

Chapter 163 Xander's Threats

Xander kept his gaze locked on Isabel as she leaned over, her rosy lips just slightly parted, her delicate teeth carefully biting off the thread. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes sparkled with a soft shimmer, reflecting the shyness and innocence of spring.

This captivating sight stirred something primal within him, his gaze darkening as he looked at her with the hunger of someone eyeing the most irresistible delicacy.

Just a bit more, and Xander felt he might lose control, allowing the untamed urge within him to take over, ready to claim the tempting prize before him.

He swallowed hard. His Adam's apple bobbed and his lips parted slightly as he fought to keep his composure.

On Isabel's side, her heart was racing.

Even though it was just a simple act of biting the thread, being this close to him, leaning over his pants no less, sent her thoughts spinning back to that rainy night and memories she did not need to relive.

Her pulse quickened, and her face felt like it was on fire.

"All done." She quickly handed the pants back to Xander, feeling like she was passing off something scalding.

"I'll head upstairs now. Just call me when the food's ready."

After finishing her words, Isabel suddenly stood up but felt a tightness in her chest, forcing her to dry heave.

"Ugh!" She clutched her chest, her face a bit pale, beads of sweat gathering on her smooth forehead.

Seeing her like this, Xander did not even bother with his pants, immediately reaching out to steady her, wrapping his arms around her slender frame.

"What's wrong? Is it your stomach acting up again?" he asked, his concern clear.

After patting her chest for a moment, Isabel checked her pulse.

Xander kept his lips pressed tightly together, his expression tense as he waited for her to say something.

The room went completely silent, so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. Even Samuel, who was peeking through the door, barely dared to breathe, aware of how much importance everyone placed on Isabel.

After a few seconds, Isabel lowered her hand from her wrist, giving Xander, who was anxiously watching, a reassuring look. "My stomach has always been sensitive. It's not something that's going to improve in a couple of days."

"Is it serious?" Xander's brow furrowed deeply.

"There's an old saying, stomach pain isn't a disease, but it can feel life-threatening when it flares up. It'll pass soon; it's probably just from the sudden cold weather," she said, stepping back from his embrace.

You can talk to me, but do you really need to hold me that close? You might not feel awkward, but I do!

Xander's eyes then moved from Isabel's stomach to the oranges on the table. "You're done with these—no more oranges from now on. I'll have Diana stop preparing them."

"No way! Oranges have nothing to do with it." She reached out, grabbed an orange, and quickly stuffed it into her pocket.

Xander held out his hand. "Hand it over."

Isabel looked at him wide-eyed, covering her pocket with a playful look, "Just one. It's not a big deal."

Xander kept his hand extended, and Isabel quickly turned her head toward the door. "Oh, look who's here!"

She tried to use this as a distraction to slip away upstairs, but Xander was not fooled at all.

With one long stride, he covered twice the distance she could, his height giving him an unstoppable advantage.

In the end, not only did Isabel fail to escape, but she found herself firmly encircled in his embrace, with no chance of slipping away.

From his vantage point on the second floor, Samuel watched the whole scene unfold and could not help but silently cringe.

Just a moment ago, it had been all serious with Isabel taking her pulse, and now the atmosphere had completely shifted.

He berated himself—if he had just stayed in his room instead of peeking, he would not be stuck witnessing this display.

"Just let me have this one!" Isabel clutched the orange in her pocket stubbornly, unwilling to hand it over.

It was sweet and juicy, and she really could not resist.

Xander raised an eyebrow, his gaze intense. "Fine, you eat that, and I'll eat you."

His eyes locked on her, carrying a look that made Isabel feel like she was utterly exposed, trapped by his gaze alone.

"Here!" she quickly shoved the orange into his hand and dashed upstairs, hoping to escape.

Xander watched her go, chuckling as he smoothed a hand over his brow.

A few minutes later, with the orange in hand, he arrived outside her room.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Isabel had just come out of the bathroom when she heard a knock on the door.

"What's up?" Isabel opened the door and saw Xander extending his hand toward her, holding a golden orange in his palm.

"You told me not to eat it, didn't you?" Isabel tilted her head.

"It's warmed up, you can have it," Xander said, handing her the orange.

The orange was warm in her hand, and she looked down to see steam rising from it.

At that moment, a strange sensation touched her heart, as if the warmth of the orange had a comforting power that reached deep into her soul.

"Thank you." Her voice was slightly heavy.

In fact, it really was.

Isabel looked at the orange in her hand, feeling it was no longer just an ordinary orange but a token of Xander's warmth.

Why was he being so kind to her?

And if he was so kind, how could she ever bring herself to leave in the future ...

That night, Isabel could not sleep, her thoughts tangled, leaving her confused and restless.

Was she feeling guilty?

Initially, she did not think she owed Xander any guilt because when they got married, both had their own motives.

She wanted the emerald guardian angel pendant, and Xander wanted to fulfill his grandmother's dying wish by marrying early, just after being stood up by his fiancée.

Beyond that, she had gone to great lengths to heal Samuel's leg.

To others, it might have looked like she had easily cured his leg. In reality, Samuel's condition was quite severe. Throughout his treatment, she was constantly refining solutions and using many expensive medicinal herbs.

Many of these precious herbs were flagship products of the alternative medicine clinic, ones she obtained through connections as a miracle healer in her past life.

She had not mentioned any of this to the family or to Xander, and she paid for everything herself.

So she should not feel guilty for doing all of this.

Yet, Xander's care and protection seemed to outweigh all these material possessions, and the more Isabel thought about it, the harder it was to sleep.

Meanwhile, the Zimmermans were also restless.

Lillian had been held overnight without release, leaving Colin and his wife extremely anxious.

"Honey, you have to find a way! Lily is someone we've invested so much in. She can't afford to be in trouble! Recently, she's brought significant profits to our company, too. She can't stay locked up like this!" Amelia's hair had visibly whitened from the stress.

Colin took a few deep drags on his cigarette, fully understanding Amelia's concerns. They absolutely could not sacrifice Lillian.

"That girl Isabel has never contributed anything to the Zimmermans, and now when we finally need her to step up, she refuses to take the blame for Lily!"

The more Colin thought about it, the angrier he became. "And the victim's family is being difficult—they refuse any settlement no matter the amount and insist on Lily facing prison.

"No, we can't just sit here," Colin muttered as he pulled out his phone and dialed a number.

He was calling Reggie, determined to make him talk some sense into Isabel.

"Dad? What's going on?" Reggie was in his office at I.Z. Corporation, working through paperwork.

"Reggie, go find your sister right now. Tell her to go to the police station and confess that it was her, not Lily. If you can convince her, I'll let you return immediately and appoint you as the general manager of the Marketing Department."

Hearing this, Reggie, typically calm and composed, felt a surge of anger like never before.

He gritted his teeth, struggling to hold it back, and said, "Dad, there's a question I've wanted to ask you for a long time, and I hope you'll give me an honest answer."

"Ask later! Lily's been in jail overnight. Go convince Isabel to surrender already!" Colin was too focused on getting Lillian out to care about Reggie's questions.

"Answer me first," Reggie said firmly, his voice unwavering.

Colin let out a sigh of irritation. "Fine, ask quickly!"

Reggie closed his eyes, took a steadying breath, and asked, "If you take a moment to reflect, do you really believe you've been a good birth father to Isa?"