

Chapter 145 The Fierce and Possessive Man

"You sure? If I leave now, I'm really going," Isabel said, testing him.

She turned as if to go, sneaking a glance at Xander out of the corner of her eye. But he didn't make a single move to stop her.

With a quiet sigh, she stepped closer to him.

"It really was a misunderstanding. Kaleb suddenly got rough with me, so I raised my knee to make sure he wouldn't be fathering any children. Who could've guessed that you'd show up right then—at the worst possible moment—and see ... well, that."

Determined to clear things up, Isabel explained every little detail, leaving nothing out.

But Xander didn't move, standing there in the rain like a statue.

The downpour blurred the streetlamp's light, casting a hazy glow around him. The shadows fell over his long, thick lashes, obscuring his dark eyes, making it impossible to read his expression.

"Come back with me. Your cold isn't fully gone yet. Once we're back, I'll tell you everything you want to know. I swear I won't leave anything out," Isabel urged.

Growing frustrated, she grabbed his hand. It was ice-cold—far colder than normal.

After feeling Xander's wrist, Isabel's eyes narrowed with concern.

Then she reached up and pressed her hand to his forehead.

Just as she'd thought.

He had a fever!

"Let's go!" Isabel tugged at him, but he didn't budge.

"You ... " Isabel started to speak, but Xander interrupted her.

"You can't forget him, can you?" Xander's voice was low and hoarse with a hint of exhaustion.

Isabel's expression turned serious. She looked him straight in the eyes. "That's right. I can't forget him. Of course I can't."

Xander's heart clenched painfully, and his gaze grew even darker.

But she wasn't finished.

"Someone like him—some blind, worthless scumbag who's spent years bleeding me dry to take care of his little mistress. After everything he put me through ... how could I ever forget that?"

Xander slowly raised his head, his dark, unreadable eyes locked onto hers, as if trying to read the truth in her gaze.

Isabel's eyes were bright and sincere, showing no sign of deception.

Seeing this eased the ache in Xander's heart, if only a little.

"Alright, alright ... " Isabel gave Xander's hand a little shake, her voice taking on a soft, almost playful tone. Even she felt a bit embarrassed—she couldn't remember the last time she'd acted this way.

It was probably the first time in her life she'd tried to be cutesy with anyone.

It was kind of mortifying.

"Now that I've explained everything, let's head back, okay?"

But Xander kept staring at her hand, his eyes narrowing more and more.

Isabel looked at him in confusion. Why wasn't he moving?

And what was he so fixated on?

Just as she was wondering what was going through his mind, his deep voice sounded in her ear.

"Can I trust what you're saying?"

Isabel hesitated, momentarily at a loss for words.

After a few seconds, she said, "There weren't any cameras there, and I don't have any witnesses. If you don't believe me, I have no way to prove it."

Xander's pale lips tightened, and his dark eyes bored into hers with such intensity that Isabel felt like he was going to devour her whole.

"You do have a way to prove it," Xander said.

"Huh?" Isabel blinked, caught off guard.

A way to prove it? What was he talking about?

Suddenly, Xander pinned her against the wall, the impact making her back tingle with a dull ache.

Before she could fully process what was happening, he grabbed both of her wrists with one hand, pressing them over her head, pinning her firmly against the cold, hard wall.

Xander's hand was large and strong—there was no way she could break free.

His other hand slipped around her waist, pulling her up so that her body arched slightly, her chest pressed against his firm torso. A shiver ran through her, and her eyes widened in shock.

Taking advantage of her stunned reaction, Xander lowered his head and captured her slightly parted lips with his own.

It was fierce, possessive, and utterly wild.

Isabel felt a wave of dizziness, as if her entire body no longer belonged to her.

Rain continued to pour down on both of them, soaking them to the bone.

The last shred of her rational mind warned her that if this continued, Xander would consume her completely, leaving nothing behind.

Her throat was dry and sore, and she could taste the faint metallic tang of blood in the back of her mouth.

Had Xander lost his mind?

No—this couldn't go on.

She had to stop him.

Isabel tried to pull her hands free from his iron grip, but his hold was unbreakable, like steel shackles pinning her wrists above her head.

She tried shifting her legs, but as soon as she moved, Xander lifted his knee, pressing it between her thighs and lifting her off balance, so she was barely on tiptoe, hovering with no solid ground beneath her.

In that moment, she felt like a puppet, completely at his mercy.

Out of options, Isabel opened her mouth and bit down—hard.

"Hiss—" Xander finally paused, his brow furrowing as he tasted blood. He licked the corner of his mouth, his expression darkening.

"Do you really hate me that much? Am I that repulsive to you?" He asked, his deep voice rough with restrained emotion.

His tone was full of barely controlled pain, as if he were holding back an impending storm, and hearing it made something in her heart ache unexpectedly.

"I don't hate you. It's just ... I ... I haven't ... "

"Haven't fallen in love with me," Xander finished for her, his voice heavy. Rain dripped from his lashes, his wet hair clinging messily to his forehead. His face was so close that the bridge of his nose brushed against her lips, barely a breath apart.

Seeing him like this and hearing those heartbreaking words, Isabel felt a pang of guilt.

After all, she'd approached him with ulterior motives from the start. She hadn't expected Xander to actually fall in love with her, but thinking back on everything they'd been through, she knew his feelings for her were genuine. He'd treated her with nothing but kindness and devotion, as if he wanted to spoil her endlessly.

But feelings between men and women weren't as simple as "you're good to me, so I'll love you in return." More often, it was a messy tangle of "I like you, but you like him, and he likes someone else."

Right now, Isabel's emotions were all over the place. She didn't know what to say or do.

After a moment of silence, Xander released her wrists and lowered his knee from between her legs.

Isabel leaned back against the wall, feeling weak. His intensity had been overwhelming, and it took her a moment to steady herself.

"Go." The cold, detached word slipped from Xander's lips.

Isabel paused, taken aback. "You're not coming back with me?"

Xander leaned heavily against the cold wall, raising a hand to his forehead. "Hah ... Hah ... "

His breathing was labored, and his face looked exhausted.

Seeing this, Isabel immediately reached out to feel his forehead.

"You're burning up!"

She suddenly remembered what Samuel had told her a few days ago—that Xander couldn't afford to get a fever. Once he did, it wouldn't go down easily, and his whole body would be racked with pain.

Worry surged through her.

"Come on, let's get you back so I can figure out what's wrong."

But Xander made no move to go with her. He hunched over, wrapping his arms around himself, his face as pale as a sheet, his body faintly trembling.

"Hey! You're a grown man—stop being so reckless! If you keep this up, you're going to kill yourself!"

Isabel's frustration flared, but it wasn't directed at him; she was just angry at how carelessly he was treating himself.

Was he really this careless with his own body?

Xander's chest heaved, his breathing ragged and uneven.

Isabel studied him closely. Something was seriously wrong. His pupils looked dull and unfocused, as if he couldn't see her at all.

Was he losing consciousness?

"Xander," she whispered in his ear.

For a split second, his eyes flickered with a faint light.

He still had a shred of awareness left.

But it was brief; his gaze dimmed again, and his eyes slowly closed.

Isabel felt a wave of helplessness wash over her. She tried to pull him up by the hand, but he was as unmovable as a mountain.

"What do you want from me?" She muttered, frustration thick in her voice. "Do you really have to ... do you really need me to ... "

Trailing off, Isabel bit her lip, steeling herself. Then, taking a deep breath, she stood on her tiptoes and pressed her lips to his.

"Fine ... I'm willing ... to give you what you want ... "