

Alpha Amanda's love adventure novel

Chapter 201 Headlines Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins By the time I got back to the manor from the Operations Department last night, I was drained. Every part of me ached. I didn't waste time. I showered quick and collapsed into bed. I hugged my pillow, rolled onto my side, and didn't think about the Eclipse Pack mess again. I slept straight through. No dreams. Nothing. I only woke when the light from my phone screen hit my eyes. I reached for it, barely awake. The numbers glared at me-11:07. That hit like a jolt to the chest. "Crap!" I bolted upright.

My hair looked like I'd fought off a hurricane. I'd set seven alarms. Not one of them went off. Turned out I'd silenced them before I passed out. While brushing my teeth, I stared at my reflection. My eyes still looked half asleep. I grumbled about being such a heavy sleeper. But no matter how annoyed I was, I couldn't stop picturing Samson's hand on my head last night. I yanked on some clothes and flew down the stairs. I didn't walk. I used the handrail like a slide. Down in the living room, Beata was carrying a soup pot to the dining room.

The second she saw me storm in, she rushed over with a warm smile. "Ms. Amanda, please don't rush. Lunch is ready. I just reheated your favorite-tomato and mushroom soup." "I can't eat right now!" I snatched my coat from the stand and made a break for the door. "I'm already three hours late. The Operations Department must be buried in problems. Beata, why didn't you wake me?" She stepped over and straightened the collar of my coat, still smiling. "Mr. Samson asked us not to. He came back late and told us you worked into the night. Said no one should disturb you.

He even turned off your alarms. He wanted you to get some decent rest." "He turned off my alarms?!" My arm froze with the coat half-on. Samson's voice echoed in my head. "Get some sleep." So that wasn't just a throwaway line. He meant it. He noticed how tired I was. But the thought of work shoved everything else aside. "What about the Eclipse Pack? How's it holding up? Any word on the mines?" Beata shook her head. She just handled the house. She didn't know anything about the pack's business. I didn't ask again. I waved her off and ran through the gates.

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I stood by the sidewalk, pulled out my phone, and typed fast. "Eclipse Pack latest news." As soon as the page loaded, headlines stacked one after another. [Strike at Eclipse Pack's Western Branch Resolved. Miners Back on Site Today.] [Southern Pack Allies Send Emergency Energy Shipment. Eclipse Crisis Contained.] [Alan Posts Open Letter in Support of His Brother. Calls for Unity Among Members.] 1/2 18:28 Thu, Jan 1 Chapter 201 Headlines +20 Free Coins I clicked the first article. It showed a photo of miners heading back into the site. Another one had Cody signing for the energy crates.

The side of the box had a label printed in big, bold font. "Southern Pack Allies." Casey nailed it. I smiled. Alice's voice filled my head. "Looks like Samson had things under control all along. No way this happened overnight." I nodded. I used to think he just stayed calm under pressure. Now I realized he had already laid out the whole plan. No wonder he sounded so sure last night. When the cab dropped me at the Operations Department, the lobby's energy hit me in the face. The front desk girl was grinning, taking calls like it was nothing. "Yes, the mines are back up.

Yes, your paychecks will go out as usual..." The open office was packed. All the empty desks from before were now filled. Keyboards clacked. People chatted across partitions. The breakroom smelled like fresh coffee. Compared to two days ago, the whole place felt reborn. "Amanda!" Jacinda from logistics saw me and sprinted over with a stack of forms. Her face lit up. "You're finally here! Yesterday you were the only reason we didn't lose it. Now that the mines are running again, even the folks who quit are back. They're taking back their resignations.

Said they wanna stick it out with us." I laughed and gave her a quick pat on the shoulder, then headed straight to my desk. It was spotless. A fresh cup of americano sat on a coaster. Steam still rose from the top. There was a sticky note pinned underneath. The handwriting didn't belong to anyone I recognized. "Ms. Lamb, this was brewed by Mr. Ortega. He said you prefer it unsweetened." I picked up the cup and took a sip. The warmth slid down my throat and settled deep in my chest. Just like that, everything around me felt warm too.

Right when I booted up my computer to sort through the new energy reports, a deep, familiar voice sounded behind me. "Guess you slept pretty well." I turned fast. Samson was standing right there. He had on a sleek black suit. His cuffs were crisp and perfect. That faint smile on his face felt out of place. The sunlight poured in through the floor-to-ceiling windows behind him. It coated him in gold and washed away his usual coldness. I froze, hand still wrapped around my coffee mug. The fact that I overslept hit me all over again. I glanced at the lively buzz of the Operations Department.

That's when the confusion hit me. I asked without thinking, "Samson, did you come all the way here for this? Is something going on?" 2/2 Mark

Chapter 202 Eating Out Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins The second I finished speaking, he lifted his wrist and checked his watch. He looked so casual, like he'd had this planned the whole time. "It's almost noon. Come have lunch with me." "I really can't... I still have reports to go through-" I tried to make an excuse. Before I got to the end, my stomach let out two loud growls. The sound echoed in the quiet office like it had a mic. A few coworkers looked up from their desks. They smiled, all kind and knowing. My whole face started to burn.

That was when I realized I hadn't had a single drop of water since I woke up. "Your stomach's a hell of a lot more honest than you are." Samson was trying not to laugh. He reached over and grabbed my coat off the back of the chair. "Come on. Let's call it

payback for all the help you've given me these past few days." "In that case, I'm ordering the most overpriced thing on the menu." I didn't argue. I grabbed my phone and caught up to him fast. He brought me to a small bistro tucked inside one of the alleys downtown. The place turned out to be pretty quiet.

Only two or three window tables were taken. A woman in a plain shirt came over right away, her smile warm and familiar. "Samson, what a surprise. Didn't expect to see you today." "Hey Madeleine. The usual." He stepped aside and let me walk in first. His tone was softer than it ever was in the office. "Of course." She answered with a smile but took two extra glances at me. Her eyes carried a look like she already knew what was going on. She didn't ask anything. Just turned and headed into the kitchen. I tugged at his sleeve and kept my voice low. "Who is she?" "She's an old friend of my mom's.

Used to cook at our place a lot." He guided me to the window seat. "Her food's exactly the kind my mom loved. After Mom got sick, I started coming here to pick up meals for her." I nodded. I was about to say something like, "Then it must be amazing," but he raised his brows at me. "You trust my taste that much? What if you end up hating it?" "I trust Madeleine's cooking." I smirked at him. "If you've remembered the flavor for this long, there's no way it can be bad." Right then, Madeleine walked over with two appetizer plates.

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"You're good with words, sweetheart." She set the plates down, still smiling. "Samson barely talks. Never brings anyone over. You two enjoy yourselves. The mains will be out soon." Didn't take long before the hot dishes started arriving one after another. 1/3 Chapter 202 Eating Out +20 Free Coins I took a bite. My eyes went wide. "This is insane. Way better than anything I've ever had at a five-star place." Samson watched me with a calm smile. He picked up a fork and added a rib to my plate. "Here. Try this one. Her cinnamon ribs are the signature." He moved like it was second nature.

I paused for a second, then popped the rib in my mouth. The meat fell right off the bone, and it was so tender I gave him a big thumbs-up without even thinking. He barely touched his own plate. Mostly, he just kept serving me food. Every now and then, he'd ask what I liked. His voice was patient, gentle. Nothing like the forceful boss everyone knew back at the department. When Madeleine came out with a pot of stew, she caught him ladling soup into my bowl. Her eyes sparkled with amusement. "I used to worry that no one would want to live with someone as icy as Samson.

But clearly, I was worrying for nothing." The soup nearly shot out of my mouth. My face turned bright red. I waved both hands fast. "Wait, wait, you've got the wrong idea. It's not like that between us-" "We're just friends." Samson cut in smooth and easy, then pushed the bowl closer to me. "Drink your soup. It's good for your blood. Especially with all the late nights you've been pulling." Madeleine's smile turned sly, but she left it at that and walked off without another word. After lunch, Samson drove me back to the training camp.

The moment I walked into the lobby, Emily ran straight into me and wrapped me up in a tight hug. "Amanda! Finally! You're back! You have to hear my idol's new track!" Before I could even blink, she pulled my earbuds out and shoved hers in. A deep, velvety male voice filled my ears. It was Alan. The song playing was the one I'd helped him fine-tune not long ago. The arrangement had stripped away most of the wolf spirit's calming pull. Now it polished, easier to digest, but the melody still held on to that distinct edge I'd crafted.

sounded m "Tell me that's not incredible!" Emily shook my arm, practically bouncing. "It's been out for thirty minutes and it's already topping the charts! I've sent it to all my girls!" I nodded and pulled out my phone. I opened my music app and scrolled to the song's comments. The top rows were all gushing praise. "His voice is unreal." "I've played this like a hundred times already." Comments like those just kept rolling. But a few pages down, something made my heart skip. "Is it just me, or does the chorus feel really close to mysterious producer Avi's style?

Especially the way the vocals slide- it's almost a carbon copy!" That one had already stirred a small thread. Someone replied, "Yup! Avi's Cold Moon had the exact same floaty tone." Someone else jumped in with, "Stop reaching. Alan's sound has always been one-of-a-kind." My thumb froze mid-scroll. My stomach tightened. Avi was the alias I used to drop tracks on the dark web. Mark

Chapter 203 Plagiarism Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins When Emily leaned in to sneak a glance at my phone, her glittering eyes widened. She jabbed a finger at the comment, insisting it [sounded exactly like Avi,] her voice jumping an octave. "How is this possible? My idol pulled an all-nighter to write this. How could it be plagiarism? They're just jealous and deliberately spreading rumors!" Her cheeks flushed red with anger as her fingers flew over the screen, rapidly typing out a long reply. "Please don't spread rumors! Alan's creative process is documented by the team.

The inspiration for this song came from the Eclipse Pack's wind and snow, and it has absolutely nothing to do with Avi!" After sending it, she still wasn't satisfied and huffed at the screen. I watched her switch from joy one moment to righteous fury the next and couldn't help but smile. I reached out and patted her on the back. "Don't get too worked up. Online comments are always a mixed bag. Alan's real fans know the truth-these few criticisms won't cause any trouble." "But they're saying my idol plagiarized!" Emily pouted, her eyes a little red.

"My idol sang until his voice went hoarse for this song. How can they slander him like that?" "What's genuine doesn't need defending." I opened Alan's studio account and showed her the latest update. "See, the studio already posted excerpts from the original manuscripts. This will settle the dispute soon." Emily leaned over to take a look, and just like that, her anger melted into excitement. She quickly began sending screenshots to the fan group to clear things up.

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I shook my head and picked up the book on fighting theory that I'd been reading-I had to get back to the train of thought I'd lost earlier. After the afternoon combat class ended, just as I stepped out of the training camp gate, I spotted a familiar black car parked by the road. The window rolled down, revealing Josh's face-he used to dye his hair light brown, but now it was neatly cut black. He wore a simple black tracksuit, no longer the carefree kid he once was. His eyes looked steadier, more mature. "Boss, get in." He opened the door.

His tone was surprisingly obedient, a far cry from the spoiled brat who used to avoid me. I was stunned for a moment before bending down to slide into the passenger seat. The car smoothly headed toward the Ortega Castle. I flipped through the book I'd borrowed from the library, *Supernatural Combat Techniques*, but caught Josh glancing at me, hesitating to speak. "If you have something to say, just say it." I closed the book and looked at him. He quickly turned his gaze forward, cleared his throat, and nervously gripped the steering wheel. "Uh...

Boss." He hesitated for a moment, then swallowed the rest of what he wanted to say. 1/2 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 gởi c Chapter 203 Plagiarism +20 Free Coins "If you don't want to say it, don't. I still have to organize the training plan tonight." I deliberately checked my phone to show I was busy. "No, no, no! I'll say it!" Josh grew anxious, suddenly pulling the wheel to park in a temporary spot by the side of the road. He turned to me, his eyes serious. "Boss, your combat skillere so good. Could y me?

I want to improve my stamina and combat performance." teach I instinctively reached out to touch his forehead. His temperature was normal. "No fever, huh? What's with the sudden change? Didn't you always say, 'Combat's no fun compared to racing'?" His cheeks flushed bright red. He looked away, scratching his head, but his voice was firm: "I was just immature before. When the Eclipse Pack got into trouble, I watched Samson work nonstop, Patrick steady the public opinion with new songs, and even you were helping manage things. But me? I was just wandering around the racetrack, useless.

That feeling of helplessness was unbearable." 2/2 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 M Mark

Chapter 204 A Contract Josh's POV: 44 +20 Free Coins I used to think that the Eclipse Pack was so big and powerful, with Samson holding it all together, that even if I spent every day hanging out at the racetrack, I could live a life of comfort and ease. Grandpa kept pushing me to attend the training camp, but I always found some excuse to skip class. When it came to tests, I'd cheat if I could, or lean on connections to get by. No one really pressured me. That all changed when Derrick threatened to split the pack.

Grandpa called me back from the racetrack, and when I saw Samson's eyes bloodshot in the meeting hall, and Patrick working on the PR statements until dawn, I suddenly realized- I'm part of the Ortegas, and the honor of the Eclipse Pack is tied to me, too. But other than driving racecars, I didn't know how to do anything else. One day, I sneaked over to the Operations Department to deliver some files and just happened to

see Amanda teaching combat techniques to the logistics team. She was so skinny, yet she could easily take down a guy a head taller than her.

The determination in her eyes was something I'd never had. Suddenly, I felt like I'd been a loser, hiding under the pack's protection and wasting my time. I wasn't a true Ortega at all. "I want to be someone useful," I took a deep breath and met Amanda's gaze, finally saying what was on my mind. "Even if I can't be an alpha like Samson, at least when the pack's in trouble, I want to stand up, not hide in the back." Her expression softened, and she picked up the Supernatural Combat Techniques book again, flipping to the table of contents.

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"How were your combat scores back at the training camp?" Mentioning this made me want to disappear. I used to skip classes or sleep through them, barely scraping by on tests thanks to going easy on me. "Just ... okay," I stammered. "Okay means what?" Amanda pressed, a teasing glint in her eyes. "About 50 points per subject, and if I was lucky, a 100 on the combined test," I said, my voice shrinking, not daring to meet her eyes. "Fifty points on three subjects, that's 250 total?" She raised an eyebrow, smiling.

"Josh, your score is awfully exact." My face burned red, but I pushed on, "That's exactly why I came to you! Samson said you get better by following someone strong. Look at you-you're working with Samson now, helping run the pack. If I follow you, I'll definitely improve!" I leaned forward, practically begging. "Boss, give me a chance! I'll do whatever you say-run all ten laps, no cheating, and go all out on the bag." Amanda didn't answer right away.

She lightly tapped the Supernatural Combat Techniques book on her 1/2 Chapter 204 A Contract knee, her gaze fixed on my face as if weighing how much I meant it. *20 Free Cams The air in the car grew still. I was so nervous my palms sweated, even my breathing softened-this was the first time I'd ever begged someone so seriously, more desperate than when I begged Grandpa for a limited-edition racecar. "Are you serious?" she finally asked, her tone no longer teasing, but rather serious. I nodded almost instantly, my head bobbing like a drum, eyes glued to her. "I swear!

Seriously-worth its weight in gold!" To prove I was serious, I even held up my right hand, swearing like in the movies. "If I ever goof off like before, let me always come in second in races and never touch a brand-new sports car!" Even saying that felt harsh-racecars were everything to me. Sure enough, Amanda laughed, the seriousness in her eyes easing. She picked up the book again, flipped to a blank page, and tapped it with her finger. "I can teach you, but there's one condition." "Anything! Ten conditions, I'll agree to them all!" I leaned closer, afraid to miss a word.

"We have to sign a contract. Her tone turned serious again. "The rules have to be crystal clear. You must follow my instructions completely. Skip class or slack off even

once, and the contract's void-I won't help you anymore. But if you stick to my method and study seriously, I promise you'll score at least eighty on every test next time. If you don't, I'll treat you to a month of my home-cooked meals." "Contract?" I blinked, surprised by how formal she was being. Then I realized it meant she was really serious about teaching me, not just humoring me. I immediately patted my thigh and agreed.

"Great! Perfect! I'll draft the contract as soon as I get home. I'll make the terms clear and promise not to cheat!" 2/2 Mark

Chapter 205 A Brand-new Me Josh's POV: +20 Free Coins "You'd better think this through," she said, looking down as she wrote. When she finished, she pushed the notebook toward me, her voice carrying a warning. "Once you sign, I won't go easy on you. If you're even a second late for the 5 a.m. morning run, that counts as tardy. And if your moves aren't perfect during the evening combat training, you'll have to start over-crying won't help." I picked up the notebook and read carefully. The rules were spelled out clearly. No skipping class or slacking off; follow Amanda's training schedule.

Run five miles every morning, train fighting two hours every night, rain or shine. Score at least 80 on every subject in the next test. If I don't, Amanda will treat me to homemade meals; if I do, I'll treat her. At the bottom were two spaces for signatures, next to a small wolf head doodle-like a mascot. "Rain or shine" made me pause-getting up at 5 a.m. was tough enough. I could barely wake up by noon if no one nudged me. Still, thinking about Samson working late in the Operations Department, and remembering how lost I used to feel, I bit my lip, grabbed the pen, and signed. "See?

It's signed!" I pushed the notebook back with a determined look. "Boss, don't worry. I won't regret this! From now on, you're my teacher-I'll listen to everything you say!" Amanda looked at my signature and couldn't help but smile. "I'm nobody's teacher. Just call me by my name." She took the pen and signed "Amanda" in neat, strong handwriting. After signing, she tore the notebook in half and handed me one piece. "Keep this. It's your proof. Starting tomorrow at 5 a.m., don't be late." I carefully folded the half-sheet and slipped it into my pocket like it was a treasure.

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When I started the car, I couldn't help but hum to Patrick's new song. I'd never felt so lighthearted before -life used to feel aimless, and I didn't know what I was doing. Now I finally had a goal. Even if the beginning was tough, I felt energized all over. As the car turned into the Ortega Castle, I saw Samson's car parked at the gate. He got out and raised a brow when he saw Amanda and me together. "Why are you two coming back together?" "Samson!" I jumped out and ran to him, excitedly telling him about the contract and showing him the half-sheet. "I'm going to learn combat from Amanda.

I'm done wasting time!" He looked at the paper, then at Amanda, a faint smile flickering in his eyes. "I'm glad you figured it out. But..." He glanced at Amanda and said, "If this kid doesn't listen, tell me right away. I'll handle him." 1/2 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter

205 A Brand-new Me "Don't worry," Amanda smiled and nodded. "I've got the contract. He won't dare." +20 Free Coins Listening to their conversation, I felt warmth inside. I used to think Samson was strict with me, but now I understand-he just wanted me to succeed.

I silently made a promise to train hard and impress everyone at the next test-I would become the pride of the Ortegas and a real asset to the Eclipse Pack. No longer the useless kid hiding under their protection. Lying in bed, I tossed and turned, unable to sleep. My mind was full of the morning run route and scenes of combat training. Moonlight streamed through the curtains, falling on a group photo on the wall. I looked at the slouching, carefree version of myself in the picture and whispered, "Goodbye, old Josh. Starting tomorrow, I'm going to be a brand-new me." 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 Mt. Mark

Chapter 206 Birthday Banquet Chapter 206 Birthday Banquet Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins Watching Josh clutch half a contract and almost bounce as he charged into the castle, I couldn't help but curl my lips into a smile. This kid was still acting carelessly and unseriously just a few days ago, but now he's really changed, which is reassuring. In a daze, I suddenly thought of myself back when I first took over the affairs of the Glacier Pack, carrying the same lonely courage, determined to make something of myself.

I walked slowly into the foyer and saw Hugh standing in the living room with a cane, holding a hand warmer. When he saw me come in, he smiled and waved. "Amanda, training must have worn you out, right? There's hot soup simmering in the kitchen. Have Beata pour you a bowl." Hugh. I'll go wash my face first and be right there," I replied with a smile. "Thank you, Hugh. I'll go By the time I tidied myself up and went downstairs, the crystal chandelier in the dining room was already lit.

Samson sat beside the main seat, Alan leaned back in his chair scrolling through his phone, and Patrick was adjusting the floral arrangement on the table-rarely were all four brothers gathered together, and even the air felt livelier than usual. I took the empty seat opposite Samson, but my peripheral vision inadvertently swept over the end of the table-that seat Derrick used to sit in. Now it was completely empty, without even tableware laid out, making the surrounding warmth look especially glaring. My fingertips paused, and a complicated feeling welled up in my chest.

It was clearly him who had pushed this family away with his own hands, yet when he was truly absent, it was hard not to feel unsettled. "Everyone's here. Let's eat," Hugh said as he took the main seat, his gaze passing over everyone and lingering on the empty chair for half a second before he slowly spoke. He lifted the teacup in front of him. "I called you all back today for two reasons. One was to see you, and the other was to say something from the heart-these past storms around the Eclipse Pack were weathered thanks to the few of you holding the line.

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Since you were young, I taught you that brothers are family bound by blood. You must live in harmony and stand united. Now that you've done it, I couldn't be more gratified." Samson set down his fork, his firm voice ringing in my ear. "Grandpa, rest assured. We will never let you down." His voice was steady as his gaze swept across Alan and the others, carrying a silent strength. "We are a family bound by blood, and we always will be," Patrick said as he put down the flower stem in his hand.

He had just rushed back from preparations for Fashion Week, a faint fatigue in his eyes, yet it couldn't hide how much he cherished his family. 1/2 Jan Chapter 206 Birthday Banquet +20 Free Coins Alan put away his phone and nodded hard. "Grandpa, the Ortegas will only get better and better." Josh gripped his fork, his cheeks flushed red. "Grandpa, brothers, I used to be immature. Now I'm learning properly from Amanda. I'll definitely catch up to you and never drag everyone down again.

Our family will always stay together." Looking at the sincere faces around the table, my heart felt as if it had been soaked in warm water. This kind of unspoken blood-bonded affection was something no amount of conflict of interest could ever tear apart-perhaps Derrick had been too obsessed with "proving himself," and forgot this most precious bond. "Good, good." Hugh smiled so broadly that the wrinkles at the corners of his eyes smoothed out. He took a sip of tea and looked up. His expression turned serious, as if suddenly remembering something. "Oh, right.

The Midnight Pack sent someone over with an invitation this afternoon. On the 18th of this month, it's the 60th birthday of Albert, the alpha of the Midnight Pack. We've been family friends with them for three generations. Since the invitation was delivered to our door, someone has to go and offer congratulations. You can decide who will make the trip for me." As soon as he said that, the brothers looked at one another. Alan was the first to wave his hand. "Grandpa, I'm heading south in the next few days for a new song signing tour.

My schedule is completely packed, and I really can't get away." "I can't either," Patrick quickly added. "My haute couture line has to be finalized before Fashion Week. I need to keep an eye on the factories, and there's no room for error." Josh scratched his head, a little embarrassed. "Grandpa, I have a mock assessment next week. Amanda filled my training schedule to the brim, so I need to save time to review." Hugh's gaze naturally landed on Samson and me, carrying expectation. "Since the three of them are all busy, then Samson and Amanda, why don't you two go in my place?

Samson can represent the Eclipse Pack's sincerity, and with Amanda along, it'll be livelier." I had just opened my mouth to say that I wasn't very familiar with banquet etiquette when Samson had already agreed, his tone decisive. "Don't worry, Grandpa. I'll have Cody arrange the itinerary as soon as possible. We'll attend on time." With things said to this point, I could only swallow back the refusal at the tip of my tongue and nod to Hugh. "Yes, Hugh, we'll go." 2/2 Mark

Chapter 207 Michelle's "Special Program" Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins The words "Midnight Pack" had just surfaced in my mind when the intel Theo sent earlier automatically jumped out. They and the Eclipse Pack are third-generation family friends. The ones holding power in the clan are Percival Gill and his brother, one handling internal affairs and the other external, with roots in Howlstead that are exceptionally solid. This time, for Albert Gill's 60th birthday, the scale was indeed impressive. The banquet was held directly on an ultra-luxury cruise ship docked at the harbor.

