

## The Kiss 981

### Chapter 981

Ellinor gave Rosie a once-over and spoke in a tone laced with subtle condescension, "Usually, someone who's used to hard physical work in the fields all day wouldn't be tired from just taking a test, right?"

Rosie's mom countered, "She's mentally drained, not physically!"

Ellinor responded, "It won't take long. It's just that the values in the questions have changed. You can write the answers without much thinking."

Rosie's mom wanted to argue, but the media personnel below were all giddy, egging Rosie on for another round.

Rosie and her mom were at their wits end.

Even the live stream viewers were rallying for a rematch. They were all itching to see Ellinor's downfall.

The audience was so hyped up that the host felt the live stream wouldn't end without a retake. So he announced, "Since everyone's so pumped for a rematch, let's bring the teachers back to change the values on the test, print out two new copies, and have our test-takers go at it again!"

After listening to the host, Rosie's mom realized they couldn't dodge a rematch, and her face fell

Rosie was in a panic, whispering to her mom, "What do I do, mom? I can't do those questions..."

The middle-aged woman shot her daughter an annoyed look and said quietly, "Didn't you memorize the answers? Just follow the same formulas. I refuse to believe you can't handle a change in numbers!"

"But mom, I don't think I can... Rosie wasn't exactly the brightest bulb and had struggled to memorize the answers. She didn't remember any formulas.

Before the mom could say more, the host approached, "Rosie's mom, please wait off-stage. Rosie needs to get ready for the next test."

Rosie's mom had no choice. She couldn't argue with the host. So she stepped aside, hoping her daughter could ace the test again.

Under the watchful eyes of the media and live stream viewers, the teachers changed all the values on the test paper, printed out two new copies, and handed them over to the participants.

And the test began again.

Rosie's vision blurred as she stared at the unfamiliar numbers on the paper. She tried to recall the memorized answers, hoping they would work on the new numbers.

Ellinor played with her pen for a bit before diving into the test.

To the media personnel, Rosie's serious approach looked much better than Ellinor's casual demeanor.

The live stream viewers agreed, thinking Ellinor looked like she was just messing around.

But to everyone's surprise, Ellinor was the first one to turn in her paper.

She breezed through the test in about twenty minutes. She had taken the test before, and despite the changed numbers, she had no trouble finding the answers.

Everyone thought Rosie would be done soon, too. But Rosie hadn't even finished half of the paper. She was sweating bullets and counting on her fingers.

Viewers in the live stream chat were puzzled.

"What's up with Rosie? Ellinor turned in her paper ages ago. Why hasn't she finished yet?"

"She's sweating buckets. Can she really not solve the problems with the new numbers?"

"That's nonsense! How could that be? Rosie probably isn't feeling well. Or maybe it's just too hot."

"But she really does look stumped by the problems on the test."

## Chapter 982

Time licked away, and the deadline for the test rolled around Rosie, however, seemed far from done. In the interest of fairness, the host walked over to inform her that time was up and she needed to turn in her paper.

Rosie left with no other choice, handed over her unfinished test paper to the host and anxiously looked down at her mom in the audience.

Once he got the papers, the host called over the teacher to grade them live.

It didn't take long for the scores to come out.

The host stared at the scores with a look of disbelief on his face.

He then announced the scores to the media and the viewers tuning in.

"Apologies for keeping you all waiting, folks! We've got the scores for Ellinor and Rosie's retake

Just like before, Ellinor aced the test with a perfect score.

Rosie, on the other hand, left three big questions blank and only managed to rack up a total of 2 points from a true or false question."

The room erupted in chatter at the host's announcement.

"Just 2 points for Rosie? How's that even possible?"

"Didn't you hear the host? She didn't even finish the test and left three big questions blank."

"But even if she left three questions blank, she shouldn't only have 2 points! She scored perfectly last time; how could she fail just because the numbers changed?"

"The one she got right was a true or false question, maybe she just guessed correctly. So basically, she didn't earn even those 2 points?"

