

Crazy Love 311

Chapter 311

How time flies!

Winter came in a blink.

When the first snow fell in Anaville.

The filming of "Love in Bitter Winter" finally wrapped up.

In Snowstock, as soon as the director yelled "cut," Thomas and Theresa, who were in an embrace, quickly separated. Alice, the character. in the movie, still had tears in his eyes.

But Theresa, out of character, instinctively stepped back.

Suddenly finding his arms Thomas was left momentarily stunned.

empty:

This month, he and Theresa were almost inseparable.

Sometimes, he even had trouble distinguishing between the scenes and reality.

In the movie, the world was bleak, with only the two of them as each other's salvation.

Though the world outside was harsh, the warmth and tenderness of their nights together were beyond words.

But a movie was just a movie.

After wrapping up this final scene, was it time for their movie to come to an end? Thomas felt reluctant. He subconsciously wanted to hold Theresa's hand.

But Theresa avoided it and said softly, "Thank you for taking care of me during the filming." 1/7
Theresa's tone was pleasant, but her words confined everything to "during the filming."

They were a couple, but only within the movie.

But beyond that, they were just acquaintances: nothing more.

Thomas picked up on the underlying meaning in Theresa's words. His eyes lost a bit of their sparkle, but he still managed to say, "And thank you for your concern."

Theresa nodded at him, then turned and walked toward the rest of the crew.

Thomas watched her retreating figure, standing still for a long time.

He rubbed his brow and eyes with a bit of distress.

Honestly, no matter how Theresa treated him, he felt he could accept it.

After all, he had caused so much trouble in the past.

The movie was over at that moment.

But his pursuit was just beginning.

No matter how hard it was this time, he would never give up.

Thomas quickly rejuvenated his spirits, ready for a long-term struggle.

After the wrap party, the crew couldn't wait to return to Coraland.

These past few months, in order to make a good movie, they mostly turned a blind eye to the outside world.

Now that the movie was done, they were finally coming out of their shells.

The crew chartered several planes, and everyone headed to the airport together.

As soon as Theresa got off the plane, she started looking around.

"Theresa." Thomas took a deep breath and approached her, "Is someone picking you up? Do you want me to..."

He didn't even finish speaking.

"Theresa." Not far away, Susan appeared, enthusiastically waving at Theresa.

"Susan." Theresa's eyes lit up, ignoring Thomas completely, and ran straight to Susan.

The two girls hugged, laughing and bouncing around in excitement.

Thomas couldn't help but look at Susan with a bit of melancholy.

However, Susan definitely wouldn't pay attention to him.

So, he looked mournfully at Ben, who came with Susan.

Ben raised an eyebrow, "What are you looking at me for?"

Thomas exhaled deeply, "Can't you keep your wife in check? She's married now, she ought to act with a bit more decorum."

Ben glanced at him and said calmly, "She makes her own choices. I don't tell her what to do."

Thomas looked visibly frustrated, "You can't even handle this, Ben? You used to be so assertive and sol in charge. And now you can't even take charge of your own household? What happened to the decisivel CEO you were known as?"

Ben calmly replied, "Well, well. It seems like when you get married, you'll definitely be able to control your wife well."

Thomas replied confidently, "Of course. When I get married, I'll be the one calling the shots. If I make a decision, there won't be any room for argument. I'll ensure that..."

Thomas was boasting enthusiastically.

Suddenly, he saw a smile creep onto Ben's face.

Thomas felt a sudden chill, a sense of dread creeping over him.

Could it be... he's been played?

Stiffly, Thomas turned his head and saw Susan and Theresa, hand in hand, both looking at him with a barely-there smile. Thomas was on the verge of losing it.

He blurted out quickly, "Theresa, let me explain..."

Theresa gave him a tight smile, "No need to explain. I never had any intentions of marrying you anyway."

Thomas found himself tongue-tied.

A stab of regret for words spoken in haste.

After saying that, Theresa ignored him.

She took Susan's hand, "Susan, you've got to catch me up on everything from the past few months. Your stories are just incredible. I could only call you during shoots, and it always felt so rushed. This time, you have to spill all the details..."

The two girls walked away, chatting intimately.

Thomas and Ben stood in silence.

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After a while, Thomas looked at Ben in despair, "Did you do this on purpose?" Ben, with a poker face, replied, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Originally, Ben was a bit down about Susan being taken away.

But seeing Thomas like this, why did he suddenly feel better?

After looking at him with a mix of disbelief and resignation for a moment, Thomas finally gave a thumbs

up, saying, "Well played."

"You know how it goes," Ben replied calmly.

At the café, Susan and Theresa were savoring their desserts and sipping coffee, lost in cheerful conversation. The two men were completely ignored.

They stared at each other for a while.

Ben calmly sipped his coffee, breaking the silence, "Planning to be a full-time actor?"

Thomas shook his head in horror, "Better not, I'm not cut out for it."

Ben replied coolly, "You know, I was just thinking, if word got scalpel for the spotlight, you might just hit the big time."

"Quit joking," Thomas said, glancing around nervously and quickly shushing Ben.

Glancing around to make sure they weren't being overheard, he said anxiously, "Hey, drop that title, will you? I don't want to blow my cover!"

"Why go through all that?" Ben raised an eyebrow, "If you set up a- the door, have the global elite lining up for an appointment."

Thomas, feeling a bit defeated, said, "I'm just not up for minimal is my Marh's passion project. I'm just trying to keep it afloat."

Ben laughed, "Saying something like that to your investor isn't exactly a wise move."

"Just turn a blind eye to that as an investor. Relax. I'll ensure this hospital flourishes and rakes in profits daily," Thomas assured. Ben and Thomas were just casually chatting, neither of them seriously fixated on the investment matter. Ben was aware that if Thomas truly wanted to rake in the cash, all he had to do was capitalize on the

"Medical Mystic" moniker, and the money would come pouring in.

— But after encountering some issues, Thomas had become averse to this fame, wanting only to live a simple life in accordance with his mother's wishes.

Despite Ben previously threatening Thomas with the investment, it was nothing more than a joke between them.

Ben's investment was just a smokescreen.

Thomas, known as "the Medical Mystic," had accumulated enough wealth to easily open a hospital.

But given his secret identity, he way to avoid suspicion.

n't go public. Pretending that Ben was the investor was the best

While Ben bore the title of an investor, the money was actually Thomas's and had nothing to do with him.

"These past few months, I've sorted out the hospital's location and staff for you," Ben said. "Check it out when you have the time."

"Thanks," Thomas replied with a cheeky grin. "You're so good to me, | feel like | owe you big time." Ben just silently added a bunch of ice cubes to Thomas's coffee.

Even though it's said that you can't beat someone with no shame, Thomas felt like he needed to chill out, maybe with an ice pack.

Unfazed, Thomas just chewed on the ice cubes thick—skinned. All Ben could do was sigh. He couldn't understand how he ended up being such close friends with someone like this.

It even made him doubt his own judgment.

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The next day, Ben took Thomas to the hospital.

Though Thomas himself had no particular demands for the hospital, merely wishing to get by, Ben still chose a prime location for him, with top-notch facilities in the country. Ben also secured an experienced doctor to oversee things. With this arrangement, Thomas only needed to bear the title of hospital director, with little else to do but coast along.

Ben, accompanied by Thomas, met with several key figures from various departments of the hospital. Then, he formally announced Thomas's appointment as the director.

At Ben's declaration, murmurs and whispers began to spread among the crowd.

"A director so young? There must be some backdoor dealings."

"Backdoor dealings? We're a private hospital; what the investor says goes when it comes to naming the director."

"Exactly. They could appoint anyone, no matter how unqualified, and if Mr. Landor backs them, we've got no choice but to accept it."

The staff discussed in hushed tones, careful not to openly express their dissatisfaction, yet their words dripped with disdain.

Thomas observed everyone's expressions, taking it all in.

He could guess what they were all saying.

But it didn't bother him.

His role as the director was just a front to bide time. Even the most exaggerated comments couldn't wrong him.

After completing the handover, Thomas saw Ben out.

Pausing at the door, Ben turned to Thomas with a pointed look, "Looks like you're not winning any popularity contests here."

"Isn't that expected? I mean, if I suddenly had to report to a useless boss, I wouldn't be thrilled," Thomas said, flashing a playful grin.

