

## **Divorce 1441**

### Chapter 1441 Pointing Fingers and Cursing

I pretended to be cheerful as I approached, but the old woman stopped me before I could reach her rocking chair.

"Girl, I'm not a Cross!" Her tone was sharp. "Atlas, where did you find such a rash girl?"

I immediately interjected, "Am I rash? But I've known for a long time that Atlas's grandmother is surnamed Cross, right, honey?"

"Right, my grandmother is indeed surnamed Cross." Atlas spoke to me in a lovely manner.

I then pretended to look puzzled and glanced at the old woman in the rocking chair. "So, who are you, Grandma?"

"How insolent! Where did such an impudent brat come from?" The old woman was getting angry at being played by me.

"This is my home! I was just about to ask you the same question! How can you sit so comfortably in my home? And what's with the thing you're sitting on? It's ruining the attractiveness of this hall. It's really tacky!"

I ruthlessly criticized the rocking chair beneath her without holding back

"Honey, I'm back. Please quickly get rid of this thing for me. It's so out of place, isn't it? Clearly something concocted by someone trying too hard to be fashionable! It's so ugly!" I pointed at the rocking chair.

Actually, the rocking chair was innocent. Its style and color were quite nice. Furthermore, with Celine and Adeline's financial resources, how could they buy cheap goods? It was just placed in the wrong location.

If this chair were placed in a corner by a French window, in a sunny conservatory, or under a porch, it would be pleasant. Unfortunately, it was placed in the hall, which really didn't match and seemed obtrusive.

"Hey!" The old woman abruptly sat up straight and pointed at me after slamming the rocking chair's armrest.

Before she could say anything, Atlas's expression immediately turned cold. His icy gaze pierced Adeline like a sword.

The old woman held back the words she was about to say.

My words had clearly made Celine, who had always restrained herself, somewhat displeased. As a proud person, she couldn't take the insults from someone she hadn't even given a cursory glance.

"Atlas, you've spoiled your wife. At home, we can put up with a little bit. But if she speaks so recklessly in

public, it might make a mockery of

the Pierce family." Celine's tone was gentle, but her gaze towards me was filled with extreme disdain and hostility.

Atlas calmly responded, "I don't think she's wrong."

This statement almost made me burst out laughing, but Celine's face turned a little red, though she still suppressed it. "Tsk tsk... the morals of today's society are declining!" Adeline clicked her tongue disdainfully and said, "No manners at all!"

I smiled and looked at the old woman innocently. "Madam, you're absolutely right!"

She snorted scornfully, sent me a scornful look, and appeared somewhat dissatisfied with what I had said.

I continued, "Every era has its scum, right, Grandma?"

Atlas's eyebrows raised slightly; he knew what I was going to say next. This expression really motivated me.

I continued with an innocent

expression, "Like becoming a

mistress and shamelessly climbing into bed while the wife is away, using sinister means to harm

others..." I continued to enumerate, looking serious and pointing fingers.

The atmosphere in the hall suddenly became strange...

Chapter 1442 Never Seen the World

The mother and daughter's faces turned red.

I said, "Anyway... wait! After all, even after doing all these vulgar and despicable things, they can still brazenly spout nonsense, flaunting their virtues in public and behind people's backs. Such people are everywhere, right?"

I was really on the verge of laughing out loud.

I held back my laughter and continued, "I just said a few words about the chair, and it's considered a sign of the decline of morality! Grandma, you haven't seen the world! Don't go around accusing people. I've never liked that kind of thing!

"As for manners? People without manners naturally don't understand a refined upbringing! Otherwise, how could they engage in such underhanded deeds? Grandma, you simply don't understand our upbringing, just as we don't understand yours!"

After saying that, I looked at the mother and daughter with great seriousness, pretending to be carefree.

However, I was sure they wouldn't dare respond. After all, it's a matter of dignity.

The more one engages in these abhorrent behaviors, the greater their fear of having their masks taken off.

Adeline's meticulously manicured fingernails were digging into the armrest of the chair. Perhaps she had never encountered a "rash" girl like me who didn't play by the rules!

I exclaimed, "Madam, be careful with your nails! It would be a pity if they broke!"