"How did she score perfectly in the first place?"

"I'm having a hard time wrapping my head around this."

Rosie hung her head, avoiding the media and the cameras.

She had given it her all, yet she didn't get a single question right. This was a major screw-up.

Who would've thought that Ellinor would request a retake?

Down below, Rosie's mom was under siege from the media.

"Rosie's mom, your daughter only scored 2 points in the retake; how do you feel about that?"

"You said your daughter was a star student, but she failed as soon as the questions changed?"

"Did you fabricate your accusations against Ellinor? Did Rosie really get accepted into Creston University?"

Facing these pointed questions, the middle-aged woman wanted nothing more than to get Rosie out of this mess. But they were surrounded by the media, with no exit in sight. All she could do was stubbornly insist, "Didn't I just say that Rosie was exhausted? She can't perform when she's this tired!"

The media was clearly not convinced by this vague explanation.

"Even if she's tired, she can't just score 2 points, right? She scored perfectly the first time, even if she answered randomly, she wouldn't score just 2 points!"

"Excuse me, did your daughter cheat on the first test?"

"If your daughter isn't the high achiever you claim she is, does it mean that Ellinor didn't steal your daughter's spot and actually earned her place at Creston University through her own hard work?"

## Chapter 983

The middle-aged woman was cornered by the media. She was visibly nervous but still insisted, "My

daughter is an excellent student! She got into Creston University on her own merits, and it's Ellinor who stole my daughter's grades!"

The media felt like they had been played by the mother daughter duo.

"If your daughter is such a great student, then why did she only get a score of 2, which is not even average? Can you give us a reasonable explanation?"

"Yeah, we need an explanation!"

"Who's going to believe that an excellent student only got a score of 2?"

The middle-aged woman insisted, I've already told you, my daughter was too tired, so she didn't perform well. And my daughter hasn't reviewed for several years, forgetting some knowledge is normal, right?"

The media scoffed.

"Normal? How can this be normal? She didn't just forget some stuff, she forgot everything!"

I think she never learned it to begin with, she's not an excellent student at all! She's clearly just using us to manipulate public opinion!"

"And she still won't admit the truth? She's the one spreading rumors. We and the netizens have been fooled by your pity act!"

Faced with the media's criticism, the middle-aged woman was silent and began to look a bit pale.

The comments in the live stream also started to shift.

"The truth prevails! Justice always belongs to the good guys."

"Where are all those Rosie's fans who were supporting her just now? Why aren't they speaking up?"

"Maybe they're too embarrassed!"

"Just by changing the numbers in the exam questions, Rosie couldn't answer a single one correctly. Is this the excellent student you guys were talking about?"

"Okay, I admit I got it wrong! But why would Rosie accuse Ellinor if there was no substitution incident?"

"What are you implying? Don't you believe that Ellinor got into Creston University on her own merits?"

"I just don't understand why Rosie would do this."

"Do bad guys need a reason to do bad things? If we can understand their thinking, we're not far from becoming bad guys ourselves!"

"Damn! Rosie and her mom are such fraudsters; they really know how to play the victim! I'm really pissed off, how could I have been fooled by them? Sorry, I admit I was biased against Ellinor just now."

"I was also blinded by their pitiful act. I didn't expect them to be like this! It's too much. How could they take advantage of people's sympathy like this?"

"We've been saying all along that Ellinor was an excellent student at Creston University. She's a genius who was personally invited three times by the principal. But you guys just wouldn't believe us!"

"It's infuriating! Rosie's mother is still sticking to her story, and Rosie is just keeping her head down and saying nothing! They should apologize to Ellinor in front of the media and us viewers!"

"Yes, they should apologize! Apologize! Apologize!"

"I have to say, Ellinor's mental state is really good! Despite all the misunderstandings and criticisms, she remains so calm and steady"

"Now I understand. This is the confidence and stability a strong person should have."

