

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 1

In Erudia, a private jet landed at North Hampton Airport, where all international flights experienced an eight-hour delay because of it.

At the private passageway were five men in suits and leather shoes, standing as straight as a javelin.

Every now and then, they would raise their wrist to look at the time, for a big shot was coming to town. The upper-class society of North Hampton had learned about his arrival, but no one had the capability to get an inch closer to the private passageway.

Even the richest man in North Hampton who came to pay homage was chased away.

Finally, there were movements coming from the passageway.

“God of War!!!” the mass cried out, their eyes filled with awe and veneration at the sight of the undefeatable legend of Erudia.

He, who was dubbed the God of War, was the one and only five-star war God in the history of Erudia.

Once, he’d inflicted a crushing defeat on the strongest battalions in eighteen countries. He was an overbearing and formidable man.

He who overwhelmed the world with his unparalleled power had even created the Five Great Wars Regiment, Cavalry Regiment, and many more.

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Setting foot on his homeland, Levi Garrison was overcome with emotions.

Once upon a time, he used to be an orphan who was abandoned on the streets of North Hampton and then adopted by the Garrison family.

However, the Garrison family had never been fond of him.

His adoptive parents, who had a tendency to beat and scold him, treated him like an outsider.

As for the outsiders, they treated him as a nobody.

But he didn’t care a stiver. He had always been proud of his surname since he was a child, and he strived to bring glory to this family when he grew older.

At last, Levi had established Levi Group, the largest dark horse in North Hampton’s business community.

With billions of assets, it ranked among the forefront of North Hampton, pushing the declining Garrison family to the top.

However, not only did the Garrison family show no signs of appreciation, they even harbored

dissatisfaction towards him. Jealous of his success, they regarded him as a thorn in their flesh and coveted Levi Group.

No matter his wealth and power, unless they were in control, he was just an outsider in the Garrison family's eyes.

Eventually, on Levi's wedding night, the Garrison family plotted a frame-up against him by getting him drunk before tossing him onto his sister-in-law's bed. They wanted to create the illusion that he was doing something untoward to her and was caught in bed by his brother and adoptive parents.

That night, the Garrison family had brutally broken his limbs and left him on the road like a wild dog.

Not only was he handicapped, but he also had to take the flak for something he didn't commit.

From an upstart in the business world, he had become the target of disdain overnight.

And the next day, he had been punished for several crimes and sentenced to six years in prison.

He could never forget the ruthless and sinister faces of everyone in the Garrison family and the ridicule of his friends, classmates, and business partners.

More so, he could never forget the disappointment on his newly wedded wife, Zoey's face.

He had regarded the Garrison family as his home and devoted himself to the family.

Yet, they treated him like trash.

It felt as if a knife was being twisted in his heart every time he thought about this.

How he hated the Garrison family!

But who would have thought that Levi had been secretly transferred away from prison to join the military?

In a few years, he dominated the military world and became the one and only five-star God of War.

Now that he came back, the Garrison family ought to stay on their toes.

"How's it going, Azure Dragon?" Levi asked.

Azure Dragon, the commander of the Five Great Wars Regiment, took a step forward and said respectfully, "Sir, I'm afraid your wife, Ms. Zoey Lopez will remarry at ten o'clock tonight!"

Ever since Zoey's husband was sent to prison on their wedding night, she had been living like a widow.

Only God knew how much pressure she was put under.

And right now, the person Levi couldn't wait to see the most was Zoey.

After a moment of hesitation, Azure Dragon continued, “To add on, Sir, the Garrison family is holding a successful listing celebration banquet at the Crystal Palace Hotel tonight! Many people had invited the God of War just now, including the Garrison family, but I didn’t accept nor refuse directly.”

“What time?” Levi asked tersely.

“Eight o’clock, Sir.”

“Okay. Tell the Garrison family I will attend the banquet!”

Since the time for the two events didn’t clash, Levi gladly accepted the invitation.

The celebration banquet for the public listing of Garrison Group was held at North Hampton’s Crystal Palace Hotel.

With the help of Levi Group, they had become a rich and powerful family in one fell swoop.

The hall was bustling with noise and excitement, and sounds of glasses clinking could be heard ringing in the air every now and then.

“God bless the Garrison family,” said Joseph, the head of the Garrison family. “The younger generations are the stars among men. Garrison Group is now listed and has become an upstart in North Hampton!”

Joseph’s three sons and daughter welcomed their guests with bright smiles on their faces.

The younger generation of the Garrison family was all the smugger and prouder because, after today, the Garrison family would become a powerful family, and they would become one of the top rich kids.

Most of the guests who attended today’s banquet were from the top circle in North Hampton.

“Garrison, do you know what happened today?! Your celebration party is nothing compared to that.” They were gossiping about the major event that had happened today.

“Yeah! I heard that a big shot has arrived in North Hampton!”

“The richest man in North Hampton wanted to meet him but was shoed away. Apparently, he’s not qualified enough!”

“So? Jesse Nielsen had been waiting for five hours in advance at the airport!”

Joseph nodded. “Yes, I know about that too. I even sent someone to invite this big shot to the celebration party!”

“No way! Why would this big shot attend such a party?”

No one believed it.

In fact, as an upstart, Joseph was just trying his luck.

“Dad!” shouted Jaycob, the second eldest son of the Garrison family could be seen running over. “The big shot has accepted our invitation to attend our celebration banquet! He’s on the way!”

“Jesus! God has indeed blessed the Garrison family!”

Everyone in the Garrison family could barely conceal their delight as this was their chance to reach the sky in a single bound.

The grandchildren of the Garrison family gathered together, sunshine flooding their souls.

Levi’s brother, Bryan, and sister-in-law, Victoria, smiled. “Well, it all starts with Levi’s imprisonment that the Garrison family is at where we are today...”

“Right, speaking about Levi, do you guys know today’s the day that kid gets out of prison?!” somebody asked abruptly.

“Really? Isn’t that bad luck? Why did he have to be released on such a big day?!”

“Please, please, please don’t come back! He’s the Garrison family’s biggest disgrace!”

Victoria’s lips tugged into a sneer. “Speaking of which, Levi is the crowning glory of the Garrison family’s status today.”

“That’s what he’s supposed to do!” Bryan said. “He should contribute to the Garrison family for raising him, an orphan! His multi-billion Levi Group means nothing. To put it bluntly, he’s just a dog raised by the Garrison family!”

Someone gave a chortle. “As a matter of fact, I’ve been interested in Levi’s wife for a long time now. She’s still widowed, and I’m so going to marry her!”

The man’s remark caused gales of laughter.

“Everyone, stop what you’re doing. I have an important announcement to make,” Joseph said and went on to announce that the big shot was coming.

A thunderous applause was heard.

But when the applause had died down, there was still someone clapping.

The sound was loud and clear, approaching from afar.

On the red carpet, a man came clapping, looking bold and energetic.

His stride gave off a majestic and imposing aura, which made the mass hold their breaths.

“It’s Levi!” Bryan and Victoria exclaimed.

Suddenly, all eyes were riveted on him.

“I forgot this little brat got out of jail today!” Levi’s adoptive parents spoke in unison.

Ignoring the astonished gazes darted at his way, Levi walked step by step towards Joseph.

“A little bird told me that the company is now listed. How are you feeling, Joseph? Are you happy?”

Levi flashed him a meaningful smile.

“How dare you show up here, you insolent brat! And what did you just call me?” Joseph’s fury sprang to life.

“Who let him in? Didn’t you know he just got out of prison? How inauspicious!”

Bryan rose to his feet. “What the hell are you doing here, Levi?”

Levi sized him up. “Why can’t I be here?”

“Well, for starters, you’re an orphan! The Garrison family has raised you, but you were ambitious and ungrateful. You had inordinate ambitions for your sister-in-law, and you wanted to take possession of the Garrison family! You’d even tried to kill your parents when things go south! Have you no conscience? Do you have any sense of morality left in your heart?”

“You’ve lost your reputation in North Hampton, and everyone knows that. Have you no shame to have the brass neck to come round here?”

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 2:

“Everyone knows why you’re back. You want to leech off the Garrison family; you want our money, isn’t it?!”

“You’ve long been expelled from the Garrison family, you ungrateful wretch! The Garrison family has nothing to do with you! Now, get lost!”

Levi’s adoptive parents rose to their feet and pointed at his nose, hurling abusive remarks at him. The Garrison family’s brazenness of distorting the truth was mind-bending.

How disappointing!

He had thought they would feel somewhat apologetic after six years, but they were unexpectedly more aggravated.

They took everything from him, crippled him, and ruined his reputation, turning everything upside down and making everything his fault instead.

The Garrison family didn’t have the slightest bit of compassion to speak of.

Bryan zipped towards Levi, assessing him condescendingly. “Hmph! Don’t you just want money now that you’re back?”

Flap!

Bryan threw a credit card to the ground and lifted his foot, shaking his leather shoe. “My vamp is dirty. Lick it clean, and the one million in this card is yours!”

His words elicited a fresh burst of laughter as the crowd looked at Levi as if they were looking at a dog.

“Oh my! One million? That’s more than enough to cover his living expenses. I bet he’ll lick it!”