Just as Celine was about to speak, the butler walked in and reported, "The guests have arrived!"

We all looked outside and indeed saw a group of guests.

Atlas and I glanced at each other. It seemed that Celine's invitation today wasn't so simple.

He smiled at me and said, "Come! Let me show you around!"

"Okay!" I reached out my hand for Atlas to hold, then looked at Celine without changing my expression and said, "Excuse us!"

Celine was seething with anger, but she dared not show it.

She had been acting a little furious before, but now she was grinning and saying to the butler, "Please, welcome the guests!"

As she greeted the guests with a

smile, Atlas had already led me through the west corridor of the h walking toward another building as if no one else was around.

The hall here was the central axis

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the entire building, with spacious corridors on both sides extending to the left and right, but the layout was completely different.

According to Atlas's introduction, Louis and Tammy lived with Atlas's family on the east side, and our White family of three lived in the west corridor.

Back then, the Louis couple were as close as siblings to my parents, and they had absolute trust in each other in their careers. Therefore, for the convenience of their career, the two families had always lived together as one, without distinction between them.

However, when Atlas led me into the building on the left, Atlas's handsome face became more and more serious, and there were signs of calm before the storm.

Chapter 1443 The Disappointment

I noticed a shift in his emotions. I asked softly while looking at him, "It's different now, isn't it?"

"Yeah." His eyes swept across the layout of the entire west side, and he said coldly, "It's no longer the same as before."

I knew exactly why Atlas was angry. If the place had been tampered with, the chances of us finding any traces of the past were basically zero.

Not to mention any signs of where my mother had left things.

Putting his arm around my shoulder and patting it, Atlas reassured me, "I had expected as much."

Despite his words, his expression was depressing. I knew there was still some anger in him because he couldn't help me recall the past and felt regretful.

"But this also indicates something..." Atlas finished speaking and looked at me.

I looked up at him and continued his thought, "Even if she changed the house, she still couldn't find anything of value by accident! In other words, the things aren't in this building!"

His eyes skittered over his surroundings, and I knew instantly his intention. I said nothing more.

The modifications in the internal details here were reasonable, considering it had been 20 years. It wouldn't be the same after Celine came in. After all, she felt guilty!

She had to find a way to change or erase any signs of our two families living here.

Although I didn't remember what it was like before, I thought the main structure was still there.

"When was the last time you came back?" I asked.

Atlas thought for a moment and said, "It's been many years since I came back here. The last time I came back, it was still the same, but now everything has changed!"

I scoffed, "She thinks that by changing the layout, it's really hers?"

"We're working on it," Atlas patted my shoulder reassuringly.

A sense of disappointment permeated between the two of us. We both knew that the chances of finding clues to the BZ plan from here were now very slim.

But this was the real purpose of our return to Nocturnia.

"Let's go to the greenhouse!" I looked at him, wanting to divert his attention. "When I came, I dreamt about the garden!"

"Then I'll take you there," he said.

He took my hand and walked out of the main building through the side door at the end of the corridor. "When our mothers were still alive, they always went out from here to the garden."

I was curious. The garden in my dream was too vague, but I remembered clearly that it had a tiny pond with lotus flowers and beautiful sunlight.

As we stepped out of the side door, we walked along a quiet path paved with stone slabs with lush plants on both sides. The backyard was quite spacious, with large lawns and various rare flowers.

On the left was a large glass greenhouse.

I broke free from Atlas's hand and walked a bit faster in the direction of the glass house.

But strangely, walking along this path gave me a feeling of familiarity. In my dream, I was chasing after my mother's footsteps.

Atlas hastened to follow up after noticing that I was moving too quickly and said, "Slow down a bit, watch your step... Don't rush!"

I looked at him mischievously and said, "I've been here in my dreams."

"More than just in your dreams. When you were little, you followed Aunt Lucille here!" He caught up to me, holding my hand and controlling my pace. "Really?" I asked with some doubt.

I did not remember having any interest in flowers or plants in my later memories. It might be related to my foster mother-my current mother! I never saw my mother taking care of plants.

Moreover, I was too busy with my career after leaving home for college and joining the Murphy family.

During the exhausting days, I work!

collapse like a corpse when I

returned home. How could I have the leisure for such elegance?