"Can I say that I want to be a fan of Ellinor?"

"Go away! Ellinor doesn't need a fair-weather fan like you!"

## Chapter 984

The cameras from the media were all pointed at her, the middle-aged woman had nowhere to hide, and

finally, she couldn't bear it anymore, her anger exploded.

She cursed rudely while using her head to ram into the media personnel blocking her way, breaking through the crowd. She rushed onto the stage to pull up her good for-nothing daughter, then quickly escaped the scene from another direction.

Some of the media followed closely with their cameras, while others stayed behind to interview Ellinor.

"Ellinor, they ran away. Aren't you going to sue them?"

"Yeah, you should sue them. Make them pay for their lies!"

"Make them apologize publicly and compensate for your reputation damage!"

Ellinor was still seated at her examination station, with one hand resting on the desk, leaning lazily against the table. She stated nonchalantly. "Forget it, they were just being used, and they have no money to compensate for my reputation damage, no point wasting my time on them."

A journalist seemed to understand the meaning behind Ellinor's words.

"Ellinor, are you suggesting that someone is instigating this mother and daughter to slander you deliberately? Could it be one of your enemies?"

Ellinor arched her eyebrows, "Guys, you're all smart cookies, do you really think their target was just to slander me? Think about it, who is the biggest loser in this scenario?"

The media were reminded and suddenly saw the light.

"It's the Blanchet Corporation!"

"Right! The biggest loser is the Blanchet Corporation! The Blanchet Corporation's stocks have been falling these past few days."

"So, are you saying that the Blanchet Corporation's competitors are waging a propaganda war?"

Ellinor pursed her lips slightly, not answering, which was taken as tacit agreement.

But she knew very well in her heart that this was Patricia's scheme to target her, even involving the Blanchet Corporation.

And her deliberate misdirection to the media, which led them to believe that the mastermind was targeting the Blanchet Corporation, was to utilize the media's sense of guilt so that they would spontaneously help to clear the public's misunderstanding towards the Blanchet Corporation. The media's influence was enormous, more pervasive, and more credible than their own official statements.

At that point, another journalist stepped forward, with a cameraman directly filming her, asking, "Ellinor, is your relationship with Theo from the Blanchet Corporation really as the internet rumors say?"

Just as Ellinor was about to answer, her phone in her pocket suddenly rang, interrupting her.

She glanced at the phone, it was a call from Theo.

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Ellinor answered the call, only to hear the man's serious and low voice say, "Don't talk too much to the media. Come here, the car is parked behind the artificial mountain in the park."

Ellinor slightly squinted her eyes. Theo's call was too timely. Was he afraid that she would publicly disclose their relationship in front of the media?

Although she was not planning to directly answer the journalist's question, Theo's actions still made her feel uncomfortable.

After a moment of silence, she asked back, "Are you still in the park, did you not go to the company?"

"Yes, I'm worried about you being here alone," the man softly replied, "Alright, the test is over. Come to the car."

## Chapter 985

Ellinor nodded, "Alright, I'll be right there."

She hung up the phone and got up, bidding the reporters below the stage a quick goodbye. She then turned around and disappeared swiftly from their sight.

As she was leaving, a reporter called out, "Ellinor, why the rush? Can you tell us who just called? Was it Mr. Blanchet?"

Ellinor didn't bother to look back, she just walked straight out.

The Blanchet family's mansion.

Putnam and Marissa had been watching the live broadcast, and their faces had visibly changed; one looked more relaxed, and the other let out a sigh of relief.

Marissa even looked a bit proud of her granddaughter's performance. She nudged her husband with her elbow, "See, what did I say? Ellinor isn't the type to lie! Someone's clearly trying to frame her right under our noses. You're just too gullible!"

Even though Putnam then understood, he was still a bit stubborn. He snorted, "Why would they frame her and not someone else? It's probably because she's done something to offend them!"

