

Read Novel Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 1041-1050

Julian's Stand-In Wife chapter 1041

"I got angry, so I moved out."

But Julian also worried that Cecilia might cause her trouble again, so he brought Noel with him. As soon as Noel followed him, Cecilia insisted on not staying in the villa.

Thinking of this, Julian placed his grandmother's portrait back in its original position. Then, he pushed the door open and called Cecilia. "Where's Noel?"

"He's in the kitchen."

When Noel was mentioned, Cecilia's face turned slightly red.

She had already confessed to Julian that, compared to him, she actually preferred spending time with Noel. She could do without Julian's care, but she couldn't stand not being able to see Noel.

"Oh," he elongated the word, giving it a meaningful tone. "You won't be upset if you don't see him for a while?"

"No." Cecilia smiled, feeling a bit embarrassed. "I'm quite clear-headed now."

After being treated by Shiloh, her condition had its ups and downs. Most of the time, she was just like an average person.

However, whenever she saw Diana, things turned unpleasant. For Cecilia, Diana was her emotional stumbling block. Keeping her away from Diana was good for both

Diana and Cecilia.

"Could you help me apologize to Diana?" She couldn't face Diana directly. "I shouldn't have treated her like that in front of the two children... And I said such hurtful things, too..."

She fidgeted with her hands, and continued anxiously, "I don't know why, but I feel terrified and panicked when I see her. Then..."

“Then you have a seizure?” Julian asked.

Cecilia nodded. “Yes. I always feel like she’s dangerous, and that I need to make myself very strong to avoid the harm she might cause.”

She lowered her head. “In reality, she hasn’t harmed me at all, but I’m still scared.”

This included the incident at the studio. Julian had explained to her that Diana had originally meant well. However, Diana had amnesia and didn’t know it was the anniversary of her children’s death.

In that situation, Julian had lost control of his temper. At the same time, he wanted to sever Cecilia’s attachment to him completely-so, he poured paint on her.

Ultimately, Julian’s actions had indeed been effective.

Cecilia was very clear-headed. “I won’t like someone who has hurt me. Even if I don’t like Noel and he hasn’t been as good to me, I still wouldn’t like you.”

Regardless of Diana’s original intentions, it was undeniable that it was Julian who had harmed Cecilia. She didn’t have

such a strong attachment to Julian from the start.

“I’ve received so much love since I was a child. There’s no need to waste my time on someone who doesn’t love me and can be cruel to me,” Cecilia concluded.

Noel appeared in her mind again. Since they had met after she fell ill, he had been noticeably more patient with her than Julian.

Even when she had seizures, he could stay calm and composed. At night, whenever she needed someone, he was always there, sporting dark circles under his eyes from staying up late to attend to her needs.

She knew.

It was Noel who had personally modified the lighting system for her, putting small nightlights in her room. He had installed pink nightlights in both the guest rooms of Collina Villa and the Fulcher Manor, which she loved. The pink lights would come on as soon as her feet touched the floor.

What she needed was a man like him.

Single-minded, and with eyes only for her. Even when she was sick, Noel hadn't minded and was only concerned about treating her well.

Unfortunately, he didn't know that she liked him.

After hearing Cecilia's words, Julian's heart shook.

Cecilia said she wouldn't like a man who had hurt her.

What about Diana? Did she always give up on him so easily because he had, consciously or unconsciously, hurt her so much in the past?

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Julian wasn't sure.

He decided not to dwell on it.

After all, Diana had already accused him of wanting her to throw herself at Simon, and even calling her worthless.

Julian was genuinely angry.

How could she think of him like that?

However, after a while, he couldn't help but ponder again.

"Is that woman eating well? When does she rest? Has she shown any signs of being upset or reluctant since I moved out?"

Noel, who had just come out of the kitchen, looked at him." Sir..."

Under Noel's gaze, Julian felt a bit uncomfortable. "I'm not concerned about Diana; I'm just asking out of curiosity."

Deep down, he was still thinking about whether he should go and comfort her again.

His son had said that women needed to be consoled.

He had lived for so long. Could he really not compare to a two-year-old child?

No, Julian wasn't such a petty man.