When my career started to show results, I gave birth to Ava. For me, Ava was the most beautiful flower.

So, a garden was definitely a dream for me, a magically enticing place.

Chapter 1444 The Hunched Old Man

As I stepped into the greenhouse, the sunlight filling the room made me feel a long-lost warmth. The flowers and plants were indeed well cared for. At this season, the orchids exuded a delicate and elegant fragrance throughout the room.

Surprisingly, butterflies were flying around in the greenhouse, which was a wonderful sight I could hardly imagine.

I couldn't wait to go in. My mind was only focused on the pond full of water lilies, without stopping to appreciate the other flowers and plants. Sure enough, I could see the little pond, but sadly, not a single water lily could be seen-all that was swimming in it was koi fish!

I stood by the pond in a daze, and Atlas hugged me from behind, "What's wrong?"

I turned my head, pointed to the pond, and said to Atlas, "There used to be water lilies planted here! They looked beautiful when they bloomed!" Atlas looked a bit bewildered. He asked in surprise, "Do you remember?"

I shook my head and said softly, "No, it's just from my dream! My mother showed me her brooch here, and the blooming water lilies in the pond looked exactly like the flower on the brooch. It was so vivid!"

"Don't worry, there will be more in the future!" Atlas comforted me.

My emotions were overwhelmed by another wave of disappointment. It seemed that this place was no longer the same as it used to be. People were gone, and the past would never return.

What would it be like if we could go back and start over? A sense of sadness overwhelmed me, and my eyes became misty. "A-Are you Mr. Atlas?"

I was astonished when I heard a voice behind us that neither of us had heard before. I looked at the person behind us in surprise.

A hunched old man walked over from behind us. He looked quite tiny, with a wrinkly face and snowy white hair, as he stared out at us. A sliver of light appeared in his already cloudy eyes.

"Are you... Uncle Kenny?" Atlas asked eagerly as he slowly released his hold on my hand and turned to face the elderly man.

As soon as the old man heard

Atlas's question, he immediately

then tears filled his eyes

"Mr Atlas!

You finally came back!"

He trembled as he approached, reaching out his hands eagerly.

Atlas quickly stepped forward and grabbed the old man's hands, but the old man promptly withdrew his dirt-covered hands and said, "Oh! Dirty!" Without hesitation, Atlas reached out again and held the old man's hands with his own. "Uncle Kenny, you're still alive!"

"Mr. Atlas, how could I dare to die without seeing you?" He choked up, tears streaming down his face.

"H-How did..." Atlas's gaze locked onto the hunched back behind him.

"Mr. Atlas!" he sobbed, "Where have you been all these years? Why didn't you come back? You've made this old servant wait so long in agony!" With reddish-tinged eyes, Atlas turned to face him and said, "Uncle Kenny... you used to be..."

"Let's not talk about that. C-Come

with me! The old man quickly wiped

away his tears with his sleeve and

grabbed Atlas's hand, but then hesitated and gave me a doubtful glance.

Atlas quickly reached out and pulled me over, "Uncle Kenny, look, this is Stella, my wife!"

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As soon as the old man heard it was Stella, he immediately widened his eyes. He leaned toward me, and his

mouth trembled violently, "Stella?

I-Is she really Ms. Stella?"

He turned to Atlas for confirmation.

Atlas nodded firmly and said, "Yes! She's Ms. Stella, my wife!"

The old man cheered, "Really?"

He then clasped his hands together and raised them above his head; he bowed to the sky and said, "Goodness begets goodness!"

I felt a sharp rush of emotion in my nose as I watched him hunch over and make feeble bows repeatedly. I felt choked up.

I quickly reached out and supported his arms, "Uncle Kenny!"

Suddenly, he nervously grabbed Atlas again, "Mr. Atlas, come with me!"

Atlas and I exchanged glances and quickly followed Uncle Kenny as he walked fast.

Chapter 1445 Two Peculiar Keys

We didn't know what Uncle Kenny wanted to do, but seeing his urgency, we were certain that something important was going on.

He rushed forward, making his way quickly to the other side of the flower house with wobbly steps.

There was a small room in the corner, just outside the side door of the greenhouse. It was dim and narrow, with only a bed and a broken table. The area was somewhat messy, with various gardening tools within.