Marissa glared at him and said, "You're blaming the victim! Let me tell you, Ellinor is a good kid, I know I'm not wrong! If you keep giving her a hard time, I'm divorcing you!"

Putnam was taken aback, he hadn't expected his wife to mention divorce at their age, "Are you threatening me? If you want a divorce, then let's do it. You think I'm scared of you?"

Marissa got up angrily and said, "Fine! Let's get it over with, we'll go file for divorce right now!"

Putnam went silent for a while, then suddenly clutched his chest in pain and started yelling, "My chest hurts... get my medicine..."

Seeing this, Marissa was frightened, "Help! He's having a heart attack! Get me his heart pills, quick!"

A satisfied smirk appeared on Putnam's face, but he continued to play unconscious.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in the Howard family was not good.

Patricia and Xenia were so angry about Ellinor's reversal that they were speechless.

However, Dean and Alyssa Howard appeared rather relaxed.

Dean said, "I told you, Ellinor isn't that type of person! It's clearly that mother-daughter duo slandering her!"

Alyssa glanced at Xenia and Patricia and said, "Exactly! That pair wouldn't just slander someone for no reason. There must be someone pulling the strings behind them!"

Xenia could hear the implication in her mother-in-law's words, but she didn't dare to object.

Patricia felt her image was beyond repair, but she was still not willing to give up and made a last-ditch effort, "Grandpa, Grandma, I think Ellinor might have planned this. Her request for a retest might have been premeditated..."

Dean grunted loudly in response, "What are you implying? Are you suggesting Ellinor cheated? How could she possibly cheat in front of the media and so many live cameras? I'd like to ask you two, did you steal the test paper from me and give the correct answers to that mother-daughter duo?"

## Chapter 986

When Grandpa Dean asked, Xenia and Patricia both turned pale in fear, stuttering.

Xenia said, "Um... Dad, why would you think so? You were the one who found someone to set this test, we didn't even have contact with the examiner, how could we possibly have cheated?"

Patricia also nodded in agreement, "Grandpa, we really didn't cheat!"

Grandpa Dean scoffed as he looked at them, "Really? Neither of you cheated? So you mean to tell me that that mother and daughter snuck into our home and stole the questions from my computer? Do you think I'm a fool, or are you taking our security system for decoration?"

Xenia's eyes fluttered nervously, revealing her guilt, "Dad, why are you so sure someone cheated? Did Eleanor tell you something?"

Grandpa Dean replied displeasedly, "If no one cheated, why did Rosie get a perfect score in the first test and fail the second one?"

The results of the first test clearly indicate that she had memorized the correct answers in advance!

Before the test, the examiner sent a test paper to my email. I reviewed it and thought it was fine, so I set it as the test.

Who else could have helped that mother and daughter and had access to my computer, besides *you* two?"

Even though Xenia was feeling guilty, she still firmly denied, "Dad, we really didn't! You can suspect me, but don't falsely accuse Patri..."

Patricia said, teary-eyed, "Grandpa, my mom couldn't have cheated for that mother and daughter, I think Rosie just didn't perform well on the second test."

Grandma Alyssa frowned deeply, looking at her beloved granddaughter with unfamiliar eyes, "Patri, if you admit your mistake now, we might still think there's hope for *you*. Don't be obstinate!"

Patricia hesitated, seemingly unsure of admitting her mistake.

If she really admitted her mistake, her grandparents wouldn't trust her like before, would they?

No, she couldn't lose their favor.

"Grandma, I really didn't do anything."

Grandpa Dean couldn't help but feel terribly disappointed after witnessing their attitudes.

"I thought growing up in the Howard family would make you more like us, but you're becoming more and more like your mother, just as hypocritical, pretentious, and greedy! Hopeless!"

Patricia tried to win her grandpa's sympathy with her tears, "Grandpa..."

But Grandpa Dean had no patience to listen any further, "Enough, both of you shut up, pack your things, and move to the country house immediately Out of sight, out of mind!"