Once he decided, he immediately had Noel buy some jewelry and send it to Collina Villa, saying he had picked them out.

He also reminded Noel to check on Simon. If Simon was still staying there shamelessly, Julian would have to find another way to get him to leave.

Fortunately, Simon had already moved out. Julian listened as Noel reported the situation.

"Alright. How did she react after receiving the jewelry?"

Noel thought for a moment. "She didn't show much of a reaction."

Julian's gaze was quite intimidating. Noel wished he could lower his head even further.

"And then? Where did she put the jewelry? Did she smile or frown?" Julian paused momentarily, then asked again, "Cough... cough... Did she...cough..."

He covered his mouth with a fist, faking a cough to cover up his embarrassment.

"Did she ask about me?"

He had moved out, after all. She should show some concern, shouldn't she?

Noel shook his head, hoping that Julian wouldn't continue pressing him. The more Julian asked, the more disappointed he would become.

"She didn't ask anything. After receiving the jewelry, she just casually placed it on the table."

It was an invaluable green emerald, worth hundreds of thousands to anyone who glanced at it. Julian had given it to Diana, yet she didn't even realize his intentions and hadn't asked a single question.

"But..." Noel could see that Julian was preoccupied with Diana's situation, and had lost all interest.

Even the meal that the chefs had prepared were untouched. Cecilia, who was watching their conversation, also hadn't eaten.

Noel felt a pang of sympathy for her. He clenched his fist, and glanced at Cecilia. For the first time, he dared to reach out and tug at Julian's clothing.

Julian was taken aback. "What's wrong?"

"Sir..." Noel had been wanting to talk to Julian about something that had been on his mind for a while. Now was the time to get it off his chest.

"Could you step outside? I need to speak with you."

"Go ahead."

Just as they stepped outside, Julian handed Noel a cigarette. He was feeling incredibly frustrated at the moment. His mind was filled with Diana's aloofness. It seemed she didn't care about what he had given her, or about him as a person.

With a click of the lighter, Noel lit Julian's cigarette. Even though Julian had offered him a cigarette, Noel didn't dare to smoke in his presence.

Julian was the man he had been taking care of since childhood, together with his father.

As the son of the butler, Noel had always held a special respect for Julian that others didn't understand.

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This respect had been ingrained in Noel from a young age.

The fact he had received the cigarette from Julian today made him very happy, and gave him a sense of recognition. But the more Julian acted this way, the harder it became for Noel to speak his mind.

Noel was on the verge of tearing the cigarette apart.

"Come on, out with it," Julian said impatiently.

Julian's handsome features would leave anyone, even someone like Noel, in awe.

So, it was entirely normal for Cecilia to have feelings for their employer.

“I want to resign,” Noel blurted out, taking out the resignation letter he had prepared. He continued resolutely, “Sir, can you forget about Ms. Winnington and focus on Ms. Jarvis? Don’t make Ms. Jarvis sad. After all, she’s your fiancée. This marriage proposal was something you agreed to yourself.”

What on earth was this about?

“You’re such a lovesick fool,” Julian scoffed. “I asked you for some love advice when I had a falling out with Diana over Kayla, and you gave me a lot of serious advice. And now, you’re pulling this?”

Noel had almost forgotten about that. “Did that happen?”

“When I followed your advice later, and things got even more chaotic,” Julian said.

At the time, he had been so angry with Noel that he had nearly sent the latter to Africa. Looking back now, he realized how foolish he had been. Knowing that Noel had never been in a romantic relationship, he should have known that Noel wasn’t the best person to give love advice.

Sensing Julian’s gaze, which seemed to regard him as if he were an idiot, Noel thought that his words had upset his employer.

“Sir...”

He kept trying to stuff the resignation letter into Julian’s hands. “I know I’m not qualified to advise you on your love life, and I know that you still have feelings for Ms.

Winnington. But Ms. Jarvis is really pitiful. She...”

“And then? What if I really intend to marry Cecilia? What will you do after resigning? Where will you go?” Julian interrupted.

Noel hesitated momentarily, then replied quickly, “I’ll go abroad, and never return.”