He reached the door of the room and turned back to stop us. "It's dirty inside. Please wait!"

Uncle Kenny blocked us from entering, then his frail figure turned and disappeared into the room. Soon, we heard a clattering sound from inside. Although we couldn't see his actions, the sound conveyed his urgency.

Before long, he came out with his face covered in dirt, and he held a dirty metal box in his hand.

His eyes glanced vigilantly towards the entrance of the greenhouse from a distance.

Then, he anxiously tried to open the box right in front of us, but he couldn't steady his hands because of his nervousness. Atlas quickly reached out and held the rusty box firmly.

He wrenched open the lid with shaky hands, tilted the box, and poured out a grayish-white powder that looked like old powdered milk and had a slight mouldy odor.

After that, he reached in with his calloused, wrinkled hand and pulled out a small bundle wrapped in layers of torn cloth.

I looked at the dirty object in surprise and glanced at Atlas, unsure of what it was.

Then, he anxiously glanced at the passage outside the glass house, and I understood that he was afraid of someone coming. "It's alright, my man is outside!" Atlas reassured him.

Indeed, Tris, who came with us, was outside and hadn't followed.

Upon hearing Atlas's words, he seemed to breathe a sigh of relief but immediately looked back at the item in his hand.

It seemed that this item was very important to him.

He tore off the pieces of cloth with force, fumbling for a while before finally revealing a hidden layer. Surprisingly, there was another smaller bundle wrapped in plastic tape. He struggled to tear it off, his hands shaking with nervousness and urgency.

With his efforts, we finally saw inside there were two peculiar keys. A contented smile appeared on his face as he glanced outside.

"Mr. Atlas, these are the keys Mr. Louis entrusted to me before the incident!" he said, holding out his wrinkled hands to present the items to us. Atlas looked at me, then at Uncle Kenny, and reached out to take the keys. Then, he exchanged a glance with me and whispered, "These should be keys to a bank safe!"

I leaned over to take a look. Atlas handed me the keys, and I carefully examined them. I had never seen this type of key before.

However, the two keys were different-one was a normal-sized key, and the other was a particularly small, delicate key with intricate carvings.

"Uncle Kenny, are you saying that

my father entrusted these two keys to you before the incident?" Atlas bent down and asked Uncle Kenny carefully, their height difference making it necessary for Atlas to bend down and speak softly.

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Uncle Kenny nodded while maintaining a hopeful smile and exclaimed, "Yes, yes! He didn't tell me what these keys were for, so have no idea. He just said, 'These are very important, please keep them safe for me, and whatever you do, don't lose them!'"

Upon hearing his words, I looked at Atlas excitedly, and he glanced back at me. Our thoughts were the same.

Finding something so crucial without effort seemed like a stroke of luck!

Both Atlas and I immediately realized that these keys must be related to the distribution map hidden by Louis.

Chapter 1446 Unexpected Turn of Events

This was an unexpected delight. It seemed like the heavens were playing a joke on us. An incredible opportunity had appeared just as we were utterly desperate.

When Kenny saw that we were both bewildered, he quickly added, "The master also told me that if he didn't come to retrieve them in the future, I should wait until you grow up, then give them to you."

After hearing that, Atlas's eyes suddenly grew moist as he looked at Kenny.

I was moved too. Could Louis have sensed that something was going to happen to him back then?

Regret tore at my heart. I couldn't imagine the pain Atlas must have been feeling.

"I was terrified. I asked the master why he had entrusted such an important thing to me for safekeeping; it didn't seem right. I... I was afraid I wouldn't be able to keep it safe! But the master told me he believed in my loyalty and said I was a trustworthy person," Kenny said. He started crying again, "The master said I was very loyal and trustworthy!"

Atlas nodded solemnly. "Yes, you're very trustworthy. This is very helpful to me, Kenny."

Kenny wiped his eyes and stared at us in shock. He happily said, "Really? That's great! Thank goodness! I was afraid I wouldn't be able to hold on until the day you came back! The heavens have finally opened their eyes!"

After he finished speaking, he bowed again, in an expression of joy.