When the car stopped at the entrance to the cruise ship, I could already see many familiar faces through the window-figures of status and influence across Howlstead, dressed impeccably as they headed toward the boarding gate. Samson turned his head, tapped the car door lightly with his fingertip, and reminded me, "We'll be staying overnight on the cruise ship tonight. It won't dock until tomorrow morning.

If you get tired later, just find a staff member for a room card and give them my name." Looking at the scene of clinking glasses and mingling guests outside, I gave a soft "Mm," and said, "Got it." We got out of the car together. The sea breeze carried a salty dampness. Just as I finished adjusting my skirt, Samson suddenly held his arm out in front of me. I froze for a moment. My fingers were still suspended in midair when I heard his low voice. "Take my arm." With glances sweeping over from time to time, I hesitated for two seconds before gently placing my hand into the crook of his arm.

"Samson!" We had barely taken two steps when a sweet, lively voice pierced through the crowd. Michelle was wearing a pink evening gown, the hem dotted with tiny sparkling crystals. She waved at us from afar, and as she hurried over, even the bow in her hair bounced along. "Samson, you finally made it." She stopped in front of Samson, her tone as familiar as if they were siblings who had grown up together. Her gaze, however, barely lingered on me, sticking directly to Samson instead. Samson's tone was polite, and he even stepped back half an inch, opening some distance. "Ms.

Gill, you're too kind." The smile on Michelle's face stiffened for a split second, but quickly returned to normal, as if she hadn't noticed the distance at all. The joy she couldn't hide flickered in her eyes, and even when she looked at me, she seemed a bit more "friendly" than the last time we met. "Ms. Lamb, you are here too. You must have a great time tonight." "Thank you," I replied politely. The way she had deliberately set me up to embarrass myself at the last banquet was still vivid in my mind, and this sudden warmth made me feel that things were far from simple.

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1/3 18:39 hu, Jan Chapter 207 Michelle's "Special Program" +20 Free Coins Her gaze swept over the arm I had linked with Samson, as if she hadn't seen it at all. She turned and made a welcoming gesture. "Samson, I'll take you inside." "After you, Ms. Gill." Samson inclined his head. Walking along the boarding corridor, Michelle took the initiative to speak, her tone carrying a hint of pride. "Actually, my uncle originally wanted

to hold the birthday banquet at home. I was the one who suggested the cruise ship-this way it's lively, and everyone gets to enjoy the sea view.

Don't you think so, Ms. Lamb?" I didn't expect her to suddenly cue me. I blinked, then followed her lead. "The night view on a cruise ship must be beautiful. Ms. Gill, you really thought this through." That answer seemed to hit the sweet spot. She smiled even brighter and turned to give me a playful wink. "I've also arranged a special program. Ms. Lamb, you mustn't miss it." With that innocent, carefree look, if I hadn't gone through what happened before, I might truly have taken her for a naïve young lady. "I'm sure that it'll be interesting.

I'm really looking forward to it." I maintained a polite smile, but in the instant she turned away, I caught the flash of smug satisfaction in her eyes. This cruise ship was even larger than I had imagined. The banquet hall alone could accommodate 500 people. Crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling, casting a dazzling glow across the entire space. The entertainment area, restaurants, and guest cabins were all fully equipped. Even staying here for ten days or half a month, one would never feel bored. "My uncle is over there.

Let's go say hello," Michelle said, pointing toward the center of the banquet hall. A middle-aged man in a vintage suit stood there, upright and composed, chatting with several elders. As guests, it was only proper to greet the host. Samson and I exchanged a glance, neither of us refusing, and followed her over. That was Percival-the eldest son of Albert, and one of the current figures in power of the Midnight Pack. He looked no more than his early 40s. There wasn't a trace of gray at his temples. He was energetic, with sharp eyes, nothing like someone nearing 60. "Mr.

Gill." Samson spoke first, his tone noticeably warmer than when addressing Michelle. Percival turned around, and the moment he saw Samson, a hearty smile bloomed across his face. He reached out and patted Samson's shoulder. "Samson is here! It's been a while. You've grown even more mature and steady." "You flatter me, Mr. Gill." Percival's gaze lingered on Samson for quite some time, his tone full of admiration. "The Eclipse Pack is thriving more and more under your leadership. I've heard plenty about it already. Come visit us more often in the future.

You and Michelle grew up together, and young people should stay close." 2/3 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 Chapter 207 Michelle's "Special Program" As he said this, his eyes drifted meaningfully between Samson and me. Samson simply responded politely, "Yes, Mr. Gill." 743 +20 Free Coins After exchanging a few more pleasantries, Samson and I took the opportunity to excuse ourselves. More and more people filled the banquet hall. The sounds of clinking glasses and overlapping chatter blended together, making it hard for me to breathe.

I loosened my hold on Samson's arm, turned my head, and spoke softly, "If you've got people to talk with, go ahead and take care of them. I'll go get some sea air on the deck." Samson glanced at my slightly uncomfortable expression and nodded. "All right."

As I turned toward the corridor leading to the deck, I faintly heard Michelle's voice rise behind me, deliberately sweet and coy. "Samson, my dad just said he wants to talk with you..." I didn't slow my steps, but inside I was already on guard-Michelle's "special program" was probably not going to be simple at all.

3/3 18:39 Thu, Jan1 M 3 Mark

Chapter 208 The Female Alpha of the Glacier Pack Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins
Forget it, Michelle Gill is still just a little girl after all. No matter what kind of special program she has, it can't possibly compare to my cousin Mephisto. I continued walking toward the deck. When I pushed open the glass door leading outside, the salty, briny sea wind rushed at me at once. Leaning against the cold railing, my mind was still turning over the information I had previously uncovered about Mephisto sabotaging things behind the scenes.

Just as I was deep in thought, someone suddenly gave my shoulder a light tap. The force wasn't heavy, but it still made my nerves snap taut instantly, and I reflexively turned to the side, taking up a defensive stance. "Ms. Lamb, don't be nervous. It's me." A familiar voice sounded. Jayden raised both hands and stepped back half a pace, an apologetic smile on his face. "Did I scare you?" I let out a breath, withdrew my guard, and recognized him.

"Jayden, what are you doing here?" He walked over to my side and leaned against the railing the same way I was, holding a glass of non- alcoholic sparkling water. "My father is an old acquaintance of Mr. Gill. He specifically sent me to this birthday banquet to deliver a letter of intent for cooperation-the Windspire Pack wants to talk with the Midnight Pack about a medicinal supply chain." He paused, his gaze settling on the distant horizon. "I didn't expect to run into you here. Ms. Lamb, are you also not used to the bustle of the banquet hall?" I smiled and didn't deny it.

"When there are too many people, things get chaotic. It's quieter here." After a few seconds of silence, Jayden suddenly turned to look at me, his eyes carrying a note of seriousness.. you did "Ms. Lamb, I've always admired you. During the turbulence in the Eclipse Pack last time, the work in the Operations Department-helping Samson handle logistics-spread throughout the young alpha circles of Howlstead.

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Being able to steady the situation at a time like that isn't something just anyone can do." I was slightly startled, not expecting such a small matter to spread, and could only reply politely. "I just did what needed to be done. Samson was the real backbone." "That's not quite right." Jayden shook his head, his tone even more sincere. "The Windspire Pack has always been recruiting capable people, and my father also thinks very highly of you. Ms. Lamb, have you ever considered switching packs for development?"

I can guarantee that the Windspire Pack would give you ample room to prove yourself, and the benefits would be no worse than the Eclipse Pack." That caught me off guard. I froze for a moment, then shook my head gently but firmly. "Thank you for thinking so highly of me, but I'm very settled in the Eclipse Pack and haven't considered changing places." 1/2 Chapter 208 The Female Alpha of the Glacier Pack A flicker of regret crossed Jayden's face, but he didn't press the matter. Instead, he smiled. +20 Free Coins "I was being abrupt. I just feel that talent like yours shouldn't be buried.

My goal is to build the Windspire Pack into a top-tier pack in Howlstead. In the future, I might have to ask you and Samson for more advice." "Becoming a top-tier pack isn't easy." I raised a brow. "Old-established forces like the Glacier Pack and the Eclipse Pack have deep foundations. If the Windspire Pack wants to move upward, it has to find the right direction." At the mention of the Glacier Pack, Jayden's eyes lit up instantly. "Ms. Lamb, you know about the Glacier Pack too? The one I admire most is the female alpha of the Glacier Pack!

I heard that when she first took over the pack, the Glacier Pack was still being oppressed by other small families. In just three years, she expanded her power across Snowpool in the north to the point where even the Snow Wolf Pack had to give her some leeway." My fingers, resting on the railing, paused almost imperceptibly-the "female alpha" he was talking about was me. "She really is impressive." I could only respond vaguely and quickly changed the subject. "But the rumors say she keeps a very low profile. Even within the pack, few people have seen her.

You seem to know quite a bit, Jayden." "I went out of my way to ask around!" Jayden grew more animated as he spoke. "It's just a pity that no one knows who she actually is. No matter what, she's my goal-I want the Windspire Pack to stand firm through strength, just like the Glacier Pack." Looking at the light in his eyes, I suddenly thought of myself when I had first taken over the Glacier Pack, fueled by the same lone courage, sleeping with a weapon in my arms. Just as I was about to say something more, footsteps sounded from the deck entrance.

A server pushed a cart past us, reminding us that the main course of the banquet would be served soon. "I should head back. Samson might still need help on his side." I straightened up and nodded to Jayden. "I wish the Windspire Pack success with its cooperation." "I'll take that as a good omen!" Jayden also stood upright. "Ms. Lamb, if the Eclipse Pack ever needs us, just say the word." As I turned and walked back toward the banquet hall, I was still mulling over Jayden's words-the rumors about the Glacier Pack had already spread to southern packs.

It seemed I would need to act even more cautiously in the future. I had just reached the corridor at the entrance to the banquet hall when a familiar voice called out to me. "Ms. Lamb, please wait." I turned around and saw Michelle standing not far away, accompanied by two elaborately made-up women. The three of them were looking at me, their gazes far from friendly. It seemed that the "liveliness" of this birthday banquet was something I wouldn't be able to avoid after all. 2/2 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 Md. Mark

Chapter 209 Drugging Her Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins Michelle led the two exquisitely made-up women and stopped not far away. The look she gave me was far from friendly, yet the deliberately coy sweetness from before was gone. Instead, it was more like she was appraising an "ill-timed intruder." In the information Theo had given me earlier, there was a roster of the major families across Howlstead. The one on the left wore a sapphire-blue evening gown. I recognized her at a glance-Kiara Gelber, the youngest daughter of the person in charge of the Green Flame Pack.

Her pack had secured its foothold in the south through arms trading and had always styled itself as "upright aristocracy." The woman beside her in a champagne-colored gown was Elena Aquilla from the Celestial Pack, whose pack primarily handled luxury manufacturing and had long relied on the Green Flame Pack for survival. "So, Michelle, this is the Ms. Lamb you mentioned-the one helping Samson handle affairs in the Eclipse Pack?" Kiara spoke first, her tone carrying a condescending scrutiny. "She's quite different from the rumors.

Is the Eclipse Pack's hiring threshold really this low now?" As soon as she said that, Elena let out a light chuckle in agreement. Michelle didn't respond, merely folding her arms and standing to the side, clearly acquiescing to their attitude. I understood immediately-they weren't targeting my looks, but my "unclear background" and the increasingly important position I held within the Eclipse Pack. "Kiara, that's a bit unfair." Michelle finally spoke, though her tone sounded more like she was smoothing things over. "Ms. Lamb stayed behind during the Eclipse Pack's turmoil.

That kind of courage is still worth acknowledging. Those of us raised comfortably within our families may not necessarily have that kind of resolve." Yet the contrast she drew between "pampered insiders" and an "outsider" only made the disdain on Kiara's face more pronounced. "Resolve? I call it ignorance of one's place." Kiara stepped forward, her perfume mingling with the sea breeze as it rushed over. "Someone whose family background can't even be put on the table thinks she's worthy of attending your grandfather's birthday banquet?

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If word gets out, people might think the Midnight Pack doesn't even know how to choose its guests, needlessly lowering the standard of the entire event." Elena chimed in, her fingers brushing over the gemstone bracelet on her wrist. "Exactly. We're here representing the name of our respective packs. If people misunderstand and think that a lonewolf like Ms. Lamb is a guest of one of our packs, wouldn't that be humiliating for everyone?" Her words sounded tactful on the surface, but in truth, she was implying that I had "no pack backing me," an easy target that could be manipulated at will.

Leaning against the railing on the deck, the sea wind sweeping my hair back, I looked at the three of them standing united and curled my lips into a cold smile. 1/3 Chapter 209 Drugging Her +20 Free Coins "The Green Flame Pack made its fortune through arms trading, yet this is the kind of ill-mannered daughter it raises. The Celestial Pack lives at

others' mercy, to the point where you need to tread carefully when you speak. If this is the 'name' you represent, it's really nothing special." Kiara's expression changed instantly.

"You dare insult our packs?" "You were the ones who used 'status' as a weapon first." I straightened up, my gaze sweeping over the three of them. "This birthday banquet is Albert's event. Aren't you afraid Albert will think the Green Flame and Celestial Packs are deliberately disrespecting the Midnight Pack by throwing your weight around here? As for me..." I lifted my wrist and gave the wolf-head token Samson had given me a slight shake. "I am a guest of the Eclipse Pack, attending on Samson's behalf.

It's not up to you to judge whether I'm worthy." Elena's face went pale, clearly reminded of the long-standing ties between the Eclipse Pack and the Midnight Pack. Michelle's POV: I hurriedly grabbed Kiara before she could retort, tugging her hard and shooting her a look. Amanda was far too sharp. With just a few sentences, she had steered everything toward "family reputation" and "old alliances." If this dragged on and Uncle Percival heard about it, he would definitely scold me for being childish and damaging the relationship between the Midnight Pack and the Eclipse Pack.

"Kiara, Elena, forget it." I lowered my voice, pulling them back a couple of steps. "Ms. Lamb has leverage on me from last time. If things really blow up and she says even one word in front of Samson, Uncle Percival will definitely tear into me." Kiara shook off my hand, fuming. "You should've said earlier that she was this troublesome! We thought she was some background-less soft target-turns out she's all thorns!" Elena frowned as well. "Exactly.

We stood up for you-surely we're not supposed to just swallow this for nothing." I knew they were upset and quickly tried to placate them, "I'm not asking you to help for nothing. After the banquet tonight, there's a private cooperation meeting. The Eclipse Pack wants to talk arms supply with the Green Flame Pack, and hasn't the Celestial Pack always wanted to connect with the Eclipse Pack for a luxury co-branding project?" I leaned closer, lowering my voice even further. "Ms. Lamb is currently responsible for logistics coordination for the Eclipse Pack.

Our plan already requires her to 'cooperate' a little." Kiara's eyes lit up-the Green Flame Pack had recently been looking to expand into the northern market, and the Eclipse Pack was the best springboard. Elena perked up as well, grabbing my arm. "What's your plan?" I looked toward Amanda's back. She was gazing out at the sea, seemingly unaware of our conversation. Mark

Chapter 210 Backup Plan Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins In the short dozen or so steps from the corridor to the banquet hall, I had already figured out most of Michelle's intentions. The clutch Kiara was holding revealed half of a pill bottle labeled "Green Flame Pharmaceuticals." It was a mild hallucinogen supplied exclusively by the Green Flame Pack. It wouldn't cause physical harm, but it could blur consciousness and slow reactions-just enough to ruin a cooperation meeting that required precise judgment.

Sure enough, the moment we reached the consultation area in the corner of the banquet hall, a server in uniform approached with two glasses of champagne, his smile perfectly practiced. "Ms. Lamb, Mr. Ortega, Ms. Gill specially prepared these for you." The glass he handed to me had fewer beads of condensation on the surface than the other one. It was clearly freshly poured, and along the rim there was a faint, barely perceptible sheen—a trace left when the hallucinogen reacted with the champagne.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Michelle standing not far away with Percival and Kiara's father, her gaze locked tightly on this side. Samson appeared beside me at some point. His fingertips brushed lightly against my wrist, giving me a reassuring look. He then took the other glass of champagne from the server, his tone natural. "Thank you for your thoughtfulness." I accepted the tampered champagne. The moment my fingers touched the glass, I pretended to lose my grip. "Oh!" I exclaimed, and more than half the champagne splashed onto the tablecloth in front of me.

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Under the tablecloth was a strip of miniature test paper I had placed there in advance. The instant it came into contact with the hallucinogen, it turned a vivid crimson. This was a little trick Alice had taught me—emergency supplies I had brought from the Glacier Pack. I hadn't expected I'd actually need to use them. "Sorry, my hand slipped." I pulled out a napkin and wiped it up with an apologetic expression, my voice neither loud nor soft, just enough for those nearby to hear. "The glass is too slippery.

"I'll just switch to juice." Michelle's expression shifted slightly, and she hurried over to smooth things out. "Ms. Lamb, are you all right? This is my fault for not explaining properly. The glasses were ice-chilled, so they were more slippery." She shot a look at the server, who immediately turned to fetch another drink, but Samson stopped him. "No need. The meeting is about to start anyway. Amanda will be taking notes, so juice suits her better." I laughed inwardly. Samson had clearly seen through it.

He walked over to the table and, as if unintentionally, brushed past the soaked tablecloth, slipping the now-red test strip into his palm. He then raised his wrist to check the time. "Mr. Gill, Mr. Gelber, it's about time. Let's head to the conference room." 1/2 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 Ms. Chapter 210 Backup Plan +20 Free Coms The conference room was already full. Kit Gelber of the Green Flame Pack, Martin Aquilla from the Celestial Pack, and several elders of the Midnight Pack were all present. I sat down with the folder I had prepared in advance.

Just as I opened my notebook, a sharp numbness pricked the back of my neck. It wasn't the hallucinogen, but a silver needle. I turned my head calmly and saw Elena withdrawing her hand, a trace of smugness hidden in her eyes. So they had a backup plan. I tapped my fingers lightly against the notebook, producing the prearranged rhythm. Before coming in, Samson and I had agreed that this would be the signal if anything went wrong. Sure enough, Samson immediately spoke.

"Amanda, distribute the Eclipse Pack's supply proposal to everyone." I stood up to hand out the documents, deliberately pausing for two seconds beside Kiara and placing a "special" proposal in front of her. It was a forged plan I had prepared, mimicking Michelle's handwriting-an alleged scheme in which the Midnight Pack intended to swallow up the Green Flame Pack's medicinal supply channels. Inside were also several screenshots of Michelle's call records with unidentified individuals. Kiara took the bait.

The moment she picked up the document, her face changed dramatically, and she instinctively looked up at Michelle. As the meeting reached its critical stage. Kit proposed that the Eclipse Pack lower its arms supply prices. Samson was just about to respond when I suddenly felt "dizzy," swayed, and braced myself against the table...
Mark

Chapter 211 Won This Round of the Game Amanda's POV: Samson immediately stepped forward to steady me, his tone full of concern. "What's wrong?" +20 Free Coins "It might be that glass of champagne just now." My voice was weak, but I deliberately raised it. "There was a strange glow on the rim, and now my head feels really heavy." Saying this, I pulled another test strip from my pocket-actually a duplicate of the one from earlier. "I saved a sample in case there was a problem. It's already changed color." The conference room went silent in an instant.

Kit's expression darkened as he looked at Kiara. "What's going on? How did a Green Flame Pharmaceuticals hallucinogen end up at a birthday banquet?" Kiara panicked, leaping to her feet and slapping the forged plan on the table. "It wasn't us! It was Michelle! She wanted Ms. Lamb to make a mistake so the Midnight Pack could take control of the cooperation. She even said she would take over our medicinal supply channels!" Michelle was completely flustered, pounding the table in protest. "You're lying!

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That's forged!" "Whether it's forged or not, just check the handwriting," I spoke at the right moment, my tone calm again. "Besides, on the deck earlier, I overheard you talking about 'adding something to the champagne' and 'making me make a mistake on the agreement. I happened to record it." I took out my phone and pressed play. The recording was a voice simulation Theo had helped me generate, imitating their voices perfectly. Every word matched their plan exactly. Percival's face turned ashen. He slammed the table. "Michelle!

You've completely disappointed me!" Samson's POV: I held Amanda's waist, feeling her body tense but steady-clearly, she had prepared for this. Earlier in the banquet hall, when she deliberately spilled the champagne, I had already noticed her subtle movements under the table. This girl was even more meticulous than I had imagined. When Kiara produced that "plan," I knew Amanda's setup had succeeded. She had

calculated the conflict of interest between Kiara and Michelle perfectly. A small push would be enough to make them implode from within.

Sure enough, when Kit saw the word "take over" in the plan, his expression darkened more than anyone else's-the Green Flame Pack valued its medicinal supply channels above all else. Amanda had hit them right in their weak spot. "Mr. Gill, this matter needs an explanation," I spoke at the right moment, calm but with a hint of pressure. "Amanda is a guest of the Eclipse Pack. Something like this happening at a Midnight Pack birthday banquet cannot go unnoticed." Elena's father, Martin, chimed in as well. "Exactly. The Celestial Pack also needs to explain-Elena just pricked Ms.

Lamb with a silver needle. We can't let that slide." 1/2 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 MS. Chapter 211 Won This Round of the Game +20 Free Coins Michelle slumped into her chair, tears welling up. "Uncle Percival, I was wrong. I just didn't want the Midnight Pack to lose out..." "Rubbish!" Percival shook with anger. "Cooperation depends on strength, not trickery!" He turned to us, his tone softening considerably. "Samson, Amanda, this was our oversight. I apologize. The lead on this cooperation will go to the Eclipse Pack. The Midnight Pack will fully cooperate." I glanced at Amanda.

There was a smile in her eyes as she gently nodded. I knew that she had won this round of the game. 2/2 18:39 Thu, Jan 1 M d Mark

Chapter 212 Old Injury Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins After Michelle's matter was settled, the banquet hall's clamor seemed to be muted, leaving only the distant thud of waves against the ship's hull. I followed Samson toward the lounge. As we passed the corridor, the evening breeze slipped through the portholes, lifting the hem of his suit jacket and carrying a faint scent of cedar. The lounge had been converted from a VIP suite. Outside the floor-to-ceiling windows, the sun was sinking, casting an orange-red glow across the ivory couch and warming the entire room.

Samson loosened his tie the moment he sat down. That's when I noticed the fabric over his left ribcage looked slightly darker. I reached out and touched it; my fingertips met a damp surface. "When did you get hurt?" I frowned, my voice unconsciously lowering. During the earlier chaos in the conference room, he had stayed close to me. It was probably then, when a flustered server pushed him, that an old injury was aggravated. Samson froze for a moment, seemingly surprised, and instinctively tried to cover the stain. "It's nothing.

An old injury from handling Derrick earlier-just got bumped a little." I ignored his explanation, turning to the lounge's first-aid kit to pull out iodine and gauze. He sat on the couch while I knelt slightly in front of him. Tilting my head up, I could just see the curve of his jawline. The moment the iodine swab touched his skin, his Adam's apple moved, but he didn't pull away. He only murmured, "Gentle, Amanda." His warm breath brushed my hair. My hands froze for a moment. The sunset stretched his shadow across me, thickening the air around us.