Victoria gave a wry look.

“On your knees!” Bryan roared, seeing that Levi was glaring at him. “Now, lick my shoe!”

Levi stared at him coldly and held his peace.

“Kneel!!!”

Bryan rushed to Levi and pressed his shoulders, forcing him to kneel, but the latter didn’t budge.

“I said kneel!!!”

Bryan struggled to rivet him to the spot.

“Drop dead!”

Levi suddenly slapped Bryan in the face, sending him flying almost eight meters away.

Silence engulfed the room; one could even hear a pin drop!

Unbelievable!

Everyone in the Garrison family was stupefied.

What did Levi just do?

Did he just knock Bryan to the ground with a single slap?

Plod!

Bryan was about to get up when Levi stepped on him, crushed him, and crossed over him.

Looking at the approaching Levi, Joseph instinctively stepped back.

Levi went up the stage and adjusted the microphone stand.

Everyone looked at him, wondering what he was going to do next.

“Listen up, everyone...”

“I’m sure you remember what happened six years ago, yes? For the love and care I had received from the Garrison family during childhood, I’m giving you one month to kneel before me for three days and three nights to repent your sins!”

“Remember, that’s everyone from the Garrison family!”

“If I don’t see any shadow within a month, the outcome is simple—I swear I’ll wipe off every single one of you here today!”

Levi’s voice was low and deep.

But as soon as he finished, the crowd was laughing like a drain.

“Did prison life eat his brain or what? What conceited nonsense is he spouting?”

“The Garrison family right now is a juggernaut in North Hampton. He’s just a criminal. Isn’t it a pipe dream to destroy the Garrison family?”

“Did he knock his brain loose or something?”

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“Bear in mind that I have limited patience. You only have one month! Of course, you may gather your strengths and connections to fight against me! I’ll be waiting.”

Levi then took his leave straightaway, disregarding the mockeries of the crowd.

“Stop right there, you bastard! Did I tell you to leave?”

Ben, Levi’s adoptive father, wanted to stop him.

“Ben, let him go!” Joseph said. “It’s a big day today. I don’t want to see bloodshed!”

He was afraid about the impact that would bring about if the big shot saw this.

“Yeah! There are so much more opportunities to take care of him!”

“He’s in luck that the big shot is on his way!”

With that, Levi left the place under the watchful eyes of hundreds of people.

After Levi had left, Joseph asked anxiously, “Jaycob, where’s the big shot? Isn’t he here yet?”

Jaycob looked dazed. “According to the time, he should have arrived long ago. Let me ask...”

After making a phone call, Jaycob blanched. “Dad, the big shot was here, but he left already.”

“What? The big shot was here?”

“The big shot said that the Garrison family are a bunch of unworthy stupid pigs!”

“I get it. He must have left in a fit of rage after witnessing the ruckus that brat had created!”

“He must have thought that the Garrison family disrespected him!”

Joseph trembled with rage. “That brat will pay for this!”

The multitude reacted accordingly.

Levi has ruined the Garrison family’s glorious event!

He just pissed off the big shot!

That’s equivalent to cutting off the Garrison family’s chance to reach the sky!

Levi Garrison is indeed the sinner of the Garrison family!

At that moment, the Garrison family wished to skin Levi alive.

His adoptive parents, brother, and sister-in-law especially hated him to the bone. “Just you wait, Levi!”

After leaving Crystal Palace Hotel, the next person that Levi was going to look for was his wife, Zoey Lopez.

In this life, he owed no debt to the Garrison family, nor his friends and classmates, but Zoey.

He had been imprisoned on the second day after the wedding, making Zoey lose her reputation. That even put her through six years of widowhood.

This woman has carried too much on her shoulders for six years.

But now that I’m back, I’ll hold your hand, and we’ll conquer the world together!

After hesitating for a long time, Levi pressed the doorbell.

Thud!

The young woman dropped her mobile phone to the ground as the door opened.

Upon taking a closer look at Levi’s face, Zoey broke down in tears.

“Zoey, quick, just get the parcel and come in. It’s almost time for the family banquet! Your grandfather is going to settle your marriage at the family banquet tonight. You can’t get away from this!”

“Yeah! Quickly get dressed! Your grandfather is going to set you up with someone else!”

Zoey’s parents’ voices sounded from the inside.

“Zoey, I’m back!” Levi said excitedly, wanting to fling his arm around her, but Zoey slapped his hands away.

“Why did you come back? I’ve already forgotten about you...”

Zoey’s voice was choked with sobs.

Very soon after, Zoey’s parents, Aaron and Caitlyn, came out, looking horrified.

“How dare you have the nerve to come back? Do you know how much criticism my family has suffered because of you? Especially Zoey. Do you know how much she has suffered for the past six years?” Zoey’s father, Aaron, reproached.

Meanwhile, her mother, Caitlyn, pushed and shoved Levi. “You should know that this relationship between you and Zoey is impossible in this life the moment you went to jail! You’re a criminal! You’re just a street rat in North Hampton! You’re only putting Zoey in harm’s way by coming to see her!”

Naturally, Levi had known of Zoey’s sufferings for the past six years, including her refusal to remarry because of him.

Levi put on a serious face. “This time, I’m back for good. I won’t leave Zoey ever again. I will grant her a bright future and let her own the world!”

Levi’s declaration had Aaron and Caitlyn hooting with laughter.

“You’ve spent six years in jail. How are you going to give Zoey a future?” Aaron asked with a sneer.

“Yeah! With your mouth?” Caitlyn chimed in. “There’s a limit to talking big!”

Nonetheless, Levi smiled. “Don’t worry. I’ll reclaim what I lost in those years! I’ll destroy the Garrison family in a month!”

“Levi!” This time, even Zoey couldn’t bear to listen to his nonsense any longer. “Can we be more realistic? It doesn’t matter if you just get out of prison. Can’t you just be down to earth and start anew? I believe that you will make a comeback one day, but you can’t just indulge in tall talk. Do you know just how powerful the Garrison family is right now? And besides, today’s era is a far cry from what it was six years ago!”

“Zoey, trust me,” Levi said earnestly. “I can make the Garrison family bow at my feet with just a word!”

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Preposterous!

Levi’s bravado nearly drove Zoey and her parents round the bend.

Having been caged up for six years, did he finally lose his mind?

“Fine. If you say so,” Zoey said, shoving her mobile phone to Levi directly. “Then prove it! I’d like to see how you make the Garrison family bow their heads with just one word!”

“I...”

Levi was stunned.

It was true that he could exterminate the Garrison family with his words, but he had given them one month; it would be too uneventful to destroy them now.

“See, you can’t do it, can’t you? Then don’t you ever talk big if you can’t!”

Zoey smashed the phone to the ground, marking her wrath.

Following that, her parents pushed Levi away. “Go now. You’re not welcome here. We’ve got a family banquet to attend!”

“No. Mom, Dad, let him in!”

“What do you mean, Zoey?”

“I won’t remarry. My husband is back.”

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Aaron and Caitlyn couldn’t talk her round, so they could only let him in.

After that, Zoey took Levi to her bedroom.

“Since you’re back, you’re still my husband. I don’t care about the gossips. Besides, I believe you’re innocent, and anyone with discerning eyes can see that it was the Garrison family who’d framed you!”

Levi could feel the warmth in his heart.

She trusted him, and that was more than enough for him.

“But you must promise me to start from zero and be down to earth. I believe you will achieve something great with your ability! I’ll give you five years!”

“That’s unnecessary,” Levi said. “Just give me one month. In a month, I’ll de—”

“Shut up! I don’t want to listen to your nonsensical and unrealistic talks! Why can’t we just be realistic?” Zoey shouted.

“Even if you have nothing now, as long as you take one step at a time, I believe you’ll get back on your feet!”

Levi shut up obediently.

“I bought you these six years ago.” Zoey took out a suit from the cupboard. “Change into it at once and follow me to the family banquet!”

“Zoey, what is up with you?”

Seeing Levi all dressed up, Aaron and Caitlyn were naturally dissatisfied.

Zoey clung onto Levi’s arm. “Mom, Dad, Levi is my husband now! I will make myself clear to Grandpa tonight!”

Aaron and Caitlyn looked daggers at Levi, sighing helplessly, “For Heaven’s sake!”

The Lopez family banquet was held at Golden Port Restaurant, where they contracted the entire restaurant.

Naturally, the Lopez family was not as powerful as the Garrison family, but they were considered above average in North Hampton.

When Zoey and her family arrived at the main hall, they were greeted with strange and jesting gazes.

In the past, when Zoey and Levi had gotten married, Aaron’s family status was the highest in the Lopez family.

But after Levi’s downfall, Aaron’s family had experienced a seismic shift in life, and their status in the Lopez family took a nosedive as they became the subject of ridicule, especially during family events.

“Look! Is that Levi beside Zoey?”

“Yeah! It’s really him! He’s released from prison already?”

All eyes fell on Levi at once.

Harry, the head of the Lopez family, snorted and turned a blind eye to the four of them.

The old man’s favorite now was Fabian, his eldest son, and his family.

Mainly because Fabian’s son-in-law, Samuel Robertson, was of mixed ethnicity who was born rich and had lived overseas.