Ben narrowed his eyes slightly, "If they actually knew your true identity..."

"Drop it," Thomas said, waving his hands dismissively with a look of appeal, "I'm content being a low-key director."

Ben gave him a look, "This is Coraland. What happened in the past won't repeat here."

Back then, Thomas was outwardly a student, but in secret, he had made a significant name for himself, even revered by some patients as "the Medical Mystic".

The Medical Mystic.

Not just anyone could bear such a title. It signified the pinnacle of medical skill and genuine recognition from patients.

Such fame brought admiration but also envy.

At that time, Thomas treated patients in secret, wearing a mask.

His only condition was to treat one patient at a time.

Once, he encountered a patient with a complicated condition, from a poor family. Thomas didn't mind;

he waived the medical fees and devoted himself to the treatment.

Then, a wealthy patron sought him out, demanding Thomas treat him. The patron's symptoms sounded like a mere cold, hardly needing Thomas's intervention.

Moreover, he already had a patient, so naturally, Thomas refused on the spot.

That very night, the patient Thomas had seen was killed in a sudden house fire.

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The police concluded it was an accidental fire,

But Thomas knew it wasn't.

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After the patient's death, the same powerful figure sent people to find Thomas again..

Thomas refused once more.

The man gave him a significant look, "I hear a lot of patients think of you as a miracle worker. But I have to ask, does even a miracle worker fear getting burned?".

Thomas already had his suspicions.

This statement could confirm them.

The previous patient had been killed by this influential person.

Thomas was young at the time.

He fixed the man with a furious glare, “Your boss had nothing more than a mild fever. A good night’s sleep and a bit of sweat, and he would’ve been fine without any medical treatments. He didn’t need me. But the other patient was in critical condition! I’d been nursing him back to health, and he was finally improving. Then you barged in over something so trivial and cost an innocent life! How do you sleep at

night?”

Thomas’s heated accusation was met with an icy chuckle.

The man turned and walked away.

Thomas, enraged, filed a report, demanding a re–investigation of the fire.

But justice for the patient wasn’t served.

What he got instead was another fire.

His apartment building suddenly caught fire in the middle of the night!

Thomas was lucky to be rescued.

But he wasn’t the only resident. That night, ten bodies were found.

Among the bodies, there was a young girl who always greeted him with a bright smile.

An old lady who remembered to share her delicious cooking with him.

And a child who greeted him with a warm smile.

In the morning, they were all alive.

But now, they were just lifeless bodies.

When the police arrived, the man was even at the scene.

He looked at Thomas with an icy, mocking smile.

Thomas broke down then. He had always consulted under the guise of “the Medical Mystic”, never revealing his true identity. But seeing this man, Thomas understood.

His identity was exposed. The man knew he was the Medical Mystic.

The fire was his latest act of revenge.

Thomas even felt that his escape was deliberate by the man.

The man wanted him to witness with his own eyes how so many lives were lost because of him!

Thomas’s sanity snapped in an instant. He wildly accused that man of being the murderer, demanding

the police to take him away for investigation.

The police ignored him.

So, he kept shouting and screaming.

Finally, the police took him away for obstructing

duties.

As he was taken away, Thomas looked back and saw the man's mocking smile.

Thomas spent three full days in jail.

It was later when Ben found out and managed to get him out.

Following that incident, Thomas remained quiet for quite a while.

Then, he threw away all his medical books and swore never to mention the Medical Mystic again.

Even if he continued to be a doctor, he'd rather be a mediocre one.

That way, at least not so many people would die because of him.

The past flashed through his mind.

For a brief second, a sharp look flickered in Thomas's eyes.

But he quickly flashed an easygoing smile, "You know, I still believe a laid-back lifestyle suits me better."

Ben shot him a knowing look, then coolly looked away, "As long as it makes you happy."

Thomas flashed a big grin and clapped a hand on Ben's shoulder, "Absolutely, I'm over the moon."

With a blank face, Ben gently pulled away from Thomas's grasp, "I should get going. You are in charge of the hospital now."

"Okay," Thomas chuckled in response.

Ben left.

Watching the departing car, Thomas slowly dropped his smile.

His hand clenched slightly.

How could he find happiness knowing his actions had led to en manu livar Inct?

He carried the heavy burden of so many lives on his shoulders.

He could never fully let go in his lifetime!

But what could he do?

He was just a small-time doctor.

And the person pulling the strings?

He hadn't even seen his real face, only a minion sent by him.

He was in the dark about the real mastermind – their background, appearance, everything...

Even if he wanted revenge, he had no direction.

Even if he did find that person, what then? What could he possibly do?

He was just a doctor...

Thomas stood alone for a long time, then calmly turned around and returned to the hospital.

In that single turn, his face was already back to its carefree grin.

He even started humming a tune, looking like he was in a great mood.

Chapter 313 At the hospital, Thomas became the director just like that.

His daily routine went something like this: sleep in till around nine or ten in the morning, then leisurely start his day with a coffee in hand, lounging in his office for a bit.

Amust-do for him was a nap at noon.

By the time he woke up, it was usually around three or four in the afternoon, just in time for a bit of coffee before he casually called it a day.

Even as the director, Thomas's style stirred up quite a bit of dissatisfaction.

One day, just as Thomas was waking from his nap, he was about to enjoy some coffee when someone knocked on his office door.

Thomas raised an eyebrow, surprised.

Wasn't he the universally acknowledged incompetent director?

And yet someone was actually seeking him out?

“Come in,” Thomas said, in a lazy drawl.

“Director.”

The visitor was Mr. Cavanaugh, the vice dean elected by the other doctors.

Mr. Cavanaugh, approaching fifty, boasted years of clinical expertise and stood as one of Anaville’s most esteemed doctors.

If Ben hadn’t made him such an attractive offer, he would never have considered joining a private hospital.

Originally, he was just the deputy director.

But in the absence of a director, he was the one calling the shots at the hospital, a role that Mr. Cavanaugh quite relished. But then, out of the blue, Ben suddenly appointed this young kid as the director.

Initially, Mr. Cavanaugh was pretty hesitant.

Typically, in the medical field, a hospital director is known for their outstanding reputation or exceptional medical expertise. But what did Thomas have?

Reputation?

Mr. Cavanaugh had never even heard his name before.

Medical skills?

Please, with his age, how skilled could he be?

Although Thomas didn't interfere much, the hospital was still under his control.

But after giving it a lot of thought, Mr. Cavanaugh still found it hard to come to terms with it.

Today, he felt compelled to probe into the true nature of this Thomas.

When Thomas saw Mr. Cavanaugh, he broke into a smile, "Oh, Mr. Cavanaugh! Perfect timing. Join me. for some coffee and pastries. The lemon bars today are absolutely heavenly. Just the aroma is intoxicating. And once you taste them, they're sure to be..."

Thomas enthusiastically introduced the various snacks to Mr. Cavanaugh,

Mr. Cavanaugh tried his best to hold back, but ultimately he couldn't resist.

He couldn't help but say, "Dean, I'm here on official business.

"Official business?" Thomas was somewhat surprised. "Why come to me for official matters? You can decide on your own."

Mr. Cavanaugh was at a loss for words.

He wasn't sure whether to feel happy or to complain.

He took a deep breath, trying to smile, “Dean, here’s the thing. Our hospital received a patient today. His case is quite unusual. He’s...”

“A patient?” Thomas interrupted impatiently, “You don’t have to talk to me about patients. You know I’m just here to pass the time.”

Mr. Cavanaugh was speechless.

Thomas’s self-awareness was so profound.

It left Mr. Cavanaugh at a loss for words.

After several deep breaths, Mr. Cavanaugh regained his composure.

He spoke in a low tone, “Dean, here’s the situation. This patient’s case is quite a mystery. He’s been across the country and back without finding a cure. It’s a real medical puzzle. He’s turned to our hospital, banking on the Landor Group’s reputation. If we can solve his case, it’ll put us on the map, and we won’t have trouble drawing in patients after that.”

Thomas looked at Mr. Cavanaugh encouragingly, “Then it’s all up to you. You must do your best to bring honor to our hospital.” Mr. Cavanaugh was speechless yet again..

He managed a wry smile before saying, “Dean, believe me, if I had any answers, I wouldn’t be here. This patient’s case is tricky. None of the tests gave us anything. I figured, given you were handpicked by Mr. Landor, you must be something special. Could you take a look and see what you can make of it?”