## Chapter 987

Xenia was stunned, "Dad, are you saying Patri and I should move to the countryside?"

Dean stated firmly, "Yes! That's exactly what I mean. Pack your bags right now, I'll have someone take you there immediately"

Xenia couldn't accept this decision, she practically collapsed onto the floor, "Why? Dad, are you seriously kicking us out just because of Ellinor, a stranger?"

Dean looked at her with disgust and replied, "Patri is already under your influence, I won't let Byran be influenced by you too! You both should go to the countryside, so Byran won't be affected by you!"

Xenia started crying pitifully, "Dad! You can't treat me like this! I'm McNeil's wife, how could you send me to live in the countryside? People will laugh."

Dean's mind was made up, he wasn't budging.

Alyssa agreed with this arrangement

too, Patricia was already influenced by Xenia, Byran was still innocent, and they couldn't let Byran be influenced by Xenia too.

When Xenia saw that her pleas to Dean were ineffective, she knelt and crawled over to McNeil, who was sitting on a sofa

on the other side. She collapsed onto his legs for help, "McNeil, you've got to stand up for us, your wife and daughter! You can't let Dad send Patri and me to the countryside!"

McNeil looked at her with no

expression, calmly asking her, "Do you admit to what you and your daughter have done?"

Xenia's eyes were blurry with tears, she hesitated, "McNeil, Patri and I really didn't do anything! How could you trust a stranger more than your own wife and daughter?"

"Didn't do anything?" McNeil frowned, "Wasn't it you who taught your daughter to bring that mother and daughter to slander Ellinor?"

Xenia was getting a bit anxious, "Yes, it was Patri who found that mother and daughter... but Patri only wanted to help them get justice after hearing their complaints! Besides, the results of today's test might not be fair, I think Ellinor might have cheated again, she might have bribed the teacher who marked the papers."

A flash of disgust crossed McNeil's eyes, "That teacher who marked the papers is **an** old friend of my father's; he is now a professor. He participated in marking the papers out of respect for my father. Do you think he lacks money and can be easily bribed?

Moreover, the test was conducted under the watchful eyes of many media and cameras. Both sides had the same questions, and Rosie's team didn't get a single question right, **all** of this was recorded by the cameras! How could Ellinor have cheated? Did she suck all the knowledge out of Rosie's brain?"

Xenia

was left speechless, her face growing more and more unpleasant, but she still maintained a look of great

grievance, “Uh... it was that mother and daughter who deceived Patri and me. They tried to exploit our kindness, using us to confront Ellinor. McNeil, this shows that Patri and I are also victims who were used!”

After listening to her explanation, McNeil coldly removed Xenia’s hand from his leg, then gently smoothed out the wrinkles on his trousers. His movements were light and casual, revealing his complete disgust.

“Enough, stop playing the victim in front of me! The more you do this, the more desperate you appear! Dad’s current arrangement is excellent; you should

take Patri to the countryside and reflect properly!”

Xenia, with tears in her eyes, resentfully said, “McNeil, how can you bear to see Patri and me live a hard life in the countryside? Especially when Patri is now taking care of an adopted child, it’s totally inconvenient to live in the countryside!”

McNeil replied, “Dad just asked you to live in the holiday villa in the countryside. You’ve been there before, it’s fully equipped with servants to take care of **you**, so there’s nothing inconvenient. He didn’t say you have to go to the countryside to be punished.”

## **Chapter 988**

Seeing that her pleadings were going unanswered, Xenia became agitated, “McNeil, do you hope that I’ll go to the sticks and never come back so you can find some other woman?”

McNeil frowned, “Stop spouting nonsense, you brought this on yourself.”

Xenia broke out laughing and exclaimed, “Hahaha! McNeil, quit acting! You’re the real deal!

I’ve been married to the Howard family for so many years, and you’ve been sleeping in separate beds these days without laying a finger on me. I don’t think you, as an adult, haven’t needed to satisfy your bodily demands all these years! You had to have had other women on your side, right?