He was afraid that if he continued to stand by Cecilia’s side and watched as Julian ignore her despite their engagement, he would eventually do something he couldn’t take back.

“Do you want to hit me?” Julian asked. He saw through Noel’s thoughts, and the cigarette between his fingers flickered. He could see the turmoil and guilt on Noel’s face.

Noel was loyal, perhaps too blindly loyal.

“Anyway, I won’t marry Cecilia. I won’t treat her well,” Julian said, as he took the resignation letter from Noel’s hand and glanced towards the dining room.

Cecilia hadn’t eaten. She had been watching them since they came out.

Julian relayed what Cecilia had told him to Noel when he went to deliver gifts to Diana.

“She said she doesn’t like me,” Julian scoffed, tearing the resignation letter into pieces. “What are you going to do next? Do you have a plan?”

Noel was taken aback by his words.

“Sir?!”

Was Julian implying that Cecilia liked him, Noel? He was just a personal assistant. He had spent his whole life following Julian.

He could never hope to win the favor of a wealthy young lady like Cecilia.

“It’s just as you thought,” Julian clarified. “Cecilia has feelings for you, not me.”

The reason she treated Diana with such fear, and why she experienced anxiety and even illness every time she saw Diana, became clear to Julian.

“Her fear of Diana and her belief that Diana tore us apart have led her to act this way,” Julian explained.

That was why Cecilia kept calling Diana a schemer. In reality, Julian and Cecilia had never been together. However, him splashing paint on Cecilia impacted her deeply.

It had almost become an obsession to her.

“She curses Diana now because she fears history repeating itself. She’s afraid that Diana will take you away from her.”

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"No... This can't be possible..." Noel grew more confused as he listened.

"If you don't believe it, you can ask her," Julian said." Sometimes, it's best to communicate openly."

Noel had good reason to believe that Julian was testing him. So, he asked, "Why don't you do the same with Ms. Winnington?"

Julian was caught off guard by Noel's words.

"You have some nerve! Do you think you're impressive now that my fiancée likes you?!"

He and Diana were in different situations. Their love could not be explained in just a few words. He always felt that his love with Diana was more special than anyone else's.

Julian's anger was still intimidating, even after all the time Noel had spent with him.

Noel shrank back and said firmly, "Sir, don't lie to me!"

There was sadness and stubbornness in his eyes. "Ms. Jarvis can't possibly like me!"

As he spoke, he became increasingly frustrated. "You can't just push her off to someone else to break the engagement. It's highly irresponsible of you!"

Clenching his teeth, Noel pushed through his fear of Julian.

He bowed and said, But I really do like Ms. Jarvis. You saw through this a long time ago, I know."

He took a deep breath, avoiding Julian's gaze guiltily. "I'll consider this as you giving me permission to resign, and leave now. Sir, I wish you and Ms. Jarvis a lifetime of happiness."

Noel had dirty thoughts about Julian's future wife, so he no longer deserved to stay by Julian's side.

With that, he turned and left.

This turn of events ended up making Julian chuckle, despite his initial anger.

He was infuriated! This fool! Such a lovesick idiot! He couldn't even recognize it when a woman liked him.

From this alone, Noel deserved to stay single forever!

Julian returned to the dining room, incensed. He glanced at Cecilia, who was still looking outside expectantly. "Let's have dinner now. Noel went to take care of something."

He didn't dare to tell her about Noel's resignation. Cecilia would definitely chase after Noel again, especially at this late hour.

Julian didn't want to deal with their drama right now.

However, Cecilia's eyes displayed worry and longing. Noel had only left for a short while. Was it necessary for her to react this way?

Meanwhile, Julian had been away from Collina Villa for so long. Did Diana miss him more than Cecilia did Noel?

Just as he was pondering, a video call from Diana came in.

Julian's eyes instantly lit up. In his excitement, he immediately answered the call.

As soon as Diana's face appeared on his phone, he regretted his impulsive decision. He should have waited a bit longer before answering.

Why had he picked up so quickly? He was even more foolish than Noel!

"What's wrong?" Julian's expression turned icy.

