

The Kiss 121

Chapter 121

"Byran, you lucky dog" Julius stood up, rummaging for the bet agreement in his pocket and crumpling it with a disgruntled expression before tossing it to Byran.

Byran caught the ball of paper, unfolded it to double check, then promptly ripped it up

"Julius, if you guys didn't cheat, you'd have lost fair and square Still can't swallow your defeat? How about another round? If you lose, you'll have to call me grandpa. Dare

to take it on?"

"I don't have time for your games!" Julius was clearly not up for another round, with a gloomy face, he turned and left with his gang, with tails between their legs.

Byran could finally breathe a sigh of relief.

Meanwhile, Ellinor was lazing about on the couch quitting the game, and opening up a pinned group chat on WhatsApp. She shot a message to the group, "You guys did good I'll give you a cash bonus later

Chase Larios avatar popped up. "You roped us into your game, and now you just want to buy us off with some cash?"

Ellinor replied. "What do you want then?"

Chase sent a goofy emoji. "I want you!"

Another avatar, named Ida Gipson, appeared, "Boss, I haven't seen you at the company in a hot minute"

Chase chimed in, "Exactly!"

Ellinor responded, "I'll make time to drop by in the next few days. Behave yourselves!"

After placating her underlings, Ellinor pocketed her phone and got up to leave.

"Ellinor, wait!"

Byran called out to her.

Ellinor halted, "What is it, Mr. Howard?"

Byran stood up, giving her a rather unfriendly look, "Why did you help me today? I haven't been exactly nice to you in the past."

Ellinor replied nonchalantly, "Consider it payback for you having my back earlier."

Byran scoffed, "With your smarts, you could have handled those girls even if I hadn't stepped in. They're lucky you didn't give them a thrashing!"

**Flattered" Ellinor gave him a faint smile, then turned her attention to the bruises on his face, "Mr. Howard, I'm curious, why didn't you call for your security when you were getting beaten up on your own turf?"*

Byran stubbornly retorted, "If I called them, they'd tell my dad and my brother. I don't want them to know!"

Ellinor patted

his shoulder, 'Kid, sometimes you've gotta swallow your pride in front of your family. Your safety always comes first, there is no need to suffer for the sake of face."

Byran scowled. "I don't need you telling me what to do!"

Ellinor shrugged and pulled her hand back. Then forget I said anything."

Seeing Ellinor about to leave, Byran quickly followed her, "Ellinor, since you helped me today and you're pretty badass at gaming. I'd like to be friends with you."

Ellinor stopped and turned to him, "You want to be friends with me? Have you forgotten about me sleeping with your sister's man?"

Byran lifted his chin, 'I haven't forgotten, but I know you and Theo aren't actually together!"

Ellinor raised an eyebrow, "And how do you know that?"

Byran confidently replied, "I don't need to see it to know it. Theo would never betray my sister. He wouldn't want you!"

Ellinor squinted slightly. 'Is that so? Then why doesn't your sister just marry Theo? That way, I wouldn't be in the picture."

At this, Byran's brows furrowed, "There are some issues between our families' elders, so their marriage is being put on hold. But I believe they'll end up together eventually."

"Ellinor, since we're friends now, I just want to remind you that you're just being used. Theo's marrying you because of pressure from the Blanchet family's patriarch. Don't have unrealistic expectations for Theo. It'll only hurt you in the end because Theo will only ever be my sister's husband!"

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Ellinor thought back to how Theo had treated her, how he'd made it crystal clear to her that he could give her anything but his heart in these three months.

It was obvious his heart was already somewhere else with Byran's sister

Her eyes dimmed slightly, and she smiled, "Thanks for the heads up, but I'm not really into making friends with kids."

With that, she walked away with grace

Byran, whose friend request was promptly denied, looked disgruntled. He followed Ellinor stubbornly, clearly not willing to let it go.

"Ellinor, who are you calling a kid? I'm not a kid?"

Ellinor ignored him, letting him trail behind her while she casually looked for Sheila in the ballroom.

After a once-over of the room and with no sight of Sheila, she noticed a swing chair by the floor-to-ceiling windows

She walked over and sat down to take a break.