"But I didn't think... I didn't think my master wouldn't be able to take the keys back himself. My poor master!" After saying that, he lost control of his emotions and knelt on the ground.

Although he was crying quietly, I could feel his heart-wrenching sorrow.

Kenny covered his face and sobbed. "He was such a good person. How is he gone? Your father must have been wronged, Sir. You must avenge him!"

"I will, Kenny!" Atlas reached out to support him.

Kenny said, "When I heard about the master's death, I knew there was something more to it!"

Talking about the events of that year was torture for anyone who had lived here before, let alone Kenny, who his master had acknowledged.

Louis must have truly trusted Kenny from the bottom of his heart. He had dared to entrust those important things to the family gardener.

Kenny was also low-key and inconspicuous. No one would have thought a gardener would have Louis's trust.

Kenny looked at me sadly, saying, "Later... Later, Madam White died unexpectedly too. She was perfectly fine. How did she die so suddenly? They said she died of illness, but i don't believe it. She was in good health. How could she die of illness? It's nonsense..."

"She came to the flower house every day to help me care for the flowers and plants. never saw any signs of illness. How did she die so

suddenly

suddenly? It's impossible! But then, you both disappeared..." Kenny looked helplessly at Atlas. "Lonce tried to ask where you two were, but no one knew a thing."

His crying was heart-wrenching, which showed just how much pain he was in.

"At that time, I had to continue my work in the flower house and didn't dare ask about what happened. People kept being driven away. I didn't want to stay at first. I knew that... that woman was not a good person."

Atlas patted his shoulder and nodded solemnly. "I know."

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"She sent people to search the flower house for a long time and smashed it up. I tried to figure out what they were looking for. Were they looking for what the master left behind? But I had to keep the things the master entrusted to me safe, even if it cost me my life

"Thank you, Kenny," I said sincerely.

"When that woman took over the house here, she fired those people, and some of them disappeared. I suspect... I suspect they're all dead!" Kenny's eyes showed a trace of panic as he said that.

"You don't need to be afraid anymore. I'm back." Atlas comforted Kenny firmly. "This place is still my home."

"Then you need to be careful of her, Sir. She's sinister and vicious. She interrogated all the old people here back then." Kenny reminded us to be cautious.

Chapter 1447 The Sole Old Gardener

"I don't know who told her about it later, but she came here with some people, asking me what the master had said to me. I didn't know what she wanted to know, but I refused to admit that I had any private dealings with the master, even if she wanted to beat me to death. I insisted that I was just a gardener." Kenny wiped his eyes, then continued, "So she beat me half to death and ordered some people to ransack my place. But they found nothing, so it ended there."

"What a viper!" I cursed, then asked, "What happened afterwards?"

"Even though I was seriously injured, she refused to let me get any medical attention. I think she didn't care whether I lived or died. I was just an insignificant ant to her. She wanted me to perish!" Kenny gritted his teeth.

"I persisted, telling myself I couldn't die because I had to fulfill the task the master had entrusted to me. I had to keep the keys he had given me safe, so I would be worthy of the master." He looked at Atlas with a face full of joy.

"You've suffered, Kenny," Atlas said sincerely. His eyes turned slightly red.

"So that was why you were injured?" I asked.

"My injuries took three months to heal. But they didn't heal properly, which gradually resulted in my current condition, and that's how I became a hunchback," he spoke softly and indifferently.

"You never left this place?" Atlas looked at Kenny with gratitude in his eyes.

"I wanted to leave to find you, but I didn't know who to ask. The people here had all changed, and I didn't know who was good or bad. I couldn't take the risk."

Atlas grabbed his hand and nodded seriously to show that he understood.

"Besides, I was worried that I wouldn't be able to discover you, since my health was deteriorating. That's why I stayed." Kenny sighed with relief.

"I knew that it would be best to wait here if I wanted to see you. If you were alive, you would return one day. You would return no matter how far you went, because this is your home."

"Stella wanted to come to the flower house. If she hadn't insisted on visiting this place, I might not have come here, and I wouldn't have known that you were still here," Atlas said sincerely.

"Miss Stella is a lucky star indeed!" Kenny smiled at me.

"You're right. Stella is my lucky star!"