On the other hand, Diana immediately regretted her decision. She shouldn't have made this call. Yet Layla had urged her to do it, explaining that the emerald was something the late Madam Fulcher had loved and had intended to gift to her.

Unfortunately, the old woman had passed away.

Layla had broken down while talking, mentioning how close the old woman had been to Diana. She also said that Madam Fulcher had given Diana

shares of the Fulcher company, which were substantial enough to ensure Diana's financial security for a lifetime.

Diana had forgotten this, but Layla reminded her, "Originally, the late Madam instructed me to keep this share transfer a secret and act as if I didn't know anything. She believed this was the safest option for you."

The shares were incredibly valuable. With how Diana and

Julian kept arguing, Layla felt compelled to remind Diana of the late Madam Fulcher's intentions.

If Diana was unhappy with Julian, she could use this share to secure a comfortable life for herself. The money was enough to sustain her for generations.

She wouldn't need to continue working so hard.

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"You're balancing work and taking care of the children.

You're pushing yourself so hard. The late Madam Fulcher would surely be heartbroken if she saw this," Layla said.

Diana was shocked to hear it.

She actually had shares in Fulcher Inc.!

And it was given to her by Julian's grandmother.

Even Julian didn't know about this.

Layla only found out about it when she went to see a lawyer, according to Madam Fulcher's orders.

Layla was right.

The old lady was genuinely considerate towards her. She feared Diana would be wronged.

“About your miscarriage before...” Layla could barely continue, her voice choking up. “Madam has always felt guilty about it. She has always believed that her hasty announcement of your pregnancy brought you a lot of trouble. It caused so much friction between you and your husband. As an elder, she was very uneasy.”

Layla’s words opened the floodgates.

She began recounting many past events.

These events were all unfamiliar to Diana.

Unfortunately, they had really happened.

Layla told Diana about the late Madam Fulcher...

And about Aster and Star, who hadn’t been with her for long before she miscarried unexpectedly.

All these past events made Diana’s heart ache.

Even her own blood family, Zachary Winnington, treated her cruelly. Yet, this old lady thought so much for her sake.

Layla also mentioned that if Diana was willing, she could go to the law firm right now to check the share transfer document to prove that Layla hadn’t lied.

“Seeing you happy is indeed the late Madam’s wish. You have given her great-grandchildren, which is probably the happiest thing for her. You don’t owe the Fulchers anything. On the other hand, regarding the engagement between the master and the Jarvis family...”

Layla sighed when she got to this point. “Madam...”

From the bottom of her heart, she truly respected Diana as the lady of the house.

“If you don’t want to continue to be entangled with the master, leave him and live your own life,” she said.

Take a look at how Julian reacted when he came to his senses.

For these past few days, Layla had also been holding in her anger about this sudden engagement.

If Layla already felt this way, what more of Diana?

Diana sighed. Even Layla could understand the situation. And yet, Julian couldn't grasp it at all. She had argued with him and had been in a bad mood because she had considered giving up.

Ultimately, it all came down to her lack of confidence regarding his engagement to Cecilia.

After listening to Layla, Diana looked at the string of emeralds. She wanted to recover her memories first. She didn't want to forget...the late old madam who had been so kind to her.

Still, Simon warned that she would surely regret it if she regained her memories.

Thus, she wanted to discuss things with Julian. As soon as the video call connected, his cold demeanor made her lose her confidence.

"Have you eaten?"

After thinking for such a long time, this was the only thing Diana could bring herself to say.

Finally, she cared about him. It seemed appeasing and coaxing her a little was somewhat effective.

Julian's eyes showed his happiness, but he persisted with his cold facade.

"Yes, I have."

He acted as if smiling at Diana would mean that he was on the losing end.

After saying that, he adjusted the video camera. Coincidentally, it focused on Cecilia.

To Diana, it looked like Julian and Cecilia were having a peaceful dinner together; as if her untimely video call had ruined Julian's mood.

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So that was why Julian looked so cold when he answered the video call.

Then... Why did Noel have to send her the emerald?

Perhaps Julian wanted to use it not to reconcile with her, but to draw a clear boundary between them?

Diana suddenly felt embarrassed.