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As I focused on bandaging, my fingertips brushed his warm skin. Suddenly, he pressed down on my wrist—not forceful, but with an unmistakable authority. "Don't move." I pretended to remain calm, pulling back slightly, but when I looked up, our eyes met. His gaze was far softer than usual, like molten sunset spilling over my face, carrying a weight of serious scrutiny. "Amanda, thank you for today." "Thank me for what?" I turned away, avoiding his scorching eyes.

"Thank me for setting a trap to expose Michelle, or for tending to your injury?" He chuckled, running a hand through my hair with a practiced ease. "Both." His fingers traced the fine hairs by my temple, stopping at my earlobe, cool to the touch. "And thank you for staying with the Eclipse Pack." A shiver ran through my earlobe, spreading along my nerves. I jumped up abruptly, nearly bumping into the coffee table behind me. "Bandaging done. Let's discuss the next steps—there's still no news from Derrick's side.

We can't be careless." 1/2 943 Chapter 212 Old Injury +20 Free Coins He looked at my flustered expression, a deeper smile in his eyes, but didn't tease me. He took a tablet from his briefcase. "I had the tech department optimize the logistics deployment plan you proposed. Take a look here..." By the time we finished discussing work, the sun had fully set. A broadcast on deck reminded passengers that the ship was approaching port. Samson put the tablet away, and as he stood, his movements faltered slightly. The rib injury was still painful, but he only frowned silently.

By the dock, the lights were already on. Cody was standing by the car. Seeing us, he hurried over, his eyes scanning Samson's face with concern. "Mr. Ortega, are you all right? Tech just reported that Derrick's people have been monitoring the Eclipse Pack's medicinal warehouse." Samson patted his shoulder, his tone no different from usual. "I'm fine. Just a minor injury. First, let's head to the office and deploy the medicinal warehouse plan." "No." I stood beside him, voice firm. "We must go to the hospital first. An old injury flaring up isn't minor.

If it affects subsequent operations, the consequences could be worse." Cody froze, glancing between me and Samson, troubled. At the Eclipse Pack, Samson's word was absolute. No one had ever dared to contradict him so directly. He opened his mouth, hesitated for a long moment, then stammered, "M-Mr. Ortega, this..." Samson turned to me, his eyes a little helpless but not angry. "Amanda, the company's matters are more urgent." "Even if it's urgent, an hour won't matter." I stepped in front of him, blocking his path.

"If you push yourself and something happens, who will oversee the Eclipse Pack's operations? Do you want me to confront Derrick alone?" He studied my determined expression, silent for a few seconds, then suddenly laughed. "Listen to her. Go to the hospital." Looking into his eyes, my heart skipped a beat... 2/2 12:0 Thu, Lan Mark

Chapter 213 Childish Idiot Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins As the Alpha of the Eclipse Pack, Samson's self-healing ability was far stronger than that of ordinary werewolves. The injuries looked frightening, but in truth, they hadn't damaged any bones or tendons. The doctor used silver tweezers to clear the bruised blood around the wound. Werewolves are sensitive to pure silver, yet he didn't make a sound the entire time, only the line of his jaw tightening visibly. "Keep the wound away from untreated water, especially before the full moon. Werewolf skin heals more slowly then.

The doctor slid the medicine bottles toward him, his tone cautionary. "These anti-inflammatory ointments are specially made and contain no silver. Apply them twice a day and come back for a follow-up in three days." Normally, he would have frowned and said. "That's unnecessary," but today he merely hummed in acknowledgment, his gaze passing over the doctor and settling on me at the doorway of the examination room. I leaned against the doorframe, my fingertips still carrying the warmth from holding down the gauze for him earlier. The moment he came out.

I straightened up, my eyes first scanning the bandaged area over his ribs before I dared to ask, "How is it? Did the doctor say it's serious?" Samson lifted a hand and tossed the medicine bag to me, his movements crisp, hardly like someone who had just finished having a wound treated. "Just as you said. Apply the medicine on time, and it'll be fine." The medicine bag still carried his body heat.

I instinctively clenched it, my fingers brushing against the cool glass bottle inside, and I suddenly remembered how, in the examination room, he had quietly brushed the stray hair off my shoulder with his uninjured hand. "Then you have to go home and rest today." I kept pace with him, my tone leaving no room for argument. "The Eclipse Pack's operations department isn't just for show. Cody and the elders can handle daily affairs. There's no need for you to force yourself." He suddenly stopped and turned to look at me.

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Under his gaze, I felt a little uneasy and instinctively took half a step back. "W-why are you looking at me like that?" "Amanda." His voice was lower than usual, carrying the unique magnetism of an Alpha. "As the Alpha of the Eclipse Pack, since when does my schedule get decided by you?" I froze on the spot, my mind grinding to a halt, as if stuffed with wolf fur. That's right. He was the lofty Alpha, and I was merely an "identity-unknown" outsider. My concern, in his eyes, might have crossed a line. I tightened my grip on the medicine bag, my voice turning a little hollow. "I just ...

don't want to see you ruin your body by forcing yourself. After all, Derrick is still watching from the shadows. The Eclipse Pack 1/2 Chapter 213 Childish Idiot can't do without you." 43 +20 Free Coins The excuse was passable, at least it didn't expose the selfish feelings I kept buried. He raised an eyebrow, turned, and continued walking. "There's still a medicinal contract with the Snow Wolf Pack that needs to be signed. I'll

have Cody take you back to the apartment." "Samson!" I hurried after him and grabbed his sleeve. "Your ribs were just treated.

During the healing period, overexertion is the last thing a werewolf should do. Can you stop treating yourself like you're made of steel?" He stopped, turned his head slightly to look at me, a trace of amusement flashing in his golden eyes. "If I don't work, will you support me?" The word "I" got stuck in my throat. I opened my mouth, but no sound came out. Cody was also stunned. The folder he had been holding nearly slipped from his hands-he had probably never seen his Alpha "provoke" someone in this tone. "I... That's not what I meant!" I let go of Samson's sleeve, my ears burning.

"I just think you should rest..." He suddenly let out a low laugh, his shoulders trembling slightly. Only then did I realize he was deliberately teasing me. Just as I was about to lose my temper, Cody suddenly cut in, "Mr. Ortega, Ms. Lamb is right. And Ms. Lamb is now a partner of the Eclipse Pack. Even if she really were to 'support' you, with her ability, it wouldn't be a problem at all. After all, the Glacier Pack's medicinal channels all rely on her connections now." "Cody!" Samson and I both turned and glared at him at the same time. I around in a huff and walked off.

"I'm done caring about you. Go to the company if you want!" spun Behind me, Samson's laughter rang out, and I gritted my teeth and quickened my pace. The moment I stepped out of the hospital entrance, I called a ride on my phone. The car had just pulled up when a figure slipped into the back seat ahead of me. "Samson!" I grabbed the car door. "Weren't you going to the company?" He shifted inward and patted the seat beside him, his brown eyes glowing softly in the sunlight. "Cody said the company's fine. And..." He paused, the corner of his mouth lifting into a smile.

"My medicine is still with you. I can't very well let you lose it, can I?" I looked at the bandage around his ribs and, in the end, couldn't bring myself to be ruthless. I bent down and got into the car. Sigh, forget it. What a childish idiot... 2/2 Mark

Chapter 214 Samson's Dream Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins When the melody suddenly came on through the car's sound system, my back tensed almost violently-it was Alan's Moonfall on the Wasteland, which had been wildly popular across Howlstead lately. I stole a glance at Samson. He was leaning back in his seat, eyes half-lidded, his fingers unconsciously tapping against his knee in time with the melody-an Alpha's instinctive reaction when hearing a resonant tune. "This piece..." he suddenly spoke, his tone carrying a hint of hesitation.

"It's too similar to Avi's style." "Alan isn't the type to plagiarize," I said deliberately, my tone firm. "It's probably just different werewolves' melodic instincts colliding." He didn't pursue the topic further, his gaze drifting back to the window. When the car stopped in front of the Ortega Castle, I pushed the door open first, deliberately keeping my distance from him. His voice suddenly came from behind me. "Amanda, wait." "Is something wrong?" I tried to keep my tone flat. He stepped in front of me and leaned down slightly, carrying a faint medicinal scent. "My legs are numb.

Help me." I was just about to reach out when he naturally draped his arm over my shoulder, his weight settling lightly against me. His body temperature was higher than usual—a normal reaction during a werewolf's healing process. It seeped through the thin fabric and made my ears itch with heat. I quickly bit my lower lip, forcing myself to steady my steps. As we entered through the main door, several servants were polishing vases in the corridor. The moment they saw us, they tacitly turned and headed for the kitchen, not daring to let their eyes wander.

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I heard someone whisper behind us, "Go tell Mr. Hugh," and couldn't help rolling my eyes—the Ortega household servants were even better informed than the operations department's intelligence agents. When I helped him into the bedroom on the second floor, he suddenly grabbed my wrist and pulled, making me stumble and nearly crash into his arms. "I'm thirsty." His gaze landed on the tips of my reddened ears, his tone carrying a barely perceptible smile. I shook free of his hand and turned to pour water at the table. Samson's POV: Taking the water from Amanda's hand, I smiled in satisfaction.

1/2 18:40 Thu, Jan 1 M. Chapter 214 Samson's Dream +20 Free Coins The next second, she fled back to her room in a fluster, and I turned and headed into my own room as well. The moment the door closed, I leaned against the headboard and lifted a hand to touch my cheek—the temperature was higher than usual. Outside the window, the sky gradually darkened, and without realizing it, I fell asleep. The dream was loud, filled with the horns unique to werewolf weddings. Guests in traditional beast-patterned ceremonial attire laughed as they poured into the hall.

I pushed through the crowd, confusion filling my mind. Since when was I getting married? "Mr. Ortega, are you willing to take the woman before you as your wife?" The officiant's voice echoed through the church, deep and resonant in the way unique to werewolves. Following everyone's gaze, I looked toward the end of the red carpet. There stood a figure in white werewolf wedding attire, the hem embroidered with snow wolf totems. When she turned around, sunlight fell perfectly across her face, her lips curved in a familiar arc—it was Amanda.

She walked toward me, her fingertips carrying a faint medicinal scent, the same warmth as the water cup in my palm. "What are you spacing out for?" She smiled and said, "The officiant is still waiting for your answer." I opened my mouth, wanting to ask what was going on, yet I heard my own voice ring out, clear and unwavering. "I do." When I jolted awake, the moon had already risen outside, silver light spilling onto the floor through the gap in the curtains. I touched my racing heartbeat, fast as if I'd just run across the wasteland.

So, it turned out that, deep in my subconscious, I had long since placed her in such a position... 2/2 18:40 Thu, Jan 1 Mark

Chapter 215 I Believed in Him Samson's POV: +20 Free Coins I suddenly sat up, cold sweat soaking the collar of my pajamas, sticking to the side of my neck with a chill. Outside, the night was thick and impenetrable, and the beast-bone wall clock ticked steadily, the hands pointing precisely to 3 a.m. I threw back the covers and stepped onto the icy wooden floor barefoot, trying to steady my breathing. "I must have lost my mind," I muttered to my reflection in the dressing mirror, frowning. Sleep eluded me for the rest of the night, so I decided to tackle the stack of documents piling up.

By the time dawn broke, I had changed into black sportswear to head out, and the injury on my leg was no longer a major issue-wolf healing abilities were naturally astonishing, and last night's "difficulty" had mostly been an excuse. During my morning run, I caught a glimpse of the second-floor guest room curtains drawn aside; Amanda's figure in a white hoodie flashed past. My heart tightened again, and I sped up my pace, pretending not to see her. After finishing two laps and turning into the corridor, I ran straight into her. "Good morning!" Her voice rang in my ear.

My mind went completely blank, and all the greetings I had prepared got stuck in my throat. Flustered, I just turned my head stiffly, brushed past her quickly, and didn't dare give her a single glance. As soon as I closed the door, I slid down against it, my fingertips cold. If any of the Pack elders saw me like this, they would probably laugh themselves silly. I, who usually maintained composure, had been undone by a female werewolf whose identity wasn't even fully known. A knock sounded suddenly, accompanied by Amanda's slightly impatient voice. "Samson, when are you coming down?"

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Josh's school's about to start!" I took a deep breath, composed my expression, and opened only half the door, letting my injured leg lean against the frame. "My leg isn't ready yet. Let Josh's driver take him." "Stop pretending." Amanda raised an eyebrow and poked the leg of my sweatpants. "I saw you running this morning. You were faster than that brat." The instant our fingers brushed, I jerked my leg back, nearly hitting the doorframe. "I'm not going," I said stiffly, slamming the door before she could argue, leaving Amanda outside muttering in confusion.

Amanda's POV: 2 118 1/2 18:40 Thu, Jan 1 M S 943 Chapter 215 I Believed in Him +20 Free Coins "Weirdo." I rolled my eyes at the closed door and headed downstairs, where Josh was already waiting in the dining room with his backpack. "Boss, did my brother bully you again?" he mumbled through a mouthful of sandwich. I paused mid-motion, nearly choking on a crumb. "Stop making things up. He's handling the cooperation with Snow Wolf Pack," I quickly changed the topic and pushed the milk toward him.

"Eat quickly, or we'll really be late." We finished breakfast quickly and then took the car to the training camp. "Boss, I think I understand that physics problem you explained yesterday now." Josh followed beside me, holding a heavily annotated textbook, completely changed from his usual lazy self. "It's about calculating the load-bearing of

wolf bones, but I'm still unclear." "That's because you didn't relate it to reality." I slowed my pace, pointing to the werewolf students training on the field. "See how their bones deform when they transform?"

The load center is at the third lumbar vertebra." Josh's eyes lit up with understanding, nodding repeatedly. Who would have thought that three months ago, he was a spoiled brat who wouldn't even do homework, and after I "taught him a lesson," he had become more diligent than anyone. When we entered the classroom, the usual noise instantly quieted. Not long after we sat down, the math teacher entered carrying his lesson plan. "Class." He pushed up his glasses and scanned the room, finally stopping at Josh.

"Josh, come to the board and solve this wolf bone load-bearing calculation problem." The class immediately erupted; a few boys even laughed out loud. It would be amazing if the old Josh would take out his textbook, let alone solve a problem. He froze for a moment and instinctively looked at me. I nodded, mouthing, "Believe in yourself." Josh took a deep breath, walked briskly to the podium, and although his hand holding the chalk trembled slightly, his strokes were firm. I watched his back, a small smile tugging at my lips, because I believed in him... 2 2/2 Mark

Chapter 216 Defending Josh Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins "Absolutely correct!" The teacher's voice fell, and the classroom erupted in exclamations like a hive of startled bees. Even the werewolves training outside the windows instinctively glanced over. Josh clenched the chalk in his hand and paused, his ear tips instantly flushed red. As he turned, he almost tripped over the podium. "Did I see that right? That's really Josh?" A boy in the back row nudged his classmate, speaking at a volume not particularly low.

"He used to be fierce, always competing with Camilla for second place in the physical contests. I thought he was just a brawler, but now his brain's catching up." "Exactly," a girl nearby murmured with a smile, scanning the back row. "Look, even Camilla nodded at him while he solved that problem. These two have been pairing up for physical training lately. Could it be..." "What are you talking about?" I almost instinctively spoke up, my voice quiet but enough to hush the surrounding students. The words left my mouth, and I was startled myself-the pen in my hand clattered onto the desk.

Back at Glacier Pack, I'd hated getting involved in this kind of gossip, so why was I now defending Josh so instinctively? The few students I had snapped at froze, quickly bowing their heads to pretend to read their textbooks. Josh was stepping down from the podium, hearing the last part, and scratched his head with a sheepish grin. "Boss, they're not lying. I've been learning physical skills from Camilla recently. Her Moon Blade skill is way better than mine." I followed his gaze to the back row. Camilla was bent over, tidying her notes.

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Even the way her fingers traced the pages carried the precision of an Alpha. Sensing my gaze, she lifted her head and tilted her chin toward me, her eyes carrying a subtle smile—a silent camaraderie forged from previous battles. The last time Levi kidnapped us, she had restrained the kidnapper wrist, allowing me to knock him out, "You can ask for techniques, but don't let it get misinterpreted," I said, picking up my pen and tapping on Josh's textbook.

"Copy the auxiliary formulas for this problem ten times, and I'll check them before school ends." 1/2 O < 13:03 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 216 Defending Josh 30% +20 Free Coins He immediately made a grimace and groaned, "Boss, mercy! Solving that problem just now drained all my brain cells!" "Stop whining." I deliberately put on a stern face though I caught the faint smirk on Camilla's lips as she looked down. The surrounding whispers gradually ceased. A few girls even leaned over to ask me for study notes, and the way they looked at Josh shifted from "spoiled rich kid" to "potential talent"...

It seemed my "special training" wasn't wasted. As the bell rang, Camilla approached, carrying her notebook. "Amanda, want to practice Moon Blade together during physical training this afternoon? I've been working on a move that combines it with the Snow Wolf Claw—it's perfect for you." "Sure." I nodded just as Josh squeezed up like a little wolf trying to snatch a treat. "Count me in! Camilla, I haven't mastered that side-flip dodge you taught me last time." Camilla raised an eyebrow at him, didn't refuse, but shot me a look—a teasing glance, clearly catching onto the earlier gossip.

I pretended not to notice, packed my exercise book, and said, "Let's go to the cafeteria first. If we're late, the venison sets just delivered from the hunting ground will be gone." Walking along the tree-lined path toward the cafeteria, Josh chattered ahead, asking Camilla for details on her techniques. Sunlight filtered through the leaves onto them—one rowdy, one composed—it genuinely looked like they fit together in some way. I followed behind, suddenly realizing why I had impulsively defended Josh earlier.

Seeing him transform from a carefree rich kid into someone diligently clutching his textbook and asking questions, I had unconsciously started seeing him as a younger brother I needed to protect. "What are you thinking about?" Camilla slowed her pace, walking beside me. "Earlier, when you defended Josh, you looked like a mother wolf guarding her cub." I snapped back to reality and turned to her, asking earnestly, "What do you think of Josh now?" 2/2 ||| O Mark

Chapter 217 Training With Camilla Josh's POV: "What do you think of Josh now?" 炒完30%會 +20 Free Coins The moment Amanda's voice fell, the physical training manual in my hand hit the floor with a sharp thud. Cold sweat instantly prickled the back of my neck. What is she trying to do now? Hand me a "cross-examination" script in front of Camilla? I ran toward her, yanking Camilla's wrist, speaking so fast it sounded like a wolf was chasing me. "Camilla! Didn't you say you'd teach me the side-flip dodge?"

If we don't get to the mats soon, someone else will take them!" I grabbed her and turned to run, leaving no chance to pick up the manual. From behind came Amanda's shout of "Hey," but I pretended not to hear, only noticing how hot my palm had become-Camilla's wrist was delicate, and even through her cold tactical gloves, I could feel the warmth of her skin. I loosened my grip slightly but couldn't bring myself to let go entirely. "Let go." Camilla's voice rang above me, tinged with a helpless smile.

That's when I realized I'd been too rough-her silver-gray hair had been pulled into a few disheveled strands, sticking to her neck, making her skin glow even paler. "S-sorry!" I released her abruptly, stepping back and almost tripping, my ear tips burning hot enough to fry an egg. I'd never been this timid chasing girls in the training camp before, yet facing Camilla, I felt like I even have to breathe carefully. Camilla didn't pursue it. She bent down to pick up the manual I had dropped.

Her fingertips brushed the cover, tracing the three words I'd written: Josh Must Win, and she raised an eyebrow. "So now you know you must win. Why didn't you have this kind of drive when copying homework?" "That's ancient history!" I quickly puffed out my chest, patting my training suit. "Now I'm officially a 'potential talent' certified by Amanda Next time we have a physical competition, I'll definitely beat you to second place!" She laughed at me and turned toward the training mats. "Big talk.

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First, master the side-flip, then we'll see." = III 1/3 13:03 Fri, Jan 2 * 30% Chapter 217 Training With Camilla +20 Free Coins Sure enough, few mats remained. Camilla chose one in the far corner, shielded from the sun by nearby equipment, forming a perfect shaded spot. She unbuttoned her tactical jacket, revealing a black fitted training top underneath, and tucked the stray strands of hair behind her ear. "Watch carefully." She didn't waste words.

Her feet spread front and back, her body suddenly lowered, and she used her core strength to perform a clean, precise side-flip, landing just in time to avoid the mock prey I tossed. "When a werewolf transforms, skeletal weight distribution shifts. During a side-flip, let your center of gravity follow the tail-don't end up like last time and fall face first." I tried to mimic her, but my movement was too hasty, and my balance faltered-I toppled straight toward her... Just as I was about to crash into her, I slammed my hand on her side.

Our bodies were suddenly close-close enough to smell the faint pine scent in her hair and see the tiny beads of sweat on her lashes. "Idiot." Camilla pushed my shoulder to separate us, her tone still calm, but I could see her ear tips had reddened. "Your wrist strength is off. Try again." From then on, I trained with intense focus. Physical training had always felt dull and exhausting, but now with Camilla by my side, demonstrating each move personally, occasionally tapping my waist with a tactical stick to remind me to lower my center of gravity, even sweat felt interesting.

Halfway through, I handed her a bottle of ice-cold energy drink. When our fingertips touched briefly as she took it, we both froze for a moment, then quickly withdrew. "Rest ten minutes." She twisted open the cap and took a sip, letting droplets slide along her jawline into her collar. I got distracted until she poked my arm with her tactical stick. "What are you thinking?"

Trying to slack off again?" "No!" I quickly averted my gaze and pulled something from my pocket—a small silver hairpin engraved with the Mystic Moon Pack totem, something I had specifically asked the steward to buy yesterday. "You dropped your hairpin during the kidnapping. This... It's for you." Camilla stared at it for a few seconds, hesitated, then asked, "How did you know it was mine?" "I remembered!" I hurriedly explained.

"That day your hair was loose, and I picked up the hairpin for you, but before I could return it, you got kidnapped." Finally, she smiled and clipped the hairpin into her hair, her movements as elegant as a snow r 2/3 13.03 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 217 Training With Camilla wolf under moonlight. "Thoughtful of you." 330% +20 Free Coins I was grinning foolishly when I suddenly heard Amanda's laugh from nearby. Turning, I saw her leaning against the equipment, waving at us.. 111 < Mark

Chapter 218 What's Going on With Samson? Amanda's POV: I leaned against the training equipment, watching clearly, the corners of my mouth unconsciously curving upward. 30% +20 Free Coins One was a boy, newly sharp and sincere, every breath careful and tentative; the other, a strong woman hiding warmth beneath her icy exterior, even her criticisms carried guidance. Standing together, the two looked perfectly matched. The wind rolled across the field, carrying the scent of grass, and the air seemed to hold a faint, naive sweetness.

I glanced at my watch—the hands steadily pointed to exactly five o'clock. I tucked away my smile and raised my voice, interrupting the two still sparring. "Josh, time's up. It's time to go back." Josh froze as if someone had hit the pause button, spinning around so quickly that his sweat-soaked training gloves barely had time to come off. He ran toward me in three hurried steps, nearly knocking over a nearby mock prey mode Camilla shook her head with a smile, then turned and waved at me sweetly. "Amanda, be careful on the way. See you tomorrow." "Don't worry.

See you tomorrow." I waved back at her, but the moment I turned, Josh clung to The kid hadn't been settled the entire way. Once in the car, he immediately leaned toward me, eager to show off. "Boss, how do you think I did today?" He was so excited, his smile practically reaching the ceiling. Back at the palace, his behavior became even more over-the-top.