The swing chair was positioned perfectly to view the most beautiful scenery in Pearl Moon, the garden under the moonlight and the beautiful fountain.

Looking up, the full moon seemed to be falling into a sea of flowers

This place was not only a symbol of opulence but also of exquisite taste and romantic ambience; no wonder the elite of Greenhaven chose it for weddings and other significant events.

Ellinor wasn't usually a fan of such parties, but she found herself surprisingly fond of this place, a feeling that she couldn't put into words.

"Ellinor! I'm talking to you! Did you hear me?"

Byran was still yapping beside her, saying something about how befriending him was an honor and she should appreciate it, and that she had to be his friend or else it was an insult, etc.

Ellinor paid him no mind, just looking up at the full moon, and then suddenly asked, 'Byran, you said earlier that Pearl Moon has a special significance to your family, what's so special about it?'

Despite Ellinor not agreeing to be friends, Byran had taken it upon himself to consider her one.

So he didn't mind answering her question.

"This is an estate my father built for my sister; she loved lively places. It's usually empty, so my father allows people to hold parties here to keep it lively"

Ellinor lazily squinted her eyes, 'Pearl Moon, it's a pretty name. Is Ms. Howard the one Theo's got the hots for?'

Byran replied, "No! I have two sisters; the one involved with Theo is my younger sister, Patricia Howard. My elder sister was Pearl Howard; sadly, she's no longer with us. Pearl Moon was built in her memory"

Ellinor glanced at him, 'No longer with us? She passed away?'

Byran shook his head, looking a little down, "I'm not sure! I never met Pearl, they say she disappeared when she was very young. I guess.... she might be dead"

Realizing she'd touched a sore spot, Ellinor frowned slightly, "Sorry, I shouldn't have asked that"

Byran's mood swings were quick, the sadness on his face vanished in an instant, he said determinedly. "It's okay! I consider you a friend, so you can ask anything!"

Ellinor fell silent

She didn't remember agreeing to be friends.

Just then, the Howard family's servant, Carlos, rushed over looking relieved, "Mr. Howard! There you are ! I've been looking everywhere for you!"

Byran turned to Carlos impatiently. "What do you want?"

Carlos was about to speak when he noticed the wound on his master's face. He swallowed his words, looking terrified, "Mr. Howard, you... what happened to your face?"

How did you get hurt?"

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Byran casually wiped the small cut at the corner of his mouth "It's nothing, just a minor scratch What's up?"

Carlos looked visibly worried,

"Um...your mom asked me to get you home to do your homework. She said exams are around the corner, and if you don't hit the books soon, your dad might be sending you off to boot camp

Byran didn't seem too pleased, as he seemed to lack the words for a response.

Ellinor flashed a smile, "Better get your butt home and do your homework or your mom might whoop you"

Feeling a bit embarrassed in front of his new friend, Byran blushed, "Cut it out! I'm not a kid anymore, my mom won't spank me anymore!"

Carlos glanced at Ellinor, puzzled at how Byran could be hanging out with the usually despised 'Mrs Blanchet'. Plus, she looked a bit weird today.

However, he didn't have time to ponder, Byran was hurt, and even if he didn't need to be rushed to the ER, he should at the very least get him to see a doc ASAP

Carlos quickly pulled Byran away. "Let's hit the road! If we're late, your dad might whoop you too."

Ellinor giggled

Byran seemed ticked off, glaring at Carlos, "You dimwit, cut the crap! I've never been whooped!"

Carlos mumbled defensively. "Oh, my bad! You've never been whooped"

Byran was irritated, "Don't pull me! I can walk!"

As Carlos led Byran away, Ellinor seemed quite pleased

"Ellinor!"

Sheila's voice suddenly rang out.

Ellinor turned around to see Sheila storming over.

"Ellinor, there you are! I've been looking all over for you and here you are, goofing off all by yourself on the swings!"

Ellinor calmly replied. "I've been looking for you too. I couldn't find you and got tired, so I'm taking a breather here!"

Sheila glared, "Get up, now!"