This time, Harry was going to set up Zoey with Samuel’s younger brother, Chris, who had been casting covetous eyes on Zoey for some time now.

With no one paying attention to them, Aaron and his family could only find a place to sit first.

As they were about to take their seats, a voice was heard. “No, Aaron. You guys can’t sit here.”

It was a reminder from Henry, the second eldest son of the Lopez family.

“What?”

“There are sitting arrangements to the family banquet this time.”

Aaron looked puzzled. “How so?”

“There are four tables for the family banquet! And it’s decided according to the family contribution!”

“For example, the first table is given to the family who contributed over five million to the family in a year; a million for the second table, a hundred thousand for the third table, and less than a hundred thousand for the last table, or should I say no contribution at all!”

Henry smiled smugly. “Our family has made good profits this year, and we’ve contributed just about five million to the family. So excuse me, but this table here is ours.”

“Of course, you can also sit at the first table without contributing. That is if your family has tens of millions of assets.”

“Unfortunately, we couldn’t be any clearer about your family’s situation,” sneered Maddison, Henry’s wife. “Now that there’s an ex-convict in your family, I’m sorry that you guys can only sit at the last table!”

“Mom, Dad, as far as I know, Uncle Aaron and his family didn’t contribute much to the family last year,” said Shaun, Henry’s son, walking over with a glass in his hand. “Their company went bankrupt, and they even borrowed over two million from Grandpa. Clearly, it’s a negative contribution. It’s unfair to the relatives sitting at the fourth table! I say we add a fifth table for negative contributors!”

“Yeah, I agree!”

The rest of the Lopez family concurred.

“Okay, we’ll do as Shaun says! This shall motivate you people!”

Harry gave his consent.

“Hurry up and sit down. Don’t just stand there and make a fool out of yourselves.” Harry glared at Aaron.

With that, Aaron and his family walked over to the fifth table quietly.

“Which table should a ten billion contributor sit at?” asked Levi suddenly, pulling Zoey’s arm.

Levi was the one and only five-star God of War, and wealth to him was just a number.

In fact, he didn’t know exactly how much he had, but he could still fork out ten billion casually for the family contribution on behalf of Aaron’s family.

As soon as Levi said that, everyone was stunned at his query.

After a few moments of silence, the crowd blossomed into an enormous belly laugh.

“Ten billion? You must be kidding me! Even the aristocratic Garrison family may not have that much

money!”

“This kid must have a loose screw in the head to come here and embarrass himself!”

“Hey, Aaron. Did you know you have a son-in-law worth ten billion? Hahaha...”

Sensing the jeering gazes and titter from the people around, Aaron and his family wished the ground could swallow them whole.

This is embarrassing!

Too embarrassing!

Zoey’s temper sparked, and her eyes blazed with rage.

“Levi Garrison, is it not enough for you to talk big at home that you have to come here and embarrass me? Do you think you haven’t done enough after all these years?”

Zoey trembled as tears silently rolling down her cheeks.

“But I do have ten billion!” Levi said helplessly.

At this time, no one bothered to listen to Levi’s sheer bull because the star of the day, Fabian’s son-in-law, had arrived.

Everyone, including Harry, went out to the entrance to greet him.

“I’m sorry to keep everyone waiting.” Samuel wore an apologetic expression.

“Your flight was nearly ten hours late. What’s up with that?” Harry asked in concern.

Samuel smiled. “Grandpa, don’t you know? A big shot has arrived in North Hampton, and North Hampton Airport was sealed off for eight hours.”

What? Is there such a thing?

“Who’s this big shot to have the airport sealed off, Samuel?” Harry asked smilingly.

“It’s not just that. It’s said that a hundred planes escorted the private jet of that big shot, and there were a hundred thousand people guarding at the airport.”

“Damn!”

“What?”

The crowd gasped in shock.

“He’s the commander-in-chief of nine military regions, the God of War of Erudia. Haha, you may not believe it if I say this, but I met this great man when I was at a gathering abroad, and we even

exchanged numbers. I didn't expect him to take up a post in North Hampton! I'll ask him out sometime in support of the Lopez family. That way, you'll gain a foothold in North Hampton in no time," Samuel said loftily.

"God! That's incredible! How did you even get to know someone like him?"

"My brother-in-law is so cool!"

"The Lopez family's son-in-law is one of a kind! Of course, except for one!"

Everyone looked at Samuel with veneration; the old man was all the more impressed, Aaron and Caitlyn begrudged Fabian's son-in-law, and Zoey was envious as well.

But she believed that in five years, Levi, too, could make her grandfather proud.

Yet, unbeknownst to them, Levi was actually barely stifling in his laughter. This kid is quite something to know that I've arrived.

But his ability to make up nonsense is even more impressive.

"You're saying you know the God of War?" Levi asked.

Samuel raised his head. "Yeah, we had a drink together. Is there a problem?"

Levi chuckled. "Then why don't I recognize you?"

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"Huh?"

Samuel froze, and so did the rest.

What does he mean?

Samuel frowned. "Are you saying that you're the God of War?"

Levi smiled. "Yes, I am the God of War. But I never knew you."

The crowd burst into laughter; Samuel especially laughed his head off.

Even old man Harry was amused as he had never seen such a sensationalist before.

Clown!

Levi is such a clown.

"Gosh, Zoey, your husband is hilarious!" Melanie, Samuel's wife, derided. "He called himself the God of War, just to prove himself and save his pride! Do you even know who the God of War is? He's the commander-in-chief of nine military regions who can wipe off a clan with just his words! What? Is the prison a war zone? Jeez, Zoey, what a husband you have there. I feel terrible for you!"

The others also tried to get a word in. "Don't bring him out in the future, Zoey. You might not think it's embarrassing, but we do!"

“Yeah, don’t ever let him attend any of our family banquet in the future. The Lopez family wants to preserve our reputation!”

“Aaron, your family is really rotten. I’m so disappointed in you.” Harry gave Aaron a dark look.

“God! What sin have I committed in my previous life to deserve this?”

Aaron and Caitlyn looked down, their expressions ugly.

This is the most humiliating day ever!

Zoey sat in the corner. In the face of many insults and derision, she didn’t utter a single word, but tears rolled down her cheeks silently.

Never in her mind would she expect to be confronted by such humiliating moments.

Zoey looked at Levi, feeling a little disgusted.

She didn’t mind that Levi was imprisoned, nor did she mind the stigma of him having gone to prison.

All she cared about was Levi’s attitude.

Initially, she thought that he would start from scratch and live a practical life after he got out of prison, but the Levi Garrison right now was a bitter disappointment.

He’s so unrealistic! A sensationalist! Not to mention his damned pride!

What a buffoon!

Zoey didn’t want to admit that this was her husband.

“Okay, aren’t you the God of War?” Samuel refused to let Levi off so easily. “There will be a welcome banquet tomorrow night in North Hampton, specially dedicated to welcome this big shot! I hope to see you there!”

Samuel was up to date.

Indeed, there was such a banquet.

As Levi had decided to settle down in North Hampton, the higher-ups had assigned him as the deputy of North Hampton, which was more reasonable.

After all, his purpose of being here was uncertain, and everyone was afraid of this big shot.

It was easy to cause panic.

For this reason, North Hampton had decided to host a welcome banquet.

“Oh? Can you also attend such a welcome banquet, Samuel?” Harry couldn’t help but ask upon hearing their conversation.

Samuel squared his shoulders and smiled. “I just received two invitation cards!”

In fact, Samuel had gone out of his way to buy two invitation cards for two million just to show off at the family banquet today.

All those present looked at Samuel in awe.

Now that’s two million well spent! He thought to himself smugly.

“Can you get any more of this invitation card, Samuel?” Harry asked cautiously. “If so, your father and I would like to expand our horizons!”

Fabian gazed at Samuel with anticipation in his eyes.

“I’ll get it no matter what!”

Samuel flat out agreed, although he could feel the burn in his pocket.

That’s another two million there!

“It’s just a matter of one phone call!”

Samuel made a call and purchased two more invitation cards.

“Say, Zoey,” Melanie said, scooting over to Zoey. “Will I see you at the banquet tomorrow? Hahaha...”

Zoey’s face darkened, knowing that Melanie was embarrassing her on purpose.

Not long after, a black car stopped in front of Golden Port Hotel, with a man in a suit walking in soon after.

“Aren’t you Riley, the secretary?”

Harry quickly went up to greet him upon realizing who the visitor was.

Riley, who came into contact with the upper management every day, was the secretary of the North Hampton Office Building.

Surely, he had to show his respect.

“Greetings, Mr. Lopez. I’m here for one simple purpose—to send the Lopez family ten invitation cards for tomorrow’s banquet!”

After dropping off ten invitation cards, Riley left in a hurry.

It was a mission assigned to him from the head secretary of North Hampton.

At this moment, the head secretary of North Hampton was sitting in the car outside.

He was afraid of meeting the legendary God of War.

The words of his big boss echoed clearly in his ears, Every important family member of the God of War's father-in-law's family must attend tomorrow's banquet. He was to send out the invitations in a low-profile manner while keeping the identity of the sender unknown.