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I had just changed into house slippers when he bounced over with a hot towel, then spun around to bring me a warmed cup of honey water, perfectly tempered "Boss, you really did me a favor helping me smooth things over today." He rubbed his hands, looking eager to please. "Tonight, I'll have the kitchen make snow wolf bone soup for you, with your favorite toppings." I was too wrapped up in him to argue. Just as I took the cup, a familiar figure caught my eye -Samson.

He wore a dark gray cashmere loungewear, his posture even taller, holding a rolled-up set of III O < 1/2 13:03 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 218 What's Going on With Samson documents. He didn't glance at the contents, simply staring steadily at us. 30% +20 Free Coins The golden sunlight hit him, tracing the sharp lines of his profile, but in those usually calm golden eyes was a strange, inexplicable intensity as if he were staring at a problem that puzzled him. Petals drifted down from the wind, landing at his feet, yet he didn't move a muscle.

"Samson, what are you doing here?" I waved at him as usual, stepping forward lightly. "Not going to the office to handle business? I heard the Snow Wolf Pack herb contract is almost finalized." Only then did he come back to himself, his gaze landing on me, but unlike usual, he didn't respond. His golden pupils narrowed slightly, as if sensing some abnormality, brow furrowing. "What's wrong? You look so strange." I stopped in my tracks, puzzled, reaching out to touch his arm. Ever since his last injury, his temperature had been slightly irregular at times.

"Did something go wrong with the documents? Or is your rib hurting again? I can get your medicine." Before my hand even reached him, he abruptly stepped back, avoiding my touch. His Adam's apple moved up and down. Finally, he spoke, his voice lower than usual, with a barely noticeable rasp, "Just back from the training field?" His gaze swept over Josh, who was running up behind me, and his brow furrowed even tighter, as though he strongly disliked seeing Josh and me together. "Yeah, Josh trained really seriously today.

Camilla had him practice the side-flip dodge," I answered honestly, but his strange expression didn't ease; it became even more pronounced. At that moment, Josh ran up, clutching my arm. Samson, why are you just standing here spacing out? Come eat! Today's dinner has your favorite roasted venison!" Samson's gaze landed on my arm, wrapped by Josh. His face darkened instantly, and the document in his hand snapped shut with a smack, the force enough to almost crush the paper. A vague unease rose in me. What's going on with him? Did something really happen with the documents, or ...

is he bothered by something? 2/2 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 2330%- Mark

Chapter 219 Keep Busy Amanda's POV: Suddenly, a bell went off in my head. Today is Wednesday! Every week at this time, I have to give him Isnes language lessons. As soon as I remembered, I quickly waved at the two brothers. "I just remembered something.

I'm going upstairs first." +20 Free Coins The words had barely left my mouth before I turned and dashed toward the stairs, not even bothering to respond to Josh's shout of, "The soup's almost ready!" Once inside the room, I closed the door behind me and hastily pulled out my phone to check the messages, scrolling through, but there was nothing from Samson. Strange. Normally, by this time, he would have already sent a message about class. I stared at the screen for a few seconds, my fingers hovering over the input box before pulling back. Forget it.

A man like him, with all the daily business at the Operations Department, probably got tied up with something urgent. Thinking that, I tossed the phone onto the bed and

turned to organize the training notes I hadn't finished yesterday. If he finished his work he would naturally come find me. Samson's POV: Watching Amanda disappear at the staircase, a strange heat surged in my chest. Josh was still beside me, grinning foolishly. "Sanson, what happened just now? Your face is as black as coal," I ignored him and turned toward the garden, leaving him dumbfounded in place.

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I fished a cigarette pack from my pocket, bit the cigarette, lit it, and inhaled deeply before exhaling. Smoke rings floated in the sunset, but I could see in my mind was that scene just now-Amanda being hugged by Josh, smiling helplessly. Their closeness was such an eyesore. I hadn't even finished half the cigarette when I impatiently pressed it into the stone table beside me, the sparks flaring briefly and dying out. I reached into my pocket to feel the car keys pressing against my hand, then it hit me-today is Wednesday, the day for Ishnesh language lessons. I almost completely forgot.

1/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Chapter 219 Keep Busy 30% +20 Free Coins I hurried back to the bedroom, tossed the files onto the desk, and immediately turned on the computer to log in. The moment the screen lit up, I opened the chat window with Sara and typed, "Are you there?" While waiting for a reply, the image of Ms. Airel popped into my mind again-her eyes, her tone of voice, how could she resemble Sara so much? This thought had been nagging me for days, getting more confusing the more I thought about it. The computer chimed. Sara had replied. "Been waiting for you a while.

"Why are you late today?" I exhaled in relief, took off my coat, and headed to the bathroom. The shower ran hot, and the tension in my body finally eased. Less than ten minutes later, I stepped out, towel-drying my hair. Sitting at the computer, drying my hair and, opening the video window, Sara's avatar was already lit. Those Ishnesh grammar is intricate, but following along helps temporarily push away troubling thoughts. An hour flew by, and when I closed the study interface, I realized the sweat in my palms had dried. My fingers paused over the keyboard.

I opened the private message box and typed, "I heard some good materials arrived in Alexandria. Interested?" Less than half a minute after sending, the computer popped up a new notification. Sara replied, "Sure. Where?" I stared at the two words. The tension around my mouth finally relaxed a little. I immediately typed the coordinates. "Ten a.m. tomorrow. Shall we go check it out together?" The reply came even faster this time. A thumbs up emoji appeared on the screen. I closed the computer and leaned back. When I retched, my bones were lightly creaking.

Standing up and stepping onto the balcony, the evening breeze hit me, and I finally felt some of the restlessness ease. But peace didn't last more than a few seconds. My mind was already full of Amanda's image. I realized that whenever I had a moment to myself, my gaze inevitably followed her. Seeing her chatting and laughing with Josh made my chest feel like it was stuffed with wet cotton- stifling. 2/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 219 Keep Busy I frowned and shook my head, trying to shake out these chaotic thoughts.

30% +20 Free Coins It must be that there's too little business at the Operations Department recently, which was why I was overthinking. Turning back into the room, I resolved to clear all the piled-up contracts tomorrow. If I keep busy, I won't have time to think about useless things. 3/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 220 Raw Stone Market Amanda's POV: The next morning, I followed Josh to the training camp. 30% +20 Free Coins As soon as I entered the classroom and put down my backpack, I headed straight for the instructor's office to request leave. The instructor frowned, holding my leave note. Amanda, I know your foundation is solid, and you scored perfectly on the last werewolf mechanics test, but frequent absences are unacceptable.

The inter-pack selection exams are next month, so you need to focus on your studies." I leaned forward slightly, smiling as I helped him stack the scattered exercise books neatly. "Instructor, this is really an urgent matter, just this once. I promise to attend all future classes without fail." He stared at me for a few seconds, sighed, and signed the note. "This is the last leave I'll approve this semester. Any further absence will count as truancy." I breathed a sigh of relief and quickly nodded. "Thank you, Instructor.

I'll remember!" This time I was prepared, with spare clothes in my backpack. I found an empty public restroom, changed out of the academy uniform into a dark gray work jumpsuit, and put on a short ash brown wig with thin-framed glasses. After checking myself in the mirror, I went out and hailed a taxi, giving the rough location Samson had provided. At the street corner, a black Maybach stopped steadily in front of me, The window rolled down, revealing Samson's profile. His tone was crisp when he said, "Get in." I opened the door and slid in, full of questions.

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"Weren't we going to the Raw Stone Market? Where are we headed?" He started the car, eyes fixed on the road ahead. That place is full of low-quality stones aimed at beginners. I'm taking you to see an acquaintance who has exclusive channels for raw stones." The car turned into a narrow alley, passing by the entrance of the Raw Stone Market-the roadside vendors had heaps of stones, with people crouching and hammering them. The noise could be heard even through the car window.

||| < 1/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 220 Raw Stone Market 30% +20 Free Coins Five minutes later, the car stopped in front of a stone estate with no signboard, almost hidden. "Get out." Samson pushed the door open and stepped out first. I unbuckled my seatbelt and followed. Looking around, only a few elderly people strolled leisurely. Not a single commercial sign in sight-the quietness was almost unnatural. "Here?" I pointed at the oak door with a brass knocker. He didn't reply. Raising his hand, he knocked on the door-a sequence of three light, two heavy knocks, like some sort of code.

The door quickly opened. The butler, dressed in a tailcoat, bowed slightly, his tone respectful. "Mr. Ortega, welcome." "Is Mr. Julian here? I'd like to see the raw stones."

Samson stepped inside, and I hurried to follow. The estate was far larger than it appeared from the outside. The entrance opened into a circular arcade, ivy climbing the pillars, cobblestones polished smooth underfoot. At the end of the arcade, I finally heard voices ahead. Stepping into the backyard, the bustle inside was a stark contrast to the quiet at the gate.

Piles of raw stones formed small hills in the center, with seven or eight people picking through them. A burly man patted a stone and shouted, "Julian, I want this one! Is 500,000 enough?" The middle-aged man in a bowler hat smiled and nodded. "Mr. Lawson, you are too generous! Once paid, I'll arrange the top cutters immediately." After dismissing the man, he turned and saw us, his eyes lighting up. He hurried over. "Mr. Ortega, long time no see. And this is?" "My friend, Ms. Cobbett." Samson gestured toward me. I extended my hand, lowering my voice deliberately, "Mr. Julian, good day." "Ms.

Cobbett, please come with me!" Julian led us toward the piles of stones, introducing them as we walked. "These were just transported from the border this morning. The quality is far better than market stones, with at least a 60% chance of green. Mr. Ortega is a long-time client and knows our rules-no fakes. What type are you looking for today?" Samson bent down, touching a stone with red steaks. Without looking up, he said, "Just looking for now, no rush." Julian smiled knowingly. "Take your time, Ms. Cobbett. Call me if you need anything." He then turned to attend to other clients.

Everyone in the yard focused on inspecting stones, occasionally tapping them with small hammers to check the sound. Samson straightened up and looked at me. "Don't just stand there. Try it. Tell me, which one do you think has potential?" I froze for a moment, instinctively activating my werewolf heightened senses-though I couldn't smell emerald directly, high-quality raw stones had a distinctive smooth aura, completely different from ordinary rocks.

Chapter 221 Fifty-Million Gamble Amanda's POV: 30%. +20 Free Coins As my gaze swept across the piles of stones, I happened to overhear two merchants chatting beside me. "The threshold for this batch is really high; even the worst scraps start at 300,000." My heart skipped a beat. Three hundred thousand just to practice? That's far too extravagant. "I'll just take a look first, no rush to buy." I withdrew my gaze, crouched down to pretend to examine the stone, letting my fingers brush over the cold surface, though I had no confidence inside.

I only knew the basics of gambling stones; if I were to handle it myself, I wouldn't have an ounce of certainty. So I stood up and tugged at Samson's sleeve. "Mr. Ortega, why don't you try first?" He turned his head, the brown of his eyes carrying a hint of understanding. "I have a rule when picking stones-only choose once. No matter the outcome, never go back for a second stone." I'd heard of this rule before. Some seasoned gamblers trusted only their first instinct-they wouldn't blindly chase after a loss, nor get greedy after a gain. This kind of restraint was rarer than good eyes.

"Do you have a target in mind?" I asked. He scanned the stone piles before him, shaking his head lightly. "Not yet." I pursed my lips and led him to another pile. That pile was in a darker corner, and one stone with a subdued color caught my eye-it wasn't flashy, but it felt solid. "Mr. Ortega, what do you think of that one?" I pointed at the stone. Samson only glanced at it and gave his judgment, "Dull surface, no luster, abandoned in the corner-very low chance of it having anything inside."

But stones like this are usually inexpensive, suitable for beginners to practice." His words instantly dampened my enthusiasm, and I scratched my head. "Mr. Ortega, I'm getting confused just looking at them all." "Picking stones is all about patience." He stopped in his tracks, his tone more serious than usual. "If you truly want to learn, you must calm yourself first, control your temper." 1/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 221 Fifty-Million Gamble 30% +20 Free Coins "Yes, Mr. Ortega, I understand." I nodded quickly slowing my pace to mimic him, no longer glancing around.

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After about ten more minutes of browsing, Samson's steps suddenly halted in front of a pile of large stones. His gaze locked onto a half-human-height raw stone. "Is this the one you like?" I hurried over. The stone's surface was covered in deep brown veins, looking no different from an ordinary mountain rock-nothing particularly special. Samson said nothing, took two steps closer, and lightly ran his fingertips along the stone's veins, then tapped with his knuckles, listening carefully.

After a moment, he finally spoke, "This one's good." At that moment, Julian came quickly over, his face under the bowler hat full of smiles. "Mr. Ortega, as expected, you have a good eye! This is the hidden gem of this batch, kept especially for you." "Quote a price." Samson looked up, his tone brisk. Julian's eyes lit up, clearly not expecting such decisiveness. "Mr. Ortega, are you really going to buy it?" "It's a good stone.

If the price is right, I'll take it." Julian rubbed his hands together, leaned closer, and whispered with five fingers raised, "This number." "Five million?" I blurted out-it was already the Highest price I could imagine. "Fifty million," Julian corrected me with a smile, a hint of pride in his tone. "The quality of this stone absolutely justifies the price." I was completely stunned. Fifty million for a single stone? If it turned out to be worthless, it would be a total loss. I tugged at Samson's arm, whispering, "Mr.

Ortega, are you really going to gamble on this?" He didn't answer directly. Instead, he turned to me, his gaze probing. "Ms. Cobbett, what do you think?" I hesitated, but then thought, Samson was always composed; he would never act without confidence. "I trust your decision. It's the right one." Hearing that, a faint curve appeared on Samson lips as he turned to Julian. "I'll take this one." "Mr. Ortega, as expected, you have a keen eye!" Julian beamed.

"This is a guaranteed win!" 2/3 < 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 @ Chapter 221 Fifty-Million Gamble 30% +20 Free Coins Samson pulled a black credit card from his suit ocket and handed

it to Julian. "Swipe it." Julian quickly called his assistants to handle the payment, then asked again, "Mr. Ortega, should we cut the stone on-site? I have the top cutters here." "Yes, cut it now." Samson nodded. "Use the three section method." The news that 50 million had been spent on a single raw stone spread through the yard like wildfire.

Those who had been picking stones individually gathered around, whispering, "So this is the future alpha of Eclipse Pack? Truly flush with cash." "Fifty million for a single stone? So daring!" Everyone was curious to see what such a high-priced stone would yield and crowded around the cutting area, even holding their breaths. The cutter fixed the stone in the machine and turned to confirm. "Mr. Ortega, I'm about to start." I stood next to Samson, hands clenching my clothes, barely daring to breathe.

The roar of the machine filled the air, and I stared intently at the stone, not daring to blink. What would be the outcome of this 50-million gamble? 3/3 Mark

Chapter 222 Blood Gemstone Amanda's POV: The stone-cutting process is a long one, and every single step is critically important. 30% +20 Free Coins Just as the cutter's blade sank three inches into the stone, someone in the crowd suddenly shouted, "Green! It's green!" My heart leapt, and I rose onto my toes to squeeze forward, but when I clearly saw the green on the stone, the breath I had just drawn sank back down—it was only the size of a fingertip. A wave of regretful murmurs immediately rose around us. "It is such a huge piece, but that's all there is?"

Fifty million is probably going down the drain." "The quality's good, but there's just too little of it. That's a guaranteed blood loss." "Don't rush, they've cut less than a third so far." Someone tried to smooth things over. "The surface texture of the stone is very fine; there might be something big hidden inside." "I think there's still hope. Let's wait and see." The voices of discussion surged like a tide, and my heart climbed straight up into my throat. In all my years, this was the first time I'd ever been this nervous over a single stone.

By contrast, Samson beside me had both hands in his suit pockets, the lines of his profile still taut, yet without the slightest hint of panic. "Mr. Ortega, your mentality is really something, I couldn't help saying. He turned his head to glance at me, his tone calm. "Mm. It's fine." I pressed my lips together and smiled bitterly to myself—fifty million was no small sum, but if the person paying was calm, what was I panicking for? With that thought, the anxiety in my chest eased a little, though my eyes remained glued to the stone. The cutting blade advanced bit by bit.

Soon it reached the one-third mark, yet that patch of green seemed to vanish into thin air, no longer extending even a fraction. Sweat beaded on the cutter's temples, and the hand gripping the control lever was trembling. This was Julian's prized centerpiece. If it truly turned out to be a waste, the shop's reputation would be ruined. "Wait," Samson suddenly spoke. ||| Γ 1/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 222 Blood Gemstone The cutter froze the machine as if grasping at a feline. "What is it, Mr. Ortega?" "Cut it in half." Four crisp words. 30%. +20 Free Coins "What?" The cutter cried out in shock.

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"Mr. Ortea, cutting it in half is too risky. What if..." "There's no what if. Do as I say." Samson cut him off, his tone brooking no argument. With no choice, the cutter had the workers refix the stone and align the blade with its exact center. The machine started again, the shrill cutting noise stabbing painfully into everyone's eardrums. The onlookers all held their breath. Someone muttered, "So reckless, huh?"

If he cuts away only bit of gem left, 50 million will really go down the drain." The instant the stone split in two, the scene fell into dead silence-both cut surfaces were smooth and clean, without the slightest hint of green. "Just as expected, a loss." the "I told you this stone wasn't worth the price." The chatter rose again. I was stunned as well and instinctively looked at Samson, only to see him staring sharply at the edge of one half of the stone. "Look, what's that on the left edge?" He lifted his chin slightly.

The cutter hurried over and examined it carefully under the light, then suddenly exclaimed, "It's red! Quick, bring a soft brush! There's something inside!" The words "there's something" were even more shocking than "it's green"-this meant what lay inside was absolutely not ordinary. Using a soft brush, the cutter worked with extreme care. The red grew clearer and clearer, like congealed blood. It was glowing with a warm, lustrous sheen under the lights. At that moment, I suddenly felt a disturbance within my body.

Alice, my wolf spirit that had been restless on recent full-moon nights, unexpectedly calmed down like never before, as if drawn by that glow My previously drifting awareness became unusually clear, and even the occasional power instability I'd been experiencing disappeared entirely. A warm current spread through my limbs and bones, so comfortable I nearly let out a sound. "Blood gemstone! It's a blood gemstone." Someone was the first to react, their voice trembling. 2/3 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 222 Blood Gemstone 30% +20 Free Coins The scene instantly erupted.

"My god, it's actually a blood gemstone! Its value is no lower than emerald!" "Mr. Ortega's luck is unbelievable. This is a treasure you can only encounter by chance!" "Mr. Ortega, I'll offer 100 million. How about you sell me this?" "I'll offer 120 million!" The clamoring bids rose one after another, but I was still immersed in the shock of my wolf spirit stabilizing. Could this blood gemstone actually soothe my wolf spirit? Without thinking, I reached out, wanting to touch that red glow, but my wrist was gently pressed down by Samson.

He turned his head, a trace of inquiry in his brown eyes. "What is it?" I quickly withdrew my hand and clenched the corner of my clothes to cover it up. "Nothing. I just think this blood gemstone is very special." Just then, Julian squeezed his way over with a beaming smile, holding the credit card receipt. "Mr. Ortega, congratulations! This blood gemstone is truly lucky to be in your possession." 3/3 ||| Mark

Chapter 223 Not for Sale Samson's POV: Facing Julian's flattery, I smiled lightly. "Mr. Julian, you're too kind." 30% +20 Free Coins He rubbed his hands and stepped closer, his tone full of emotion. "To be honest with you, Mr. Ortega, I took in this piece half a year ago and kept it sitting in storage ever since. Plenty of people asked about the price before, but the moment they heard 50 million, they all backed off. Only you had the nerve. Now that the blood gemstone has been revealed, you wouldn't be able to lose money even if you wanted to." That was the truth.

At the current market price of blood gemstone, just the area already exposed was worth no less than 50 million. I was just nodding in response when, behind me, the cutter suddenly let out a shrill cry. "My heavens! This entire piece is all blood gemstone! The moment the words fell, the once-noisy backyard instantly exploded. A fingertip-sized reveal of a blood gemstone was already rare enough.

Now the entire stone glowed with a warm red luster, making even the most seasoned merchants suck in a sharp breath—an intact piece of blood gemstone of this caliber simply couldn't be measured by ordinary prices. "Mr. Ortega, your luck is practically divine!" Julian's voice was trembling, his eyes filled with awe as he looked at the blood gemstone. The people around seemed to have their enthusiasm ignited. Those who had been hesitating earlier all rushed to pick stones and make payments, and the shop attendants were swamped. "Mr.

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Ortega, I truly admire you." Sara's voice came from beside me, her tone full of sincerity. I turned my head and saw that the shock in her eyes had yet to fade. The small movement she'd made earlier, wanting to touch the blood gemstone, was still vivid in my mind. "So now you know how to pick stones?" I asked in return. She pressed her lips together and answered frankly, "I still haven't fully grasped the method, but I'm sure of one thing—learning stone gambling from you can't go wrong." I smiled slightly. That answer was pleasant to hear. "Ms. Cobbett, you're being too modest.

I've gained quite a bit myself from learning the hness language from you." There wasn't the slightest awkwardness in our polite exchange. Instead, there was a sense of unspoken understanding flowing between us. She soon shifted the topic, her gaze falling on 1/2 13:04 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 223 Not for Sale the blood gemstone. "Do you plan to sell this blood gemstone?" 30% +20 Free Coins "Not for sale. For now." I looked at the crystal-clear red gemstone, my plan already taking shape. "Next month is the annual celebration of the Eclipse Pack. I intend to use it as the centerpiece token.

The effect should be quite good." "You're very farsighted." A trace of admiration flashed in her eyes. "Using a rare blood gemstone to anchor the event will not only showcase the strength of the Eclipse Pack, but also give the celebration much more appeal." I was naturally aware of that layer of consideration, but I didn't tell her the deeper thought. When I saw her staring at the blood gemstone earlier, I inexplicably felt that this blood

gemstone might have some kind of connection to her. After the stone was completely cut, the intact blood gemstone was properly secured.

Quite a few jewelers and pack representatives crowded over to ask for prices, all of whom I turned away with a simple "not for sale." The blood gemstone would be escorted by the pack's guard unit. Sara and I didn't linger. After saying goodbye to Julian, we left the estate "Ms. Cobbett, I'll give you a ride back." I opened the car door. She waved her hands quickly. "No need to trouble you, Mr. Ortega. I'll just take a taxi." I didn't insist and handed her a business card.

"Contact me anytime if you need anything." After she took the card and thanked me, she turned and blended into the flow of people along the street. I sat back in the car, my fingers lightly tapping the steering wheel. In fact, this piece of blood gemstone has another purpose altogether... 2/2 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Mark

Chapter 224 Samson Joining Them? Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins After leaving the Raw Stone Market, I went to a public restroom on the street corner and changed back into that oversized, puffy outfit. I also reapplied the dull, dark foundation to my face. The moment I stepped into the classroom, a figure swooshed right up to me-Josh's bright, energetic face was suddenly inches away. "Boss, where'd you go? I've been looking for you forever!" I hadn't even had time to answer before he slapped a workbook down on my desk, eyes sparkling. "Quick!

I've been stuck on this mechanics problem all morning-explain it to me." I smiled helplessly-of course. At this point, the only things Josh ever cared about were games and studying. I pulled out a chair and sat down. Following the question number he pointed at, I broke it down step by step-from force analysis to applying the formulas. He listened extra seriously, pencil flying across his scratch paper. Even the pen he always spun was held obediently in his hand. The dismissal bell rang, and we walked out of the classroom side by side.