"In the early years, I would sometimes hear about you, but folks in the courtyard started to leave one by one until, eventually, not a single elderly person remained. All I could do was hope against hope that you would return."

He couldn't control his tears. "You don't know how scared I was, Sir. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to fulfill the task the master entrusted to me. I was afraid I'd never see you again! Thank goodness! You're finally back!" Kenny looked up at Atlas with

a face full of tear marking

his neck.

Atlas reached out and hugged Kenny's hunched body, "You've suffered, Kenny."

"I haven't, Sir! The heavens have finally opened their eyes, and I've finally completed the task the master entrusted to me. Now that I've handed the keys to you, I can die in peace!"

"I won't let you die like this. You have to watch me avenge my parents and Lucille. You have to enjoy life with me. I'll get you out of here," Atlas said earnestly.

"I'm content, Sir! I'm glad to see you alive and grown up with Miss Stella. I'm happy you finally returned!" the old man rambled on incoherently. "Where did you hide the keys back then? Why didn't they find them?" I asked curiously.

"Ah, I hid them in the tree trunk. I dodged a bullet there. Later, they cut down a lot of trees in the courtyard, and I was afraid they might get lost, so I took them out and kept moving them."

I understood the fear, anxiety, and nervousness Kenny must have felt that time.

"After that, I didn't go anywhere,

stopped interacting with anyone,

and just stayed in the flower house

Gradually, she stopped bothering me." Kenny sighed. "But I was anxious since I heard no news about Mr. Atlas."

Before we could finish speaking, we saw Tris suddenly walking quickly towards us.

Chapter 1448 The Spiritual Water Lily

Atlas immediately said "Kenny, we need to go now. Take care of yourself. I'll get you out of here."

Then he pulled me with him back into the flower house, briskly crossing it until we stopped by the edge of the pool.

I glanced back at Kenny. He was trembling, and quickly disappeared into the cottage. He was reluctant to see us leave.

The butler came over when Tris arrived, glanced at the flower house, and smiled. "Mr. Atlas, Miss, please come over. The guests have arrived."

Atlas gave him a cold glance and asked indifferently, "What guests?"

"Miss Celine invited some distinguished guests here to celebrate Mr. Atlas's return. After all, it's been a long time since the mansion had a lively event like this," The butler responded obsequiously.

I ignored him and asked while pointing to the pool, "Where are the water lilies?"

The butler immediately respectfully replied, "Madam, the water lilies we used to have were all precious varieties that no one could care for properly, so... they all withered!"

I looked at the koi in the pool with a sad expression and said, "It seems these water lilies have spirits. They know who their true master is and they refuse to thrive for wicked and filthy people."

My words came from the heart. I was convinced that the water lilies in this pool had been grown by my mother and all had spiritual qualities. How could they bloom for malicious and impure individuals after their owner passed away?

"Don't be sad. I'll plant a pool of thriving water lilies for you," Atlas said tenderly in my ear. "Let's go!"

He took my hand and led me out of the flower house.

I saw the butler glance at the corner of the flower house again.

Kenny had disappeared long ago, but he was still cautious.

The people here seemed vigilant, especially the butler. He probably wasn't a good person, since he served Celine and devoted himself to her wholeheartedly.

Atlas calmly led me out of the flower house and back to the hall.

I realized then that Celine had extended an impressive invitation.

In just a short while, the hall was crowded with people who were not simple characters.

I was taken aback. How could these

people have appeared silently and unexpectedly, like bamboo shoots after a spring rain? The hall was filled with bustling activity, and

people mingled and

The hall went silent when we entered, and everyone turned to stare at us.

I realised that most of them were staring at me with an odd expression in their eyes.

It seemed that Celine's invitation today was not just about dinner.

Atlas tightened his grip around my waist and forcefully whispered, "Don't be nervous. I'm here."

I smiled back at him tenderly and whispered, "Do you think so little of me?"

But even though I said that, I was feeling nervous. After all, I had been utterly mentally unprepared, since I thought it was just a dinner.

This was not just a dinner, as I had thought; it was more like a party that had been planned expressly to put me to the test. Everyone here was all dressed up and appeared to be very grand.

Luckily, Atlas had prepared a very simple and elegant evening gown with diamonds for me before I arrived.