Ellinor stood up

Sheila sat down on the swing, haughtily announcing. "Just so you know, my godfather will be introducing me to someone important later, and you need to be there to assist me"

Godfather? Ellinor thought. Must be that middle-aged man she was having a great chat with earlier.

Sheila's godfather, Pollock, is a big-shot director in the film industry. He was attending the banquet today to secure funding for his new movie.

Sheila's invite was courtesy of her godfather.

He had also suggested she could meet some bigwigs in the investment world while there, and she might land more resources down the line if she catches their eye. Thinking about meeting important people made Sheila a bit nervous. She needed an assistant to boost her image.

Ellinor's outfit today was rather unassuming, so she wouldn't steal any limelight from Sheila.

"Got it? You need to be on your toes. You're not just there to assist me but also to serve tea and water to the VIPS. They're big shots!"

Ellinor nodded, "Got it. But who are we meeting? At least give me a heads up."

Sheila proudly announced, "The head honcho of the Blanchet family – Theo!"

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Ellinor crinkled her brows when she heard that man's name, "Do I really have to go with you? Can I not?"

Seeing her reluctance, Sheila shot back sharply. "Ellinor, know your place! You're my assistant, you do as I say! You're pocketing the ten thousand dollars I'm paying you, so you've got no right to pick and choose!"

Ellinor rubbed her temples, "Alright then."

Just thinking about seeing Theo again gave her a headache, but Sheila clearly had no intention of letting her off the hook easily.

She was dressed pretty low-key today. Theo might not even notice her.

"Sheila."

The middle-aged man from earlier slowly strolled over to call Sheila.

This was Sheila's godfather.

"Sheila, Mr. Blanchet, and his group are upstairs. I'll take you to meet them" he said.

Sheila sprang up from her chair with a delighted smile, "I'm ready, thanks, Godfather!"

*Pollock smiled at her and then his gaze fell on Ellinor. His smile faded, "Sheila, who's this? Why is she dressed like that?**

Sheila shot Ellinor a disdainful glance, then explained obediently, "Godfather, she's my assistant!"

Pollock, ever the gentleman, looked at Ellinor with clear disapproval, "Why would you hire an assistant like this? It doesn't reflect well on you. I'll find you a better assistant when I get the chance!"

Sheila shook her head, "Godfather, she grew up in the countryside. She had a hard time finding a job, so I felt sorry for her and gave her a chance

Pollock looked touched and praised, "Sheila, you're such a kind-hearted girl."

*Sheila smiled and looped her arm through Pollock's,
"Godfather, enough about my assistant. Let's go meet Mr. Blanchet!**

"Alright, let's go."

Watching Sheila's affected performance, a hint of irony flashed in Ellinor's eyes as she followed them.

Downstairs was bustling with excitement, but the room upstairs was quiet and elegant.

Four distinguished men sat around a tea table, leisurely chatting, while a professional tea master brewed tea.

Pollock walked in with Sheila, offered a slight bow, and greeted them warmly. "Mr. Blanchet, Mr. Wyton, Mr. Larios, Mr. Rex, all of you are here! I didn't expect to have the pleasure of meeting all four young heirs of the four great families today!"

*Jonah Wyton took a sip of tea and looked up at them, laughing,
"Oh, it's Pollock! Do you have any new work premiering soon?"*

*Pollock humbly waved his hand, "No, no! I'm
preparing to shoot a new film, but I haven't found any investors yet! So I came to see if you four might be interested in investing?"*

In the film industry, Pollock was widely regarded as a seasoned artist. But in front of real capitalists, he needed to stay humble in order to secure investments for his films. Jonah politely replied, 'Pollock, you're too modest. Each of your films grosses over a billion at the box office. How could you not find investors? I think you're intentionally leaving the opportunity for us to invest and make money!"

Of course, there were people lining up to invest, but they always wanted to meddle with his creative process and casting choices. It was too much of a hassle.

On the other hand, these business elites were generous and viewed it as a game. They basically wouldn't interfere with his filming content and wouldn't care even if they

made a loss.

Pollock immediately shook his head modestly, "That's too much! What I earn from my films is just a drop in the bucket for you guys!"