“Me?” Thomas stared at Mr. Cavanaugh, incredulous. “You expect me to make a diagnosis? I only got the Dean position because I’m Ben’s childhood friend — it’s not about my skills.”

Mr. Cavanaugh was astonished.

Could anyone really be that shameless about riding on the coattails of nepotism?

“Mr. Cavanaugh, drop by for coffee anytime, but for official stuff, don’t bother,” Thomas said, uninterested. Mr. Cavanaugh’s lips curled in a resigned smirk.

He hesitated for a moment before setting the medical records on Thomas's desk. “Anyway, Dean, please review these. And forget the coffee; I’ve got a ton of things back at the hospital. I’m not as free as you are.

Choosing to ignore the sarcasm in Mr. Cavanaugh’s tone, Thomas dismissed him with a wave, “Yeah, yeah, go ahead, get back to work.”

Mr. Cavanaugh left without a word, glancing back at Thomas.

Mr. Cavanaugh left.

But Thomas didn’t pay attention to the exquisite snacks in front of him.

He narrowed his eyes, hesitating for a long while.

He slowly opened the patient’s medical file.

Thomas reminded himself that he was just taking a look.

After all, there’s no harm in just looking.

However, this patient’s condition was somewhat bizarre.

Initially, his symptoms weren't severe, just occasional fevers.

But gradually, the fevers worsened, and eventually, he barely had any moments of lucidity throughout the day.

The first hospital he visited diagnosed him with tuberculosis.

However, after a series of anti-tuberculosis treatments, not only did his condition not improve, it worsened.

Cavities developed in his lungs, and the bacteria began to eat away at his skin and bones. After years of treatment, he had lost over fifty pounds, resembling an extraterrestrial from a science fiction movie.

Thomas's expression grew more solemn.

After six years of seeking treatment, his condition only worsened.

Now, he was in a state worse than death.

Driven by a doctor's instinct, Thomas felt compelled to keep reading.

Recently, the patient had developed a lot of abscesses all over.

Based on clinical findings, the hospital ruled out tuberculosis.

But the actual cause remained unknown.

The hospital had taken samples from various parts of his body, but despite numerous tests, they couldn't detect any bacteria. Without identifying the cause, they couldn't make a diagnosis, and the situation reached a deadlock. Thomas squinted his eyes.

How challenging!

There was no doubt the patient was infected with bacteria.

But the fact that it eluded detection by so many instruments indicated it was an exceptionally cunning type.

The hunt for bacteria by a doctor is a battle of wits and courage.

The more cunning the bacteria, the more skilled a doctor needed to be to conquer it!

Night fell, Thomas sneaked into the patient's room, and while the patient slept, he took samples from the abscesses, and then locked himself in the lab.

He stayed up all night. The following day, Thomas yawned and called over Mr. Cavanaugh.

"Mr. Cavanaugh, care for some breakfast?" He held a bagel toward him. "The bagels are frozen in the freezer, but heat them up, and they're not half bad."

Mr. Cavanaugh couldn't help but respond somewhat irritably, "Director! It's already nine o'clock! I had breakfast a long time ago." "What? It's nine already? Sorry, I overslept." Thomas yawned again.

He had been up all night and didn't hit the sack until seven in the evening. Though he had caught a quick nap, he wound up snoozing for a full two hours.

Mr. Cavanaugh really didn't feel like dealing with Thomas at the moment. "Director, if there's nothing else, I need to get back to work."

"Oh, sure, go ahead." Thomas casually handed him a report. "Take this with you." "What's this?" Mr. Cavanaugh frowned as he took it.

It turned out to be a bacterial diagnosis report.

As Mr. Cavanaugh read it, his eyes widened in shock..

He abruptly turned to Thomas, "This..."

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"Oh, right. You mentioned that treating that patient would be good for the hospital, didn't you? So, I hit up Ben for a favor. We had someone sneakily grab a sample from the patient, and Ben got another expert to run some tests. Turns out, it's a bacterial issue. I've jotted down the exact strain. You guys can handle it from here, right?" Thomas said with a yawn.

Mr. Cavanaugh looked at Thomas, "To diagnose in just one night, this expert must be no ordinary person. Director, can you tell me who he really is?"

"It's someone Ben brought in; I'm not clear on the specifics," Thomas said, waving his hand dismissively, "Why get hung up on that? Let's just concentrate on the patient's care."

Mr. Cavanaugh was struck dumb.

He felt something was off.

But if it wasn't for Ben's help, could it be Thomas who made the diagnosis?

That seemed even more impossible.

"Get going; don't delay my breakfast." Thomas started shooing him away.

Mr. Cavanaugh left in a daze.

Standing at the door, he glanced over the test results and a smile began to form on his lips.

No matter what, the patient was saved!

Back in the office, Thomas ate a few bites of his bagels and then lay down for a nap.

Darn it! Laziness had become second nature; suddenly ramping up the pace was seriously jarring.

In the future, he decided not to take on such tasks!

Isn't there something great about being a doctor who just goes with the flow?

1/7

Glancing at his phone, Thomas answered groggily, "Hello? Ben?"

There was a pause on Ben's end before he finally spoke, "Your Vice Dean called my secretary to express his gratitude. He said it was thanks to the specialist I brought in that they could pinpoint the diagnosis. Thomas, what's your take on this?"

Thomas cleared his throat, "It's not a bad thing. How about you take the credit for it?"

Ben quirked an eyebrow, "Thinking of making a comeback?"

"It was just a fluke," Thomas quickly explained, "I just felt bad for the patient and lent a hand. But keep it under wraps, will you? I'm all about that easy-going lifestyle."

After hanging up, Ben raised an eyebrow and personally made a call to Mr. Cavanaugh.

"Yes,

it was an expert I found. Though not famous, he's very capable."

“Next time you run into a tough case, just take it to Director Smith. He’ll get it to me.”

“Want to meet the expert? No need, he’s not one for the spotlight. Just follow my lead.”

“Just make sure to add some heart–wrenching photos of the patients in each file; the more pitiful, the better.”

“Yeah, send over some more case files.”

After hanging up the phone, Ben put away his cell phone, a deep meaning flashing in his eyes.

He thought, “Oh, Thomas!

Just admit that you were never cut out to be a mediocre doctor.

With all those complex symptoms laid out before you, can you really restrain yourself?”

Ben pinched the bridge of his nose.

It was not that he specifically wanted to force Thomas into the spotlight.

However, he had seen Thomas’s struggles over the years.

Thomas wasn’t genuinely content with just scraping by; more so, he was running away.

He was fleeing the weight of lives lost on his watch and the feeling of powerlessness that came with being just a doctor.

But was he truly content with that?

No, he never was, not for a moment.

Unless he sorted out this inner turmoil, Thomas was going to be stuck living a nightmare.

“Give it a try; step out bravely,” Ben murmured to himself before letting out a long sigh.

That was all he could do.

The rest of the journey was for Thomas to walk on his own.

In the following days, Thomas’s condition worsened day by day.

After solving a complex case, Mr. Cavanaugh started showing up at his office daily, bringing a pile of medical records every time!

These were all serious cases!

Thomas attempted to avoid it, but the photos of the patients on the case covers were just too heartbreaking to overlook.

Doctors cared for their patients as if they were their own children.

Unable to resist, Thomas opened the cases again.

A month passed like this.

Thomas consistently worked late into the night, earning nothing but respect from Mr. Cavanaugh, who admired this legendary expert. Mysteriously, their hospital's reputation had also started to soar.

"Dean, look at this..."

One day, Mr. Cavanaugh, clutching a stack of medical files, was on his way into the office.

"Wait!" Thomas stretched out his hand in alarm, signaling a refusal.

"What's wrong?" Mr. Cavanaugh was puzzled.

Thomas cleared his throat and said, "The specialist, well... he's really worn out and needs a few days off to recharge."

Mr. Cavanaugh was caught off guard, then slapped his forehead in realization, "That's on me, I didn't consider that! Director, let the expert know to take it easy. We can handle the patients for the time

being."

"I'll tell him," Thomas nodded.

Mr. Cavanaugh then left with a guilty look on his face.

These past few days, he had really been slacking off.

These patients, none of them particularly difficult cases, but he still sent their files over.

Who could blame him? After all, those patients' chances of recovery always skyrocketed once that expert got involved.

