

Chapter 6 Blaming Her

Lauren's anger flared up instantly. She pushed herself up with both hands, but the pain in her leg made her stagger. Gritting her teeth, she glared fiercely at Elliot. "Mr. Elliot, you really say whatever comes to mind! She ran into me herself, yet you're blaming me without even figuring out what happened. What is it? You're so used to wronging me that you don't even think twice about it anymore?"

"You!"

"There are dozens of eyes watching. Is it that I wasn't paying attention, or was it you, Mr. Elliot, who wasn't paying attention?"

Elliot quickly looked around and saw that the guests were all eyeing him with subtle but unmistakable expressions. These guests were all from prestigious families. Though they looked down on Lauren, a former convict, their upbringing didn't allow them to twist the truth.

Someone finally spoke up. "Mr. Elliot, it really was Willow who ran into her. We all saw it."

With one person taking the lead, the others nodded in agreement.

Elliot's face turned grim, his gaze icy. He was certain that Lauren was deliberately trying to ruin Willow's birthday party and embarrass the Bennett family in front of Hoverdale's elite.

He knew his sister all too well.

She was narrow-minded, vengeful, and even capable of framing others. There was nothing she wouldn't do.

Elliot frowned, his voice dark. "Even if Willow ran into you, it was an accident. Couldn't you have stepped aside? You did it on purpose."

Lauren felt a rush of anger so intense that her head buzzed, nearly making her lose control.

Step aside? I can barely walk without limping, let alone move quickly. How am I supposed to get out of the way? Oh, right. When I got out of prison, Elliot didn't even believe my leg was really injured. All he saw was Willow getting bumped, never me hitting the ground.

Since he enjoyed humiliating her so much, there was no need for her to save face for them anymore. Right in front of everyone, Lauren rolled up her sleeve.

The crowd gasped.

Her elbow was covered in fresh blood, the glaring red wounds standing out starkly against her pale skin.

Her palm hadn't been spared either; where the skin had broken, blood was still seeping out, trickling down her fingers before dripping onto the floor.

Lauren raised her arm high so that everyone could see.

"Would I really do this to myself on purpose? Did I injure myself all over just so you could scold me? Do you think I'm that pathetic?" Her voice trembled, on the verge of breaking, her reddened eyes filled with grievance.

Seeing the shocking wounds on her hand and arm, Elliot's eyes filled with shock. His face burned with embarrassment, and for a moment, he couldn't bring himself to meet Lauren's gaze.

Alice let out a startled cry, quickly releasing Willow and stepping forward, wanting to touch Lauren but hesitating for fear of hurting her.

"Laurie, you're hurt. Does it hurt?" She blew gently on Lauren's wound, looking genuinely distressed.

Tears welled up in Willow's eyes. "Laurie, I'm sorry. Elliot had a custom gown made for me, but somehow, it was damaged. I panicked and accidentally bumped into you. Please don't be mad at Elliot, okay? He only misunderstood you because he was worried about me. I'll apologize on his behalf."

She gazed at Lauren with pitiful, teary eyes, her expression soft and vulnerable. Even her tears looked graceful, delicate like petals in the rain.

She apologized, yet her demeanor made it seem as though Lauren had bullied her.

During Lauren's three years in the Bennett family, every time she was mistreated, Willow always played the victim.

Five years had passed, yet she hadn't changed a bit.

"So you're saying that because Elliot cares about you, he can accuse me however he likes?" Lauren's expression was as cold as ice, her eyes sharp as stars in the winter sky. Her entire presence was freezing.

"No, that's not what I meant." Startled by Lauren's aggressive tone, Willow shrank into Alice's arms, tears streaming down her face. "Laurie, how could you misunderstand me like this?"

Alice held Willow protectively, sighing helplessly. "Laurie, you've really misunderstood Willow. She's always been kind and well-behaved. She's not like what you're saying. Today is her birthday. Just apologize to her and wish her a happy birthday, and we'll move on."

Lauren arched her brow. "This isn't the first time something like this has happened. Madam Alice, do you really not know whether I misunderstood her? Should I remind you of what happened five years ago...?"

"That's enough!" Alice's face paled, guilt flashing in her eyes. "Don't say any more."

"Heh." Lauren let out a cold laugh, dripping with mockery.

Her own mother was still the same as five years ago, choosing Willow without hesitation.

She couldn't bear for Willow to suffer even the slightest grievance, yet she was perfectly fine with letting her biological daughter endure hardship and pain.

Lauren suddenly found all of this unbearably pointless.

Forcing herself to endure the pain, she straightened her back and limped toward the door.

She had only taken two steps when a strong hand grabbed her arm tightly. "Explain yourself."

Lauren turned her head, her expression impatient. "What do you want me to explain?"

Elliot wanted to lash out, but when he met Lauren's gaze, filled with resentment, his heart clenched. He forcefully swallowed his anger and spoke as calmly as possible. "What happened to Willow's dress?"

The custom gown Willow wore had layers of feathers that shimmered under the sunlight, exceptionally beautiful, except for a large, obvious gap at the hem, where feathers had clearly been torn off.

Lauren's hands clenched into fists, her body trembling slightly with rage.

"So, Mr. Elliot, you think I deliberately damaged your sister's dress?" she asked coldly.

"You were the only one who got into my car. You were the only one who had the chance to touch it."

Tears fell from Willow's eyes again, her voice choked. "Laurie, why would you do this?"

Alice, unable to bear seeing Willow upset but also unwilling to blame Lauren, sighed softly. "Laurie, I know you're holding onto resentment, which is why you did this. Let's just let this go today, but in the future, you mustn't..."

"Tch." A cold scoff abruptly cut Alice off.

Lauren locked eyes with her mother, her voice slow and deliberate. "Mr. Elliot's car has a dashcam. If I really tampered with Miss Bennett's dress, wouldn't checking the footage prove it?"

With that, she turned to Elliot. "To prove my innocence, I demand that you take out your phone and play the footage for everyone to see."

Her unwavering confidence made Willow panic.

"Laurie, there's no need to check the footage." Alice stepped in to support Willow. "The guests are all here. Laurie, let's not cause more trouble."

David, who had remained silent, finally stepped forward. "Let's end this here. Laurie, go get your wounds treated first."

Again.

Lauren's body trembled with fury. She forcefully shook off Elliot's hand. "So you're just going to let me take the blame for ruining Willow's dress? I dare to check the footage; why don't you? What are you afraid of?"