It turned out she wasn't the only one who wanted to give up; Julian wanted to give up too. Even Layla, a mere bystander, found it exhausting.

Diana and Julian, the parties involved in the relationship, were tired and wanted to give up. It was normal.

Diana...shouldn't have made this video call today.

"It's nothing. I'm hanging up now," she suddenly said. The phone screen went black.

Julian's gradually widening smile instantly vanished.

Bang!

He smashed the phone to pieces.

What had upset her again?

What had he done to provoke her?

He had been trying to please her every day, yet it seemed like he only managed to anger her with his efforts.

Over the years, he was usually the one pampered by others. What he had done for Diana had gone far beyond his usual habits.

At this moment, Julian couldn't stop his exploding temper.

He would ignore Diana.

He absolutely would!

He wouldn't respond at all!

After Diana hung up, she made up her mind.

Since Julian had moved out and sent her the emerald, that meant he agreed with what she had said about giving up on this relationship.

It seemed he and Cecilia were living a better life in a place without Diana.

It was quiet.

It was a peaceful life.

Just like the beautiful image Diana had imagined, when she and Julian were living together.

Unfortunately, she wasn't the main lead of such a beautiful life.

She wasn't Julian's fiancée, either.

Diana suppressed the bitterness in her heart.

She looked at the emerald once again.

It glistened under the bright light; as if reminding her of something.

Diana recalled Cecilia's face on the video call just now.

Finally, she decided: she would regain her memories, but she wouldn't consult Julian anymore.

Her greater motivation was to remember Madam Fulcher, remember the two children she had never met, and remember...the life she had once entangled with Julian.

Only by filling up the hole her past had left would she be able to slowly let go of her concern for him.

She hoped that after regaining her memories, she could smile and say to him one day, "Julian, I wish you and Cecilia a lifetime of happiness."

Suddenly, Julian sneezed.

There was no reason for him to do so.

Somehow, he recalled Noel's parting words, "Sir, I wish you and Ms. Jarvis a lifetime of happiness."

What a fool.

He had already told Noel that Cecilia reciprocated his feelings, yet Noel still pushed him away.

Noel didn't even believe Julian's words.

Would he really go abroad after leaving the Fulcher Manor?

Julian was starting to get anxious. If Noel went abroad, it would be troublesome for Cecilia. He didn't want to keep

living with her and wait for Noel to return.

Besides, Noel and Diana had already disrupted this meal. Now, neither he nor Cecilia had much of an appetite. He might as well get right to the point.

"Cecilia," he said, "Noel's going abroad."

Later, Diana made an appointment with Oliver Channing at a cafe.

The desserts here were delicious.

Not to mention, they came in beautiful shapes and colors. Betty especially liked the chestnut cake here, which was molded in the shape of a little lamb.

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Lately, every time they picked up Sean from school, Betty would drag Diana and Julian to this very cafe for a small treat.

Then, she would pack a portion of creamy yogurt buns for her big brother. Sean didn't like sweets, so it would ultimately end up with Betty eating them all.

Every time they came here, Betty felt like she had entered heaven. The cafe had a calm vibe to it, which allowed her to sit comfortably and enjoy her dessert without a care in the world.

Diana and Oliver could also discuss in peace.

“The rental yield on that property isn’t high. If you can buy it, it will actually benefit me,” Oliver said calmly.

There was excitement in his eyes the moment he saw Diana, but he quickly composed himself.

He had once deceived Diana by collaborating with the Pabian family. It was his biggest regret. He couldn’t let it go, even until now. Since then, he had sworn that he wouldn’t do anything to make her unhappy again.

She didn’t have feelings for him, not the way he did for her. If he showed her affection, it would only pressure her.

To him, the fact that Diana had forgotten about the past was a good thing. That way, she wouldn’t remember his darker

side. They could spend time together comfortably like friends, and enjoy this quiet afternoon like they were now.

“As for the price...”

“No problem.” Oliver had already thought about it before coming. “I know you haven’t fully repaid Fanny yet. Even though the studio is profitable, there are still significant expenses. After all, it was recently renovated. All of these are costs.”