Mr. Cavanaugh told himself that next time, he shouldn't bother the expert with ordinary cases.

After Mr. Cavanaugh left, Thomas finally let out a long sigh of relief.

But with the relief came a sense of emptiness, no more cases by his side.

Was he actually feeling a sense of emptiness?

He found himself thinking, "What the hell is that?"

Thomas shivered involuntarily.

It seemed he wasn't fit to stay in the hospital lately.

Then, Thomas decided to skip work.

He was the director, after all, and nobody was going to stop him.

Thomas said he'd skip work, and he did just that, slipping away.

On the street, Thomas couldn't help but pull out his phone, looking confused.

It had been almost a month since he returned from Snowstock.

And a month since he'd last seen Theresa.

Every day, he'd send Theresa trivial messages.

Sweet texts to start and end the day, always making sure she's okay.

He'd been sending these for over a month, and Theresa hadn't replied even once.

He'd secretly asked Mrs. Austin for news.

Mrs. Austin said Theresa was busy preparing for her final thesis and exams lately.

The reason was just too solid.

So much so that Thomas felt almost embarrassed to disturb Theresa..

But as far as Thomas knew, today was the last day of Theresa's final exams...

His longing suddenly became almost unbearable.

*For some reason, Thomas really wanted to see Theresa.

At Anaville University, Snowflakes gently fell from the sky.

When the exam was over, everyone spilled out into the hall, buzzing about how it went.

On a regular day, Theresa was the least noticeable person in school.

But now, she was surrounded by a crowd.

"Theresa, how did you answer the first essay question? I feel like there was something off about it," someone asked.

Theresa replied softly, "There's nothing wrong with the question. Think about it carefully, there's a hidden condition in there..."

"Theresa, how about the last question?"

"I approached it from three aspects. First of all..."

One by one, everyone asked their questions.

Theresa answered casually, and the crowd listened intently, some even taking notes exaggeratedly.

Most of them had progressed to this point in their studies together.

Everyone knew that Theresa's answers were almost always correct.

Matching answers with Theresa was the best way to gauge one's own score,

As people kept asking, Theresa responded earnestly.

Suddenly, a figure approached.

"Theresa," he said, a slight, devilishly charming smile on his handsome face.

Immediately, some of the girls nearby blushed.

Theresa looked up impassively.

"Be my girlfriend?" he asked, magically producing a bouquet of flowers from behind and presenting it

to Theresa.

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Onlookers were totally blown away!

Theresa drew a blank.

Thomas, observing from a short distance, thought to himself, "No way! This can't be happening!"

Thomas instinctively edged toward the wall and then eyed the unexpectedly appearing handsome guy

with caution!

Though Thomas was sizing him up critically, he couldn't deny that the guy was really good-looking.

But so what?

He himself was also very handsome!

Theresa ignored him, so why would she pay attention to this pretty boy?

Thomas comforted himself with these thoughts, calming down a bit.

"Theresa, I mean it," he said, gazing at her with intense affection. "Please, say yes."

Theresa gave him a blank look and replied, "Sorry, you're not my taste."

The determined look on the man's face stiffened for a moment.

But soon, he smiled again.

“Theresa, I get what you’re saying. You’re concerned about us not being a ‘good match’ looks-wise, and what people might say. But that doesn’t bother me. You might think you’re just average, but to me, you’re the most beautiful. What really matters isn’t how we look together, but how our souls connect, right?”

Theresa was left speechless.

She had seen people with high opinions of themselves, but never this high.

She was feeling a bit sick now.

Yet, the girls watching nearby actually showed envy and jealousy.

“Why would Evan fall for her?”

“Yeah, she’s not exactly a looker and always dresses down. What on earth does Evan find attractive in her?”

“Acting all uninterested. I’m sure she’s secretly excited.”

“She’s just showing off, haven’t you noticed? Whenever we ask her something, she goes into a lot of detail as if she’s worried we won’t realize she’s capable of handling the problem.”

“She’s really putting on a show.”

“Isn’t that a bit harsh? I think Theresa is really nice.”

“Nice? She’s just pretending.”

“You’re just jealous because she gets good grades and has the school hunk chasing her.”

“Jealous of her? Her ugly looks, or her shabby clothes?”

Before Theresa could even say a word, the onlookers nearby were almost on the verge of an argument.

Theresa, a bit at a loss for words, rolled her eyes and then spoke in an even icier tone.

“Evan Blackwell, get out of my way.”

“Theresa, if you don’t, I won’t move,” Evan said with a determined expression.

“Then you may stay here,” Theresa said with a flat tone, and she simply walked around him.

This reaction from Theresa caught Evan off guard.

Evan was momentarily stunned, then quickly said, “Theresa, wait a moment...”

He reached out to grab Theresa.

But just as he was about to reach for her, his hand was stopped in mid-air.

“Who the hell is it?” Evan exclaimed, irritation evident on his face as he noticed a man smiling at him.

What was more infuriating was that this man seemed to surpass him in both demeanor and appearance.

Evan squinted his eyes and said with a hostile tone, "You're not from our department, are you? Not even from our school, right?"

Thomas let go of his hand and swiftly turned, casting a concerned look at Theresa. "Theresa, you alright? Did this guy freak you out?"

The onlookers were shocked again.

What's going on?

Theresa, who hadn't been pursued for so many years, suddenly had two suitors?

And one was the campus heartthrob, and the other, even more incredibly, was even more handsome than the campus heartthrob?

Theresa looked at Thomas, somewhat speechless, "Why are you here?"

"Theresa, did you forget?" Thomas said, a touch of exasperation in his tone. "Today is the day your exams are over, and I promised to take you out for a meal to celebrate. You forgetful thing how could

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As he spoke, Thomas even affectionately stroked Theresa’s nose.

Theresa couldn't find words.

She suddenly felt a bit panicked.

What was Thomas thinking?

"Theresa, is he your boyfriend?" Evan inquired, his gaze focused and questioning

Before Theresa could respond, Thomas calmly extended his hand, "Let me introduce myself, Thomas. Theresa's boyfriend."

Thomas really had a thick skin.

Theresa, unable to bear it, turned her head away and didn't even bother to deny it.

It was just right; she could use Thomas to avoid Evan, who had been pestering her like an annoying

plaster.

Over the past few days, Evan had inexplicably begun sending her a barrage of flirtatious messages.

Theresa flatly refused him at that time.

Who would have thought he wouldn't give up and even staged a public confession?

His shameless behavior was utterly disgusting, making her feel as nauseated as if she had accidentally ingested a fly.

Seeing that Theresa didn't deny it, Evan's expression hardened.

He said in a disdainful tone, "Boyfriend? Why hasn't Theresa mentioned you before? You don't seem all that important."

Thomas's smile remained unchanged, "Theresa is just shy, not like some, with a skin thicker than city walls."

Evan, slightly irritated, retorted, "You seem like you're from a different world. Even if you've got some cash, do you and Theresa truly share anything in common? Can you appreciate the subtleties of life? Can you understand the depth of her emotions? You just don't get it! Someone like you will only corrupt Theresa's pure and pristine heart."

Thomas was speechless.

Theresa was also speechless.

Thomas glanced back at Theresa, "He..."

Theresa calmly said, "No idea. I wish I didn't know him either."

"Theresa," Evan turned to her, "think carefully. We are the best soulmates. This man is not worthy of you."

Theresa initially ignored him, but at Evan's words, she actually burst into a radiant smile.

She stepped forward, sweetly took Thomas's hand, and said, "How could that be? If anything, I'm not worthy of him. In my eyes, he is the most perfect man in the world."

Her voice was soft and gentle, with an indescribable charm.

Even though Thomas knew Theresa was just provoking Evan, his heart still raced uncontrollably.

6

“Sweetheart, let’s not waste our time here. Weren’t we going to have a feast?” Theresa said with a smile.

“Yeah, let’s go,” Thomas nodded eagerly.

Then, under everyone’s watchful eyes, they left, closely bonded..

Evan watched their retreating figures, his face turning utterly sour.

He, the school’s heartthrob, had stooped so low to pursue such an ugly girl. To his dismay, not only did she reject him, but she also had an outstanding boyfriend.

Was her boyfriend out of his mind?

Why ruin his good fortune?

Evan remembered what his mentor said.

