parking lot.

As it was Saturday, the amusement park was bustling with people. Afraid of losing the children in the crowd, Charlotte and Jordan held their hands tightly and entered the park.