He proposed a solution. “You can make an initial payment, and the remainder can be paid to me in installments through a bank loan.”

Diana hesitated. She had considered this option, but she didn’t want to add so much leverage to herself.

Mr. Whatever had also inquired about the studio’s investment and profit funds. In a way, she had accumulated quite a bit of debt over the past three years.

Adding this property to it would only increase her financial burden.

She was buying the house to give herself more confidence and a more comfortable life, not to exhaust herself even more.

“This property is already in its fifth year, so there are no taxes to pay. As for the price, I can lower it a bit more.”

Oliver had offered a price that was already quite low. Diana didn’t want to press him further.

As she was about to grab a tissue to wipe the cream from Betty’s mouth, she noticed that Oliver had done it ahead of her.

Ever since she had children, Diana had a soft spot for men who were gentle with kids. She quickly said thank you, and had Betty thank the man as well.

Out of the blue, Diana blurted out, “You don’t need to lower the price anymore. Oliver, do you like me?”

Oliver was taken aback. Surprise and embarrassment colored his face. “Have you remembered everything?”

“No.” Diana shook her head. An idea ran through her mind. “I met a doctor at the hospital before, and he mentioned you.”

At the time, that person had implied that Oliver had feelings for her. Plus, not too long ago, he hadn’t let Diana leave Richburgh.

It would be a lie if Diana said she didn’t feel anything. She didn’t want to use someone’s feelings to negotiate a lower price for the property.

“It’s all in the past,” Oliver said.

Surprisingly, he was very casual about it. He waved his hand dismissively, and continued, “Really, it’s all in the past. If you bring it up again, I won’t be able to sell you this house.

Otherwise, Fanny will get jealous.”

He explained to Diana, “I told you before that Fanny and I weren’t in a relationship. It was a lie back then, but not anymore. In the three years you’ve been away, a lot has happened between us.”

He smiled.

“Even if you recover your memories, there’s no need to dwell on the past. Right now, I’m just here as your friend.”

His honesty put Diana at ease.

“Let’s give it a week,” Diana said. “I’ll give you my answer in a week, whether I’ll buy it or not.”

Oliver nodded. “Okay.”

Before answering Oliver, Diana needed to plan her finances. To do that, she needed to meet with Mr. Whatever. She had yet to have a proper conversation with him since finalizing the contract. She needed to address the investment funds he had lost while working with her over the past three years.

After bidding goodbye to Oliver and leaving the cafe, Diana dialed Mr. Whatever’s number.

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However, no one answered.

In Collina Villa, Layla had heard a phone ringing in Julian’s room for a while. After thinking it over, she decided to open the door and take a look.

It was an old-fashioned mobile phone, and it was placed in the wardrobe.

The phone didn’t seem like Julian’s usual style. He usually put everything in its proper place, so it was unlikely for him to leave his phone here. Was he perhaps looking for it, and was trying to call it from another phone?

Layla stood there for a while. She was puzzled, but she noticed that the ringing continued persistently. In the end, she decided to answer it for him.

As soon as she pressed the answer button, she said, “Hello.”

This was the first time she had answered Julian’s phone without his permission. She was already nervous about it. Now that she had answered the call, she even felt a bit flustered.

Even her speech was slow. Before she could finish her greeting, the call was disconnected.

Wait, why was there a woman's voice on the other end? And why did it sound somewhat familiar?

Diana must have misheard it, right?

Diana looked at the phone. Suspicious, she checked the number-it was indeed correct. It was Mr. Whatever's phone number. They had exchanged messages using this number before.

Worried about causing him trouble, Diana hesitated to make another call. She decided to send a text message instead.

[Mr. Whatever, I'd like to meet in person to discuss about the investment funds. Do you have some time?]

The phone screen was locked again. When the text message appeared in a pop-up window, it stayed on the screen so quickly that Layla couldn't read it at all. Still, she did catch the words about meeting in person.

After some thought, Layla decided to contact Noel to ask where Julian was.

However, Noel didn't answer either.

Layla thought about all the Fulcher family's properties. She knew Julian didn't like the downtown apartments, or the large penthouses. He preferred quiet places. In addition to Collina Villa, he had several courtyard houses in the suburbs. However, no one had lived in them.