In their department, there was only one slot available for the Direct Entry Ph.D. program. Judging from their grades, it was almost certain that the slot belonged to Theresa.

However, if she voluntarily gave it up, or if something bad happened to her, the spot might very well fall to him, the second in line.

Evan's plan was to make Theresa fall in love with him, turn her into a love-struck fool, and then have her willingly give up her spot for him!

He thought the second and third steps would be tough.

Little did he expect to stumble at the very first step.

Looking at the current situation, it seemed unrealistic to expect Theresa to give up voluntarily.

So, he had to resort to his Plan B.

And that was to cause a major mishap for Theresa.

For instance, getting caught in academic fraud or unethical conduct.

If the situation escalated, Anaville University would likely rescind her admission to the Direct Entry

Ph.D. program.

Then, the spot would be his.

Evan narrowed his eyes, pondering how to catch Theresa in the act!

Chapter 316

"You contributed a lot to what Thomas did, didn't you?" Susan looked at him with a smile.

Ben turned around and replied, "Not me. I had nothing to do with it."

Susan continued to smile slyly at him.

Ben coughed and went on, "I just provided some theoretical knowledge, but I never thought his practical skills would be so lacking. After all, he's a doctor, and theoretically, his ability to combine

theory and practice should be strong."

Ben admitted that when he pursued Susan before, it was occasionally awkward.

But he swore that he never reached a level of mind-boggling embarrassment!

Watching Ben desperately trying to shift blame, Susan found it amusing. She said with no mercy,

"Theresa is on the verge of going berserk, so deal with the mess you created."

With that, she left him with her back turned.

Ben instantly felt a pang in his heart.

How did Thomas, who usually seemed quite clever, become so foolish in this matter?

Ben resentfully made a phone call to Thomas.

Before Ben could speak, Thomas excitedly said, "Ben, the things you gave me really worked. Before, not matter what I said, Theresa never paid attention to me, but now, she occasionally tells me to get lost."

Hearing that, Ben was speechless.

He suddenly forgave Thomas.

After all, what's the point of arguing with a fool?,

Ben took a deep breath and said with a forced smile, "Thomas, I suddenly remembered that those methods of mine were from a year ago, and they seem a bit outdated now."

Thomas was puzzled. "Really? I think they are quite effective."

"That's your illusion." Ben said expressionlessly, "You'd better forget everything you've seen before."

Confused, Thomas asked, "What should I do then?"

"Figure it out yourself." Ben said, "Remember, girls don't like smooth talkers. They prefer someone down-to-earth, someone who can take care of their practical life!"

Thomas said, "I don't quite understand."

"If you don't understand, figure it out yourself." Ben hung up the phone, unable to tolerate it any longer.

In short, he was done with giving advice to Thomas.

His only thought was, as long as he didn't get involved, let Thomas do whatever foolish things he wanted!

That night...

Thomas tossed and turned, thinking about Ben's words.

Ben had a lovely wife, and their marital relationship was extremely close—he was truly a winner in life.

He had to listen carefully to whatever he said, even though his tone sounded a bit perfunctory.

But what was the relationship between Ben and him?

Their relationship was so close, could Ben really be perfunctory?

So, what Ben said had to be valuable advice, and he had to chew on it carefully.

“Someone down-to-earth, someone who can take care of their practical life?”

Thomas pondered this sentence all night.

Even in his dreams, his mind was filled with this sentence.

The next day...

Thomas suddenly opened his eyes.

“I understand.” He excitedly got up, then quickly washed and dressed.

Someone down-to-earth who could take care of practical life...

Theresa was always busy, and who was her biggest concern?

Her parents.

So, sweet words were useless.

To make Theresa accept him, the best way was to win over her parents.

When Thomas came out, Mrs. Smith had already prepared breakfast.

“Come on over and have some bagels,” she said.

Thomas grabbed the bagels and started to leave.

Mrs. Smith was not happy with that. “What are you in such a hurry for early in the morning?”

O

Thomas halted his steps. “Mom, I haven’t seen Mrs. Austin in a long time. I plan to buy something and visit her and her husband.”

Mrs. Smith immediately became happy when she heard that. “You plan to go to Theresa’s house?”

Thomas nodded.

“Hurry up, hurry up. And remember to buy more things to take with you.” Mrs. Smith stuffed a bagel into Thomas’s hand and pushed him out.

“Mom, if you’re not happy about it, I won’t go,” Thomas said with a bit of arrogance.

Mrs. Smith kicked him out with one foot. “Stop talking nonsense, go quickly.”

Thomas muttered something under his breath, then happily left.

Mrs. Smith watched his back and couldn't help but smile.

This little rascal finally came to his senses.

She finally had a daughter-in-law.

In the Austin residence...

After a long sleep that lasted until 11 o'clock, Theresa finally woke up, rubbing her eyes as she walked out of her room.

She was just thinking about brushing her teeth and washing her face when she passed by the living room and stopped dead in her tracks.

She looked at the person in the living room in disbelief.

'Am I still dreaming?' she thought.

She rubbed her eyes again.

However, the person was still there, waving at her shamelessly.

"Thomas, what are you doing here?" she asked through gritted teeth.

"I..." Thomas didn't have time to speak.

Mrs. Austin was unhappy with her. "Theresa, what kind of tone is that? Apologize to Thomas."

"It's okay, Mrs. Austin," Thomas quickly said. "It's really fine."

Mrs. Austin's gaze hardened as she looked at Theresa. "See how polite and sweet Thomas is?"

Theresa was speechless.

She looked at Thomas, who was pretending to be honest, and gritted her teeth. "Mom, don't be fooled by him! He's not a good person."

"That's enough, Theresa!" Mr. Austin said, unable to listen further.

Feeling utterly betrayed by her parents' siding with Thomas, Theresa said, "You're all being deceived! Thomas is nothing but a shameless scoundrel."

Mrs. Austin, now visibly angry, said, "Then tell us, what has Thomas done to wrong you?"

Theresa struggled to articulate Thomas's shameless acts, knowing that she couldn't sum it up easily.

Seeing that she couldn't explain it, Mrs. Austin coldly said, "Theresa, you can't say anything, can you? Accusing Thomas without any basis! Apologize to him."

"Apologize to him? In your dreams!" Theresa stormed back to her room, slamming the door furiously

behind her.

Mrs. Austin looked at Thomas apologetically. "I'm sorry, Theresa has been spoiled by me."

"Don't worry. I quite like her vibrant personality," Thomas replied gently.

Mr. and Mrs. Austin looked at each other and immediately felt relieved.

Thank goodness that their daughter had found someone who appreciated her.

At noon....

Theresa was coaxed out for lunch with Thomas.

Look how good Thomas is to you! He learned to make noodles just because he knows you like them. Look at these handmade noodles, all made by Thomas himself," Mrs. Austin said proudly.

Theresa eyed the noodles in front of her, looking skeptically at Thomas.

"This man can make handmade noodles?"

-Why didn't she believe it?

"Try it." Mrs. Austin glanced at Theresa threateningly.

Not wanting to upset the matriarch of the family, Theresa reluctantly took a bite.

She was prepared to criticize them, but to her surprise, the noodles were much tastier than she expected. They were perfectly chewy, and the broth was deliciously savory.

Seeing Theresa's astonished expression, Mrs. Austin smiled, saying, "Thomas kneaded the dough for over an hour to get the perfect texture. And the soup, he carefully simmered it all morning. Theresa, while you were sulking in your room, he was busy making these noodles, thinking of you. Think about your attitude this morning, and whether it was justified."

Theresa pursed her lips, looking at Thomas with a puzzled expression. "Since when do you know how to make noodles?"

Noticing Theresa's softening demeanor, Thomas felt a surge of pride, thinking to himself, 'Ben's advice really paid off. Although the romantic lines were a bit cliché, this recipe book definitely worked its

magic.'

Thomas eagerly explained, "I'm a medical student, you know that, right?"

Mrs. Austin looked at Thomas with interest. "Yes, studying medicine is such a noble pursuit."

smiled and said, "We medical students have strong practical skills. Kneading dough is nothing to dissecting a body. Have you ever seen human intestines? They look a lot like noodles, long and slender, and also..."

he could finish, both Theresa and Mrs. Austin rushed to the bathroom, followed by the sounds of

etching.

Chapter 317

"Well..." Thomas looked at Mr. Austin innocently.