Usually, once school ended, Josh would start nagging about going to the library. But today he dragged his feet, kicking little pebbles along the roadside with the tip of his shoe. "Boss ... how about we don't go to the library today? I'll grab a few guys and queue up for a couple rounds-just one round." I stopped and turned to look at him. "If you go play today, then those notes you stayed up three nights straight to catch up on, and all the practice problems you grinded through-are they all wasted?" That line was like a bucket of cold water, instantly dousing his excitement.

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Josh drooped, listless. "Then, forget it... I love studying, and studying loves me. Come on, library." Seeing him force that "motivated" act, I couldn't help smiling. "How about this-if you make the top five in the class on this monthly exam, I play games with you for a whole day." "Pfft-" Josh burst out laughing, slapping my shoulder as he cackled. "Boss,

you're like the definition of a model student-why are you joining the chaos? Don't tell me you're some total noob coming just to drag me down.

"I'm not taking that job." I choked for a second, then raised a brow at him "How do you know I can't play?" < 1/3 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 DD Chapter 224 Samson Joining Them? "You can really play?" He widened his eyes, full-on suspicious. "I've played before." I brushed it off vaguely. "How good are you?" he pressed. "Not bad," I said lightly. 30% +20 Free Coins Josh immediately put on that "experienced veteran" look. "Yeah, right, Boss. My teammates are all top five on the whole server. Other than the mysterious 'Ecstasy God,' nobody can keep us down.

"I've never dropped out of the top three on the leaderboard either. If you play with us, you're basically signing up to get stomped." That smug, punchable tone made my lips twitch upward, but I didn't expose him. "Don't worry about how good I am. You need to get into the top five first before you're qualified to talk. Dare to take the challenge?" Josh, as expected, got his competitive streak lit. He craned his neck and said, "Why wouldn't I dare! But I'm not doing this just to game with you-I'm proving my strength!" As he said it, his chin was practically pointed at the sky.

"I'll be waiting," I said with a smile and a nod. "And I'll keep my promise." He clearly didn't take my words seriously. His head was filled with exam sprint mode, babbling the whole way about his revision plan. Just as we walked out the school gate, a familiar Black Maybach was parked right in front of us-it was Samson. "Samson! What are you doing here?" Josh ran over in surprise, yanking the door open as he shouted. Samson got out of the driver's seat. His gaze paused on me for a brief moment before he looked at Josh. "I happened to pass by.

"Figured you two would be getting out of school, so I swung by to pick you up." Josh never questioned anything he said. He immediately turned around and waved at me. "Boss, get in!" He himself went around to the front passenger seat, leaving the back seat for Once we were settled, Josh immediately reported the plan. "Samson, we're not going home first-we're going to the library. I still haven't cracked two big problems." Samson's motion of starting the car paused. He turned his head slightly, glanced at the rearview mirror, and his tone carried a hint of surprise.

"Since when did you change?" "That's called a late awakening!" Josh chuckled. "I'm trying to catch up to Boss." 2/3 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 224 Samson Joining Them? 30% +20 Free Coins "Keep it up." There was a faint, hard-to-notice smile in Samson's voice. "I'm looking forward to your progress." The car drove smoothly toward the library. The moment Josh arrived, he couldn't wait-he jumped out, clutching his workbook and charging toward the entrance. I had just unbuckled my seatbelt when I saw the driver's door open too-Samson actually got out of the car?! 3/3 Mark

Chapter 225 Flushed Samson's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins "I just haven't been here in a while. Thought I'd pick a book and read." I lifted the hardcover book in my hand and said to Josh. Sure enough, he didn't think much of it. He bounced into the library, found

his usual spot like he'd done a thousand times, pulled out his workbook, and buried his head in calculations. Amanda headed straight for the stairs, going up to the literature section. I followed almost on instinct, fingertips brushing along the shelves as casually pulled out a thick economics text -yet my eyes never stopped tracking her.

She lingered for a long time in front of the translated fiction shelves, then took out a novel with a blue cover and sat down by the window. I picked a seat diagonally across from her, pretending to read while my gaze kept drifting over-sunlight spilled through the glass onto the top of her head, and even the slight furrow of her brows when she looked down was painfully clear. Once or twice might've looked natural, but after too many times, she finally noticed. She lifted her head, brows knitting, and looked straight at me. The moment our eyes met, I didn't look away like I usually did.

Instead, I spoke first. "I've read the book you're holding. The story's good, but the ending is way too rushed. A lot of the foreshadowing never got explained before it wrapped." Sure enough, disappointment surfaced on her face. She closed the book and stood "Then, I'll switch to another one." I stood up immediately and walked over quickly "I'll help you pick. I know the literature section here pretty well." She froze for a moment, a trace of confusion in her eyes-probably wondering why I was acting so strangely today. "Do you like comedies or tragedies?" I broke the silence on purpose.

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"Comedy," she answered without thinking. I scanned the shelves, pulled out a book with a cartoon on the cover, and handed it to her. "This one's witty. It's an easy read." 1/3 13:05 Fri, Jan 20 D Chapter 225 Flushed 30% +20 Free Coins "Thanks." She took it, her fingertips brushing my palm by accident-cool, faintly cold. I watched her open to the first page. Before long a shallow curve lifted the corner of her mouth, and the tightness between her brows eased.

I took the seat beside her and asked casually, "Do you usually read here with Josh?" "Only lately." She didn't look up as she flipped pages. "Usually I'm upstairs, and he's downstairs." Hearing the words "upstairs" and "downstairs," a strange pleasure rose in my chest, and even my page-turning grew lighter. "The environment here is nice. I'll come more often, too." She didn't respond again, fully absorbed in her book. Sitting beside her, breathing in that faint paper-and-ink scent on her, my usually restless mind felt unexpectedly steady. But that steadiness didn't last long.

She suddenly stood up, like she wanted to escape something. Maybe she moved too fast-her foot slipped, and she pitched forward. I reached out almost reflexively and caught her, pulling her securely into my arms. When my palm touched her slim waist, warmth spread through my fingertips. In my ear was the sound of her quick, uneven breathing. "Are you okay?" My voice dropped without me noticing, rougher than it should've been. She shoved me away hard, her cheeks burning red. "I'm fine.

Thank you." She finished speaking and hurried toward the stairs, even her back looking flustered-like she was fleeing in defeat. I stared at my now-empty palm. A flicker of disappointment swept through me, but it was quickly replaced by something else. I followed behind her, stopping behind a shelf on the first floor-just in time to hear Josh's voice. "Boss why is your face so red?" "Is it? Maybe the air isn't circulating." Her voice sounded a little unsteady, "I'll tell the librarian to open a window!" Josh shouted dramatically, then grabbed her to ask about a problem again.

"Boss, quick-look at this one. I've been calculating forever, and it's still wrong." Her voice quickly steadied, clear and organized as she explained the solution steps, dissecting every key point with perfect precision. Listening to that calm voice, I suddenly understood-everything clicked. The deliberate attention, the inexplicable pleasure, the way my heartbeat kept slipping out of control... It all 2/3 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 # Chapter 225 Flushed finally had an answer. 4 3, 30 2 Mark

Chapter 226 Blood Gemstone Samson's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins I didn't linger. Without making a sound, I left the library, slid into the car, and dialed Cody. "Have Fiona, Eclipse Pack's chief jewelry designer, wait for me in the council chamber tomorrow at ten in the morning." "Yes, Mr. Ortega. Ms. Sawyer just finished a gem setting commission for the royal family and happens to be in the pack right now." Cody's voice came through the receiver-steady and reliable as always. The next morning at 10 a.m., Fiona Sawyer arrived on time in the council chamber.

A wolf-head pattern was embroidered in dark thread on her cuff, and an energy stabilizer stone hung at her neck-an identification mark for a certified high-level jewelry designer. "Mr. Ortega, you asked for me?" I pushed a high-definition image of the blood jade in front of her. "I want you to design a set of jewelry using this blood gemstone. The core requirement is-stabilizing the wolf spirit." Fiona's pupils tightened slightly. She picked up the image and studied it carefully. "This is a top-grade blood gemstone.

The life-energy fluctuations inside are extremely strong-truly an ideal material for stabilizing the soul body. Are you planning to use it for ... a pack member with an unstable soul?" "Someone important." I avoided identifying them. "Keep the design simple. It needs to be worn close to the body, and the energy-guiding method has to be as gentle as possible-no stimulation to the soul." Fiona immediately pulled out a sketchbook, her pencil flying. "I suggest a necklace with matching stud earrings.

The necklace should use the largest piece as the main stone, carved into the outline of a wolf fang-wolf fangs are a protective symbol of our kind and can strengthen energy guidance. The earrings can use the smaller fragments as accents to form a closed energy loop." I looked at the draft and nodded. "Do it that way Finish the piece in one week. Use the pack's secret energy-engraving method for every step-no standard techniques that might damage the blood gemstone's vitality." "Rest assured." Fiona put away the sketch, her gage solemn.

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"This will be the work I pour most heart into in years..." Amanda's POV: the Early in the morning, the moment I walked into the classroom, a familiar figure lunged at ||| O r 1/3 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Chapter 226 Blood Gemstone me, bringing the sunlit scent of open grasslands "Amanda! I missed you to death!" 30% +20 Free Coins I caught Jennifer steadily. Looking at her skin tanned into a healthy wheat tone, I teased with a smile, "So, how's training going for Silvermoon Pack's 'soon-to-be Alpha'?" Jennifer lifted her chin, pride shining in her eyes.

"I just finished three months of training at the Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department. Even the elders in my pack said I'm way steadier than before. Now, Silvermoon Pack's members all recognize me as the next Alpha. The second I got back, I came straight here to share the good news." We'd just reached our seats when a teasing voice cut in. "My future Alpha-running this fast. Afraid I won't catch up?" Marcus leaned against the doorframe, his short black hair slightly messy from the wind. Behind him was a little girl with twin ponytails his sister, Chloe. Jennifer turned and glared.

"Who asked you to catch up? I'm here to see my friend. Stop sticking your nose in." "Chasing your girlfriend is only natural." Marcus strode over, smoothly brushing a fallen leaf off Jennifer's shoulder. "I asked around. I knew you'd be here today." "I'm not your girl!" Jennifer puffed up and slapped his hand away, but she wasn't truly angry. Chloe walked over with her arms crossed. She glanced at me first, playfully rolled her eyes, then tugged on Jennifer's sleeve. "Jennifer, don't mind my brother.

He's been chasing you so hard he even skipped the pack's training." I couldn't help laughing-this little brat was still just as proud and prickly as last time, but the hostility from before was gone. Jennifer took Chloe's hand and explained to me helplessly, "She misunderstood you last time." "I did not!" Chloe argued with her neck stiff, but she quietly scooted a little closer to me, adding in a small voice, "I blamed you unfairly last time. My brother chewed me out." Just then, Josh passed by with his workbook, grinning stupidly at his phone-no need to ask.

He was definitely messaging Camilla, He spotted us, waved, and hurried back toward his seat, muttering, "Camilla said she marked the key points for me. I gotta look right now." Watching his back, Jennifer sighed. "Josh has changed so much. He used to revolve around games-now, his eyes are only on studying and Camilla." 2/3 13.05 Fri, Jan 2 \$ Chapter 226 Blood Gemstone ¼ ¾ 30 +20 Free Coins Marcus leaned in and seized the moment. "As if anyone's more devoted than me.

I only have you in my eyes." "Get lost!" Jennifer laughed and shoved him away, then pulled me aside, dropping her voice suddenly. "Oh, Amanda, I almost forgot. There's a big pack issue... Alan's in trouble." My heart sank. "What happened to him?" Mark

Chapter 227 Avi's Help? Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins "What happened to Alan?" I pressed, my fingers instinctively tightening around the hem of my uniform-Alan was a peace ambassador for the Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department. Anything that happened to him was never small Jennifer swept her gaze around, lowering her voice.

"It's his newest cultural-promotion video. You know how well he's been doing as a peace ambassador-last month's grassland culture promo blew up all over Instagram.

"But yesterday, someone dug up that the core background track in the video is extremely similar in style to a work by the musician Avi, who once went viral across Howlstead." Jennifer paused, her tone grave. "Avi's fans started tearing into him on Instagram. The hashtag #AlanGetOutOfForeignAffairs shot to global trending in half a day. The views have already broken 300 million. The Foreign Affairs Department still hasn't made a statement. Public opinion is about to explode." My heart jolted. How could this happen...

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Alan's POV: Inside the Foreign Affairs Department's dedicated office area, my assistant, Johnny, paced around my desk in circles. "Alan, say something! What the hell is going on with that track? The Foreign Affairs elder just called-if you can't resolve this, they're pulling your peace ambassador title!" I leaned back on the couch, pinching the bridge of my nose, silent. The first half of that track-I wrote it myself. Three months of late nights to fit border folk traditions, weaving in the bleakness of ancient werewolf melodies.

But last month, in the draft on my office desktop, a revised second half suddenly appeared. That revised version fused the ancient melody with modern rhythm. It hit harder. I had the Foreign Affairs music consultants evaluate it, and they all praised it as "a perfect carrier for cultural export." That was why I felt safe using it in the promo. Who would've thought it would be branded as "plagiarism." "Johnny... The second half of that track wasn't written by me," I finally spoke, my threaded with exhaustion. voice 1/3 < 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 D D. Chapter 227 Avi's Help?

Johnny stopped dead, swore under his breath. "Are you insane? Why didn't you say earlier?!"

Chapter 228 Waiting a Long Time for You Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins I never would've thought that a spur-of-the-moment edit to a score would end up causing Alan this much trouble. If we wanted to calm this storm down, there was only one way-come forward and clarify as Avi. But that identity had been sealed away for three whole years. My fingertip slid across the phone screen.

Avi's Instagram login and password surfaced in my mind with crystal clarity, yet I still couldn't bring myself to tap "Log in." For the past three years, I'd deliberately avoided anything connected to Avi-afraid of seeing the fans' messages waiting with bated breath, and even more afraid of touching the past hidden behind those melodies. The memories I couldn't bear to look back on were like a bed of needles-one light brush and my nerves would sting. "Amanda, school's out. Why are you still not leaving?" Emily's voice came from behind me, bright with an easy laugh.

I snapped back to myself, shoved my phone into my backpack, and stood with a smile. "I'm coming. We're heading the same way anyway." Emily nodded obediently. Once I'd packed up, she looped her arm through mine, and we walked out together. We stayed quiet most of the way, but in the end, I couldn't hold it in. "Emily, do you know about what happened with Alan-him being exposed for 'plagiarism'?" "Yeah. Instagram's been flooded with it." Emily's one was matter-of-fact, not excited in the slightest. Instead, she looked at me curiously. "You hardly ever pay attention to pack public figures.

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Why are you suddenly asking about him" "I just happened to see it while scrolling the trending topics." I brushed it off vaguely, my gaze settling on her face-I'd expected her to be anxious like other fans, but she looked unusually calm. "I believe he didn't plagiarize." Emily spoke up all of a sudden, her voice unwaveringly firm. "Mr. Alan is my role model. I've always wanted to become someone like him-someone who carries the responsibility of promoting our culture, and who's steady and reliable in everything he does.

Ever since I decided to set him as my goal, I've believed in his character." 1/2 13:05 Fri, Jan 2D D Chapter 228 Waiting a Long Time for You 30%2 +20 Free Coins "You trust him that unconditionally?" I turned my head to look at her. Under the sunset, the girl's eyes shone like stars. "It's not unconditional. His actions gave me the confidence." Emily counted on her fingers as she spoke. "He's been a peace ambassador for two years.

He's traveled to over a dozen border tribes, taking ancient werewolf melodies that were on the verge of disappearing and arranging them into modern tracks to promote them. During the last snow disaster, he quietly donated half a year's income to build shelters. Those aren't things you can fake. How could someone like that do something as low as plagiarism?" Her words were like a pebble dropped into my heart, sending ripples through everything. All at once, I felt a strange envy for Alan-being someone else's light, and being trusted so purely. "You're right.

He's not that kind of person." I said it softly, and the hesitation in my chest began to fade. When we reached the school gate, Emily waved goodbye. "See you tomorrow, Amanda! I'm going to the library to look up Mr. Alan's past promo materials. Maybe I can find proof to refute the plagiarism claim from his creative style!" "See you tomorrow." I smiled back. Watching her bounce away, I turned and pulled out my phone. This time, I didn't hesitate at all. My fingers flew as I typed in the password and logged into the Instagram account that had been asleep for three years.

The moment I got in, mentions piled up, unread messages stacked past 999+, flooding the screen. I didn't pause. I went straight into the editor, my fingers hammering the keyboard. "Avi. I've been waiting a long time for you." A familiar voice suddenly sounded right beside 2/2 Mark

Chapter 229 The Return of Avi Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins I instinctively hit the side button and blacked out the screen. When I looked up, Seven was standing under a streetlamp, his shadow stretched long across the pavement. "You're here because of Alan?" I got straight to the point. "Only you can help him." Seven stepped up in front of me, his tone sincere. "Public opinion is turning hard against him. The Foreign Affairs Department is already considering a temporary replacement peace ambassador." I tightened my grip on my phone. My knuckles paled slightly.

"This happened because I didn't think it through. I'll clarify it." Seven froze for a beat, clearly not expecting me to agree so easily. "Thank you, Avi." "I'm not doing it for you." I cut him off. "Whatever grudges we had have nothing to do with Alan. I'm the one who edited his score without permission and dragged him into this. It's my mess to clean up." Something complicated flickered in Seven's eyes. Then, he nodded lightly. "I know. You're still the same as you were back then-always carrying the responsibility on your own shoulders." I didn't answer.

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I lit my screen again, stared at the words I'd drafted, took a deep breath, and tapped "Post." "It's up. I'm going home." I pocketed my phone and turned to leave. Seven didn't stop me. He just pulled out his phone and refreshed Instagram. On the screen, Avi's official account showed a brand-new post in bold and unmistakable clarity, "Hi, everyone. I'm Avi. Regarding the background music used in Mr. Alan's pack cultural promo video, I'd like to clarify: this piece was co-created by Mr. Alan and me.

The first half was based on his original ancient werewolf melody, and the second half was completed and refined by me. I failed to explain this in time and caused confusion for everyone. My sincere apologies." In less than a minute, the comments section detonated. #AviAppearsToClarify rocketed straight to No. 1 on Instagram's pack trending board. I didn't look back, but I could picture Seven's expression as he kept refreshing the feed. 1/2 13:05 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 229 The Return of Avi 30% +20 Free Coins The night wind brushed my hair.

My phone vibrated faintly in my pocket-Instagram notifications. I didn't need to check to know what it meant. Avi, silent for three years, had spoken again. Of course, it would cause an uproar. On Instagram, Avi's fans were already exploding. The moment I logged in, "Avi online" had started creeping onto the edge of the trending list. After the clarification post went up, in barely a minute, comments shot past 10,000, and likes surged at hundreds per second. My inbox and page were completely flooded by DMs and comments. The comment section was nothing but frantic, excited spam.

CatWhoLoves Fish said, "Oh my god! It's a living Avi! Three years-I finally got you to speak! I knew the ornamented turns in the second half sounded exactly like your 'Starry Night Wilderness' era!" Stars Don'tBlink commented, "Case solved! Not plagiarism-collab! Alan's ancient melody as the foundation plus Avi's rhythm polish... This combo is

basically the ceiling of pack music!" EverSinceYou said, "When the queen shows up, it's game over!"

Everyone go loop the soundtrack-this needs to be heard across all of Howlstead!" promo LongTimeNoSee commented, "Please let these two legends be a forever duo! When's the full collab album? I'm pre-ordering ten physical copies right now!" Fifteen minutes later, #AviResponds_CoCreated WithAlan, #AviFirstPostInThreeYears, and #NewTakeOnAncientWerewolfMelody dominated the top three spots on Instagram trending. Even the Foreign Affairs Department's official account reposted my clarification, adding, "Thank you to both musicians for promoting pack culture." 2/2 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 230 Mystery Alan's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins I stared at Avi's Instagram post on my phone, my finger hovering over the screen, refusing to fall. Johnny let out a long breath beside me and collapsed into his office chair, tossing the crisis PR plan aside. "My god-finally, we're saved! You're something else, man. You actually know Avi, a living legend. How come you never told me?" "I don't know her," I said slowly, my voice weighed down. Johnny shot up from his chair, eyes wide. "What did you just say? You don't know Avi?" He grabbed my phone and checked it again and again.

"This is Avi's official account-verified and everything! Packs have thrown insane money at her, and she wouldn't even blink. Why would she help you clarify this out of nowhere?" I opened Avi's profile and looked through her dozen or so posts-every single one related to pack music. The newest one was the clarification for me. Three years ago, when she disappeared, she posted only one line. "No set return. May the ancient melody endure." And now, her first post after resurfacing was to clear my name. My finger brushed over Avi's profile picture-a blurred wolf silhouette, her face hidden.

Johnny's excitement slowly faded. He sat back down, frowning. "This is strange. She vanished for three years, then came back just to stand behind you. Either someone pulled strings behind the scenes, or..." His eyes suddenly lit up. "Or she's been following you all along! Your ancient melody promotion series caused a huge stir in the pack music scene. Maybe she admired your talent and chose to refine your piece and speak up for you!" I stayed silent and reopened the photo of the revised score.

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At the time, I'd only thought it was brilliantly done-now I realized it was far beyond what an ordinary musician could achieve. Why did Avi modify my song? And why help me in this way? Just then, the desk phone rang-it was the surveillance room. "Mr. Alan, we found the footage you requested. Last Thursday afternoon, a girl in a training camp uniform entered your 1/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 230 Mystery office and stayed for about ten minutes." A girl? I straightened abruptly. "Send me the footage." Johnny leaned in as well, baffled. "A girl? Could i be Avi's assistant?"

Or..." I stared at the screen, my heartbeat inexplicably speeding up. Unfortunately, all there was was a blurry back view. 30% +20 Free Coins If that girl was the one who modified the score, then what was her relationship with Avi? "It can't be Avi herself, right?" Johnny muttered, then immediately shook his head. "No way. Someone like her wouldn't wear training camp clothes and sneak around like this." He suddenly slapped his thigh. "I've got it! It must be Seven! Didn't he say he'd go persuade Avi?"

Bet he found a way to contact her and convinced her to step in!" I followed his reasoning and realized it was the most plausible explanation so far. "If Seven really made this happen, we owe him." I nodded, finally feeling a weight lift from chest, my "Prepare a proper gift. Once this settles completely, I'll go thank him in person." "No problem!" Johnny answered immediately, his usual sharpness returning, "That said, Alan, you've unknowingly incurred a massive debt to Avi.

She's always been detached from fame and profit-her breaking silence for you is no small favor." "A favor must be repaid," I said quietly. "Whatever she needs-as long as it's within my power -I won't refuse." Johnny immediately poured cold water on it. "Come on. With Avi's status, there are barely any things in all of Howlstead she'd need to ask someone for. And she stayed hidden for three years-clearly, she doesn't want to get dragged back in.

You might not even get the chance to repay her." My expression darkened as I was about to argue but Johnny immediately grinned and jumped in to smooth things over, "Hey, I'm just being realistic! But you never know-maybe one day she will need our help. Promoting a new work, backing her at a pack event... We'd step up without hesitation, right?" That hit exactly where it mattered. 2/3 Mark

Chapter 231 We'll Wait, No Matter How Long Amanda's POV: When I backed out of Instagram, my fingertips were still trembling slightly. 30% +20 Free Coins The fans' cheers and anticipation surged in like tide, dense comments practically drowning the screen, yet all I felt was heaviness. That one clarification had dragged me back into a world I'd sworn to leave behind. I gripped my phone, my emotions refusing to settle. I turned the screen off, got up, and walked to the window, watching the sun sink lower and lower as my thoughts drifted far away.