After the greeting ceremony, people gathered around us to greet Atlas and exchanged insincere words.

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Atlas merely gave them a tiny nod. He was not enthusiastic about the exchange. He didn't even consider it a conversation, just a superficial gesture of politeness. He seemed as though he was rejecting everyone from a thousand miles away with his indifference, and was absolutely unwelcoming.

However, Celine was by our side, enthusiastically playing the role of a kind aunt.

They hadn't held a family gathering like this for a long time, but everyone was gathered here because Atlas had returned today.

Celine 'kindly' introduced me to

everyone, and told us that the

guests who were here at the Pierce Mansion today were all old friends who had half a lifetime of friendship with the Pierce family. Many of them were also business partners of the Pierce family.

I understood that they were just the old shareholders of the Pierce family.

Suddenly, someone in the crowd called out, "Cousin!"

That voice immediately shook me because I knew it all too well...

## Chapter 1449 Perilous Situation

I looked up toward the source of the voice.

I couldn't help but smirk as my eyes fell on the long-lost phony Stella White, who I had been keeping an eye on.

She had dared to come here in public, which was astonishing.

She was blatantly trying to provoke me, the real Stella White.

I glanced at Atlas, and we exchanged a smile. It seemed that I couldn't just let things slide today. I couldn't let someone provoke me to my face. I had to play along.

I remained composed and smiled at her, curious to see how she would start this drama.

She took the initiative to speak first to show off.

The people around us looked over and smiled. Their smiles told me many things, but they were definitely not kind.

The hall was a perilous place at the moment.

I watched as the impostor Stella eagerly began her performance.

With a pleasant expression, she continued, "Cousin, you're finally back! We agreed to come back together, but I've been waiting for you for a long time."

After saying that, she limped toward us.

She seemed eager to battle, even though her leg injuries hadn't healed. She was excited to return to the fight, even in this ghastly state.

A stunning young woman caught my attention as she trailed behind her, gazing intently at the towering Atlas. From her infatuated expression, she seemed to be a fan of Atlas.

Beside her was a smiling man of average build, who was slightly chubby. He had a joyful face.

Obviously, Stella's words were addressed to Atlas.

Atlas narrowed his eyes, his emotions unclear. He looked at Stella as she approached us, smiled faintly, and indifferently said, "Your leg injury hasn't healed yet, but you seem eager to be out of the house. You have a short memory. You should focus on recovering from your injury."

His words definitely meant more than what was on the surface.

"I only came downstairs after I heard that you were back." Her expression was coquettish. "You don't seem very grateful."

I sneered inwardly and cursed; she was a good actress. It was a pity she hadn't entered the entertainment industry!

After speaking, the imposter Stella pulled the woman behind her and pushed her toward Atlas. "Tricia insisted on coming with me to see you."

The woman blushed and looked at Atlas, at a loss for words. "Atlas! Why haven't you been back for so long?"

Atlas glanced at Tricia and calmly responded, "Do I know you?"

Tricia was embarrassed. Her expression was bizarre, like a chameleon.

Celine quickly intervened. "Atlas, you naughty boy. This is Miss Tricia

line

from the Ellis family. Didn't you used

to play together when you were

kids?"

Tricia quickly nodded in agreement.

"I don't remember." Atlas was harsh, stating things in a cold and unwelcoming manner.

Tricia bit her lip and gave me an icy glare as her eyes instantly became red.

Stella noticed Tricia's embarrassment, but chose not to care. She reached out and tried to hold Atlas's arm.

For a moment, Atlas stared at Stella, his deep black eyes projecting a sense of distance. His eyes were hiding a deadly sword.

Stella's hand abruptly stopped in midair, and she retracted it in embarrassment.

With a smile that wasn't quite a

smile, she turned to face me and tried to hide how embarrassed she was. "Miss Chloe! I can't believe I'm finally seeing you in Nocturnia! 've invited you out many times, but we haven't been able to meet.

She smiled uneasily as she said that. It was clear that she was just being perfunctory.

"This is wonderful. I'm glad to see you here. I've been looking for you all along!"

I smiled calmly and deliberately said nothing as I listened to her train of thought. I wanted to see how she would continue.