Hence, he had assigned Riley for the task.

Levi said nothing when he saw this scene.

Samuel, however, was taken aback.

What's going on?

Didn't I just buy two invitation cards?

Why did they send us ten cards at once? And who was it again? Riley, the secretary?

"You're the best grandson-in-law, Samuel," Harry guffawed. "To have the secretary from the office building send us ten invitations at once with just a word; the Lopez family is proud of you!"

Fabian was all smiles.

"Damn! You're amazing, Samuel!"

Shaun regarded Samuel with admiration.

"Melanie has indeed married a good man! You're surely the happiest woman in the world! Unlike Zoey, who married a criminal!"

...

"I'm sorry that my husband is too amazing, Zoey. Just say the word if you need our help in the future. But I dare not get too close to you, though," Melanie paused. "Lest someone tries to jump his sister-in-law..."

Zoey could feel her anger boiling up.

It was obvious that Melanie was insulting her, but she couldn't do anything about it; Samuel's ability to have the secretary from the office building send the invitation cards in person with just a phone call was just too over the top.

Besides, an invitation for a banquet of this level wasn't something the Lopez family could easily obtain.

Aaron and Caitlyn, on the other hand, were even more envious.

With a son-in-law like that, I bet we'll wake up with a smile every morning.

Life will be all about counting money.

Right, isn't Samuel's brother in love with our daughter?

However, the couple couldn't change Zoey's mind, so they didn't muse out loud.

Meanwhile, Samuel was completely flummoxed by the whole thing.

Where in the world do I find connections in North Hampton?

They must be mistaken.

But since it's at this point now, I guess I should just go along with it.

It'll make me look good, anyway!

Samuel chuckled. "I'm sorry, Grandpa. I could only get us ten invitations. After all, there aren't many places available for this kind of banquet."

Harry grinned from ear to ear. "You're the cream of the crop, Samuel! Here, let Grandpa give you a toast!"

Upon seeing this, Aaron was green with envy.

"Grandpa, why don't you distribute these invitations?" Samuel said.

"Sure."

Harry had four children in total. Everyone received an invitation, all except for Aaron's family.

The last few remaining invitations were given to Shaun and some of his favorite grandchildren.

"Thank you, Grandpa!"

Shaun and the others flourished the invitation cards in their hands before Aaron's family.

Without a word said, Aaron's family bowed their heads and remained silent.

In Harry's eyes, they were no better than the younger ones, and they acknowledged it. They could only blame themselves for being worthless.

Just then, someone's voice broke the silence. "Why didn't we get an invitation?"

It was Levi.

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 5

Everyone laughed themselves silly at Levi's question.

"Do you think your family is qualified to get an invitation? Have you guys ever contributed to the Lopez family?" Shaun retaliated directly.

"Yeah! Dream on! Can you guys be any more shameless to expect to receive an invitation?" Henry questioned unabashedly.

Zoey and her parents had given up on all hope.

They looked at Levi with nothing but disgust in their eyes.

However, Levi let out a cold snort. "It's for my sake that this invitation is given to you! I intended to give them to my in-laws, and they were given to you passingly."

"Have some pride, Levi!" Fabian exploded. "Clearly, Samuel got these invitations through his connections. What the hell has it got to do with you?!"

"Yeah! Who the hell do you think you are?" Samuel's anger mounted. "How dare you try to take credit for this?"

Soon after, Henry pointed at Aaron. "Just look at your son-in-law, Aaron! Do something about him, and don't bring him to our next family banquet! We cannot tolerate such insolence!"

Levi was about to say something when Zoey pulled him outside. "Come with me!!!"

She couldn't stand him any longer as hot torrents of grief coursed down her face.

"Levi, please, don't embarrass me anymore. I really can't hold on if you keep this up!"

Levi wiped away her tears and asked, "Do you want to attend the banquet, Zoey?"

"Who wouldn't want to? Didn't you see the look in Mom and Dad's eyes?" Zoey said grumpily. "But there's nothing we can do, even if we want to go. It's not like you can get us in, can you?"

"I can!" Levi said decisively.

This was too much for Zoey to handle. Her temper sparked, and she turned on her heels, trying to leave.

"Zoey, why don't you trust me?" Levi asked.

"How am I supposed to trust you when you're behaving like this?" Zoey replied with a question of her own.

Levi chuckled. "I'll definitely get you inside. I, Levi Garrison, am a man of my word!"

Zoey nodded. "Okay, I'll trust you just this once! If you can't do it, we're over!"

"Deal!"

"Fine, I'm going all out on this one!" Zoey said resolutely while wiping her tears. "I don't need this stupid pride! I'm going to continue to attend this family banquet and tell everyone that my husband is capable of getting an invitation for tomorrow's banquet too!"

"Okay, ladies first. Let me just make one call."

...

"Azure Dragon, tell Jesse I'll attend the banquet he's hosting tomorrow," Levi said once the call went through.

"What? So you agree to attend the banquet? Thank God! The higher-ups were so worried that you won't give Jesse this honor!"

"Yes, I'll attend. But please ban some of the people from this event..."

"Roger that, Sir! I'll make the arrangements now!"

Returning inside, Levi saw Zoey holding her head high, looking as proud as a peacock.

It was obvious that she had made the announcement as many pairs of eyes were fixated on him.

"Say, how do you guys think this punk got the invitation? By stealing?"

"Who knows if he bought it for the sake of pretending!"

Samuel laughed. "Don't you guys know that one invitation cost over one million?"

"Aaron's family owes Grandpa about three million. How can they afford to buy an invitation?"

Right then, dinner was served, marking the start of the family banquet.

"I think the four of them can just have a bowl of noodles each. There's no need to serve them. What do you guys think?" Henry asked.

Samuel laughed. "Let's just feed them. Otherwise, it'll look like Grandpa is mistreating them."

"Alright then."

Other tables were bustling with noise and excitement, with everyone toasting each other and currying favor with Samuel, but it was deadly silence at Levi's.

Aaron glanced at Samuel, then back at Levi, sighing, "What's the point of getting envious? Such is my fate!"

Caitlyn glowered at Levi. Can today be any more humiliating?

However, they didn't dare to leave without the old man's permission and could only continue to suffer from the humiliation in awkward silence.

Right then, Samuel came over with a glass of wine, followed by a group of people who had been paying court to him.

He walked past Levi and stood before Zoey. "I was going to introduce my brother to you, Zoey. He's so much better than me! But it seems that you're not fortunate enough to enjoy a good life. It's a pity that you have a bad taste in men!"

Aaron and Caitlyn sighed.

If only Levi didn't show up, Zoey would have been with Chris, and our family would have been rich again.

How amazing is that?

But sadly, it seems that we are plagued by poverty!

Soon, the family banquet ended.

"Let's go to my house. I want to have a good talk with my grandson-in-law regarding the Lopez family's future development and tomorrow's banquet. All of you must sit in and listen. It'll be good for you," Harry instructed.

Aaron and Caitlyn looked at Harry in anticipation, hoping that the Lopez family would lend a hand to alleviate their current livelihood.

But little did they know Harry responded, "Aaron, you guys can go back on your own!"

Aaron hesitated a little. "Dad, but I..."

"No buts! We don't need you here. Besides, your good son-in-law just came back from prison. I don't want him to stain my place with bad luck!" Harry said, then left with the crowd.

Before leaving, Samuel, Melanie, and a few others stood before Levi, waving the invitation cards in their hands. "Don't disappoint me tomorrow night. Don't say you know me if you can't get in. I can't afford to throw my reputation down the gutters."

Levi snickered. "You'll never know who's the one who can't get in when the time comes."

"Alright then. We'll soon see about that."

Everyone left happily with an invitation card in their hands, leaving Aaron and his family sighing and groaning.

Aaron cast a deep glance at Levi.

If only he could bring honor for the family...

It's a pity that he just got out of prison. Even surviving is a problem for him.

After that, Levi followed Zoey home.

Compared to the Garrison family, this was his home—a home where a woman had been waiting for him for six years.

Back home, Levi took the initiative to lay a mattress on the floor, but Zoey let him sleep on the bed instead.

Thereafter, he lay on the bed while Zoey continued to draft a plan at the desk.

“What are you doing?” Levi asked.

“I'm drafting a proposal for an ecological park development project at West City. Even if the chance of success is not even one percent, I'm going to try my best to win this bid!” Zoey smiled.

Until the following night, not once did Zoey complain about him, nor did she show a long face.

But she couldn't help it anymore as it was almost time for the welcome banquet.

“Levi Garrison, I trusted you so much and bet everything on you. But where's the invitation? How on earth am I supposed to believe you now? I'd thought you would come up with ideas to get us in, but you didn't step out from this house nor made a phone call the moment we came home last night. Do you think the invitation will just fall from the sky?”

Aaron and Caitlyn added, “What are you waiting for? Zoey had made a big promise last night. If you don't make this happen, there won't be a place for us to live in the Lopez family in the future.”

Levi glanced at the clock. “It's almost time. Just follow me.”

Driving in Aaron's Haval, they arrived at Paradise Villa, where the God of War's welcome banquet was held.

“Zoey, I will prove to you now that I can do it!”