Although she didn't have the right to call Julian's private phone, she could call the landline at the Fulcher Manor to inquire.

As it turned out, Julian was there.

Layla breathed a sigh of relief, and asked, "Could I speak with the master?"

"He's out with Ms. Jarvis," the servant who answered the phone replied. "They haven't returned all night."

Hearing this, Layla couldn't help but feel sorry for Diana.

Before leaving here, the master had taken Diana and the two children to an amusement park. They had seemed so happy back then. In the blink of an eye, he was with Ms. Jarvis. They hadn't returned all night.

Even when the late Madam Fulcher was alive, he hadn't behaved like this.

Why was he becoming more and more like a scoundrel?

However, Layla knew who paid her salary. Even though she sympathized with Diana, she had to maintain her position.

She said respectfully, "When the master returns, please be sure to let him know that I need to speak with him."

"Of course."

Julian was restless. When he left Collina Villa, he was both angry and anxious. He had only taken one phone with him, and the old-fashioned phone was left in his room. He felt somewhat uncomfortable not having that phone with him, as if he had lost something important.

Cecilia noticed that Julian was distracted. "What's wrong?"

They hadn't eaten yesterday. Instead, they had gone to the countryside to find Noel at Albert's residence.

Albert told them that Noel hadn't returned, and that he was worried something untoward had happened to Noel.

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They took turns calling Noel's phone, but it remained unreachable. Julian now realized that Noel truly didn't believe his words and had actually disappeared without a trace.

Fortunately, they checked Noel's immigration records and confirmed he was still in the country. Noel was not only loyal to Julian in his work, but was also a respectful son. If he had the intention to go abroad, he would definitely come back to see Albert.

Julian wanted to bring Albert back to the Fulcher Manor and wait for Noel to return, but Cecilia refused.

"What if he doesn't come back?" Cecilia asked, tears streaming down her face. Ever since she learned of Noel's intention to go abroad, she didn't stop crying.

Julian was getting tired of her tears. “Well, what do you suggest we do now? We can’t just keep wandering around aimlessly.”

“Wait here,” Cecilia suggested.

“No, we can’t do that,” Albert said. He was the first to oppose the idea. My home is in the countryside. Even though it’s late autumn, there are still many mosquitoes because I grow many fruits and vegetables. Sir, you’re of noble status. How could I let you stay in a place like mine? That would be unacceptable.”

Cecilia didn’t argue with Albert. In fact, she was overly submissive to him.

“When I see you, I’m reminded of my grandparents at home,” Cecilia said sweetly. “The sweet potatoes you just cooked were delicious. They were soft and easy to chew.”

Her eyes were red. She had been crying for Noel all along, but her manners and attire were exceptional.

Albert had been curious about her for a while, but he didn’t dare to inquire about her identity. He simply treated her very politely. “Thank you for your kind words. If you like them, I’ll roast a few more for you.”

As he spoke, he had already piled several bricks together and lit a match to set up a makeshift stove. Then, he brought a large iron pot and filled it with water before tossing the sweet potatoes into the fire.

“This way, we can boil water and enjoy delicious sweet potatoes,” Albert explained to Cecilia. “They taste even better when roasted.”

Since leaving the Fulcher family, Albert had been living alone in the countryside. Now that he had the opportunity to entertain important guests, he was delighted.

It helped distract him from his concerns about Noel.

Suddenly, he slapped his forehead. “Sir...”

Albert was busy roasting sweet potatoes, and Cecilia wanted to try them. With that, they couldn’t leave yet.

Julian was growing impatient, and he furrowed his brows in frustration.

Despite Albert's hunched posture, Julian couldn't help but recall his two lost children and Diana's sadness whenever he saw Albert. He couldn't sit here peacefully with Albert and wait for sweet potatoes to roast. He also didn't want to follow Cecilia's suggestion to stay here.

Cecilia was unaware of Julian's thoughts. She couldn't understand how she had fallen for a man who showed such little respect for the elderly.

"Albert, don't worry. He'll wait with me to roast the sweet potatoes. He'll also stay here with me and wait for Noel to return," Cecilia reassured Albert.