Jonah noticed the woman by Pollock's side and squinted at her, "Is this your latest actress?"

Pollock pushed Sheila forward and introduced her, "This is Sheila, a somewhat famous actress in the circle. She'll be the lead in my next film." Jonah smiled and praised, "Ah, Pollock's taste is always spot-on. Every lead actress he picks is a beauty with charisma!"

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When Sheila heard herself being praised, she was over the moon, but she didn't dare lift her head to see what the man who praised her looked like from the beginning. Before coming in, her godfather told her to act a bit more innocent, as that would be more appealing to these noble gents.

Pollock gave her shoulder a light tap, indicating. "Sheila, this is Mr Wyton. Go on, say hi to Mr. Wyton!"

"Hello, Mr. Wyton" Sheila barely lifted her head and gave a coy smile

What she saw was a charming gentleman with an outstanding demeanor, his elegance tinged with a bit of aloofness. He was also both handsome and graceful

He was even more exquisite than any male actor she had worked with before!

Pollock continued to introduce her to the next gentleman, "Sheila, this is Mr. Larios, the president of the Larios Group."

"Hello, Mr. Larios."

Kemp Larios nodded and continued drinking his tea.

"This is the host of today's banquet, the eldest son of the Rex family."

"Hello, Mr. Rex"

Bartlett Rex responded with a smile

As Sheila looked at each man introduced by her godfather, her astonishment never faded.

Holy moly, these guys were not only rich and powerful, but they were also all incredibly handsome!

Finally, Pollock led Sheila to Theo, who was sitting in the middle, and formally introduced him.

"Sheila, this is Mr Blanchet, the president of the Blanchet Corporation, which is the parent company of your new employer. He is your top boss"

"Hello, Mr. Blanchet

Finally, she got to meet the person she was most excited to see. Sheila excitedly looked up, her heart racing, and was absolutely stunned.

This was the Theo she almost married?

What a beautiful man!

He had a powerful aura, striking facial features, and a face as finely sculpted as a statue. If it weren't for his blinking eyes, she wouldn't even believe he was real!

However, Theo didn't spare them a glance and continued chatting with Kemp casually.

It got pretty awkward for a moment, and both Pollock and Sheila felt a bit embarrassed.

Jonah chuckled and said, "Pollock, have a seat. Tell us about your new movie, will you?"

"Um Thanks, Mr. Wyton."

Pollock pulled Sheila to sit down, and the assistants behind them obediently followed.

Sheila kept her head down, behaving herself, not daring to look around.

Actually, she was afraid of being noticed by those men. Except for Mr. Blanchet, most of the other men had seen her before.

She certainly didn't want to be recognized!

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Pollock took a seat and started to yammer non-stop about his new film script, hoping to get these four big shots to invest in his movie.

As for Sheila, she sat adorably next to him, her gaze drifting towards Theo.

The more she looked at this handsome and dignified man, the more her heart fluttered. The more her heart fluttered, the more she felt a pang of regret.

Not too long ago, she almost married Mr. Blanchet. The Blanchet family even had their wedding procession at her doorstep, but she missed out, and it turned into a joke.

To this day, the enormous dowry given by the Blanchet family still sat in her house.

Imagine if she had married into the Blanchet family, she would now be Mrs. Blanchet, sitting next to Theo, and be the envy of all women.

Lost in these thoughts, Sheila was a bit dazed and accidentally knocked over her freshly brewed tea, spilling it on herself.

"Yikes!"

Sheila jumped up, startled, and quickly started cleaning the tea off her

"Sheila, are you okay? Did you burn yourself?" Pollock asked with concern.

"No, no. I'm okay. Sheila, feeling a bit embarrassed over her clumsiness, quickly said.

"Ellinor, grab some napkins from my bag for me, quick!"

"Alright."

As her assistant, Ellinor grabbed Sheila's bag, lowered her head, and searched for napkins, passing them to her once she found them.

Although she looked obedient, she was complaining inside.

Sheila actually called her by her name right here!

They must not have noticed, right?