Mr. Austin calmly sipped his noodles and said, "Don't worry, women are just more squeamish." A few minutes later...

Theresa and Mrs. Austin returned to the dining table.

"Eat up, the noodles are getting soggy," Thomas said warmly.

Theresa and Mrs. Austin glanced at the noodles and couldn't help but recall Thomas's graphic description of intestines, making them feel queasy again.

“No, no, I’m full already,” Mrs. Austin said, trying to hold back her discomfort.

“I’m full too,” Theresa said calmly.

Thomas’s face fell with disappointment. “You hardly ate anything...”

After the meal...

Mrs. Austin asked Thomas to rest and went to wash the dishes with Theresa. Theresa glanced at her mother and asked, “Are you still speaking well of him now?” Mrs. Austin’s stomach was still not settled down.

She composed herself and said, “Why wouldn’t I? Thomas seems like a good person. Honest and sincere, and he treats you well. It’s hard to find someone like that. Theresa, you should really consider it.”

Theresa fell silent.

Unable to hold back, Mrs. Austin asked, “Tell me the truth, Theresa. I know your personality. If you had no interest in Thomas, you wouldn’t have gone on so many dates with him, even if I pushed you. But if you do like him, why are you pushing him away?”

A flicker of guilt crossed Theresa’s eyes. “Mom, don’t talk nonsense. When did I ever show interest in him?” “A mother knows her daughter best. Are you sure you want to argue with me about this?” Mrs. Austin said calmly.

Feeling unnerved under her mother’s gaze, Theresa finally admitted in a soft voice, “He... actually has someone who he’s liked for a long time.”

Mrs. Austin was taken aback to hear that. "Is he two-timing?"

Theresa quickly shook her head. "No, it's not like that."

Mrs. Austin breathed a sigh of relief and asked, "Is he still involved with that person?"

Again, Theresa shook her head. "No."

After months of closed-door training and filming, she was sure that Thomas and Monica were indeed not in contact with each other.

Mrs. Austin was completely reassured and said, "Then it's just a thing of the past."

Theresa looked anxious and said, "But how can we be sure he's truly moved on from her? How can we guarantee he won't go back to her?"

Mrs. Austin smiled with a glint of wisdom in her eyes. "Theresa, when it comes to love, you can't always be looking back and forth. If you like someone, you need to seize the moment. If you're always worried, you'll never find happiness."

"But Mom..." Theresa still seemed lost.

Mrs. Austin said, "My suggestion is to start trying with Thomas. But remember, in love, a woman should always keep a clear head. If the situation you fear does arise, this clarity will help you pull away in time."

After speaking, she patted Theresa on the shoulder and left the room.

Theresa stood there, staring at the running faucet, her expression a mix of confusion and contemplation. She admitted it.

She had a good impression of Thomas.

But she did have a lot of scruples.

Monica's presence was one thing.

But the other concern was the rapid change in his attitude.

Just the day before, he had been mocking and sarcastic towards her.

Then, suddenly, he claimed he wanted to pursue her.

What happened that night was something Theresa knew all too well.

That night...

She and Thomas had inadvertently crossed a line they shouldn't have.

Was his pursuit of her truly because he liked her, or was it out of a sense of obligation? Theresa didn't know.

After a while...

She emerged from her reverie.

Thomas was sitting on the sofa, engaging Mr. and Mrs. Austin in a lively conversation. As long as he steered clear of topics related to dissection, he was the perfect conversationalist. 3/6

Mr. and Mrs. Austin were both amused by him.

Observing this, Theresa felt, somewhat surprisingly, that the scene was harmonious. She pursed her lips and suddenly approached Thomas.

Noticing her, he instinctively stood up.

“Let's go outside and talk,” she said calmly.

“Okay.” Thomas nodded quickly.

Theresa led the way out.

“Ill come and visit you again tomorrow,” Thomas said to Mr. and Mrs. Austin before hurrying after Theresa.

“Tomorrow again?” Theresa thought, her brow twitching slightly.

The two walked in silence to the entrance of the complex.

Suddenly, Theresa stopped.

Thomas stopped too.

She turned to face him and asked directly, “Do you like me?”

“| thought | made that clear already,” he replied, looking somewhat helpless.

Theresa bit her lip, then said, “If it's because of what happened that night, you really don't have to do this. It's a modern world now, a one-night stand isn't a big deal...”

Thomas frowned and cut her off. "You think I'm pursuing you because of that night?"

"What else could explain your sudden change of attitude?" Theresa looked at him, searching for answers.

Well... It was really hard to explain.

Thomas let out a wry smile. "Theresa, I've made plenty of foolish mistakes, and it's normal you really think I'm the kind of person who would commit to someone just because of an accident?"

Theresa was momentarily speechless,

He continued earnestly, "I know | haven't done everything right, b

please believe like you. Theresa, I'm

serious about wanting to spend my life with you."

Theresa pursed her lips.

Thomas didn't look like he was joking.

Was he serious?

"One last question," she said, fixing her gaze on him.

Thomas's heart raced as he asked nervously, "What is it?"

Theresa narrowed her eyes and asked, "Did | really gain weight?"

This question struck Thomas speechless.

He stammered, "No, no. I... | said that mainly for..."

Seeing his nervous reaction, Theresa suddenly burst into laughter..

She was still dressed shabbily.

But when she smiled, Thomas somehow felt that the whole world was bright. He stared at her, momentarily lost for words.

Feeling embarrassed under his gaze, she cleared her throat and said, "Three months." 5/6

Chapi

"What?" Thomas didn't catch on at first.

Theresa's cheeks flushed, but she said, "L

sign a contract to date for three time, we'll of us disadrees, we'll break up with no conditions."

Having said this, she looked at him seriously. "If you're willing, we'll sign the contract. If not, then..."
Before she could finish, Thomas eagerly said, "I'm willing, I'm very willing!"

Acontractual relationship was better than nothing at all.

Thomas's gaze was intense as he looked at her. "When do we sign the contract?"

His eagerness made Theresa's cheeks warm, and she turned away. "Wait for my notice."

"But when exactly..." Thomas started to ask.

But Theresa had already started to run away.

Watching her retreating figure, Thomas stood there for a long while, letting out a series of goofy laughs.

Chapter 318

After a while...

Ben received a call from Thomas.

Thomas was so excited that his voice trembled.

“Ben, you’re my savior!”

Hearing this, Ben was speechless.

Thomas said excitedly. “Thanks to your advice, Theresa has agreed to date me.”

Ben was at a loss for words.

How could he not know what idea he had come up with?

Meanwhile, Thomas kept expressing his gratitude profusely.

Ben replied coolly, “No need to thank me, it was nothing.”

But Thomas’s gratitude intensified, and he went on, “Finding someone experienced like you was the right choice. If you ever quit being a CEO, you could totally start a class teaching how to woo girls.”

“You flatter me,” Ben replied.

“No, no, you deserve the praise.” Thomas continued with his flowery words.

Eventually, he said, “You should’ve seen me today. I cooked noodles for Theresa at her place, and she was so moved that she practically begged to be my girlfriend. I had to reluctantly agree after a great deal of persuasion.”

After boasting, Thomas hung up.

Ben was left bewildered.

How could he successfully pursue her?

Ben mused to himself, “Do I really have such a talent?”

In the evening...

Ben and Susan were heading home together.

As soon as they got in the car, they said at the same time, “Thomas and Theresa are together.”

They exchanged a glance.

Susan asked, “Did you know? Can you free up some time tomorrow?”

“Tomorrow?” Ben was momentarily taken aback. “I can get some time. What’s up?”

“You don’t know?” Susan said, “Theresa said that she and Thomas are going to sign a dating contract. She wants us to witness it.”

“A dating contract?” Ben was somewhat perplexed.

Susan then briefly explained the contents of this contract..

Recalling Thomas’s exaggerated boasts from their earlier phone conversation, Ben couldn’t help but.

burst into laughter.

“What are you laughing at?” Susan asked, somewhat puzzled.

“Nothing,” Ben replied coolly. “I just remembered something amusing.”

Susan gave him a perplexed look but didn’t inquire further.

The next day...

Thomas got up before dawn and dressed meticulously, ready for his big day.

Once he felt that it was the appropriate time, he left his house.

“Going to the Austin residence again?” Mrs. Smith asked with a smile.