Levi pulled Zoey and headed towards the entrance.

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 6

“Well, well, look who's here. If it isn't Aaron and his criminal son-in-law.”

Along with the mockeries, Harry and the others had arrived with bags of gifts consisted of fine wine, wild ginseng, tea, and so on in their hands.

The Lopez family's plan was simple—to butter up the God of War as much as they could.

“I didn't expect you to come, Zoey,” Melanie said as she moved closer to Zoey, her voice laced with sarcasm. “Where's your invitation card? Show it to me. It's easy to purchase counterfeit ones these days.”

Melanie, Samuel, and the others were not the slightest bit convinced that Levi could get an invitation.

Just look at their status, there's no way they can get an invitation to the banquet!

It's like saying pigs could fly!

“I...”

Zoey hesitated because there was no invitation card, to begin with.

“Come on. What are you hiding?” Melanie laughed. “Don't tell me your invitation card is made of gold that I can't even take a look at it?”

Zoey clammed up, her head lowered.

“Aaron, show us your invitation card!” Harry demanded upon noticing the couple's odd demeanors.

“Dad, I...”

Aaron panicked.

“What? You won't obey even your own father's order? Hurry up and show it to me!” Harry bellowed.

Aaron panted heavily and could only tell the truth. “Dad, we don't have an invitation card... It was Levi who brought us here...”

Soon after they heard it, Samuel, Melanie, and the others laughed so hard that their belly hurt.

“You're such an idiot!” Harry glared at Aaron. “What a disgrace to have a son like you!”

Sensing the mass' scoffing eyes and ruthless laughter, a fresh swell of rage rose in Aaron as his last piece of dignity left in front of the Lopez family vanished without a trace.

Zoey, too, hated Levi to the core, knowing that they had lost all respect from the Lopez family.

“How shameless of you to attend the banquet without an invitation!”

“Let me tell you a fact. No matter how hard you try, your family can never enter this gate!” Samuel taunted.

“Let's go inside, Grandpa,” Melanie said as she held onto Harry's arm. “Don't let them get in the way.”

“You’re right. Knowing them is such a disgrace.”

The Lopez family shot daggers at Levi and hurried towards the gate.

Aaron was about to say something when Levi said, “Dad, look. They won’t be able to get in.”

Standing at the entrance of Paradise Villa were dozens of security guards who were hired to maintain order at the scene.

Samuel took out twelve invitation cards and handed them over. “For twelve, please.”

He said that as he straightened his back, looking proud.

After all, how many were there who could take out twelve invitation cards at once?

But the next second, the security guard said expressionlessly, “You people are restricted from entering and are banned from attending the banquet!”

“What?”

Samuel and the others thought they had misheard the security guard.

“That’s impossible! Riley, the secretary from the Office Building, sent us these invitations in person yesterday!” Harry argued.

Samuel put on a haughty face. “This is my invitation card. Let me in this instance! You can’t afford to mess with me!”

Thud!

Suddenly, a truncheon rested on Samuel’s head.

“Do you not understand human language? You people are restricted from entering! Must I explain to you in action?”

With the cold truncheon aiming at his head, Samuel was so frightened that he almost peed his pants.

But with so many eyes watching him, he mustered his courage and struck back. “I dare you to touch me! Don’t you know who I am? Let me speak to your supervisor!”

Wham!

The security guard knocked him down straight away with the truncheon; Samuel had completely wet his pants, and the Lopez family was all the more petrified.

“What are you guys waiting for? Scram!” the security guard barked.

The Lopez family helped Samuel up and made a dash.

“You were right. They couldn’t get in.”

Aaron was shocked at the scene that unfolded before him.

At that moment, Levi smiled and held Zoey’s hand. “We should get inside!”

“Don’t! We’re going to get ourselves killed. How are we supposed to get inside when Samuel and the rest can’t even get through the security checkpoint?” Aaron and Caitlyn said and back-pedaled in fear.

Zoey’s delicate body trembled as well. “Yeah, can we really get inside? We don’t even have an invitation card!”

“Didn’t you say that you’ll give me one last chance? How do you know if you don’t try?” Levi smiled.

“Okay, I trust you!” Zoey held Levi’s hand tightly.

“Officers!” Melanie’s voice was heard just as the four of them approached the security checkpoint. “Although they are members of the Lopez family, my grandfather had long kicked them out of the Lopez family! They are not related to us!”

“Yes, officers. They have nothing to do with the Lopez family,” Harry said in a flustered voice. “Please don’t take offense at us!”

Levi looked back and sneered.

Such heartless creatures!

When they arrived at the security checkpoint, Zoey even closed her eyes. To be honest, she’d rather die today than being humiliated.

Aaron and Caitlyn shared the same sentiment.

Harry and the others didn’t leave. They were hiding in a distance, intending to watch Aaron and his family make a fool of themselves.

“Welcome, Mr. Garrison and his family! You are our most distinguished guest. Invitations are not required!”

Upon hearing that, Zoey opened her eyes to see dozens of security guards lined up in two rows, saluting them.

As if they had entered fantasyland, Zoey and her parents made their way inside Paradise Villa.

Harry and the others, who were waiting for a good show outside, were completely dumbstruck.

“They... They went in? How is that possible?”

Truth be told, Zoey and her parents felt like they were on cloud nine when they saw the Lopez family’s

incredulous faces.

Aaron looked around, still in disbelief. “That was easy. How did you pull that off, Levi?”

It was only then did they feel that their son-in-law was somewhat useful.

At the very least, they managed to redeem themselves from the humiliation they had suffered.

Caitlyn smiled. “Levi also had connections in North Hampton before this, no?”

“You’re right, Mom. I have friends,” Levi replied.

Zoey looked at Levi suspiciously. She had a hunch that things were not that simple.

Almost none of his friends stepped forward when he was in trouble.

There were many who put the boot in instead...

Would anyone help him?

In the villa, Zoey and his parents were careful of their every movement.

After all, they couldn’t afford to break anything or offend anyone on such an occasion.

“Zoey, is that you? What are you doing here? Am I seeing things?”

Suddenly, a voice of surprise sounded from behind.

Zoey’s eyes were filled with disgust when she saw the incoming person.

The four people that were coming her way were dressed in tuxedos and had the bearing of royalty.

The man in the lead was Derrick Johns, the son of the president of Apex Group.

He had lusted after Zoey for ages, even offering millions to sleep with her, but she remained unmoved.

As an act of revenge, Derrick had caused Zoey’s well-developed company to go bankrupt.

“Why can’t I be here?” Zoey said coldly.

Derrick looked Levi up and down. “Is this your criminal husband? Did he bring you in?”

Upon that, he leaned in closer to Zoey and gave a lubricious chuckle. “I don’t care how you guys got in, but with my powers, I can send your husband back to jail again and get him locked up for a decade or two!”

Zoey believed Derrick could do it, given his expedients and abilities.

“What do you want?” Zoey looked at him warily.

“As long as you promise to keep me company, I swear I won’t trouble him! Otherwise, I’ll definitely send him in again!”

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 7

“You wish!”

Zoey would rather die than agree to such a condition.

“Fine. Just you wait!”

Derrick grinned insidiously before turning to leave.

Noticing Zoey’s pale complexion, Levi grasped her hand and asked, “Zoey, what happened? Who’s that guy just now?”

Zoey shook her head. “It’s nothing!”

However, she knew Derrick wouldn’t let this rest, so she was perturbed along the way.

Halfway through, a large group of people suddenly surrounded the four of them.

These people were members of the security team, each pointing at them with a gun.

Zoey was scared out of her wits. Her face drained of all colors as she gripped Levi’s hand tightly.

Likewise, Aaron and Caitlyn were paralyzed in terror, as they knew that it was Derrick’s revenge.

The leader of the group, decked out in combat suits, looked at them with cold and merciless eyes under the protective goggles. “Mr. Johns, is this the criminal that you were speaking of?”

“Yes, Mr. Lewis!” Derrick replied. “This guy’s fresh out of prison today. How is he qualified to attend such a banquet? I suspect he has something up his sleeve! If anything crops up on this occasion, can you afford to bear this responsibility, Mr. Lewis?”

“What? Is this for real?”

Ethan Lewis, the deputy team leader of the security team, was responsible for the safety inside. He wasn’t aware of how they had come in.

Derrick flashed a complacent smile at Zoey, then said to Ethan, “No matter what’s the situation, Mr. Lewis, I suggest we arrest him first! We need to get rid of any possible risks!”

“Right! How could he attend this banquet right after he was released from prison? Check their invitations first!” Ethan said coldly.

Zoey and her parents were dumbfounded.

What invitation cards! There were no invitation cards at all!

“Hand over the invitations!” Derrick spoke in an overbearing manner.

“We don’t have them,” Levi replied placidly.

“Haha. Did you hear that, Mr. Lewis? They have no invitations at all! Something is definitely fishy here!” Derrick was elated to hear that they came without any invitation.

“Men, arrest them!” Ethan gave his orders.

At that point, Zoey was already freaking out.

Mom, dad, and I will definitely be fine even if we’re arrested. But Levi will certainly be subjected to Derrick’s manipulation and get sent to jail again.