Ellinor was hoping for the best. Her name wasn't particularly unique; many people had the same name, surely it wouldn't draw their attention.

Sheila was too worried about her dress to notice that the moment she shouted Ellinor's name, the four men almost simultaneously turned their gazes towards her assistant.

"Theo, doesn't the name Ellinor sound familiar?" Jonah joked

Theo's gaze fell on the woman in the floral dress, as if trying to see right through her

Ellinor felt his icy stare, but she kept her head down, not looking up.

Even if she had been discovered, she didn't want to acknowledge him here.

She didn't want too many people to know about her relationship with Theo, especially Sheila and the others. If they found out, it would be nothing but trouble.

Finally, Sheila finished cleaning her dress and looked up, intending to apologize for her clumsiness, only to find that all four men at the table were looking at Ellinor.

What's going on?

Sheila was a bit annoyed, she had dressed Ellinor so plainly. How could she still attract male attention?

She was such a natural charmer that it was actually annoying!

Sheila managed to squeeze out a smile and changed the subject. "Why are all of you looking at my assistant? Is it because her outfit is not good and you guys find it funny?" Theo's icy gaze switched to Sheila, his eyes slightly narrowed, "She's your assistant?"

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"Uh—huh, yes!" Sheila replied in a sweet voice, excited as hell.

Damn, Mr. Blanchet was talking to her! His voice was so sexy, it was like music to her ears.

But the only reason he was talking to her was because of Ellinor, which was kind of a bummer.

Upon hearing Sheila's 'yes', Theo furrowed his brows and glared at Ellinor again, his eyes full of mixed feelings.

Jonah turned his head with a smirk and shot a glance at his brother Theo, clearly intrigued.

Even though he didn't exactly know what was going on between these two, he wouldn't miss a chance to tease Ellinor. With a mischievous smile, he turned to Ellinor and asked, "You know how to make tea?"

Ellinor kept her head down and shook it.

Sheila, however, frowned. She was pissed that all the attention from these top dogs was on Ellinor. So, she chuckled and said

"Mr. Wyton, my assistant here is a country bumpkin!

Just look at her clothes; it's clear she has no taste, let alone know the elegant art of tea-making!"

Jonah laughed it off, "No worries if she doesn't; let her just make us some random teal We're bored of all the professional stuff, something simple might be a nice change!"

"Oh, come on..." Sheila was totally confused. What was so appealing about Ellinor, who was dressed so casually and had such simple makeup?

Since Mr. Wyton had made a request, Sheila couldn't refuse anymore. She turned to Ellinor, giving her a hidden glare, "Quit standing there like a lost puppy! Go learn how to make some tea for the bosses!"

Ellinor didn't want to, but she really had no choice.

With a sigh, she obediently went to make the tea.

Ellinor knew this was Jonah's way of messing with her, they must have recognized her.

She remained calm and went through the normal tea-making process, casually using the tea set to make a pot of tea. Then, she poured out four cups and served them to the four men seated around the tea table.

The last cup was for Theo.

Throughout all this, she kept her head down and didn't look at any of them.

As long as there was no eye contact, there'd be no need for any conversation, thus preventing Sheila from finding out they knew each other.

Just as she was about to put the last cup of tea in front of Theo, her hand was intercepted by a rough man's hand.

It seemed like he was just reaching for the tea, but his coarse fingertips were pressing on hers, making it impossible for her to pull her hand back.

"Lift your head."

The man's voice was calm yet intimidating.

Ellinor didn't lift her head, silently resisting him.

She really didn't want Sheila to find out they knew each other.

Knowing Sheila, if she found out, she would definitely stir up trouble.

Seeing Theo's attention on Ellinor, even touching her hand, Sheila felt a surge of jealousy

Feeling that something was off, Sheila couldn't help herself and started to question suspiciously, "Mr. Blanchet, why are you so interested in my assistant? Do you know her?"

Theo, looking at Ellinor, slowly opened his mouth.

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"Me? Knowing someone as distinguished as Mr. Blanchet? In my dreams!"

Ellinor retorted quickly while trying her best to withdraw her hand.