Julian was, of course, against this plan.

However, Cecilia offered him an irresistible temptation.

"If you agree..." She pulled him into the yard, but her gaze remained fixed on Albert. She didn't stop smiling at the older man.

"Julian," Cecilia said disdainfully. "Can you stop making such an unpleasant face?"

No matter how good her mood was, he ruined it with his disagreeable attitude.

Since Cecilia had admitted to Julian that she liked Noel, she found Julian increasingly distasteful.

"If you agree to stay here, I'll take the initiative to inform my mother and have her cancel our engagement."

"And there won't be any other conditions?"

"None." Cecilia shook her head. "Anyway, Noel will definitely come back to find Albert."

When she saw Noel again, she would tell him about her feelings. Hopefully, he wouldn't go abroad.

But a whole day had passed, and Noel was still missing. Cecilia's anxiety grew stronger. Julian was also getting worried.

"I'll go back to the manor. Maybe Noel has returned there," he said.

As soon as he returned to the Fulcher Manor, a servant informed him about Layla's request to contact him.

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Julian returned Layla's call when he got the message.

"Miss, you're back."

He heard Layla talking to someone as soon as the call connected.

Julian had no doubt that the person on the other end was Diana. He wondered where Diana had gone.

He was curious and wanted to ask, but then he remembered the abruptly ended video call. His interest waned after he recalled the incident.

Layla was engrossed in conversation with Diana, unaware she was holding the landline phone receiver.

"How's it going? Did the house purchase go smoothly?" Layla asked. She was genuinely concerned about the matter.

"It was fine," Diana replied calmly, completely different from her assertive tone when she spoke to Julian.

Julian listened to her conversation, and strangely felt a sense of satisfaction. It was good to hear her speak so calmly.

"Before making my final decision, I need to meet with one of my investors. He supported me before I lost my memory, and I need to calculate whether I can afford the debt," Diana added.

At this point, Julian was slightly puzzled. He realized belatedly that, hidden beneath Diana's calm tone, she was talking about buying a house.

She wanted to buy a house?!

Why did she want to buy a house? Wasn't living in Collina Villa good enough? He had moved out, and he had even taken Cecilia with him.

What was she dissatisfied with?

She was being too greedy.

A surge of frustration welled up from deep within him. He was about to speak up to redirect Layla's attention, when he heard Diana continue, "Unfortunately, I haven't been able to schedule a meeting with that investor. I've called several times, but there was no answer. And when I sent a text message, he didn't respond either."

An investor... Phone calls unanswered, text messages ignored.

Layla's heart skipped a beat as she quickly said, "What a coincidence! Today, I heard a phone ringing persistently in the master's room. Someone kept calling him, and was quite insistent. Even though the call wasn't answered, the caller refused to hang up. Eventually, when I entered the room, the ringing stopped. Then, that caller sent a text message instead."

Layla carefully recalled the content of the message for Diana. "It said something about meeting in person..."

Julian's heart pounded.

Layla was describing the forgotten phone he had left at the villa. And Diana wanted to meet Mr. Whatever, who was none other than himself.

Julian hadn't told Diana that he was the Mr. Whatever. He was her studio's other investor, apart from Fanny.

Before Diana's memory loss, he concealed his identity to ensure she would accept his financial assistance. Later, he found it amusing to know her innermost thoughts and provide her with significant help under this alternate identity, especially when she was feeling down.

After Diana found out from Noel that Julian had used Albert's identity to test her, she had already been angry once.

Julian didn't want to reveal the identity of Mr. Whatever and strain their relationship even more than it already was.

Now, it was crucial that Diana didn't find out about his true identity as Mr. Whatever.

“Layla!” he quickly interrupted her, his tone harsh. “Have you forgotten the rules of the Fulcher family?”

When had Layla started to sneak a peek at his texts? She even dared to enter his room without his permission!

It was then that Layla realized that she had answered Julian’s phone call. In her distraction, she had almost committed a major workplace taboo by inadvertently revealing the texts on her master’s phone to Diana.

After all, Diana and Julian were no longer a married couple.