McNeil, let me tell you, I’m not Marlinie, you can’t just dump me whenever you want.”

Dean

was outraged and lost his patience after hearing Xenia’s filthy statements, “Someone, pack their bags, get a car, and send them to the countryside! Still nagging in front of me, spouting shameless words, what a disgrace!”

Some house servants came over and helped the out-of-control Xenia up from the ground.

“Madam, please stand up, we need to take you to the villa.”

Xenia angrily pushed them away, “What villa? I’m not going! **I’m** not going anywhere! Get away from me, who do you think you are?”

Seeing this, the servants were somewhat at a loss and looked towards the old man.

Dean had had enough of Xenia’s shrewish behavior, “What are you all doing? Get her out of here now!”



Hearing the old man's words, the servants stopped being polite and restrained Xenia, leading her out.

Patricia was also helped up by two servants and immediately burst into tears, "Grandpa, Grandma, I don't want to go to the countryside. I don't want to. I was wrong. I know I was wrong..."

Unfortunately, it was too late for tears. They might win sympathy once or twice, or even more, but ultimately, they would just become irritating.

was led

In the end, Patricia, like her mother, was led out by the servants and taken to the villa in the countryside.

As Xenia and Patricia were

led out of the Howard family gate and prepared to get in the car, they coincidentally ran into Ellinor, who had just come from a press conference.

Theo's black car was parked on the side of the road. Ellinor got out and saw the disheveled state of Xenia and Patricia, as well as the suitcases the servants were loading into the car.

She walked over slowly, smiling, and subtly curled her lips, "Are Mrs. Howard and Ms. Howard about to go on a trip?"

Patricia was in a state of disarray, but she refused to show weakness in front of Ellinor. She puffed out her chest and glared at her, "Ellinor, you've cost me everything today. I will get back at you!"

Ellinor disagreed, "Whether I've hurt you or not, let's not talk about that. Ms. Howard, it seems you've just taken someone else's place and enjoyed their life, right?"

Patricia was taken aback, and there was a flicker of caution in her eyes, "What do you mean by that?"

Ellinor smiled faintly, "Nothing much; I just hope you understand that hurting others will eventually hurt yourself! Also, things that don't belong to you, even if you can't return them to their rightful owner, will never truly be yours."

Patricia stared into Ellinor's inscrutable eyes, feeling a sense of unease and fear.

At that moment, Xenia was utterly distraught. Seeing Ellinor, whom she loathed immensely, she couldn't help but curse, "You devil, don't get too cocky! One day, I'll make sure you die by my hand!"

## **Chapter 989**

Ellinor flashed a small smile, "Really? Can't wait to see what's up!"

The servants had already prepared the carriage for the journey.

"Madam, Miss, please get in the carriage. Let's not get the old man any angrier. He might let you return after some time."

Xenia and

Patricia Howard shot one last resentful glance at Ellinor before begrudgingly getting into the carriage heading for the countryside...

In the Howard family's house.

With Xenia and Patricia gone, the house had become relatively quiet.

Dean, however, was still fuming at his son, who was acting immature despite his age. "Look at you! Over forty, and you can't even keep your wife and child in check. Look at what they've turned into!"

McNeil Howard, who had been engrossed in his phone, looked up at his old man, "You're not satisfied again?"

The mocking tone of his son made Dean's blood pressure shoot up, "I'm talking about your problems, and you're questioning whether I'm satisfied?!"

McNeil responded calmly, "Wasn't it you who forced me to divorce Marlinie and marry Xenia? Now you're unhappy with Xenia? Fine, pick someone you like, and I'll marry her for you."

Dean was so mad that the veins on his forehead were pulsating. He pointed at his only son, his hand trembling with rage, "You..."

Seeing Dean's growing discomfort, Alyssa Howard quickly tried to mediate, "McNeil, watch your words."  
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McNeil nodded and got up to head upstairs.