“Wait! We came in through the security checkpoint. What makes you think we don’t have the right to be here?” Zoey said indignantly.

“That’s impossible!” Derrick sneered. “An invitation is compulsory to enter this place! Even the host of today’s banquet, the God of War, needs an invitation! Something is not right if there’s no invitation!”

“Yes, that’s a first for me as well,” Ethan said with certainty, knowing that everyone, including the tycoons, came with invitations today. “Take them away!”

Aaron and Caitlyn squeezed their eyes shut in horror.

Zoey, too, was terribly frightened.

“Accept your fate, Zoey!” Derrick chortled. “This is the consequence of rejecting me!”

“Whoever told you that one must need an invitation to get in?” Levi’s voice sounded abruptly.

Everyone halted and stared at him with surprise.

Just then, Zoey tugged on Levi’s sleeves, signaling him to stop talking, while Aaron and his wife looked even more horrified by Levi’s retort.

Is he courting disaster?

Levi merely patted her shoulders. “Trust me again, will you?”

“Okay.” Zoey nodded.

After that, Levi’s gaze landed on Ethan. “Call your supervisor and ask him this—can Levi Garrison come in without an invitation?”

“Hahaha... Is he retarded? Who does he think he is?”

Derrick and his companions laughed so hard that their stomach hurt.

But Ethan was angered by Levi’s words, so he did as he was asked. “Okay, I shall ask the team leader if he knows you.”

Standing beside them, Derrick laughed heartily and was happy to see Levi make a fool of himself.

By then, many people had gathered around at the commotion, causing Zoey and her parents to lower their heads in embarrassment.

This is an embarrassment!

Ethan consulted Clement Phillips, the security team leader, through his headset.

When the voice came through the headset, his complexion turned for the worst. His eyes were filled with fear and trepidation as he looked at Levi.

“I-I... I got it, S-Sir...” Ethan stammered as he struggled to make out his words.

Derrick, who was unaware of the situation, looked at Ethan with anticipation. “How is it? Mr. Lewis?”

Slap!

The answer he got in return was an unexpected hard slap on the cheek that sent him flying seven to eight meters away. His mouth was full of blood, and he even lost a few teeth.

“Mr. Lewis, w-why?”

Derrick’s eyes widened as he stuttered.

Ethan stepped forward and threw another punch, causing blood to spurt from Derrick’s wounds.

“Why? You abused your power and deliberately made things difficult for Ms. Lopez! They may not have an invitation, but they are our honored guests who came in through proper means! But you! You had disrupted the order and dampened the mood of the banquet! Men, arrest him and lock him up for a few days!” Ethan ordered.

The two security guards next to him stepped forward and grabbed Derrick, dragging him away as if he were a lifeless corpse.

“Mr. Garrison, Ms. Lopez, a thousand apologies for the trouble!”

Ethan dared not stay there any longer as he led his men and hurried off.

The unexpected twist made Zoey and her parents dumbfounded.

What just happened?

Didn't they come to arrest us?

Why was Derrick arrested instead?

What's going on? This happened right after he reported his name.

The three of them gazed at Levi, with Zoey eyeing him doubtfully.

"Aren't you going to explain what's going on?" Zoey started.

"It's simple! We may not have an invitation, but we came in legally, so we're safe. And what Derrick did just now has disrupted the order of the banquet. You guys saw the horde of busybodies just now, no? That's a bad impression right there. If the God of War learned about what transpired just now, forget about Derrick, even Jesse Nielsen himself can't bear this responsibility."

"I get it now," Aaron responded immediately. "It's fine as long as we prove that we came in legally!"

Caitlyn nodded. "Yeah, that should be it."

Though Zoey felt that something was amiss, there seemed to be no loopholes in his explanation. To her, it sounded perfectly logical and reasonable.

Yet, the moment Levi turned his head, his eyes flickered.

He had heard what Derrick said just now. Instead of locking him up for a few days, he was determined to let Derrick rot in prison.

The dinner banquet was simple, but the people who attended were so great a personage that Zoey and her parents dared not make a sound once they were seated.

"Mom, Dad, why are you guys so tense? Walk around. Wouldn't it be nice to make friends and meet new people?" Levi smiled.

Aaron and Caitlyn exchanged glances. But in the end, they decided to stay rooted to their spot.

Zoey tilted her head, giving Levi a once-over. "Aren't you afraid?"

Levi's outward tranquility gave Zoey and her parents an illusion that he was accustomed to such an occasion.

"Why should I be?" Levi said.

Zoey pondered. He must be accustomed to it from facing vile and vicious people in prison.

Thus, she stopped asking.

In the meantime, there were more and more people arriving at the banquet.

Escorted by big crowds in front and behind, Jesse and a few other North Hampton big shots had arrived as well.

“Hmm? Aaron, I’ve noticed that everyone came with gifts. Even Nielsen’s secretary is carrying a gift box of some kind. I think it’s just us who came empty-handed,” Caitlyn observed.

The rest of the family caught a glimpse, and it was indeed so.

Everyone else brought gifts except for their family.

It was obvious as they were sitting at the corner, unmoving while the others had gathered together, waiting to present their gifts.

“It’s because we didn’t understand the rules. I wasn’t aware of it,” Aaron said as his head drooped.

“Yeah. But Dad, Samuel, and the others had thought about it,” Caitlyn said. “Did you see the gifts in their hands just now?”

Zoey sighed. “It’s all my fault. I wasn’t sure if we could get in.”

Aaron nodded. “Should I arrange for someone to send some gifts now? There’s still time.”

Levi quickly refused. “Mom, Dad, just relax. Perhaps the God of War doesn’t like gifts.”

“No, this is the least we should do,” Zoey said.

However, Levi let out a light chuckle. “I think the God of War will appreciate those who came empty-handed. Do you believe me?”

“I don’t.” Zoey shook her head.

THE PROTECTOR CHAPTER 8

“Did you guys see that? They came empty-handed.”

“Do they not know the rules? Or do they not respect the God of War at all?”

“I don’t think I’ve seen them before. Who are they? Did they sneak in?”

...

Soon, everyone noticed Aaron and his family.

Hearing the various mutterings, Aaron wished the ground would swallow him up.

This is too embarrassing.

It differed from being humiliated in front of someone familiar.

First of all, they didn't have any sense of presence in this place. And second of all, they were just nobodies among the many big shots.

It was a kind of psychological humiliation.

Not long after, the room was in turmoil.

Everyone had shifted their gaze to a few men walking in, dressed in military uniform.

The leader of the group was a bona fide King of War, who carried one star on his shoulder.

His imposing aura had everyone speechless.

“A quick introduction. I served at the Eastern War Zone, code-named Azure Dragon. I'm the God of War's right-hand man!”

Azure Dragon scanned the area domineeringly.

Aaron and his family shuddered in fear when they saw this scene.

“Man, this God of War is too scary! Even his right-hand man is the King of War!”

“Indeed! The God of War is Erudia's first war God with five stars!”

Caitlyn was so anxious that she was about to cry. “We should have at least brought something. What will happen to us if he thinks we are disrespecting him?”

“Azure Dragon, may I ask when is the God of War arriving?” Jesse asked.

Azure Dragon smiled. “Truth be told, the God of War is already in our midst right now. He tends to keep a low profile and hardly ever attends such events. It's beyond my expectation that he actually came.”

His words brought on a storm as people looked around frantically in search of this man.

“Stop searching,” Azure Dragon said sternly. “But keep in mind that the God of War has your every word and action in check. I will act as the mediator today. You can find me if there's anything you need.”

“Well, isn't this a hint?” Aaron whispered upon hearing this.

And the rest seemed to have understood his meaning as well.

“North Hampton Winston Gonzales presents the God of War with a pair of Legendary Pearl!”

“North Hampton Evergreen Chamber of Commerce presents the God of War with a two-hundred-year-

old wild ginseng!”

“North Hampton Apocalypse Club presents the God of War with a McLaren P1!”

...

Everyone at the venue rushed to the front to present their extravagant gifts, in which mansions were also on the list.

Seeing them presenting their gifts one after another, Aaron and Caitlyn bowed their heads in utter embarrassment.

Even Zoey wanted to make a run for the exit.

On the stage, Azure Dragon looked at the mountain of gifts piled up before him. His expression turning colder by the minute.

“What do you mean by doing this?”

Azure Dragon’s voice shocked the audience.

Even Jesse, the governor of North Hampton, held his tongue.

Everyone looked at Azure Dragon, not quite understanding what he meant.

“Are you insulting the God of War?”

“No, no. Absolutely not.”

Azure Dragon’s words scared the life out of everyone.

“Mark my words! This is what the God of War hates the most! Don’t use your tricks on the God of War! By doing so, you’re only looking down on him!” Azure Dragon reproached, and everyone understood at once.

Is the God of War short of money?

Not at all!

The God of War has unparalleled wealth and power!

“Please hold your anger, Azure Dragon! We were in the wrong!”

Azure Dragon glanced at the crowd. “Did anyone not give a gift just now?”

Everyone looked at each other and found that there was no one who didn’t present their gifts.

“Dad, raise your hand! This is your chance!” Levi reminded.