“Not today. I’m meeting Theresa for a date,” Thomas replied, brimming with pride.

At that, Mrs. Smith’s eyes lit up. “She agreed to go out with you?”

Thomas said, “After today, we’ll officially be boyfriend and girlfriend.”

As for the three-month deadline...

Thomas didn't take it to heart at all.

He was confident that he could extend the contract forever.

"Good, good, go on then," Mrs. Smith said excitedly, shooing him out.

In the end, Thomas was driven out of the house.

At the agreed-upon café...

Thomas arrived an hour early.

But Theresa hadn't arrived yet.

Thomas ordered some food first and then waited there with a happy expression.

About 30 minutes later, Theresa arrived.

She had even arrived in advance, so she didn't expect Thomas to arrive earlier than her.

She couldn't help but be stunned. "So early?"

Thomas grinned and said, "It's our first date, so I had to be early. Theresa, do you have the contract ready? I can sign it anytime."

"Just wait a moment," she said.

Thomas wondered, 'Wait a minute?'

Then Theresa stood up and waved towards the entrance. "Susan, over here."

At that moment, a bad feeling crept into Thomas's heart.

He turned to see Ben looking at him with a half-smile.

Then, Susan and Ben joined them at the table.

Ben raised an eyebrow, asking, "Crying and begging? You had to refuse several times?"

What?

Susan and Theresa looked at each other blankly. They didn't know what Ben was talking about.

Thomas's face went pale.

Thomas quickly tried to defuse the situation. "It's all a misunderstanding, Ben. What would you like to drink? I'll order for you."

He desperately signaled Ben with his eyes.

Ben smiled and didn't press Thomas further, smoothly changing the subject.

At that moment, Theresa took out a contract and said, "Thomas, to ensure that this contract is enforced, I specifically asked Susan and Mr. Landor to be our witnesses."

Her serious demeanor made Thomas equally earnest. "Okay."

“Please review the contract, and if there’s any issue, feel free to bring it up.” She then handed him the contract.

Thomas read through it carefully.

The contract essentially contained three terms:

During the relationship, intimate actions are limited to holding hands.

The relationship will not be announced on public social media.

If either party wishes to terminate the contract within three months, It ends Immediately.

And at the end of the three months, if either party refuses to renew it, it’s considered an unconditional breakup.

These three items were not hard to accept.

Thomas agreed right away.

With Ben and Susan witnessing, Theresa and Thomas each signed their names, followed by Ben and Susan signing as witnesses.

The contract was now officially in effect.

There were three copies of the contract.

Theresa, Thomas, and Susan and Ben put away a copy each.

After securing her copy, Theresa sighed in relief.

The presence of this formal contract a sense of rationality in this relationship.

These three months were a buffer period.

The two of them could escape at any time.

“Go ahead with your date, Ben and I will be leaving now.” Susan stood up, ready to leave.

“Wait.” Theresa grabbed Susan’s arm, looking at her imploringly. “Why don’t we double date?”

She felt unexpectedly nervous.

She had been on a date with Thomas before..

All their past dates were either full of bickering or arguing.

Now that they were an official couple, things should change, right?

Theresa felt unprepared for the shift.

Thomas desperately signaled Ben not to agree.

Ben, with a smile, sat down calmly with Susan. “Actually, it’s been a while since Susan and I were on a

date too.”

Susan looked at Ben curiously, whispering, “Are we really going to be the third wheel here?”

Ben replied coolly, “Don’t you want to enjoy the show?”

Hearing that, Susan was speechless.

Who in the world doesn’t enjoy a good spectacle?

Susan immediately straightened up. “Right, Ben and I will seize the opportunity to have a date too.”

“Okay.” Theresa sighed in relief.

Thomas gave Ben a look of despair.

Ben pretended not to see it.

Thomas sighed, resigning himself to the situation.

They had some coffee in the cafe.

Ben raised an eyebrow, asking, “What’s next on the agenda?”

Thomas had actually planned an activity. He cleared his throat and said, “There’s a classical orchestral performance this morning. But I didn’t know that you guys were coming, so I only bought two tickets. And, this orchestra is quite famous, so all the tickets are sold out now.”

Thomas hinted frantically: So, you’d better not be the third wheel.

“It’s fine.” Ben smiled slightly. “Which orchestra is it? I’ll see if I can get two more tickets.”

Thomas was at a loss for words.

“What orchestra is it?” Theresa also looked at Thomas.

Thomas grudgingly mentioned the name of the orchestra.

Ben made a call and easily obtained the tickets.

Thomas was utterly frustrated.

“So this is what friendship is!

‘This is what a bro is!’

He really felt like he had made a blind choice.

Chapter 319

At the entrance of the concert hall.

Thomas discreetly fell back a few steps, lowering his voice. “Bro, this is my first official date with Theresa, please don’t mess it up for me.”

Ben also spoke quietly, “Relax, the tickets I bought aren’t next to you. You two can still have your own world.”

Thomas finally breathed a sigh of relief, giving Ben a thumbs-up. “Noble.”

Minutes later.

The concert began..

Thomas felt utterly defeated.

Ben hadn't bought tickets next to them but right behind them!

However, the tickets that Ben had bought were right behind them

Just as Thomas was about to do something, he felt two pairs of eyes gossiping from behind.

On the stage.

The music flowed melodiously.

Both Thomas and Theresa were focused on the performance.

But their faces were getting redder and redder.

The lights were dim.

Finally, Thomas couldn't resist and stealthily reached out his hand.

He silently reached out and held the hand of Theresa.

Theresa slightly moved her hand but didn't pull away.

A faint smile appeared on Thomas's lips.

He was so engrossed that he only came back to reality when Theresa withdrew her hand at the end of the concert.

Standing up, Thomas saw Ben and Susan smiling at him.

Thomas felt his scalp go numb.

"I sent you some photos, check them out." Ben patted his shoulder.

Thomas opened his phone.

Then he was speechless.

How bored were this couple? Instead of enjoying the concert, they had taken photos of them.

They had a lot of photos.

Looking at the photos of him and Theresa holding hands tightly, a softness flickered in Thomas's eyes.

Since he had held her hands, he did not intend to let go of them.

Susan, still smiling, said, "We've enjoyed the concert, so Ben and I will head off now. You two continue your date."

Theresa wanted to add more, but this time, Ben and Susan didn't want to intrude and quickly left.

Left alone with Thomas, Theresa suddenly felt a wave of nervousness.

"Shall we go for a walk?" Thomas said.

"Sure," Theresa replied softly.

Thomas carefully took her hand.

Theresa blushed, but didn't pull away.

Outside, there was a chill in the air, with a few small snowflakes drifting down.

They strolled aimlessly.

None of them spoke, but Thomas felt unprecedentedly peaceful in his heart.

Thomas cleared his throat, trying to start a conversation. "Mr. Witt said our movie is starting its first promotional campaign."

"Yeah," Theresa responded lightly.

Their movie was still in post-production. Although the release was some time away, it had received poor reviews due to Henri's previous slander. To counter this, the team planned to release some teasers to improve public perception before the official release.

"I've created a tweet account and we can share posts together," Thomas said.

"Yeah," Theresa continued to respond softly.

Thomas continued to chat casually. Theresa was no longer as tough as before, but just responded gently for a moment.

Thomas looked at her beautiful profile, feeling a bit unaccustomed. “Theresa? Are you sick? You seem a bit off.”

Theresa snapped at him in annoyance. “Are you cursing me?”

Relieved, Thomas replied, “Good, good, you’re not sick then.”

Theresa was speechless.

Theresa, expressionless, pinched Thomas.

Thomas winced in pain, but his smile was bright.

– Due to Thomas’s shameless behavior, Theresa quickly showed her fierce side, which Thomas surprisingly seemed to enjoy.

Soon, they began an uninhibited and open relationship.

That day.

Love in Bitter Winter was about to release its first promotional clip.

Before the release, Mr. Witt tagged everyone in the crew’s group, asking them to help share it.

As the lead actors, Thomas and Theresa naturally had to participate.

Upon receiving the tag, Theresa quickly logged onto Twitter.

She opened the official page of Love in Bitter Winter.

The first advertisement had been released.

This was in response to Henri's previous claims that Rose's poor acting affected his performance.

It just so happened that this advertisement was a show of Theresa acting.

On the advertisement.