But she was too vigorous, and the cup got knocked off track, spilling half its tea. The man's hand was scalded red in an instant.

"Good Lord! Ellinor, what's wrong with you?!"

Sheila yelped, pushing Ellinor aside and rushing over to fawn over Theo's burn.

"Mr. Blanchet, are you in pain? I'm so sorry, my country bumpkin assistant is so clumsy. I'm gonna give her a piece of my mind later!"

Theo coldly withdrew his hand without letting Sheila touch him, shaking off the remaining tea and accepting a napkin from a waiter, slowly wiping his hand.

His gloomy gaze remained fixated on Ellinor. He didn't even frown at the burn, but after a moment of silence, he ominously said, "A harsh lesson is in order"

Sheila reached out and grasped at thin air, her movement stiffening. To cover her embarrassment, she turned her head and scolded.

"Ellinor, what are you standing there for? Apologize to Mr. Blanchet now!"

Ellinor simply bowed and said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Blanchet. I didn't mean to!"

Theo ignored her, his stone-cold face showing no emotion, sending chills down one's spine.

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The other three gentlemen remained composed, sipping their tea and silently observing, each with their own thoughts.

The atmosphere was stifling. Pollock was also at a loss. Mr. Blanchet was a man who should never be offended. This situation was bad! He frowned and signaled to his goddaughter, Sheila.

Sheila immediately understood her godfather's intentions. After pondering for a moment, she dismissively waved at Ellinor, "Alright, Mr. Blanchet surely won't hold a grudge against a clumsy woman like you! You're such a klutz, don't just stand here, find a corner and stay out of sight, lest Mr. Blanchet gets annoyed by your presence!"

Of course, she wasn't trying to protect Ellinor. In fact, she was hoping Ellinor would piss off Mr. Blanchet and get a good scolding. But since Ellinor was

her assistant, her actions would reflect on Sheila as the employer. If Mr. Blanchet decided to make a fuss, Sheila would also get dragged down. So, it was better to keep the peace.

And one more thing, she found

Ellinor standing there quite an eyesore. Her outfits were so outdated and ridiculous that she was drawing all the attention and stealing Sheila's thunder!

Upon hearing Sheila's dismissal, Ellinor happily nodded and walked away. Being away from those people was the best thing for her.

The VIP reception room was spacious. Apart from Theo and a few servers attending to the guests, everyone else had left.

Ellinor spotted a sofa in the distance where no one was sitting. It was a quiet spot. She went over and sat down, scrolling on her phone to kill time. As she was engrossed in a game of Tetris, a slender hand suddenly offered her a glass of orange juice. Ellinor paused for a moment, looked up, and saw Bartlett's handsome face smiling at her.

Chapter 129

"Ellinor, long time no see"

Instinctively. Ellinor glanced over at Theo, noticing Mr. Blanchet casually sipping his tea in the other direction, oblivious to her. Meanwhile, Pollock and Sheila were engaged in a heated discussion, each taking turns in their back and forth. Much like they couldn't hear her, she couldn't make out their conversation either.

Ellinor returned her gaze, nodding faintly at Bartlett but declining the orange juice he offered "No thanks, I'm good."

Bartlett merely smiled, unbothered. He gracefully set down the juice on the coffee table in front of her, then took a seat next to her.

Noticing Bartlett's move, Ellinor glanced at him, her brows slightly knitted, "Need something?"

Bartlett shrugged, "Nah, just not interested in movie investments. Figured I'd find a quiet spot here."

"Suit yourself then." Ellinor returned to her game of Tetris, barely acknowledging his presence.

Bartlett found himself at a loss. Although he had experienced her coldness before, it still felt uncomfortable when faced with it again. Coming from a privileged background, he was unaccustomed to being snubbed by women. This change of pace was oddly refreshing.

Bartlett squinted, his interest piqued as he watched Ellinor, then casually mentioned, "Ellinor, you and Theo don't seem like your typical couple; am I overthinking this?"

Her fingers paused on the game, looking up at him, "And what's your definition of 'typical'?"

Bartlett's smirk deepened, testing the waters, "At the very least, you two seem to be distant and lack intimacy."