Zoey and her parents had been listening. They were relieved to hear that the other party didn't like receiving gifts. Even so, they weren't audacious enough to raise their hands.

"Zoey, raise your hand if you trust me. It's definitely a good thing!"

Zoey raised her hand, and everyone looked over.

Azure Dragon fixed his eyes on Zoey. "Good, very good! Your attitude is right to come empty-handed! That shows your respect for the God of War! Good job!"

Hearing the King of War's compliments, Zoey and her parents stood up subconsciously, overwhelmed by the flattery and honor.

"What's your name?" Azure Dragon asked.

"Nice to meet you, Azure Dragon. My name is Zoey Lopez. This is my father, Aaron..."

Zoey introduced her family courteously.

"Very good. I shall remember your names. I will give priority to you and your family for any good things in the future!" Azure Dragon pledged.

Everyone in the room was amazed, including Jesse.

Zoey and her parents expressed their gratitude in a fluster.

They never dreamed that such a blessing would fall into their laps.

Even at the end of the banquet, they felt like they were floating in the clouds.

"God, this is all real."

Aaron even pocketed a few name cards from big bosses who had expressed their goodwill to him.

"You're so lucky, young lady!" Caitlyn beamed.

Zoey looked at Levi. "Mom, it's all thanks to Levi! He expected that the God of War doesn't like gifts and encouraged me to raise my hand. I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for him!"

"Levi has really knocked our socks off tonight!"

"Indeed. Do we even have the chance to attend this banquet if it wasn't for him?"

Aaron and Caitlyn's impression of Levi changed for the better.

"That's your luck," Levi said. "I just asked a friend to get us a few invitations, that's all."

Right then, Zoey regarded Levi with a rather different look.

It's as if everything was within his control tonight, as if he'd solved everything with just his words.

Could it be that he has some influential background?

Maybe he's behind all this today?

But how is it possible? He was imprisoned for six years!

Zoey dismissed that idea soon after.

It had been a long and thrilling night, but fortunately enough, it was a happy ending.

Aaron and Caitlyn felt dizzy with excitement now that they had redeemed and especially proven themselves to the Lopez family.

However, Harry called just then, and it was Aaron who picked up the call.

"You and Zoey don't have to go to work from tomorrow onwards!"

"What?"

Harry's cold and merciless voice sounded from over the phone. "You guys have disappointed me so much. When will you pay back the 2.8 million you owe me?"

"Dad, I..."

"Well, since you can't pay back, I'll take back the company and get Samuel and Melanie to take over the business. You're on your own!" Harry hung up.

Aaron's phone fell to the ground with a thud.

After learning about what happened, Zoey and Caitlyn sobbed, hugging each other.

"What's wrong?" Levi asked.

"Grandpa took back the company," Zoey sniffed. "We're unemployed now."

"Hmph, they'll regret this!"

Meanwhile, at the Lopez residence, Fabian asked gingerly after Harry hung up the phone, "Is it okay for us to do that? Levi doesn't have any influential background, does he?"

"Dad, I've already asked around," Henry said. "My friend's former classmate works at the Municipal Water Conservancy Bureau, and he was there at the banquet. He said that Levi is just a nobody who relied on a friend to get inside. What's more ridiculous, only their family didn't bring any gifts. As if that wasn't embarrassing enough, they even took it seriously when they heard that the God of War didn't like receiving gifts."

Everyone cracked up when they heard what happened.

Harry then let out a cold snort. "I must take back their company and make them jobless for disgracing me at Paradise Villa!"

He was simmering with anger because of the incident today.

It was Henry who hatched the plot to have Harry take back the company.

"That's right. They're a bunch of ungrateful buffoons who never treat Grandpa with respect!" Samuel chimed in. "I swear I'll make their life miserable!"

Harry looked at Samuel, his face full of anticipation. "The Lopez family depends on you now, Samuel. I don't think we can make it to West City's ecological park development project tomorrow, but it's okay. You have to work harder, Samuel, and get us more projects through your connections."

"Don't worry, Grandpa," Samuel replied.

The Protector Chapter 9

That night, Zoey barely slept a wink.

"Don't dwell on it too much and go to sleep," Levi comforted. "Harry will come to you in person and ask you to go back to support the business."

Zoey glared at him. "You think Grandpa will come to me in person? Please, I would thank the heavens if Dad and I can get our jobs back."

"Don't worry. I meant what I said. Harry will ask you to go back!"

Levi turned around, went to the balcony, and made a call. "Azure Dragon, put Nielsen on the line..."

The next morning, Harry woke up to a call from the Ministry of Construction, inviting the Lopez family to attend the bidding for the ecological park development project.

It was a pleasant surprise, as Harry didn't expect to have the chance to take part in the bidding given their qualifications.

Harry quickly gathered the Lopez family in the living room. "I heard before that someone is preparing to take part in the bidding. Who was it again?"

"Dad, it's Zoey!" Henry answered instantly. "She'd drafted a detailed proposal. But how could she take part in the bidding with her family's ability?"

Harry stroked his chin. "So you're saying Zoey has a detailed proposal, and we can take part in the bidding with that proposal?"

“Yeah! Zoey is still competent!”

“Where’s Shaun? Hurry over to Aaron’s and get that proposal! Who would have thought that this bunch of trash would still be useful!”

...

In the meantime, Levi, Zoey, and her parents were having breakfast in silence when a knock was heard on the door.

To their surprise, it was Shaun.

Shaun appraised the house with a glance. “You guys are living here in this dumpster? Is this even a hundred and fifty square meters?”

“What are you doing here?” Aaron asked, clearly displeased at him interrupting their peaceful morning.

“I’m here to get the proposal for the ecological park development project. The Ministry of Construction has informed us that we are going to take part in the bidding,” Shaun said.

“No way!” Zoey turned him down flat. “I drafted this proposal myself. Do it yourself if you’re going to bid for this project. This has nothing to do with me. Besides, I was fired.”

Shaun glowered at her. “Fine. I’ll let Grandpa talk to you!”

At that, he handed his mobile phone to Zoey.

“What’s going on with you, Zoey? Aren’t you going to hand over the proposal? Do you not acknowledge me as your Grandpa?” Harry’s angry voice echoed as soon as Zoey answered the phone.

Zoey welled up in tears. “You fired me, Grandpa. What do you need my proposal for? I won’t yield!”

“Hmph, what do you mean? If you don’t hand over the proposal, the Lopez family will break off all relations with you lot today!”

Zoey was all tears upon hearing that.

Levi rose to his feet. He rummaged for the proposal and handed it over to Shaun before consoling Zoey.

“Now, that’s more like it.”

Shaun looked at this family with ridicule written all over his face.

Meanwhile, Zoey and her parents looked disappointed when they saw Levi handed over the proposal.

Isn’t that a cowardly move?

What’s the use of having such a husband?

“Why did you give him the proposal?” Zoey questioned.

“Listen to me. Harry will definitely ask you to go back,” Levi asserted. “We need to go somewhere today.”

“How can I trust you like this?” Zoey raised her voice.

“You guys shall get a divorce if Dad remains silent!” Aaron added crossly.

“Deal!” Levi agreed.

On the other side, after securing the proposal, Samuel and Melanie were entrusted with the important task of taking over Zoey’s company, Imperial Meadows Limited.

Thereafter, they headed straight to the office building responsible for the ecological park project, where there was already a long queue when they arrived.

Thinking that all the Lopez family’s property would belong to him in the future, Samuel’s breathing hastened.

After waiting for one hour, it was finally Samuel’s turn.

Samuel was about to give a long-winded introduction of himself as soon as he entered the office with Melanie when the person sitting at the opposite piped up, “The Lopez family?”

“Yes, that’s right!” Samuel answered quickly in a dazed.

Melanie immediately handed over a stack of papers. “This is our project proposal! Please have a look!”

North Hampton Ministry of Construction was responsible for the approval and decision of this project. The person in charge on-site was Orlando Jennings, the leader of the Ministry of Construction management.

“Why didn’t Ms. Zoey or Mr. Aaron come?” Orlando asked straightforwardly, putting the Lopez family’s proposal under his hands.

“I beg your pardon?”

The question stunned both Samuel and Melanie.

“Allow me to introduce myself, Mr. Jennings. My name is Samuel, Samuel Robertson. I’m the key person in charge of this project of Lopez Group. As for Zoey and Aaron, they have been fired from Lopez Group. May I know why are you asking for them, Mr. Jennings?” Samuel asked curiously.

Hearing that, Orlando nodded with relief. “Oh, is that so? Alright then. You may leave now. The Lopez family is hereby disqualified from participating in the bidding for this development project.”

With that, Orlando pushed the proposal to the front, leaving Samuel and Melanie slack-jawed.

“M-Mr. Jennings, what do you mean?” Samuel faltered.

“Are you saying that this has something to do with Zoey, Mr. Jennings?” Melanie asked.

“Yes, that’s right. After inspections by the leaders, they have discovered that Lopez Group is a very suitable candidate for this project, especially Ms. Zoey’s Imperial Meadows Limited. Hence, it was decided tentatively to have Lopez Group’s Imperial Meadows Limited take on this project. But since Ms. Zoey has been fired, the Lopez family has no business in this matter any longer. We’ll have to choose again,” Orlando explained patiently.