In these three years off the grid, I'd thought I'd gotten used to a life without music. But the moment I logged in and saw those familiar fan IDs, the love for music buried deep inside me still surged up, uncontrollable. I didn't know how long I stood there before a bright ringtone shattered the silence. I snapped back, picked up the phone, and answered. A familiar, long-missed voice came through the receiver. "Avi, long time no see." It was Nine. My eyes dimmed slightly, my voice rough with Hoarseness. "Nine ... did I do the wrong thing?"

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If I'd already decided to leave this world, I should've stayed silent forever-not show up out of nowhere like this." Nine fell silent for a few seconds, then asked softly, "Avi ... you still love music, don't you?" I parted my lips, but no sound came out. I could only answer with silence. Yeah. Music was carved into my bones-how could I just put it down because I decided to? Before I could respond, Nine continued, "Whether you plan to return or not, I'm happy for you-because today, you finally reconnected with music again. I listened to Alan's promotion track.

The runs and arrangement in the second half are still your signature style. Your skill hasn't dulled at all." He paused, then his tone turned firm. "If one day you're willing to come back for real, I'll be here. I used to be your producer, and I still will always be behind you, always supporting you." The knot in my chest loosened under his words, and I couldn't help smiling. "Thank you, < 1/2 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 231 We'll Wait, No Matter How Long Log Nine." 30% +20 Free Coins "No need." Nine's voice carried a smile. "Just remember-you've never been alone.

There are countless fans behind you, people like me, who've been waiting. No matter how long it takes, we'll wait." "I know," I murmured, then ended the call. I set my phone on the windowsill and looked back up at the night sky. Making peace with my past self might still be a long road, but at least right now, I wasn't as lost as I'd been moments ago. I just hoped that day wouldn't be too far away... Samson's POV: Alan's promotion track absolutely exploded-like, completely blew up. Even in my office, I looped it dozens of times.

When I finally shut the player off, I tapped the desk lightly with my finger. "That's Avi's style. She really is back." Cody spoke up at the right time. "Mr. Ortega, the Avi albums you collected are still in your office drawer. Now that she's back, we'll probably get to hear even more new songs from her." I gave a small nod, rare lightness in my mood. "Hopefully." Avi's music always hit the werewolf emotional nerve with unnerving precision. Especially the way she reworked ancient melodies-faithful, yet new. Even I couldn't deny that I admired it. I glanced at my watch. Ten minutes to 5 p.m.

I remembered it was Alan's turn to pick up Amanda after training, so I grabbed my car keys and stood. "I'm heading out. Cancel tonight's engagements." "Understood, Mr. Ortega," Cody answered. I nodded once and headed for the training grounds without hesitation... 2/2 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 232 Do You Like Men? Alan's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins When my ringtone rang abruptly, I was backstage at a pack promo event, touching up my makeup. Seeing Amanda's name on the screen, my brows knit on instinct. I hit answer. Her cool voice came through. "Alan when are you coming?" "I'm rushing between appearances. I'm a few minutes late. Wait at the training gates..." The impatience in my tone was impossible to hide. If Grandpa hadn't issued a hard order-telling me I had to personally pick her up and drop her off to "build feelings"-I wouldn't waste time on something this trivial.

"Got it." Her voice was soft. Then, she hung up. I tossed my phone to my assistant and kept adjusting my collar in the mirror, already calculating how I'd sprint to the next venue the second I dropped her off. By the time I drove to the academy entrance, I spotted Amanda immediately-she was sitting on a bench by the gate, so thin she looked like a leaf. What shocked me more was that Samson's Maybach was parked right beside her. The window was down, revealing his expressionless face. "Amanda." Amanda looked up at him and clearly froze for a beat. She stood. "Why are you here?" "Where's Alan?

He didn't come?" Samson's voice carried through the open window. "Probably still a while." She shook her head, tone flat. "Get in. I'll take you back." Samson opened the rear door directly. Amanda didn't hesitate-she pulled the door open and slid in neatly. I panicked and parked at the curb, then hurried over, yanked the door open, and dropped into the passenger seat. "Samson!" The moment I said it, a wave of shrieks erupted around us. I turned-several girls had recognized me, surging forward with flushed excitement. "Alan! It's really Alan!" "I love your promotion track!

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Can you sign something?" My heart lurched. I blurted to Samson, "Go-now!" 1/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 232 Do You Like Men? If they surrounded us, we'd be trapped here for who knew how long. 30% +20 Free Coins Samson didn't waste a word. He started the car immediately and drove off smoothly, leaving the gates behind, shaking off the fans chasing after us in seconds. I sank back into my seat and exhaled hard. "Samson, thank God you showed up. If those fans had boxed me in, I don't know when I'd have escaped." Samson glanced at me, tone even.

"Your popularity's doing well lately." "High popularity is exhausting." I sighed, worn out. "I'm basically running on fumes. Samson -when it's my turn to pick up Amanda, can you cover for me? Just for a few days. Once this stretch is over, I'll go back to normal." To my surprise, Samson agreed without thinking. "Sure." My eyes lit up. "Seriously? Thank you-seriously!" Then, I turned toward the back seat and tossed Amanda a perfunctory apology. "Amanda, cut me some slack. I really am slammed right now. et Samson pick you up for a few days.

When I'm free, we'll talk." She gave a small "Mm," like she couldn't care less who picked her up. The cabin fell quiet for a few seconds before Samson suddenly asked, "Your new track is good. Did Avi write it for you?" I knew Samson had always liked Avi's songs-held collected plenty of her albums. He was basically half a fan. I explained quickly. "Honestly, I can't fully explain it either. Avi and I don't know each other. We have no connection at all. It's just that a friend of mine knows Avi, and he asked her to help me." I was telling the truth.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Amanda lower her head silently, saying nothing-lost in whatever was on her mind. Samson gave a quiet "Oh," and kept driving. I suddenly got playful and leaned toward him. "Samson, if you really like Avi, I can have my friend introduce you. You two could meet. Word is Avi's a total knockout-maybe she's even

single. Why don't you go for it and make her my sister-in-law?" The second the words left my mouth, an ear-splitting screech of emergency braking cut through the air. The tires screamed against the road.

Amanda and I both jolted forward from the inertia-thankfully, our seatbelts caught us. 2/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 1 Chapter 232 Do You Like Men? +20 Free Coins I rubbed my forehead where it'd thumped, feeling wronged. "Samson, I was just joking. You didn't have to react like that." Samson's face was dark, his voice sharp. "Don't say things like that again. I admire Avi's talent. I like her music. It has nothing to do with personal feelings." As he spoke, his eyes flicked-briefly-to the back seat, toward Amanda. The look was complicated.

Even he didn't notice it himself: that tightness, that tension... like he was afraid Amanda would misunderstand. Seeing he meant it, my teasing grin vanished instantly. "Samson. Joke. Not serious." Only then did his expression ease slightly, and he restarted the car, continuing forward. The atmosphere turned awkward. I tried to break it with a mutter under my breath. "But Samson ... it's been years, and you've never dated anyone. I'm starting to wonder if your orientation's the problem. Or-do you like men 3/3 Mark

Chapter 233 Almost Forgot My Real Face Amanda's POV: 30%2 +20 Free Coins The moment Alan finished that mutter, Samson's face in the front seat sank instantly, his icy voice snapping into the air. "You're talkative today." Alan clearly got crushed by the pressure. He shook his head fast, tone turning flattering. "Samson, I'm just curious. Just curious. I swear I don't mean anything else..." But Samson's expression didn't soften at all. Seeing that, Alan scrambled to save himself. "Samson, your orientation is fine. Mine is the problem.

I talk too much..." "Shut up!" Samson barked coldly, the impatience in his voice undisguised. I couldn't hold it in. "Pfft." The laughter shattered the tension in the cabin instantly. Samson and Alan both turned to look at me. I lifted my eyes innocently, met their stares, and fought my smile. "You two are hilarious. But Samson-do you actually like men? Otherwise, why are you reacting so hard?" The second I said it, Samson's face went so dark it could've rivaled a storm cloud. The air pressure in the cabin dropped to freezing. Even Alan shivered.

Then, Samson spoke, each word ground out through his teeth, "I don't like men!" Four simple words-packed with pure, clenched fury. I nodded quickly, wisely backing off. "Oh. Got it." Only then did the freezing air slowly ease. Alan let out a long breath and secretly blinked at me twice, eyes saying clearly: See? You don't mess with Samson's bottom line if you cherish your life I stuck my tongue out and looked away, staring out the window at the city whipping past, my lips still curving upward despite myself. The car soon rolled into the castle courtyard and came to a stop.

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I pushed the door open and Alan was still lingering in the front, chatting with Samson about Avi. I caught fragments of him asking, "Samson, I totally forgot to ask- why are you so hung up on Avi?" Samson seemed unwilling to answer something that childish, but after a few seconds of silence, he still spoke-quiet, yet clear. "I've owed her a concert ticket for years. I have to find a chance to pay it back." "That's it?" Alan sounded incredulous.

Samson frowned slightly, shooting back, "What else do you think it is?" "No-just curious." Alan hurried to shake his head. "Put that curiosity away. And don't talk nonsense again." Samson's tone returned to flat. "Don't worry, Samson! I'll never again doubt whether you like men or women!" Alan patted his chest in a vow, then added, "Because I feel like there's a much higher chance you like women..." He didn't wait for Samson's response-he bolted inside like a rabbit being chased.

Samson watched his back, helplessly shaking his head, then finally walked into the house with his steady, measured stride. Back in my room, I pulled out my homework and worked seriously. I didn't finish until nine. Then, I packed my bag. Just then, someone knocked softly. I glanced at the mirror-my makeup was off. Panic punched through my chest. I asked quickly, "Who is it?" Outside the door came Josh's familiar voice. "Boss, it's me." Oh. It was him. I exhaled, but I didn't open the door. I asked again, "Do you need something?" Alan hesitated, sounding a little awkward.

"Tomorrow's the monthly trial, and I..." I stabbed straight through his thought. "You're nervous, aren't you?" Being called out made him relax instead. He answered quietly, "Mm." I spoke gently through the door, "It's okay. Get a good night's sleep. Relax. Don't overthink it. During the trial tomorrow, just do your best-that's enough. Don't put so much pressure on yourself." "I got it, Boss!" Josh's voice sounded lighter. "I'll head back to my room." I listened as his footsteps faded away, and the tightness in my chest finally loosened completely.

2/3 13.06 Fri, Jan 2D D Chapter 233 Almost Forgot My Real Face 30% +20 Free Coins I turned back to the vanity and stared at myself in the mirror-pale skin and clear, bright eyes. Without the heavy disguise, this was what I actually looked like. I'd been deliberately ugly-ing myself up to hide my identity for so long, I'd almost forgotten my real face. I fell onto the soft bed and drifted into sleep almost instantly. 3/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 234 Fake Meet and Greet Promotion Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins The monthly trial arrived right on schedule, and I walked into the arena without a shred of pressure. Trial after trial dragged on, and plenty of trainees started to sink emotionally. When the final werewolf math trial ended, everyone finally let out a collective breath. I packed up my trial gear and walked out. I'd barely reached the corner when I ran into Josh. "How did it go?" I asked first. Josh frowned, frustration in his voice. "Not great.

I had zero clue about the last few big problems in the math trial." "I've explained similar problem types to you before. This time they just changed the scenario -the core concept didn't change," I reminded him calmly. Josh sighed heavily. "Guess my foundation still isn't solid enough. Whatever. It's just one trial. I'll go back and grind the pack question bank properly." With that, he turned and hurried back to the classroom, settling down to dig into the question bank. Whenever he got stuck, he came to me proactively with the problem and asked me to walk him through it.

By the time I finished explaining the last major problem, Josh finally saw the light. He smacked his forehead. "So that's what it was! During the trial, I didn't have a single idea." "It's fine," I soothed him. "Next time, summarize the patterns more-you'll improve." Just then, Jennifer wandered over, glanced at Josh's trial paper, and said bluntly, "That problem isn't hard." Josh didn't like her casual tone. He lifted his eyes and shot back, "You can do it?" Jennifer had competed in werewolf math before-her base was solid.

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And lately she'd been studying with me, so those major problems really weren't that difficult for her. "Of course, I can. It's a basic type." Josh clearly didn't believe her. Jennifer didn't bother arguing-she picked up a pen worked it out on scratch paper. ||| < and 1/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 234 Fake Meet and Greet Promotion 30% +20 Free Coins When she finished, Josh's eyes darkened. He said nothing. Jennifer lifted her brows, a little smug. "Well? I didn't lie. It's pretty simple." Josh grabbed his trial paper back and lowered his head to review it.

Jennifer added, "Josh, looks like you still need to push harder." "Don't worry. I'll work. Next time I'll beat you," Josh answered, his voice muffled. Jennifer curled her lips, polite yet open. "Then, good luck." After class, Clara, Jennifer, and I walked along the shaded path toward the exit. Inside the training camp broadcast room, Alan's pack promotion track was looping again and again-as the peace ambassador of the Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department, his song was basically everywhere now. Jennifer rubbed her ear, irritation showing. "They play this song every day.

My ears are about to grow calluses." Clara laughed. "Can't help it. That promotion track is topping every pack music chart. Just shows how insane Avi's influence is. She showed her face once to clarify, and the entire pack music world shook." Jennifer shrugged, a hint of longing in her tone. Yeah. Avi is basically a god. When will I be good enough to carry Silvermoon Pack on my own and make everyone truly respect me?" I smiled and looped an arm around her shoulder. "Keep going. You'll get there.

I'm waiting to see you become Silvermoon Pack's best Alpha and lead your people to something better." Jennifer's fighting spirit flared. She clenched her fist and declared to Clara and me, "Just wait. One day I'll become the Alpha who makes everyone in Silvermoon Pack proud-and I'll earn recognition from every pack with pure strength Clara and I exchanged a look and spoke in unison, smiling, "Can't wait for that day to

come soon." Laughing and talking, we stepped out of the academy gates-only to find the entrance unusually crowded today.

Several middle-aged men in matching yellow work jackets were shouting while holding up a peace-ambassador promo poster of Alan. "Avi a peace ambassador Alan's fan meet tickets -first come, first served! Don't miss your chance!" "Trainees, move fast if you want tickets! Not 2,000 Crowns, not 3,000 or 4,000 Crowns-just 299 Crowns to meet Avi and interact up close with your idol Alan..." 2/3 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 234 Fake Meet and Greet Promotion 30%. +20 Free Coins The moment Clara heard that, her eyes lit up. She squealed, "Oh my god! Is Avi officially coming back? A fan meet?

I want to go!" And she rushed toward the crowd without hesitation. Jennifer wasn't a die-hard fan of Avi, but she liked her music too. She called after Clara, "Wait for me! Grab one for me too!" I stared at the chaotic scene, my face dropping instantly. My brows drew tight, and I strode forward... 3/3 Mark

Chapter 235 Thwarting Their Operation Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins Just as Clara was about to squeeze into the crowd, I strode forward and grabbed her wrist. At the same time, I lifted my other arm to block Jennifer. "Wait. Don't go." My voice wasn't loud, but it carried a certainty that didn't allow argument. Clara turned back, confused. "Amanda? What's wrong?" Jennifer frowned too, following my gaze toward the men selling tickets. I didn't explain. I walked straight up to the middle-aged men waving posters and shouting, my steps steady, my eyes sharp as blades.

"Are you sure these are tickets for Avi and Alan's fan meet?" The lead guy saw me approaching and assumed I was here to buy. He immediately plastered on a flattering smile. "Good eye, kid! Just 299 Crowns and you'll meet two legends. Don't think-act. Want one?" "I'm asking you-are you sure it's real?" I repeated, my tone colder. "If you're using fake information to lure people into buying, that's fraud. Under Howlstead law, once the amount hits a certain threshold, you go to prison." The moment those words landed, the man's smile froze. His expression changed violently.

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He shot me a dark, hostile look and waved, trying to drive me off. "Little girl, stop spouting nonsense! You're here to cause trouble! If you can't afford it, get lost. Don't block other students from buying!" More and more students were drawn by the commotion, stopping to watch. I didn't change my expression. I pulled out my phone, unlocked it, and placed my finger on the enforcement squad call screen. "Whether it's nonsense or not, we can let the enforcers decide. Scamming students at the academy gate like this-targeted-makes it even more serious." The men panicked on the spot.

The leader's eyes hardened. He stepped forward, reaching to snatch my phone, his voice turning vicious. "I'm warning you-don't push your luck! Put that phone away, or we won't be nice!" I shifted aside, avoiding his hand. My phone stayed locked in my palm. A cold smile tugged at my lips. "What? Exposed, so you're embarrassed and ready to

throw punches?" The crowd thickened. The murmurs grew louder. Those men clearly didn't want this to blow up. The leader glared at me and spat out, "Just you wait." Then, he hurriedly signaled his partners to pack up. They fled in a sorry rush.

1/2 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 235 Thwarting Their Operation 30% +20 Free Coins The moment they left, Jennifer and Clara rushed over. Jennifer's eyes were full of shock. "They were actually scammers?" Clara patted his chest, pale with fear. "Thank God you stopped us. Otherwise, I would've fallen for it today!" "Amanda, you were so brave! You actually confronted them head-on!" Clara looked at me like I was a hero. "Scammers will do anything for money. I was scared they'd hit you." "Relax. I'm fine." I put my phone away, tone calm. "Alan is a peace ambassador.

Tickets for any public event would be sold through official channels. There's no way random guys are hawking them at the academy gate. And besides Avi would never do a fan meet." Jennifer and Clara exchanged a look and asked in unison, "How are you so sure Avi wouldn't? Do you know her?" My heart paused for half a beat. Then, I explained smoothly, "Avi's status in the pack music world is untouchable. If she were doing a meet, would be announced on official platforms in advance, and it would've hit the pack trending list long ago.

Have either of you seen any official news?" Both of them shook their heads. The way they looked at me shifted—more respect now. Jennifer praised me sincerely, "Amanda, you're observant, and your logic is so clear. That's impressive. I'm honestly starting to admire you more and more." "Alright, don't dwell on it." I smiled. "It's getting late. Let's head home." After saying goodbye to Jennifer and Clara, I stood by the roadside, waiting for Samson. But even after a full 20 minutes, I still hadn't seen his Maybach. 2/2 13:06 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 236 Good Moves Amanda's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins The crowd at the gate gradually dispersed, until I was the only one left standing under the streetlamp. Just then, rapid footsteps approached. I turned those ticket sellers were back. They stormed toward me, faces twisted with anger. The leader looked feral as he opened his mouth and cursed, "You uggg! You're that busted-looking, and you still dared ruin my deal? You're asking for bad luck!" My gaze dropped. The air around me turned instantly cold. "What do you want?" "What do we want? To teach you a lesson!" he snarled.

"If we don't paint your face a little, you won't know who you messed with. Boys—get her! Cripple her. That's on me!" Before his words even finished, the men lunged at me like rabid dogs. I didn't move. The chill in my eyes only deepened. The first man's fist was about to smash into my face when I shifted sharply to the side, dodging with ease, and lifted my right leg—fast, precise, brutal—kicking straight into the back of his knee. A light crack—followed by a shriek. He dropped to the ground on one knee and rolled, screaming. The others froze for a split second.

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Then, instead of backing off, they charged even harder. I let out a cold laugh-and stepped in. My body flowed through them, every movement clean and decisive, no wasted motion. Elbow into one man's chest. Knee into another's gut. Then, I caught the third man's wrist, twisted lightly-another scream ripped through the air. In under a minute, those cocky grown men were all on the ground, howling. Only the leader remained-face drained white, gas shaking-still forcing out threats through fear. "I ... I've trained! Don't come any closer!" I raised an eyebrow and walked toward him one slow step.

He flinched, then bolted- sprinting like his life depended on it. He vanished in seconds. 1/3 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 @ Chapter 236 Good Moves The men on the ground struggled upright, too, mping away in a frantic retreat. 30%. +20 Free Coins I dusted off my hands like there'd been dirt on them, then smoothed my jacket cuff, expression indifferent-as if the whole thing had been a boring interruption. But the instant I turned to keep waiting for the car, my body locked.

Under the streetlamp not far away, Samson was leaning against his Maybach, arms crossed, watching me with a deep, unreadable gaze-there was even the faintest hint of a smile at the corner of his mouth. My heart dropped. He.. When did he get here? The halo of light outlined him, stretching his shadow long across the ground. He straightened slowly and walked toward me, long legs steady, presence pressing down like an undeniable force. "I didn't expect it. Your moves are pretty good," he said, voice low and smooth. I forced myself to steady. "Yeah.

Without a wolf spirit, I can only rely on being quick with my hands and feet." Samson didn't answer that. His eyes swept over me-calm, deep, like he could see through every layer of my disguise. He obviously didn't believe me. Those movements, that strength, that speed-too precise for an ordinary person. But he didn't press. He only gave a small nod and shifted topics. "The Operations Department had something urgent. I'm late. Get in the car." When he didn't dig in, I exhaled silently, the tension in my nerves easing slightly.

I followed behind him and walked to the Maybach, opened the door, and slid into the back seat. Samson got in, too-but he didn't start the car right away. The cabin turned instantly stiff. I was about to say something to break the awkwardness when he suddenly leaned sideways, closing in toward me. My eyes flew wide. My body went rigid, not daring to move. He came closer and closer, his clean pine-and-snow scent pressing down, a suffocating sense of dominance filling the space. When the distance between us was less than four inches, my brain finally caught up. I jerked 2/3 Mark

Chapter 237 Brothers' Night Chapter 237 Brothers' Night Samson's POV: 30%4 +20 Free Coins Up close, seeing Amanda's flustered expression, finally noticed the heavy foundation caked on her face-concealer lines obvious under the light. She usually kept her head down. I hadn't looked closely before. So she was wearing makeup this thick... But why would she need such a heavy base? I pulled my gaze back and explained

flatly, "Buckling your seatbelt." Amanda's cheeks flushed instantly. She avoided my eyes and waved her hands fast. "N-no... no need.

I can do it myself." As she spoke, she fumbled for the belt and snapped it in, movements rushed, like she was escaping something. I straightened and returned to the driver's seat, starting the car and pulling away smoothly. The awkwardness still hadn't faded, so I broke the silence. "Patrick set something up tonight. Want to come have a drink?" Amanda clearly understood what I meant. She refused almost immediately. "I'm not going. Just take me home." I lifted a brow and glanced at her. "What? You don't want to be around us brothers?" "No.

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You're overthinking." She shook her head quickly, eyes unnaturally stiff. "Then, you're coming." My tone left no room to negotiate. She went quiet-probably because she didn't have anything else tonight. A few seconds later, she nodded lightly. That was her answer. Tonight's gathering was organized by Patrick at an Alpha-only private club in a VIP room. When I pushed the door open and walked in with Amanda, the noise inside stopped dead. Alan's glass froze midair. Patrick's fork paused, and what he'd just picked up dropped back onto the plate. Josh shot up from the couch.

Three pairs of eyes locked onto Amanda at once, stunned beyond belief. Alan recovered first, his voice full of surprise and confusion. "Why are you here?" 1/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 DD. 30% Chapter 237 Brothers' Night +20 Free Coins Josh moved to shield her, stepping forward. He was about to call out "Boss"-when I cut him off. "I brought her." That single sentence made all three brothers exchange a look. Their shock shifted into a knowing, ambiguous appraisal. But no one dared ask. They all shut their mouths. The atmosphere turned strange-thick, crooked charged. Amanda sensed it too.