Ellinor chuckled. "That's between us. You, as a single man, might not understand."

"Is that so?" Bartlett's smile faltered slightly; even his inherent elegance couldn't mask the disconcerting feeling her words caused. She was blunt, leaving no room for a comeback

Suddenly, Ellinor remembered something and pointed towards Pollock, "By the way, does Mr. Rex know him? Is he famous?"

Bartlett glanced over, nodding faintly. "Pollock is a well-known director back home. He's quite arrogant and only takes on big-budget projects. But he does have talent; his movies are popular"

Ellinor continued, "And what about his personal life? Any idea?"

"Not much, I just heard his wife and kid live abroad."

"Okay, thanks for that."

With her questions answered, Ellinor returned to her game.

As for Sheila's godfather, a basic understanding was enough. The rest could be left to Chase. Given Sheila's rather poor business acumen, her collaboration with a demanding director like Pollock was no coincidence. Who knows what shady dealings Tracy and Sheila had gotten into this time for fame and fortune.

Chapter 130

Bartlett took a moment to sip his tea, fell into silence for a while, then turned to Ellinor again, "Why do you want to be an artist's assistant, Mrs. Blanchet? Isn't Theo giving you enough dough to spend?"

Ellinor was leisurely playing a mobile game and answered without looking up. "It's my cup of tea, nothing to do with money"

Bartlett looked at her with a hint of seriousness. "Ellinor, I'm just concerned, that's why I'm asking. If you're in some kind of trouble, you can spill the beans to me, I might be able to lend a hand"

Help her?

Bartlett seemed to have a knack for using "I can help you out as an icebreaker when chatting with her. Ellinor slightly raised her eyebrows with a mischievous glint in her eyes. She quit her game, put down her phone, and looked at Bartlett seriously, batting her eyelashes. "If I really have a problem, would you really help me out? You can't just

be all talk and no action!"

Bartlett couldn't help but chuckle, "Of course, as long as it's within my power."

"You'd better be able to!"

"So, what's up?"

Ellinor gave a small smile. Well, she wouldn't be shy then.

"Do you remember the three paintings by Lady Lotus I saw in your gallery last time? Can you sell those three to me?"

The smile on Bartlett's face froze, he just wanted to stir her up to get the truth but ended up being cornered by her instead.

Bartlett chuckled, "Let's not even talk about if I'm willing to sell. Do you, an artist's assistant, have the dough to buy my three paintings?"

Ellinor looked at him steadfastly. "As long as you're willing to sell, I can find the money!"

Bartlett raised an eyebrow, 'Where are you gonna get the money? From your hubby? Are you sure he'd give it to you? If he's willing to give you money, why would he let you work as an assistant?"

Ellinor could tell that Bartlett was questioning her relationship with Mr. Blanchet. This guy was just too nosy!

Ellinor said, "You don't need to worry about where my money comes from; you just need to tell me if you want to sell the painting"

Bartlett replied, "I'm not selling."

Ellinor was clearly disappointed to hear Bartlett's straightforward answer. Those three paintings were her mother's works when she was young, and she really wanted to buy them for her own collection. If he insisted on not selling, there was nothing she could do. She couldn't just snatch them away.

"But I can give them to you for free."

Bartlett added this suddenly in a relaxed tone.

Ellinor's eyes lit up, but she immediately put on a guarded look, "Spit it out, what's the catch?"

Bartlett had a spark of admiration in his eyes; he couldn't help laughing. Ellinor looked innocent like a kitten, but in fact, she was quite sharp and not someone who could be easily fooled.

Bartlett swirled the tea in his cup and said with a smile, "Very simple, all you need to do is have a drink with me, and I'll give you the paintings, deal or no deal?"

Even though this man had such a gentle smile, he enjoyed stirring things up!

Ellinor frowned, "Not now, some other time."

Bartlett smiled, he already knew the answer, but he still asked, "Why not now? Is it because your husband is here?"

Yes. Because Theo is here! Even though she and Theo weren't really husband and wife, Theo was very particular about her behavior, he didn't allow her to do anything that might make him feel betrayed in the next three months.