Though it was said to be a preliminary tentative decision, the final decision had been made, and everyone knew what it meant.

“Mr. Jennings, Zoey may have been fired, but we took over Imperial Meadows Limited. You’re right to choose us. These are some documents regarding the takeover,” Samuel said, handing over a pile of documents excitedly. “Imperial Meadows is our responsibility, Mr. Jennings!”

Unexpectedly, Orlando slapped his hand away, scattering the documents all over the place.

“Scram! Don’t you understand a word that comes out of my mouth? I want Ms. Zoey to present me with her proposal. No one else from the Lopez family can replace her! We want to authorize this project to Ms. Zoey and Ms. Zoey only! Do you understand?” Orlando said, pointing at Samuel’s nose.

“Why does it have to be Zoey, Mr. Jennings?” Melanie asked sheepishly. “I’m Melanie Lopez, Zoey’s sister. I’ve studied abroad, and I’m much more capable than Zoey in many aspects. I can handle this project just as well, Mr. Jennings!”

Samuel nodded. “Yeah, Melanie is capable! So much more capable than Zoey!”

“Leave now!” Orlando threw the proposal on the table to the ground. “I’m telling you, unless Ms. Zoey comes in person tomorrow at eight o’clock sharp, the Lopez family will not have the qualification to compete in this project, and I will strike the Lopez family’s name off the list!”

“Get out now before I call the security!”

Orlando’s secretary pushed and shoved them out.

It was only then they realized the reason the project was designated to the Lopez family was not because of the Lopez family’s strength but because of Zoey.

“What did the little b***h, Zoey did to be given such a huge project?” Melanie was surprised.

“No wonder the Ministry of Construction called and invited the Lopez family to take part in the bidding! It’s because of Zoey,” Samuel stated the obvious.

As soon as they returned to the Lopez residence, Harry asked, “Samuel, how was it? Did we pass the preliminary selection?”

Samuel wore a gloomy expression. “Melanie, tell Grandpa!”

Melanie told the facts just as they had happened.

“What? It has to be Zoey?” Harry was astounded.

“Yeah, Mr. Jennings has hinted that this project will be assigned to Imperial Meadows Limited, but it has to be Zoey to seal the deal! We almost offended them,” Samuel said.

Thereafter, Harry sent Henry and Fabian to negotiate, but both of them were kicked out as well.

After thinking about it, Harry finally said, “Then go look for Zoey now! Restore her position and secure this project first!”

“Please hurry, Grandpa,” Samuel urged. “If they don’t see Zoey at eight tomorrow, they’ll give this project to someone else.”

The Protector Chapter 10

This time, not only Shaun but Samuel and Melanie also followed.

“What are you guys doing here?”

Aaron was furious to see the three of them, but he didn’t expect them to be so polite.

“Uncle Aaron, Aunt Caitlyn, where’s Zoey?”

They were carrying all kinds of gift boxes in their hands, which made Aaron and Caitlyn even more puzzled.

“Zoey? She’s not at home,” Caitlyn said.

Melanie grinned. “Where did she go, Aunt Caitlyn?”

Caitlyn shook her head. “No idea. She went out with Levi early in the morning.”

“Oh, okay, Uncle Aaron, Aunt Caitlyn. Please give us a call when Zoey comes back. We’ll be off then.”

Aaron and Caitlyn were all the more bewildered when the three of them left.

“What are they up to? Even giving us gifts? Are they sucking up to us?”

“Don’t tell me that Levi’s words actually came true?” Caitlyn mused. “It seems that I’m unable to see through him anymore.”

At this time, Levi and Zoey were wandering about aimlessly at their alma mater.

At Levi's suggestion, Zoey had turned off her phone.

It was already evening when Samuel and the others exited the Lopez residence.

They didn't go far. In fact, they were waiting in front of Zoey's neighborhood.

After waiting for three hours, Levi and Zoey had yet to return.

Harry had also checked in on them several times.

"Where the hell is she? Call Zoey now!"

Samuel grew impatient as he smoked one cigarette after another.

Right that instant, Melanie dialed Zoey's number.

"The number you have dialed is currently unavailable..."

Her expression stiffened upon hearing the automated message.

"She turned off her phone..."

"What? Is she doing this on purpose?" Samuel spat with sudden fury.

Shaun also tried to call, and sure enough, her phone was off.

"But Zoey doesn't know what's going on. Isn't this too much of a coincidence? Why did she turn off her phone?" Melanie said in surprise.

"Oh yeah, who knows Levi's number? He's with Zoey right now," Samuel asked.

"I don't."

"Let me ask Uncle Aaron and Aunt Caitlyn."

After asking, Melanie shook her head in dismay. "He just came back the day before yesterday, so they don't know his number too."

"F**k!"

Samuel lost his temper.

Right then, Harry called to inquire again.

Samuel passed the phone directly to Melanie.

"We don't know where Zoey is, Grandpa. They left home early in the morning. Her phone has been

switched off, and no one knows Levi's number. Even Uncle Aaron and Aunt Caitlyn have no clue."

Hearing this, Harry was more anxious than anyone else.

The Lopez family's social status would increase tenfold if we secured this project.

"Then keep searching! I want this settled by tomorrow morning!"

Harry mobilized every connection of the Lopez family to look for Zoey and Levi in North Hampton, including Zoey's classmates, friends, and colleagues.

However, Zoey's whereabouts were not known at all.

"Do you guys think Zoey has left North Hampton?" someone said.

Harry was so frightened that he almost had a heart attack.

He glared at Henry and huffed. "You wastrel! It's all your fault for coming up with that stupid idea! Why did we fire them and took back their company? Just how much will we lose if we can't find Zoey by tomorrow? More than a billion?"

Henry's heart lurched. "Dad, I didn't know things will turn out like this. Who could have ever thought that Zoey is the key! Why did the Ministry of Construction set their minds on Zoey in the first place?"

"Hurry up and find her! If you can't find her by eight tomorrow morning, I'll take back your company as well! You and your family won't get a single cent!"

"Dad, I'll get to it right away!"

Henry almost wet his pants upon hearing his father's threat.

"What are you guys still doing here?" Harry glared at Fabian and the rest. "Get searching! Unless you want to see a billion goes down the drain!"

"We're on it!"

That night, the entire Lopez family didn't rest and had been looking high and low for Levi and Zoey.

By this time, the both of them had long since gone to bed at a hotel.

Zoey was so exhausted from walking all day that she fell asleep right away without even turning on her phone.

Everyone had been calling and searching for Zoey all night, but to no avail.

It was almost dawn, and Harry's heart could barely take it anymore.

"If we missed out on this project, I'm taking three times more of each family's dividends this year! And Henry, I'll be taking back your company. Do whatever you want, you incompetent punks!" Harry

chided, slamming the table.

Henry paled and said in a low voice, “Dad, maybe they went out to play, and their phones died. They’ll turn it back on once it’s charged.”

“You think I’m a child? This wouldn’t have happened if it wasn’t for you!”

Saying that, Harry gave Henry a tight slap.

“Okay, it’s almost seven now. They should have charged and turned on their phones by now, yes? Try calling them now!”

Henry trembled as he dialed Zoey’s number, and to his surprise, the call went through.

“Hey, are you crazy for calling at this hour?”

It was Levi who answered the phone.

Everyone was astounded and ecstatically happy at this moment.

“Levi, it’s me, Uncle Henry!” Henry said immediately.

“Oh, Henry. Why did you call? Are you insane?”

Henry was about to explode when he heard that, but he kept his cool. “Levi, where’s Zoey? Put her on the line. I have something important to tell her.”

“She’s still sleeping. Just tell me if there’s anything important,” Levi rejected directly.

Henry tittered nervously. “Levi, it was a mistake to take back Imperial Meadows and fire Zoey. We decided to recall Zoey and let her take over Imperial Meadows Limited again. Come to the Lopez family mansion with Zoey now. Your Grandpa is asking for the both of you!”

“Oh? Reinstatement, eh? No thanks. Zoey has got a new job,” Levi said before hanging up immediately.

“I’m going to kill this bastard!” Henry exploded.

“You idiot! Call them again and asked for their whereabouts!”

Harry gave Henry another slap.

“Okay, okay.”

Henry called again. “Levi, I know we’re in the wrong! This was a mistake on our end. I swear there will be no next time. Give me your address, and I’ll go pick you guys up, okay?”

“What do you think you’re doing? Do you think you can just fire and reinstate someone as you please? Zoey is not a tool for you to mess around with!” Levi snapped.

“You guys can ask for anything as long as Zoey comes back,” Henry said promptly. “Salary is not a problem!”

“Fine, this is what’s going to happen. You want Zoey back? Sure, but whoever fired her in the first place shall be the one to invite her back!”

“It was me! I’ll be the one to invite her back!” Henry said.

“No, you don’t have the right to do that. It was Harry who fired her. Get Harry to come in person! Otherwise, Zoey is never going back!”

Levi was adamant.

Rage nearly consumed Harry when he heard this.

“What? You want me to invite that lass back in person? Are you courting death, Levi?”

At this moment, he could feel nothing but humiliation.