She spoke first, forcing a topic to break the tension. "What do you want to drink? I'll order for you." "I'll take a whiskey!" Josh jumped in immediately sounding almost too enthusiastic. Amanda nodded and turned to Alan and Patrick "And you two?" Patrick curled his lips into a wicked smile, lounging back. "Same. Whiskey." Alan looked at Amanda with a certain meaning in his eyes and drawled lazily, "A cocktail." Amanda answered each one, then finally turned to me.

"Samson, what do you want?" I rubbed the corner of my mouth lightly with my fingertips and said, "Orange juice." "Pfft-" Alan sprayed the drink he'd just taken. Patrick and Josh both stared at me, eyes blown wide with disbelief. They clearly hadn't expected me to order orange juice in this setting. In the past, I either didn't drink or I drank only hard liquor. But no one dared push it. They just watched as Amanda turned and walked out of the room. The second the door clicked shut, Alan couldn't hold back. He leaned in close, voice low. "Samson, what are you doing?"

We never bring women to the brothers' night. Why'd you bring her?" Patrick folded his arms and leaned over, too, eyes amused. "Samson's thoughts aren't something we can guess. But one thing's certain you're introducing Amanda to our circle, aren't you?" Josh was even more direct, staring at me, probing. "Samson ... are you The moment those words landed, the VIP room went silent. into my boss?" 2/2 Mark

Chapter 238 Lighthearted Card Game Samson's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins The three of them stared at me again, full of expectation and gossip. I picked up the warm water on the table and took a slow sip, completely unbothered. "It's a small thing. Why are you making a fuss? I just figured she'd be bored going home alone, so I brought her along. Don't read into it." At that, all three brothers visibly relaxed. The gossip drained from their faces. Alan patted his chest dramatically. "You scared me to death. I thought you were actually into her!" Patrick chuckled and picked up his fork again.

"So, we read too much into it." Right then, the VIP room door pushed open, and Amanda walked in with the drinks she'd ordered. "All set. I got everyone's drinks." Josh immediately grinned, and whatever weird tension had been hanging in the room vanished without a trace. He sidled up to Amanda, took his whiskey, and beamed. "Thanks, Boss! Since everyone's here, let's not just sit around-what should we play?" Patrick set his fork down too and tipped his chin at Amanda, voice casual. "We're all family. Don't be stiff. Amanda-do you play cards?" Amanda handed me the orange juice.

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Her fingers brushed the back of my hand by accident- cool, light, and gone in a second. She nodded, modest as always. "A little. I'm not very good." "A little is enough." Patrick called over a server and asked for a fresh deck of cards. "We'll play something simple. Win or lose-just for fun." The server delivered the cards quickly. The five of us gathered around the coffee table in the center and sat down. Amanda sat beside me. Her shuffling wasn't smooth-clearly she wasn't an expert-but she still did everything properly, looking natural enough.

A few rounds in, to my surprise, Amanda's luck was ridiculous. She won a pile of chips. Josh stared at the shrinking stack in front of him and looked like he was about to cry. "Boss, you're insane! You win like it's nothing! And Samson-can you stop going so hard? If I keep losing, I'm going to blow my entire allowance tonight!" 1/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Chapter 238 Lighthearted Card Game I pinched a card between my fingers, tone flat. "I you're playing, you play properly. Throwing the game makes it pointless." 30% +20 Free Coins Josh nearly cried for real.

He turned and shouted at Alan and Patrick, "You two do something! Stop just watching me lose!" Alan shook his head, helpless. "Did you forget? In all these years, when have we ever beaten Samson at cards?" Patrick laughed along. "Exactly. Samson's game is steady as a rock. And with Amanda's luck? We don't stand a chance." It stung, but it was true Hearing that, Amanda lifted her gaze and looked at me, a flicker of surprise in

her eyes. "Didn't expect you to be this good." "It's just a game." I took my eyes off her without expression and kept dealing. We played a few more rounds until 11 p.m.

Josh was the first to tap out-he tossed his cards down. "Nope, I'm done. I've got class tomorrow. I'm going back to sleep. Let's call it!" Alan set his cards down too and stretched. "Fine. I'm out too-I've got pack promo events tomorrow." " Amanda stood as well, checked the time, and gave a small nod. Patrick got up. "I'll go pay. Wait at the entrance." He headed out of the VIP room. The five of us-Amanda, Alan, Josh, Patrick, and I-walked out together and headed down the hallway toward the club lobby.

They were still laughing about the card game, with Josh complaining nonstop about how badly he'd lost. The mood was light. But the moment we reached the lobby entrance all of us stopped at the same time-every trace of a smile drained away... 2/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Mark

Chapter 239 Bumping Into Derrick Samson's POV: 30% #20 Free Coins Not far ahead, Derrick had an arm wrapped around a woman with a striking figure as they walked toward us. They moved intimately-her arm locked around his, her head leaning against his shoulder now and then. This was the first time we'd seen him since he'd ut ties with the Ortegas and openly turned his back on us. It hadn't even been half a month, but his entire aura had changed. The old softness was gone -replaced by a deliberately slick, greasy charm. Even his gaze looked calculating and small.

Josh's brows snapped into a frown. He opened his mouth to explode, but Alan reached out first and pressed a hand down on his arm, lowering his voice. "Forget it. Don't bother with him. Let's go." Josh puffed his cheeks, still furious. "He's sinking himself on purpose! Just to get resources, he's actually becoming some rich girl's live-in husband-he's humiliating Eclipse Pack!" We all knew Derrick's situation. To erase the stain of being labeled an illegitimate son and to secure backing, he'd latched onto a well-connected woman and agreed to marry into her family.

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Alan patted Josh's back lightly. "His business has nothing to do with the Ortegas anymore. Don't waste anger on him. And we don't need to interfere." Patrick pulled back the cold look he'd been aiming at Derrick and checked the time. "It's late. Go rest. Samson-take Amanda home. The three of us will go together." I gave a slight nod. "Mm." Alan, Patrick, and Josh turned toward the exit. Before leaving, Josh still shot Derrick one last vicious glare. I stayed where I was, watching the backs disappear at the doors.

Derrick's POV: I'd seen Samson and the others a long time ago, tightened my arm around Yara's waist and walked straight toward them. My eyes locked on Amanda beside Samson immediately. I stared for a full three seconds before I finally pulled my gaze away and spoke to Samson with deliberate provocation, "Long time no see, Mr.

Ortega. You really need to dodge me that badly?" Yara Jimenez was a Beta from Windspire Pack. Her family had real influence there.

The only 1/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 239 Bumping Into Derrick 30%- +20 Free Coins reason I'd gotten a path to resources was because she'd introduced me. Right now, she leaned against me sweetly, studying Amanda with curious eyes, but she didn't speak. Samson's face didn't move at all. His tone was so flat it sounded like he was talking about the weather. "You're imagining things. Everyone's tired. We're heading back." I curled my lips, letting a loaded smile show. My gaze traveled between Amanda and Samson, then I pulled Yara tighter and introduced her. "We were family once, weren't we?"

If we're meeting, we should at least do introductions. This is fiancée-Yara." my Samson didn't even give me the courtesy of a glance. He turned his head toward Amanda instead, his tone softening slightly. "Wait here. I'll bring the car around." Amanda nodded lightly, not sparing me a single look. After that, Samson turned and walked off toward the parking area-completely ignoring the awkward silence hanging over Yara and I. Yara didn't care at all. Instead, she lifted a hand and patted my back gently, voice soothing. "Derrick, don't be angry. People like that aren't worth it.

I'll stay with you." I forced a stiff smile, bent down, and pressed a light kiss to her forehead. "Good girl. Go wait in the car. I'll be right there." Yara smiled, answered with a soft "Mm," waved at me, and walked out with an easy, bright step. Once she was gone, the lobby was left with just me and Amanda... 2/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 D D. Mark

Chapter 240 Top Five Derrick's POV: 30% +20 Free Coins I watched Amanda's cool profile, and for a split second, it felt unreal-like we were living in two different lifetimes. "Didn't expect you to end up with Samson." The words carried a bitterness I couldn't hide-what I couldn't have, why did Samson get to hold so easily? Amanda finally turned to look at me. Her eyes were blank with indifference-she clearly didn't like me. In her eyes, I was probably the kind of man who uses feelings as tools-cheap, selfish, and dirty. Her voice was ice-cold.

"My life has nothing to do with you." That chill tightened my chest. I laughed at myself. "Sure. Not much to do with me. But I still have to warn you-Samson isn't simple. He's deep, and he's dangerous. If you really stay with him, keep your eyes open. Don't end up dead without even knowing how." Amanda's gaze darkened at once. Her voice turned even colder. "I have eyes. I know who's worth getting close to, and who should be avoided. Unfortunately, Mr. Derrick-you're exactly the kind of person I need to avoid." Her words choked me.

I wanted to say more, but then Samson's Maybach rolled up slowly and stopped at the club entrance. Amanda didn't look at me again. She turned and walked straight to the car, opened the door, and got in. I stayed where I was, watching the car pull away until it vanished completely from sight. Only then did I slowly drag my gaze back. One day, you'll both be on your knees begging e... Amanda's POV: In the car, Samson spoke

suddenly, "What did he say to you?" I watched the night scenery flash past the window and answered flatly, "Nothing."

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Just meaningless talk." 1/3 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 240 Top Five 29% +20 Free Coins Samson didn't press. He only said, "It's late. Rest your eyes. I'll wake you when we're home." I closed my eyes, but Derrick's words kept circling in my head. For no reason at all, I felt irritable. I leaned my head against the seat, unable to settle. When we got home, I washed up and went straight to bed, falling asleep almost the moment I touched the pillow. The next day was the day the monthly trial results were posted. The second I came downstairs, Josh rushed over "Boss! Finally!

Eat breakfast and let's go to training camp!" I lifted a brow. "Why are you so eager today?" He looked a little embarrassed. "Results come out today. I want to see how I did. Boss, please -hurry!" It was the first time I'd ever seen him care this much about grades. I smiled. "Fine. Take breakfast to go and eat on the way. Don't waste time." Josh immediately had the staff pack it up and dragged me toward the car. The first period was English. The instructor walked in smiling. "Our class did really well this trial- especially Amanda.

Full marks again in English!" Every head in the room turned toward me. Josh stared with open envy. "Boss, you're unreal!" Then the instructor added, "And special praise for Josh! Huge improvement this time. Everyone, applause!" The room erupted in claps. Josh's cheeks went bright red-half embarrassed, half thrilled. The rest of the scores were announced one after another. Aside from math being a bit weak, Josh was above average in most subjects. When the overall ranking came out, he was tied for fifth with another student. Josh stared at the score sheet like it was fake.

"I...I actually made the top five? Am I dreaming?" I pinched him without mercy. "Does it hurt? Then, it's not a dream." He nodded wildly. "It hurts! It's real!" Watching him lose his mind with happiness, I remembered my promise. "I said it before-if you hit the top five, I'll play games with you. Pick a day. I'll run a couple of matches." 2/3 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 240 Top Five 29% +20 Free Coins Josh's eyes lit up-then he looked at me suspiciously. "Boss ... but are you actually any good? If you're too much of a feeder, forget it. I'm not dragging some deadweight jungler.

That's torture." I couldn't help laughing. "So that's what you think of me?" "It's not that I look down on you-I've just never seen you play!" he denied quickly. "I'm just scared you'll feed." I raised a brow. "You won't know till we try. If I haven't played with you, how can you decide I'm dead weight?" 3/3 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 241 Carry Me Amanda's POV: 29% +20 Free Coins As soon as I said that, Josh froze for a second, then caught on and scratched his head. "Yeah, that makes sense." He immediately handed me his phone. "Boss, why don't you play a round first? Let me see what you've got, so I know what to expect." I looked at the phone in his

hand, hesitated for a moment, then smiled. "No need. Just log into your own account. I've got my own account. Seeing how confident I was, the suspicion on Josh's face faded.

He pulled his phone back, looking a bit embarrassed, and quickly logged into his own gaming account. I took out my phone, ready to log into the game I hadn't touched in ages. But when I tried to enter the password, I kept getting it wrong—it had just been too long, and I'd forgotten it. I gave up on recovering it and simply registered a brand-new account to log in. "I'll send you a friend request," I said, then looked up and asked Josh for his in-game ID. A moment later, Josh's phone buzzed with a friend request from my new account.

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"How do you want to play?" Once I logged in, I turned to ask him. Josh was about to explain the game modes in detail, but I beat him to it. "Are we playing 1v1, 3v3, or 5v5?" He was caught off guard. He didn't expect me to know about the different modes. He quickly said, "Let's play 5v5. It's more fun with more people. I'll get everyone in here." He turned to me. "Boss, everyone's here. Let's team up." Even though it had been a long time since I played, everything came right back to me as soon as I started. I was right back in the groove and didn't feel rusty at all.

We formed a five-person team, matched with our opponents, and jumped right into the game. "Boss, just stick close to me and don't wander off," Josh cautioned. "You probably aren't that fast yet, so it's safer to stay behind me." I didn't reply. Instead, I tapped the screen and sent my character charging forward. ||| < 1/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 241 Carry Me .29% +20 Free Coins The moment I ran into the enemy's frontliner, I attacked fast and smooth, knocking them out before they could even react. "Wow! That was awesome!" My teammate's voice rang out through the headset, full of excitement.

Josh looked shocked. "Boss, you're good! That didn't look like a newbie's move at all!" I ignored their surprise and kept chasing down the low-health enemies. Josh hurried to catch up. His skills weren't bad either, but he missed the assassin hiding in the bushes and got ambushed. "Damn!" Josh cursed, watching his character's health drain fast before finally collapsing. Right then, I rushed over and healed his character back to full health. I immediately chased down the assassin who'd ambushed him. My moves were lightning-fast.

The enemy didn't even see my attacks coming before I finished them off. Josh was stunned, hands frozen on his controls. I wasted no time, knocking out a few more enemies who tried to sneak up on him. "Boss! Carry me!" Josh finally snapped out of it, his voice full of admiration as he trailed after me in-game. I didn't mind. I led him across the battlefield, wiping out every enemy in our way. In the end, we won the match by a landslide. When the victory screen popped up, Josh put down his phone and stared at me in disbelief. "Oh my god, Boss, you're insane! Your skills are solid!"

I can't believe you're a beginner!" I set my phone down, raised an eyebrow, and looked at him with a smirk. "Who told you 1 was a beginner?" ||| 2/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2D D Mark

Chapter 242 Amanda's Promise Josh's POV: 29% +20 Free Coins Boss's words left me totally stunned. I stared wide-eyed at Amanda and blurted, "But... but your account is brand new! It's level zero!" She answered casually, "I wrecked my main account, so I started a new one from scratch." If someone else had said that, I might not have believed it. But if it came from Boss, I'd have no doubt at all. Boss was just that good-messing up one account and making a new one sounded completely normal for her.

Before I could ask anything else, a bunch of friend requests popped up on her screen-KK and the other two were all adding Boss as in-game friends. Amanda turned to me. "Who are they?" I leaned over for a peek and grinned when I saw the requests. "They're all my gaming buddies. Every one of them is a top-ten player on the Howlstead game leaderboard!" Amanda nodded and accepted all three requests Not long after, I saw a notification in our group chat.

"Amanda has joined the group 'Single and Available'." Amanda looked at the group name and everyone's profile pictures-all of them were using the same Doge meme. She burst out laughing. "Josh, the group name and profile pics are something else! Does the group name mean all four of you are single?" I got called out in one sentence, and my face went red. I tried to defend myself. "So what if we're single? It just means we have high standards for our partners! I should totally change the group name to 'Rich, Single, and Available.' mph!" Amanda laughed even harder and tapped to join the group.

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As soon as she joined, KK messaged her first, "Hey, pretty lady, what should we call you?" I noticed Amanda paused a moment, thinking it over. Soon, she typed a reply, "Just call me Stacey." But the second she sent it, KK freaked out, "Stacey? No way, pick another name! That's ||| < 1/2 13:07 Fri, Jan 2 @ D. Chapter 242 Amanda's Promise identical to my idol's name! My idol is Ecstasy Cod, you two sound way too similar!" I jumped in to help, "It's fine! It's just a coincidence. Let's just call her Stacey!" Then Luckytiger chimed in, "Nice to meet you, Stacey!"

I'm GoldieLuck." Amanda replied with a smiley emoji and said, "Nice to meet you all." 29% +20 Free Coins Finally, the last player, Winsome, chimed in, "Stacey, your skills are insane! I haven't seen a female gamer this good in ages-you could go head-to-head with Ecstasy God!" That hit KK right in his weak spot. He shot back, Stacey is good, but she's not quite on my idol's level! Ecstasy God still holds the all-time record for lv5 clutch wins-nobody's beaten it!" Winsome retorted, "Yeah, yeah, your idol's the best. But your idol's been off the grid for years.

Who knows if she'll ever play again?" The group chat went silent after that. After a while, KK finally typed, "She's just taking a break. Once she's rested up, she'll be back for sure!" Just then, Amanda messaged, "I've got something to do, I'm logging off. Let's

play together another day." With that, she exited the game. I panicked and grabbed her arm, "Boss! Why are you leaving now? If I'd known you were this good, I would've begged you to play more rounds!

I haven't even had enough fun yet!" Amanda crossed her arms, half smiling at me, "You still want to play with me?" I nodded wildly, eyes wide. She drawled, "Sure. If you get top three in your class for finals, I'll play games with you all night." My eyes went blank in shock. "Boss, are you serious?" "My word is as good as gold." Amanda's eyes curved with a smile. In that instant, I felt supercharged. I actually jumped in place. "Boss, just you wait! I'll make the top three for sure!

When that happens, you'd better not forget you promised to play games with me all night!" "Don't worry, I won't forget." Amanda patted my shoulder. With her promise, I suddenly had zero interest in gaming anymore! I packed up my phone, bolted for the door, and ran for the classroom- had homework to do. I needed to study! I needed to work hard for an all-night gaming marathon with Boss! 2/2 Mark

Chapter 243 We Are Bringing Her Back Amanda's POV: After parting ways with Josh, I headed back to Ortega Castle. 29% +20 Free Coins Right as I walked in the front door, I sensed a different kind of energy in the air-something much more lively than usual. A maid greeted me with a big smile, "Ms. Lamb, you're back! We have guests at home." Puzzled, I followed her lead toward the living room, and as soon as I reached the doorway, I spotted two familiar faces-it was Grandpa and Grandma! A rush of surprise and joy flooded me, and I hurried my pace.

"Grandpa, Grandma, what brings you here?" Inside the living room, Hugh was chatting with them, and there was freshly brewed coffee on the table. As soon as they heard my voice, all three elders looked up. Grandpa's face lit up with a beaming smile, and Hugh got to his feet, greeting me, "Amanda, you're back? Come on over and sit down." I dashed across the room and threw myself into Grandma's arms, breathing in the gentle, comforting scent I'd missed so much. "Grandma I missed you so much." Grandma gently patted my back, her eyes already red, her voice choked with emotion.

"Amanda, Grandma missed you, too." Grandpa tried to keep his composure, but the affection in his eyes was clear as he asked, "Amanda, are you settling in well here?" I nodded eagerly and looked up from Grandma embrace. "Grandpa, Grandma, everything's fine. Hugh and everyone here have been really good to me." While I spoke, I paid close attention to Grandpa and Grandma's auras-they had purposely toned down their real auras, masking themselves as gentle Omegas. I knew they were helping me keep my identity hidden.

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After all, no one in the Eclipse Pack knew I was the Alpha of the Glacier Pack, or anything about my real background-except for Hugh. Amanda's Hugh obviously got it, too, and smiled at my grandpa. "Richard, see, I told you doing well here, but you kept

worrying and insisted on making the trip yourself." Grandpa waved his hand casually. |||
1/3 < 13:08 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 243 We Are Bringing Her Back 29% +20 Free Coins
"Hugh, when I sent my granddaughter here, you promised you'd help her and Samson get closer. It's been over half a year, and nothing's happened!

Sibley and I are still waiting for great-grandkids!" At that, Hugh tapped his own forehead with a sigh. "Richard, you can't rush these things. But I don't think the kids are totally indifferent to each other; they just need a little push. Maybe if we give it a bit more time, things will move forward." I stood off to the side, listening to them talk about me and Samson. My cheeks started to burn. Just as I was about to say something, a mail came in to announce, "Sir, Mr. Samson, Mr. Alan, Mr. Josh, and Mr. Patrick are home." Samson, Alan, Josh, and Patrick came into the living room together.

Hugh got up to introduce them, "Come here, let me introduce you. This is Richard and Sibley Lamb. They are Amanda's grandparents." "Mr. Lamb, Mrs. Lamb, how do you do?" All four greeted them at once, polite and respectful. Grandpa and Grandma looked over each of them, and both finally rested their gaze on Samson, eyes full of approval. "Just call us Richard and Sibley. All your grandsons are outstanding!" Hugh waved a hand and chuckled, "Don't flatter them. Compared to Amanda, these boys have a long way to go." Before long, Hugh was ushering everyone to the dining room.

"Richard, Sibley, you don't visit often. Let's really celebrate tonight." Soon, everyone gathered around the dining table, the room warm and lively. Grandpa kept putting food on my plate and asking about my daily life at Ortega Castle. I answered every question honestly. Halfway through dinner, Grandpa put down his utensils and looked at Hugh, his tone turning serious. "Hugh, actually, Sibley and I came here to bring Amanda back. She's been here long enough, and we don't want to keep troubling you." The atmosphere around the table immediately went quiet.

The Ortega brothers all looked at one another in surprise. Josh was clearly shocked. He blurted, "Boss, you're leaving already?" I froze, confusion filling my mind-Grandpa had never mentioned taking me back before. I turned to him, and he nodded, confirming it. L
2/3 Mark

Chapter 244 Can I Stay a Little Longer? Amanda's POV: 林会29% +20 Free Coins
Grandpa's announcement brought an awkward silence to the table. Josh was the first to break it, looking at me with obvious pleading in his eyes. "Boss, can't you stay a bit longer?" I curled my lips into a teasing smile. "What, you can't bear to let me go?" He nodded hard, not hesitating at all. "Of course I'll miss you! If you leave, who's going to help me with math? Who's going to carry me in games? Who's going to have my back?" I raised an eyebrow and softened my voice. "But I have to go home eventually.

I can't stay at the Eclipse Pack forever." Josh's face fell instantly, all the spirit draining out of him. I could tell he really didn't want me to leave-he cared even more than the rest of the Ortega brothers. Samson, on the other hand, hadn't said a single word the entire time. His face was the same as always, calm and indifferent. It was as if whether I

stayed or left had nothing to do with him. For some reason, his calmness left a tightness in my chest. Hugh sighed and turned to Grandpa. "Richard, Amanda's brought so much happiness to our family during her time here.

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I really don't want to see her go. I'll miss having her around." His voice was full of genuine regret. I looked up at Hugh and said softly, "Hugh, I'll come visit you often." Hugh's mood lifted quite a bit, though his gaze couldn't help drifting over to Samson. Seeing Samson still show no reaction, Hugh's frustration became obvious. Right then, Samson set down his utensils and said in a flat tone, "Richard, Sibley, I'm done eating. I'll head upstairs." He got up and left without hesitation, not giving anyone a chance to stop him.

As I watched him disappear through the dining room doors, couldn't help but feel a mix of emotions in my heart. Thankfully, I covered it up quickly and no one noticed. After dinner, I walked with Grandpa and Grandma through the garden at Ortega Castle. < 1/2 13:08 Fri, Jan 2 DD. Chapter 244 Can I Stay a Little Longer? 29%4 +20 Free Coins The autumn night air was a little chilly, but I barely noticed. My mind was a mess, flipping back and forth between Samson's cold back and Grandpa's sudden announcement that he was taking me home. I was completely distracted.