It was a three-minute-long inner play by Theresa.

For three whole minutes, Theresa unfolded her performance layer by layer, with emotions escalating until a climactic burst, a veritable masterclass in acting.

Theresa shared the advertisement on her Rose's account, modestly captioning. [New to acting, still learning. I appreciate everyone's guidance.]

Theresa was still very modest.

When Susan reposted the advertisement, she had no scruples.

She tagged Theresa, brimming with pride. [This is my bosom female friend. Who said her acting was cringe-worthy?]

Susan's post was rather bold.

But previously, Henri had so harshly criticized Theresa that expectations for her were low.

But now, Theresa handed over such a perfect answer sheet.

At that moment, the crowd's eyes started to shine.

Even though Susan was blatantly boasting, under her tweet post, there were no objections, only praises.

Susan was overjoyed with the response.

However, Henri was far from happy.

His previous disparagement of Theresa's skills backfired with the release of this advertisement, putting Henri in the hot seat.

People started questioning Henri on social media.

[With acting like that, how can you call it cringe-worthy?]

[I'm starting to think there was more to the story about the male lead being changed.]

[I agree. We only heard Henri's side before, but with this clip, the crew seems to have said it all.]

[It's just a three-minute clip. How can you say Rose is a good actress based on this? Who knows if she's cringe-worthy in other scenes.]

[Our Henri would never lie. If Rose isn't genuinely bad at acting, then she must have intentionally.

sabotaged our Henri.]

Under Henri's tweet post, fans and bystanders argued fiercely.

After watching the three-minute advertisement, Henri was seething.

Back when he acted alongside Rose, he found her somewhat talented, but not breathtakingly so.

What changed in these few months that transformed Rose so much?

Originally, even if Rose's performance wasn't terrible, he could've exploited any minor flaw to drag her down.

But now, Rose's acting was nothing short of stunning.

Even if he wanted to be picky, he couldn't do it.

Even if he wanted to nitpick, it wouldn't be Rose who'd be ridiculed, but him!

"Mrs. Landor is openly supporting Rose," his agent noted, looking at Henri. "Their relationship is much closer than you think. Are you sure you want to continue this feud?"

Henri scoffed. "With their vast differences in status and position, what true friendship can there be? Mrs. Landor's support for Rose is just because of her investment in the project."

The agent frowned. "I suggest you drop this matter. Don't respond on Twitter, just let it cool off. Rose is just a newcomer, the issue will die down soon."

"Fine," Henri agreed.

The agent left, feeling relieved.

Henri browsed Twitter for a while longer, then snorted coldly.

As a renowned actor, he refused to be outdone by a newcomer like Theresa, nor would he concede defeat?

How was this possible!

He couldn't believe that Theresa was truly flawless.

Chapter 320

Henri wasn't a fool.

He decided not to entangle himself further with the Love in Bitter Winter production team.

It brought him no benefits.

His target was, and always had been, Rose alone.

After the three-minute video was released, he couldn't discredit her acting anymore.

But that didn't mean he couldn't find other ways to attack her.

Henri covertly had people gather information on Rose.

Rose seemed to have appeared out of nowhere in the modeling world. Her life before entering the industry, her family background, everything was a mystery.

Even her real name hadn't been exposed.

The strangest thing was.

Despite Rose's growing fame, there were no candid shots of her outside of work.

It was as if she vanished from the public eye once her work was done.

Rose was trying so hard to hide her real identity. Henri concluded that Rose's real identity might be a

little shameful.

Was her family an embarrassment?

Or was there something in her past she couldn't reveal?

Henri spent a hefty sum to question those who had worked with Rose.

1/6

Dreame

INSTALL

From their responses, he pieced together a shocking conclusion.

First.

Rose's family might have a criminal history.

Why did he say that?

According to an insider, he had once heard Rose answer a phone call.

Rose sounded helpless. "Dad, please handle Mom. She's been arrested again? How long will she be out this time? I can't live like this if she keeps doing this."

It seemed Rose's mother was a repeat offender, likely getting detained by the police regularly.

No wonder Rose kept her background a secret.

Second.

Rose's educational background was very low.

The evidence was as follows.

It was an insider who said.

Once, they talked about academic qualifications together. Everyone talked about some academic experience, but Rose only smiled awkwardly.

They asked her if she knew about Anaville University

Rose's face showed a very embarrassed smile.

It was suspected that she didn't know this top domestic university at all.

Combining these pieces of information, Henri found a new way to smear Rose.

He chuckled coldly to himself.

Rose, you think I can't touch you just because your acting is untouchable?

This time, he would let her know what it meant to be afraid of gossip.

No matter how good your acting was, if your reputation was ruined, you can't turn things around.

Henri carefully orchestrated a smear campaign using a myriad of fake accounts to spread the fabricated information.

He didn't just focus on the claims about Rose's mother being a habitual offender and Rose's low education. Henri added rumors about Rose sleeping her way to the top and associating with several influential figures.

In the world of defamation, a mix of truth and lies was typical.

Once this kind of news was released, even if it was fake, the person involved could not easily prove it.

Especially since Rose was a newcomer with little fan support, these rumors spread unchecked, with no one to clarify on her behalf. On the other hand, Henri had hired numerous experienced internet trolls.

He was confident this time Rose wouldn't escape unscathed.

On this day.

It was the day for Anaville University to publish results.

"Theresa, you're top of the class again," a classmate said as Theresa walked in. "First in written exams and the only one with an A+ on the final paper. You're unmatched."

Theresa was peerless in her academic performance, and despite any jealousy from others, no one could challenge her standing.

Evan also knew about Theresa's grades and his eyes flickered.

Indeed.

Theresa was still doing well.

If he didn't act, the Direct Entry Ph. D. program admission would surely go to Theresa.

Every man for himself, and the heavens and the earth for him. Therefore, he could not be blamed for secretly using means.

Theresa, anticipating her own results, merely smiled at her classmates' admiration, feeling no particular excitement.

Having collected her results and with nothing else to attend to.

Theresa was ready to leave.

“Theresa, wait a minute.” At this moment, Bryan came in.

Theresa stopped in her tracks. Bryan looked at Theresa in confusion.

Bryan smiled at her, the attitude seemingly friendly. “Theresa, there’s been an anonymous report against you. There are some matters you might need to explain.”

“A report?” Theresa was momentarily baffled.

‘What could I possibly have done to warrant a report?’ she thought

Evan’s gaze flickered slightly, and he lowered his head a bit.

The classroom buzzed with whispers and speculation.

Theresa was being reported?

What for?

As a well-known student in the Zathinese Department, Theresa’s sudden report piqued everyone’s curiosity.

But with Theresa taken to the office by Bryan, they were left to guess the reasons.

In the office.

Theresa looked at Bryan, puzzled. “Mr. Jones, may I ask what this is about?”

Given Theresa's outstanding academic record, Mr. Jones was quite amiable.

After asking Theresa to sit down, he said, "Theresa, while your grades are indeed excellent, there have been complaints that you've been missing a significant amount of classes over the past two years."

Theresa pursed her lips. "The department's policy allows students to study at home if they can maintain their grades."

"Yes, that's true," Mr. Jones said, "But you've missed almost an entire semester of classes this term. Isn't that a bit excessive?"

Theresa hesitated before nodding.

This semester, due to Love in Bitter Winter, her absences W

indeed notable.

"If you are absent from class, what is the proper reason? Truth be told, the school will not say anything about it. However, according to the report, you are absent from class. It seems you are in a relationship?" Mr. Jones's face turned serious. "According to the report, the one you are in love with is a

socialite. Additionally, your relationship is not normal. It is said that you and him... are being kept as mistresses?"

A sugar daddy arrangement?

Theresa was stunned.

She quickly said, "Mr. Jones, this is completely slander."

Mr. Jones spoke kindly, "I believe you. But Theresa, we're in a crucial phase of determining candidates for Direct Entry Ph. D. program. As you know, the professors place great emphasis on students' character. If you can't account for your whereabouts these past four months, the school might find it difficult to advocate for you."

"I..." Theresa hesitated.

Explaining her whereabouts would mean revealing her identity as Rose.

Although coming clean wouldn't be a big issue, it could cause quite a stir.

"Is there something you're hesitant about?" Bryan asked.

Theresa sighed. "I can explain. But... this matter might seem a bit unbelievable."