"I hoped I could accompany you the first time you came." She looked at me provocatively.

She must have felt very proud, as she thought that she had asserted her dominance over me.

"Thank you for the thought, Miss

Stella. But how could I let an

outsider accompany me when I'm just returning home?" I kept my composure and smiled elegantly, making it obvious what I was getting at when I said "an outsider. To me, she was just another person.

When the onlookers heard my reply, they were incredulous. Everyone scrutinized me, the woman who was standing beside Atlas.

Chapter 1450 The Start of a Showdown

Stella laughed recklessly but soon understood that her attitude was inappropriate. She quickly restrained herself and nodded. She said, "That's right, you're returning home."

I noticed a deepening mockery on Celine's face. I met her gaze unabashedly and asked, "Oh... by the way, shouldn't you reintroduce this Miss Stella to me, Celine?"

I passed the ball to Celine, who was standing beside Atlas.

When I saw Celine stifle a laugh, I said, "You've always treated her as your adopted daughter, and she even introduced herself as Stella, Rory's daughter. I've been meaning to ask you, Celine, if she's Stella, then... who am I? I didn't know my father had two daughters."

As soon as I said that, everyone turned to look at Celine.

Atlas's hand had been around my waist all this time. When he saw me questioning Celine, he looked at her with apparent interest as he waited for her response.

My question may have been too sudden. I had slapped Celine in the face with that question, and no one in the room had anticipated me saying that so directly.

The people here were "old friends" of the Pierce family. Most of them probably knew who I was. They were all just pretending to be ignorant.

These "old friends" probably followed Celine's lead not to acknowledge my existence. They treated me as nothing more than a woman Atlas doted on. Celine had completely ignored my presence throughout the event and had only briefly mentioned me. She hadn't even said that I was the mistress of the Pierce family.

So when I asked her that question, it immediately attracted some attention.

After all, I had mentioned Rory.

Many people in the hall considered that name to be taboo.

As I expected, Celine's expression briefly froze before rapidly returning to normal. She looked calmly at the fake Stella before asking, "What are you saying? I don't quite understand."

I sighed inwardly and discreetly approved. She was calculating. I had seen bitchy women before, but I had never seen a high-level bitch like her. I had to admire her for her inner quality; she was good.

What a cunning old fox!

I cursed silently in my heart.

When Celine saw me smile but say nothing, she immediately added, "Do you have a connection with Rory?"

Atlas's hand around my waist tightened, and I swallowed the words I was about to say while I looked at him.

Celine's tone conveyed disdain as

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she said, "What happened that year was simply too chaotic. Although decades have passed, we're still dealing with the aftermath, and many versions of the story keep emerging."

"Oh? I'd love to hear those different versions of the story." I remained calm as usual.

Celine looked at me with her eyes as deep as dark currents surging beneath a calm surface.

When I saw her gaze, my heart inexplicably skipped a beat.

"I received information that Rory betrayed my brother, which led to my brother's death in a plane crash. He's been on the run ever since, with several major families pursuing him. I had to adopt a daughter to maintain the family stability"

Her words immediately resonated around the room, and many people crowded around us.

I couldn't help but admire her cunning.

A fierce flame flared in my chest, and I instinctively straightened up.

How dare she try to pass off my father as someone who had betrayed Louis Pierce by openly distorting the facts? Wasn't she afraid of retribution?

"... several major families are pursuing him? I'm afraid..." Atlas's hand around my waist slightly pressed against me before I could say anything more, warning me to keep my cool.

I swallowed the rest of my words and took a deep breath without showing any emotion. I looked at Celine with a faint smile and said, "Oh? Is that so? It seems your version of the story is different from mine."

She exaggeratedly raised the corner

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of her eye and arrogantly said, "Yes, there are many different opinions. Just mentioning Rory's daughter causes all kinds of trouble. I feel sorry for that girl, but there must be something despicable about her."

"No wonder you grit your teeth when you talk about Rory. It seems the grudge runs deep," I said calmly, as if I was simply watching a show.

"Many people know that the sudden bad news caused shock and grief to the Pierce family and the Pierce family's circle of friends. My father was so heartbroken that he fell ill and never recovered."

Celine was instigating the crowd.