

Chapter 13 Fate's Joke

Adeline held Xavier tightly in her arms, her heart aching. Like in his childhood, she gently patted him and whispered, "It's okay, it's all over now. Everything has come to an end, and the pain will fade away."

Indeed, everything had come to an end, and that woman would never appear again.

Maybe it was this warm embrace let Xavier take off guard. His vision went dark, and he passed out leaning against Adeline's shoulder.

"Hurry up, call the ambulance!" Adeline yelled out in panic.

...

When Xavier regained consciousness, it was already the following afternoon. He found himself alone on a white sickbed. Outside the window was landscape scene with a clear, pristine sky and bright sunlight. It seemed as if all the troubles from yesterday had been washed away.

He stared blankly outside, feeling as if everything had been a dream. It wasn't until the pain in his fingertips drew his attention that he had to face the reality.

The captivating smile of Grace kept swirling in his mind. No matter what, he couldn't bring himself to believe that this seductive woman had left this world all alone.

Even if she had taken his photos to blackmail his mother for five million, he would rather imagine her somewhere abroad laughing at him for being a foolish man, than hear the news of her death.

As he dwelled on these thoughts, his eyes brimming with tears, and his heart throbbed as if being stabbed by a knife.

Just then, the door to the ward swung open.

A nurse entered, ready to check Xavier's wounds. Seeing that he

was awake, she quickly left to call the doctor.

A few minutes later, the doctor completed a thorough examination of Xavier, confirming that he was in good health. After giving some suggestions, the doctor left the ward.

After the doctor departed, Xavier remembered something and reached for his phone to make a call. The call was answered promptly.

"Mr. Brooks." There came the voice of his assistant, Anthony.

"How is the investigation progressing?"

Xavier's icy tone made Anthony instinctively swallow hard before replying, "Mr. Brooks, I have arrived at the hospital entrance. Would you like me to report to you face to face?"

Actually, if possible, Anthony would rather report this matter to his boss over the phone, than face him in person. Just by hearing the voice on the other end of the line, he felt a chilling fear, knowing that entering the ward would be a fearful experience.

But Mr. Brooks responded, "Yes."

After making himself mentally prepared, Anthony finally reached the door of the ward and cautiously knocked.

"Come in."

Taking a deep breath, Anthony pushed open the door and entered. "Mr. Brooks." He nodded in greeting.

"Um, what have you discovered?" Xavier's voice was slightly hoarse, yet his face remained remarkably calm.

After a brief moment of surprise, Anthony let out a relieved sigh. He quickly stole a glance at his boss before meticulously relaying the information he had gathered.

"Mr. Brooks, the police have confirmed the identities of the deceased, and they perfectly match the information registered prior to boarding the flight."

There was a moment of silence, then Xavier's hoarse voice

resounded. "I want to know the cause of this crash."

"Based on the police investigation, it was discovered that during takeoff, a flock of birds flew into the engine, resulting in a sudden fire and explosion at an altitude of 1,000 feet."

As Anthony finished his report, Xavier's breath uncontrollably quickened.

Birds? Such a colossal disaster caused by a mere flock of birds! Was this a joke of fate?!

Bang!

Xavier's fist collided forcefully with the bed board. Anthony was so startled that his heart skipped a beat. He patted gently on his chest, daring not to make a sound before the furious Xavier.

Chapter 14 Funeral

After a long while, Xavier finally regained his composure. His gaze turned towards the window, and beneath the radiant sunlight, a few birds occasionally chirped with joy as they soared towards the boundless azure sky.

"Anthony, do you believe in destiny?" He said.

Anthony, caught off guard, his ears missed to catch the voice of Xavier. But Xavier didn't expect a response from him. His eyes remained fixed on a certain spot outside the window, while a deep anguish silently washed over him.

His voice carried a husky and heavy tone. "I'd like to personally host her funeral."

Anthony was taken aback but quickly nodded in agreement. "I see, Mr. Brooks." For Mr. Brooks to personally attend Miss Everly's funeral... Perhaps Mrs. Quinn wouldn't be pleased to hear that.

Maple Cemetery, the city's largest burial ground, lies in the most expensive land. Typically, only the relatives of affluent families have the qualification to be buried within this cemetery.

Xavier laid Grace to rest in Maple Cemetery.

The rainy season intensified the desolate atmosphere of the funeral. After the ceremony concluded, the funeral company's staff left happily, clutching their payment, leaving Xavier standing alone before Grace's tombstone.

On picture of the tombstone, Grace's exquisitely pretty face remained unchanged. Time had frozen her in her prettiest age. Her large eyes seemed to gaze at him as he softly pursed his lips, forming a bittersweet smile.

Xavier couldn't resist taking a step forward, his eyes filled with an intoxicating obsession. Yet, just as he reached out to touch her face, it dissipated like a fragile bubble, vanishing before his very eyes.

"Grace, Grace..." Xavier despondently sat on the ground, whispering softly.

Resting his face against the cold tombstone, he gently closed his eyes, as if in doing so, he could feel that Grace had never truly departed. She had always been there, by his side.

"Grace, I miss you so much..."