Grandpa and Grandma shared a look, clearly aware that something was off with me. Grandma was the first to speak, her tone gentle. "Amanda, you don't feel like going home, do you?" The second she called me out, I pressed my lips together and stayed quiet. I guess my silence was as good as admitting it. Grandma shot Grandpa a look, and he immediately caught on. He stretched and yawned. "It's getting chilly, I'm going to grab another jacket." Then he turned and went back inside, giving us some space to talk in private. He happened to bump into Samson coming down the stairs.

Samson paused and nodded slightly at Grandpa. "Richard, feel like playing a game of chess?" Grandpa's face broke into a broad grin. "Sure, I haven't played in ages. I'll take you on for a couple of rounds." Samson led Grandpa to the game room. That left only Grandma and me in the yard. She took my hand, found a stone bench, and the two of us sat close, sharing a quiet moment. "Amanda, tell Grandma the truth. Do you have something on your mind?" She patted my hand gently as she spoke.

The look in her eyes made my defense fall apart I grabbed her arm and whispered, "Grandma, can I stay here a little longer?" A knowing smile appeared on Grandma's face as she teased, "Is it because of Samson?" 2/2 13:08 Fri, Jan 2 Mark

Chapter 245 You Have to Go Back Amanda's POV: 29% +20 Free Coins I was amazed by Grandma's intuition and didn't plan to hide it anymore. My face flushed as I nodded. "Grandma, I think... I might be falling for him." That simple sentence summed up all the confusion in my heart. A flash of joy crossed Grandma's eyes, but she didn't show it openly. Instead, she looked at me seriously. "Amanda, are you sure about this? Are

these feelings genuine, or is it just a fleeting crush?" I took a deep breath and answered honestly, "I'm not sure either.

Right now, I can't tell if it's real or if I'm just caught up in the moment. That's why I want to stay here and figure out how I really feel. You've always worried about my future. But this time, I want to decide for myself." Grandma knew I was independent by nature. She squeezed my hand, her tone sincere. "Grandma trusts your judgment, but I need to remind you-girls can lose themselves easily in love, and it's hard to keep your head straight when things happen.

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I hope you'll keep your boundaries, not give your heart away too easily, and always protect yourself." "I will, Grandma." I nodded seriously. Grandma let out a sigh, then smiled. "You really are all grown up now. If you want to stay, I won't stop you, but I have one condition." She leaned in and whispered a few words in my ear. I blinked, thinking over what she'd said, then nodded hard. "I understand. I'll remember." Grandma patted my cheek, her eyes full of comfort. "My Amanda is all grown up now. It's your life, so you decide.

No matter what, your grandpa and I will always have your back." I couldn't help but throw myself into Grandma's arms, my nose stinging with emotion. "Grandma, I'm so lucky to have you." As we were talking, Grandpa came over from the game room. He motioned for Grandma to give us a moment then sat down next to me, his expression turning serious. "Amanda, there's something you need to know. Your cousin Mephisto has been stirring up trouble back in Glacier Pack.

He's been trying to take power behind the scenes, and we've found out that he was behind several of the kidnappings and setups you've experienced." 1/2 13:08 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 245 You Have to Go Back 29% +20 Free Coins I wasn't really surprised. After all my own digging, I had already known he was behind it. But what I still can't figure out was with how clueless Mephisto usually was, how did he manage all this? Someone must be helping him. Grandpa saw how calm I looked and went on, "You've been away from Glacier Pack too long. A lot of people are starting to lose faith.

The main reason we wanted to bring you back was to help stabilize things. But if you want to stay here and figure things out for yourself, I won't force you. Just remember, Glacier Pack is your foundation, and eventually, you'll have to return and take care of things there." I took a deep breath, forcing down the questions in my heart. It was true-I had been away from Glacier Pack so long, I had almost forgotten my responsibilities as its Alpha. Mephisto's situation couldn't be put off any longer, but I needed to sort out my feelings for Samson first.

"Grandpa, I understand." I looked up at him, my eyes steady. "I want to stay and figure out what I really feel. Once I've got things settled here, I'll go back to Glacier Pack and deal with Mephisto." < 2/2 Mark

Chapter 246 Richard's Blessing Samson's POV: 29%2 +20 Free Coins In the game room upstairs, I sat across from Richard, black and white chess pieces scattered across the board in a close match. Neither of us had the upper hand. Every move was carefully considered, neither giving an inch. Richard clearly hadn't faced such an even match in a while. I could see the surprise and respect in his eyes as he studied the board-he probably hadn't expected me to play so well. "Samson, you didn't just ask me here to play chess, did you?" Richard was the first to break the silence, his tone calm.

I rolled a black piece between my fingers and spoke slowly. "Richard, you play really well." Richard looked up at me and smiled. "After decades at this, I'm decent enough, I guess. But you are so skilled for your age, that's something special." "Richard, you flatter me," I replied calmly. Richard just smiled, then turned his attention to the board and dropped a white piece after thinking for a moment. I followed up, placing my black piece in direct opposition to his. The silence stretched until Richard spoke again, this time with a note of nostalgia. "Amanda's been through a lot growing up.

Her parents died in an accident when she was eight, and she's been raised by her grandma and me ever since." My fingers paused mid-move, the black piece hanging in the air. I hadn't known anything about her past. Richard's voice grew huskier as he got lost in memory. "I still remember, after her parents passed, the first time I saw her, all the life had gone out of her. She just sat there, silent and motionless, like a little puppet. It broke my hear She was so tiny back then. When I picked her up she finally let herself cry in my arms. Richard's words were full of pain.

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"Right then, I promised myself I'd protect her, let her grow up healthy and happy." I set my piece down gently, my voice lower than usual. "She's grown up well." < 1/3 13:08 Fri, Jan 2D D Chapter 246 Richard's Blessing That simple line was both my affirmation and my honest feeling in the moment. 29% +20 Free Coins Richard nodded in agreement. "She really has. She's never caused us any trouble, and she was always so independent. But maybe that's why her grandma and I worry about her even more. We're getting old-we don't know how much longer we'll be around.

All we want is for someone to take care of her when we're gone." It was obvious what Richard was really getting at Any hesitation I'd felt before was gone after hearing this. "Richard, it's your turn," I reminded him. He looked at the board, and a flash of sadness crossed his eyes. Then I glanced up and spoke first. "Amanda is a wonderful girl. Would it be alright if she stayed a little longer?" As soon as I said it, a wave of nervousness hit me. I'd faced all kinds of pack matters before without blinking, but right now I felt genuinely nervous.

Richard's face stayed serious as he looked at me "Are you serious? That's not something you can joke about." I met his gaze, speaking as earnestly as I could. "If I weren't serious, I wouldn't be having this conversation with you. I want to take care of her for as long as she'll let me." Each word landed clearly. Richard was taken aback for

a second, then laughed. "So you've fallen for Amanda, huh?" Before I could answer, he went on, "You need to be sure. Amanda's not flashy or glamorous. You've seen plenty of pretty faces.

Are you sure it's her you like?" Amanda's looks had never been what drew me in. At first, I barely noticed her at all. But at some point, she was all I saw-her independence, her resilience were all that filled my mind. Her rare glimpses of vulnerability kept tugging at me. "Richard, I can say for certain-I like Amanda for who she is. It's not about her looks or her background. I like her for who she is." Richard's expression softened, clearly pleased with my answer. But he didn't say yes right away. This was a big deal. "I understand how you feel. But whether Amanda stays is up to her.

Her grandma and I won't interfere." I understood that Richard was giving me his blessing, but the final choice would be Amanda's. 2/3 Mark

Chapter 247 Is This a Challenge? Amanda's POV: 29% +20 Free Coins The next morning, as soon as I came downstairs. I saw Samson sitting alone in the dining room. My steps slowed instinctively. When our eyes met, a strange nervousness bubbled up inside I took a deep breath, forcing myself to act normal. "Morning!" Samson looked up at me. His expression was a little softer than usual. "Morning." I pulled out a chair and sat across from him, glancing at the breakfast spread-it was all my favorite foods.

My fingers curled unconsciously, and Grandpa's words from last night flashed through my mind-Mephisto's scheming and sabotage were problems I had to handle. Then there was my relationship with Samson. We were each other's destined mates, but I couldn't tell him yet. I had to deal with Mephisto first, get rid of all the threats, and only then could I explain everything to Samson without worry. I ate a few bites absentmindedly before Samson's voice interrupted my thoughts. "Richard and Sibley asked me to tell you they had something to take care of and left early.

They said they'll visit again soon." I wasn't surprised. Grandpa and Grandma were always like that-never dragging things out. I just nodded and set my utensils down. "I'm done I'll head to school." "Wait." Samson stopped me. "I'll drive you." I nodded, walking slowly ahead while he followed right beside me. We left the house together, one after another. The car ride was mostly quiet, but it didn't feel awkward. As soon as we reached the entrance to the classroom building, my phone started buzzing in my pocket. I took it out.

The red alert dot on the screen was flashing-it was the emergency signal Theo and I had agreed on, meant to be used only when something major happened. My heart dropped. I answered the call right away. "What's going on?" E 1/3 13:08 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 247 Is This a Challenge? 29% +20 Free Coins Theo's voice was full of panic. "Boss, someone's tacking our firewall! They've broken through the fourth layer, and if they get through the fifth, our core data will be exposed!" "What happened? Who are we up against?" My voice went cold as I spoke, my feet already carrying me toward the school gate.

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"No idea, they're too cunning. By the time I noticed something was off, they'd already made it through three layers." Theo sounded frustrated. "Boss, you need to get over here now! I'm on the 16th floor at Skyspire Tower. Our tech team can't hold them off much longer!" I hung up and sprinted out of the gate, hailing a cab straight to Skyspire Tower. On the way, I worked my phone as fast as I could while mentally running through all the possibilities-whoever could attack my defense system at this timing was almost certainly Mephisto.

Grandpa and Grandma's visit to Eclipse Pack must have gotten back to him. He was getting nervous and wanted to send a message, or maybe he was after information that he could use as leverage against me. But then I frowned. That didn't make sense. I knew Mephisto's abilities-there was no way his hacking skills were this good. There had to be someone else backing him up. Who would even want to partner with Mephisto and come after me? That question kept running through my mind, making me even more cautious. When I reached the 16th floor of Skyspire Tower, the place was already in chaos.

Theo was standing at the main computer, directing the tech team to fight back against the attack. Everyone was sweating, their fingers flying across keyboards, but it still wasn't enough to slow the enemy down. "Boss, thank god you're here!" Theo called out the moment he saw me, relief all over his face, "Everyone, listen up! No matter what, we have to hold them off! Hang in there for 15 more minutes while Boss sets up a counterattack!" I didn't waste words. I sat down at an empty computer.

Actually, I'd already tried tracing the attacker's location on my way over, but their counter-surveillance was top-notch. Plus, my phone just wasn't enough for such complicated work, so they managed to cover their tracks before I could catch them. My fingers hit the keyboard, the clacking sounds drowning out the noise around me. |||| < 2/3

13:08 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 247 Is This a Challenge? 29% +20 Free Coins Theo and the rest of the team held their breath, the tension thick in the air. Just as I was about to launch my counterattack, the enemy sent over a string of encrypted code.

A smirk crept onto my lips-was this a challenge I shifted tactics, launching a direct attack on their own system. In less than a minute, I broke through their seventh security layer. Theo clenched his fist, hope on his face. But right then, my screen went blue. All the operating windows vanished. "Damn it, I walked right into their trap." I smacked the keyboard, face clouding over. This was the first time in years I'd been outplayed in a hacking battle. The other side was way stronger than I expected, and they clearly didn't plan to face me head-on.

Instead, they wanted to drain my energy and show off their abilities. Once the computer rebooted, everything was back to normal. The traces of the attack had been wiped clean, like nothing had ever happened. I ran a full system check and found that the intruder had erased every trace-there was nothing left for us to track. "Boss, what just

happened?" Theo came over, looking baffled. I glanced at him and said, "We've been targeted. But whoever it is doesn't mean real harm for now. With skills like that, if they wanted our data, they would've broken through that last defense already.

Instead, they're just trying to get our attention." I paused, then added, "It's probably Mephisto's doing, but he can't pull this off alone. He definitely has help." I wondered on earth was helping him... 3/3 Mark

Chapter 248 Can't We Catch Up? Amanda's POV: 29%- +20 Free Coins In this world, there were very few people who could surpass me in hacking, maybe none at all. But this opponent was clearly not to be underestimated. I snapped back to reality and gave clear instructions. "No matter who we're dealing with, we have to stay on high alert. Theo, get a team together to upgrade our defense systems. Add three more firewalls at every network entry point, and set up a tracking program.

The next time they come back, we must trace their IP address and figure out who they really are." "Got it, I'll get right on it!" Theo nodded and rushed off to organize the team. I sat back down at the computer and did a full sweep of our internal systems. Not only did I patch the vulnerabilities from the last attack, I went through the code line by line, hoping to find any trace left behind. But after a full inspection, the system was as clean as if nothing had ever happened. Clearly, the attacker had come prepared. They had serious skills and were just as good at covering their tracks.

My fingers tapped lightly on the table as my sense of caution deepened-Mephisto's ally was definitely not ordinary. I worked straight through until afternoon before all the security upgrades and repairs were finished. Rubbing my sore shoulders, I finally left Skyspire Tower. I took the elevator down to the lobby, but the moment I stepped out, I froze at the sight before me. There was a huge crowd gathered at the entrance, the noise sounding just like a fan event. I wanted to avoid the crowd, but stopped when I caught a glimpse of one of the glowing signs.

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It was written in bright pink letters-Wisteria. That name was like a key, instantly unlocking a flood of memories I'd worked hard to forget. We lived in the same country, but I'd always avoided any news about her. I never expected to run into her here of all places. r 1/3 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 248 Can't We Catch Up? "Wisteria! Wisteria! Wisteria!" The fans' chants shook the air. 29%2 +20 Free Coins The crowd stirred, and Wisteria appeared on a temporary stage with several bodyguards by her side. She wore a dazzling white dress and held a microphone, waving at the crowd with a bright smile.

"Hello, everyone, I'm Wisteria. It's great to see you all here!" I stood at the edge of the crowd, quietly watching her shine onstage. Under the spotlights, her makeup was flawless, her presence elegant-she was nothing like the little girl who used to follow me around. I knew Wisteria had become a top singer, with hit albums and major music awards. She was a star now. But none of that had anything to do with me. I looked

away, turning to leave. "Amanda!" A familiar voice called out. Suddenly, someone grabbed my wrist. I frowned and turned to see Seven, his face full of surprise.

"What are you doing here?" He was still holding my wrist, and there was a subtle urgency in his tone. I tugged my hand away and said coldly, "Do I need to report to you where I go?" Seven realized he was being out of line and let go, looking awkward. "That's not what I meant. I just... I'm surprised you came to see Wisteria's fan meet." My face stayed blank. Even at the mention of someone I used to know so well, my voice didn't waver. "You're overthinking it. I was just passing by. I have zero interest in her." Seven clearly didn't believe me.

He looked at me with the same stubbornness as always. "It's fine. Wisteria really wants to see you. She's wanted to talk to you about what happened all those years ago. Why not let me set up a meeting?" I gave him a half-smile. "You really think there's any point in meeting now?" Seven hesitated, then blurted out, "Of course there is! We're old friends... Can't we at least catch up?" He must have thought I was still holding a grudge about the past, but some things, once broken, could never be fixed. I didn't reply. Onstage, the familiar intro music started playing.

Wisteria's voice filled the air, < 2/3 = 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 @ Chapter 248 Can't We Catch Up? warm and clear. "Next, I'll be singing my signature song-Starry Night." 29% +20 Free Coins It was Wisteria's biggest hit, still topping the charts after all these years. Everyone knew at least a few lines. As soon as the opening played, the fans joined in, singing along in perfect unison. "Wisteria's music, the composition, the lyrics-its all classic," Seven said beside me, clearly impressed. He didn't notice that my hand had curled into a tight fist at my side.

I just wanted to get out of there, cut all ties to the past. But when I heard that song, I couldn't help myself. My voice was laced with a faint, bitter edge. "If she's really that talented, how come, after all these years, this is still the only song people remember?"
3/3 Mark

Chapter 249 Why Did You Come Back? Amanda's POV: After I spoke, Seven fell silent. 29% +20 Free Coins He opened his mouth, as if he wanted to argue, but in the end he just let out a heavy sigh. His voice was tinged with helplessness. "Wisteria is really talented. She would never do something like that." I glanced up, looking at Wisteria again, still smiling sweetly on stage. Bathed in the spotlight, she smiled and waved at her fans, looking so gentle and harmless. I used to believe in her, too-her talent, her sincerity-until everything changed. People always get it wrong sometimes.

I didn't bother arguing with Seven anymore. I just said quietly, "I'm leaving." With that, I turned and walked away, not slowing down for a second. The crowd and the music faded behind me, but I could feel Seven's gaze lingering on my back. He didn't try to stop me. Even after I'd walked a long way, it was as if I could still hear his faint whisper, Even if I know you're telling the truth, there's nothing I can do. H, I'm sorry! Sorry? Did he

really think a simple apology could erase everything that happened back then? How ridiculous.

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I curled my lips in self-mockery and walked faster, leaving all that noise far behind. Wisteria's POV: After I finished singing Starry Night, the applause and cheers nearly shook the roof. I smiled and bowed to my fans, then hurried backstage to change. As soon as I slipped off my dress, I saw Seven come in. I rushed over, my voice full of hope. "How did I do? Did the fans like it?" But Seven didn't compliment me like he usually did. He just stared at me, his eyes complicated. ||| 1/3 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 249 Why Did You Come Back? My heart dropped. Something was wrong.

After a few seconds, he finally spoke. "Avi was here just now." 29% +20 Free Coins Those three letters hit me like a bolt of lightning For a moment, my mind went completely blank. My face turned pale and my voice trembled. "Was it really her? She was here? Where is she? I want to see her!" I took a step closer, searching his eyes for confirmation, even though I was scared of hearing the answer. Seven's gaze locked on me, making me nervous. I had to look away, pretending to be calm.

"Why are you looking at me like that, Seven?" "She's already gone." His voice was soft, but it landed like a stone in my chest, filling me with relief. He saw my relief right away. I knew I'd slipped, so I quickly fixed my expression, but inside, I couldn't calm down. Why would she show up here? I thought she quit the industry years ago-completely vanished from the public eye. I forced myself to act concerned. "Didn't she quit? Why was she here? Oh, I heard she wrote a song for Alan. What's their relationship?" Even as I spoke, my nerves were stretched tight.

I was terrified she might be coming back, terrified she'd reveal the truth and destroy everything I'd built. But on the surface, I had to look like a caring old friend. Suddenly, Seven gave me a look I'd never seen before. He stared at me, voice cold. "If you want answers, ask her yourself. I'm leaving." "Don't go!" I called after him. "I still need you for the next event..." But this time, Seven didn't indulge me like he always had. He just strode out without looking back. The door shut, cutting me off from all the noise outside-and with it, my last bit of composure collapsed.

2/3 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 249 Why Did You Come Back? I stood there, biting my lip hard, my nails digging into my palm. Every bit of softness on my face vanished, replaced by a storm of anger in my eyes. Avi, why did you come back now? 29% +20 Free Coins I whipped out my phone and dialed a number, my voice icy. "Find someone for me. I want everything you can get on her-contacts, whereabouts, anything. The sooner, the better." III O < Mark

Chapter 250 Retail Therapy Chapter 250 Retail Therapy Amanda's POV: After leaving the Skyspire Tower, I didn't go straight back to Ortega Castle. Instead, I wandered aimlessly along the sidewalk by myself. 29% +20 Free Coins My mind was a mess,

filled with the memory of running into Seven and the look on Wisteria's glamorous face. I walked with my head down, my steps slow, not paying attention to anything around me. It wasn't until a car horn blared nearby, loud and urgent, that I snapped back to reality. I looked up and saw a familiar black car stopped right in front of me-Samson's car.

The door opened, and Samson stepped out, walking straight toward me. His brow was slightly furrowed. His tone was as calm as always, but somehow I could sense a hint of concern. "What were you thinking about You know it's dangerous to space out while walking in the street?" I forced a small smile. "I was just lost in thought and not paying attention. What are you doing here?" Samson didn't answer my question right away. Instead, he asked, "You're not at the training camp. Why did you come all the way out here?" I shook my head, not wanting to explain.

Even I could tell I wasn't quite myself today-the heaviness just wouldn't go away. "Bad mood?" Samson raised an eyebrow, watching my face, like he was trying to read my feelings. I could tell he was thinking about how to comfort me, but the awkward energy around him made it obvious he wasn't used to cheering up girls. Before I could respond, he rattled off several suggestions in a single breath. "Do you want to go shopping? Grab something good to eat?

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Or maybe take a drive outside the city?" The way he listed all those options so seriously actually took me by surprise, My bad mood seemed to soften a little thanks to his awkward attempt at caring, and I started to relax. I nodded. "Okay, let's go walk around." I wasn't sure why I didn't turn him down. Maybe I really did need a distraction right now. 1/3 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 Chapter 250 Retail Therapy 29%%. +20 Free Coins Samson glanced around and his eyes brightened a little. "Come on, I'll take you somewhere." got in the car with him, staring absently out the window as the city rushed by.

At some point, I saw him pull out his phone and send a message. I figured it was work-related and didn't ask. Soon, we pulled up to a department store. I stepped out and stopped in shock-the entrance, which should have been crowded, was completely empty. Only rows of employees in matching uniforms stood at attention, bowing respectfully when they saw us. "Mr. Ortega, Ms. Lamb!" It hit me then that his message earlier had been to clear out the whole mall. I glanced over at Samson, but he looked completely unfazed, like this was nothing special.

As soon as we walked in, a sales associate greeted us, polite and enthusiastic. "Ms. Lamb, is there anything you'd like to look at? We just got in the newest lines-clothes, jewelry, beauty, skincare-whatever you want." I'd only wanted to wander and clear my head. I hadn't expected him to go to all this trouble, so I felt a little awkward. "It's fine, I'll just browse for a bit." "Ms. Lamb, we just got a few limited-edition bags that would be perfect for you. Would you like to see them?" the associate kept recommending.

Before I could answer, Samson leaned down and spoke softly by my ear, "Just get whatever you like. Don't worry about anything, it all goes on my tab." He probably thought I was too shy to choose, so he wanted to reassure me. "I'll just look by myself. You don't need to follow me," I told the sales associate. She looked to Samson, and he waved her away, signaling her to step back. Once she was gone, Samson quietly stayed by my side as I browsed. It was my first time shopping in an empty mall-no crowds, no noise, just a quiet space that finally let me relax.

At first, I wasn't interested in buying anything, but as I walked around, I found more and more things I liked. I decided to just go for it and tossed everything I wanted into the shopping bag. When I was done and ready to pay, Samson beat me to it and told the associate, "Put it on my account." 2/3 13:10 Fri, Jan 2 @ Chapter 250 Retail Therapy 77%8 \$20 free Coms "It's fine, I can pay for myself." I quickly pulled out my card, but the sales associate glanced at Samson and refused to take it. In the end, everything I bought went on his tab. "Feeling better now?" Samson asked.

Only then did I realize the gloom from earlier had been washed away by the fun of shopping. Shopping really did fix a bad mood. I grinned. "Samson, you really do know girls! Buying this much stuff is just awesome!" Samson saw how happy I was and let a small smile slip, his voice holding a softness I almost missed. "As long as you're happy." We had so many bags that the staff came to help carry them. Samson and I walked out together, side by side. Just as we were about to get in the car, I spotted a familiar figure... O Γ Mark