Dean, still

fuming, pointed at the retreating back of his son, "You're still holding a grudge against me for that woman? I forced you to divorce for your own good! Marlinie Bagley is with someone else. Why would you want to keep a woman like that around? The Howard family **can't** tolerate such a woman!"

McNeil paused, then turned around after a few seconds of silence, "I don't care. Why are you in such a rush? Is it for my benefit or **your** dignity?"

Dean's blood pressure spiked, and he started coughing from the anger, "You ungrateful child! Ungrateful child!"

While supporting Dean, Alyssa sternly said, "Enough, both of you! Every time that woman is mentioned, you two act like sworn enemies! McNeil, I'm not father?!" blaming you, but you're over forty, not a child anymore. Why are you still being defiant with your

McNeil looked at his father, but didn't say a word, his gaze as cold as if looking at a stranger, then turned and slowly ascended the stairs.

At that moment, a servant announced, "Sirs, Madam! Ms. Mendoza has arrived!"

Dean and Alyssa were surprised by Ellinor's arrival. They froze, looking towards the entrance, where Ellinor stood quietly behind the servant. Her expression was indifferent, with a barely visible smile on her face, and a cold look in her eyes.

McNeil, who had just started up the stairs, stopped when he heard that Ellinor had arrived. He looked back, his indifferent gaze softening a bit.

Alyssa snapped back to reality. Not sure whether Ellinor had heard their quarrel, she forced an awkward smile, "Ellinor, what brings you here at this hour?"

## Chapter 990

Ellinor gave a slight smile, "Well, I just wrapped up a press conference and happened to be passing by, so I thought I'd swing by and discuss something with you guys. But did I come at a bad time? If it's not a good time, I can come another day."

Alyssa waved at her instantly, saying, "Come on in, Ellinor, no worries at all! It's just that they had a bit of a spat just now. I was worried that it might freak you out."

Ellinor walked up to Alyssa, glanced at Dean sitting on the couch looking a bit peeved, then looked at McNeil standing by the stairs. She frowned, "You're not exactly a spring chicken anymore. Still arguing with your dad? That's not really cool."

Normally, McNeil would just head upstairs without caring if there were guests. But today, with Ellinor there, he turned back and came to the living room. As the elder, McNeil, looked at Ellinor with concern, "You just finished your exams. Why did you come here instead of going home to rest? I saw you dozing off **at** the press conference. Didn't you sleep well last night?"

Ellinor chuckled, "You were watching the live stream too?"

McNeil nodded, "Just now, I was watching *your* exam live stream with the two old guys."

Ellinor nodded, "Oh..."

Alyssa was surprised to see her son show concern for Ellinor, paused for a moment, and then said, "Ellinor, don't stand while you talk. Sit down! McNeil, you sit **too**. If you're standing, Ellinor might feel awkward as a guest."

McNeil nodded, sat back down on the couch, and said to Ellinor, "Ellinor, you sit too."

Ellinor made herself at home and sat down.

Before she could speak, McNeil asked her again, "Have you eaten? Are you hungry?"

Ellinor shook her head, "You don't have to be so polite. I'm not hungry."

McNeil nodded and said, "The flowers in the garden are blooming beautifully. Do you want me to show you?"

Ellinor frowned, not liking his enthusiasm.

“No need. I didn’t come here to see flowers today.”

Dean grunted in displeasure, “Did you hear that? Ellinor doesn’t want to see your flowers!

You’re old, yet you

only care about your flowers, neglecting the company and handing it over to Balfour. You’re not acting like a father at all!”

McNeil seemed to have gotten used to his father’s reproach, appearing completely indifferent, his gaze still falling gently on Ellinor.

Alyssa gave Dean a pat, indicating he should hold his tongue.

Dean grunted but said nothing.

Alyssa turned to Ellinor and said, “Ellinor, sorry you had to see this! If you have something to say, just spit it out, don’t hold back!” Ellinor smiled and said, “Grandma Alyssa, the reason I came today is because...”