Tears of anguish streamed down his face, tracing a path along his cheeks and falling upon the tombstone, where they gently moistened the face of Grace in the photograph.

"Grace, I hate you, oh how I hate you." Xavier murmured. "My heart is consumed by this hatred, yet, why do I find it impossible to forget you? You have taken my heart, my soul away since your departure..."

His hand rested upon his chest, where the once resounding thump of his heart seemed to diminish, as if the absence of his beloved had dulled it forever.

"Grace, I implore you, please do not leave me..."

A cool breeze danced through the wilderness, carrying a delicate fragrance and meanwhile spreading his intermittent whispers, which floated through the air, refusing to dissipate.

In Brooks Corporation's office, the door swung open with a resounding thud, and several managers walked out with serious face.

"How many managers have been subjected to Mr. Brooks's reprimands?" One of the staff whispered.

"Hush! Mr. Brooks is obviously in bad mood these days? Who knows it won't be your turn next, or even mine?" The other one scolded.

"Um, Mr. Brooks would never subject secretaries to such harsh treatment. Have you not noticed that it's primarily the higher-up managers who have faced his wrath as of late?" A third person

reasoned.

"What absurd reasoning! If even the upper managers are being scolded, based on what can we secretaries stand to escape the scolds?" Someone responded, her voice filled with incredulity.

"You make a valid point. But I can't help but wonder how long Mr. Brook's bad mood will persist. He can't possibly continue living in this state of emotional desolation. If this carries on, I fear I can't take it..." A secretary lamented with a sigh.

"Hush! Cease your nonsense, Mr. Brooks..."

The CEO's office door swung open abruptly, and Xavier stood there.

Chapter 15 Mr. Brooks In Bad Mood

“Anna.”

The woman named Anna was one of the chatty secretaries mentioned earlier. Suddenly being called out by name, she was already trembling in fear, slowly making her way over.

“Mr. Brooks, what can I do for you?” Anna asked cautiously, her voice barely audible.

“Did you injure your leg?” Xavier glanced at her legs beneath the professional secretary’s skirt and casually inquired.

Anna snapped back to attention and instinctively tugged down her skirt. “No, it’s okay.”

Xavier didn’t dwell on the matter of her injury, the conversation swiftly shifting gears. “Send me the schedule for the upcoming week.” He requested, his tone nonchalant.

“Yes, Mr. Brooks.” Anna replied, her voice filled with timidity.

Xavier nodded ever so slightly, then turned on his heel and walked toward his office.

Anna let out a relieved sigh, her hand instinctively pressed against her pounding heart. It felt as though she had narrowly escaped a calamity.

Returning to her seat, Anna hurriedly opened her email, preparing to send the schedule to her boss.

“Hey, I must say Mr. Brooks seems rather gentle with you. Not as terrifying as we had imagined.” Another secretary, Linda, approached with a teasing grin.

Anna shot her a sharp look. “Gentle? Did you not notice my trembling legs?”

Linda cast a glance under the table at Anna’s legs and they were indeed trembling.

“Forget about that for now. Mr. Brooks asked me to send him the schedule for the next week. Who knows what surprises await

us." Anna replied, a hint of apprehension creeping into her voice.

"Oh no." Linda exclaimed, her eyes widening in alarm.

After sending the email, there was no response from Xavier. Just as Anna and Linda breathed a sigh of relief, preparing to tidy up and call it a day, the door to the CEO's office swung open abruptly, breaking the tranquility like a sudden bolt of lightning.

"I have made some modifications to the schedule, Anna. Print multiple copies immediately. They will be needed shortly. Linda, please notify the department managers to assemble in the conference room in ten minutes." Xavier instructed.

Then he strode purposefully toward the conference room.

Anna and Linda exchanged a glance, their expressions mirroring a mix of helplessness and frustration. They forced a wry smile, quickly parting ways and hurrying off to attend to their respective tasks.

In the conference room.

A meeting was held, but only a few people were speaking, while the majority remained silent.

Xavier, seated at the head, had a cold gaze. He raised his hand and slammed the report on the table with a resounding thud.

"Approximately, estimated, maybe... Is this how you present the statistical data to me? The company hired you at high salaries, not just for show. At the very least, you should hold a serious attitude."

Xavier berated them angrily, and everyone below lowered their heads, afraid to make a noise.

In fact, this report was painstakingly prepared by the Sales Department and the Marketing Center. They had worked for a whole night to finish it.

Mr. Brooks had requested sales reports from over 500 global subsidiaries in the past three years, categorized by product and type in detail. The deadline was tight, and they added these words

in fear of being criticized for inaccurate data. However, they never expected that it would still result in being scolded.

After venting his anger, Xavier assigned several tasks in succession. The subordinates dared not complain and began another round of busyness.

"Mr. Brooks, your phone..."

Xavier usually set his phone to silent during meetings, but this time, while he was giving instructions to a subordinate, he didn't notice his phone. One of the managers beside him noticed that the phone had been ringing several times and couldn't help but remind him.

The screen kept flashing incessantly. Xavier reached out to silence the phone, but suddenly, he stopped in mid-action.