

Chapter 189 The Charm of His Smile

"Xan ... "

Isabel's voice trembled as she spoke, her face turning a deep shade of red, like a freshly picked persimmon. The color seemed to spread down her neck and behind her ears, making her look so delicate, as if she might melt under his gaze at any moment.

She barely lifted her eyes and caught a glimpse of him smiling at her.

And in that instant, everything else in the world seemed to fade away, leaving only Xander—vibrant and full of life.

I have to say—he's strikingly handsome when he smiles.

But ...

I've called his name, so why hasn't he let me down yet?

"Um ... Mr. Bennett, you can set me down now, can't you?"

"Of course." Xander, content with her response, spun her once in his arms before gently placing her beside the table.

"I'll bring you some truffle bisque."

Isabel watched him walk away, his back still radiating the warmth of his joy, even though she couldn't see his face.

She muttered under her breath, "What's so special about me? Why treat me like I'm some precious thing?"

Her words didn't match the warmth flooding her chest, a warmth she couldn't quite explain.

The next day, after much stretching and limping, Isabel finally began to recover from the soreness that had settled in her body.

After the events of that night, she made a vow to herself—no more getting drunk in public.

Luckily, both times she had gotten drunk, Xander had been there. But what if it had been someone with less honorable intentions? Her reputation could have been destroyed.

And even if the person hadn't meant harm, the thought of someone capturing those moments and sharing them online was just as mortifying.

The more she dwelled on it, the more anxious she felt.

"Isabel? Isabel? Isabel!" Yvette's voice snapped Isabel back to reality.

"Hm? What's wrong?" Isabel blinked, still caught in her thoughts.

Yvette rolled her eyes, exasperated. "I'm asking you what I should do, and you're asking me what's wrong? Are you even paying attention? Are we still best friends?"

Isabel quickly gave her a sheepish look. "Sorry, I was lost in thought. Let's not focus on that. What were you saying?"

Yvette opened her mouth, then shrugged. "Forget it. Focus, okay? Max wants to take me to meet his parents. I barely know him, and I definitely don't know his parents. Why should I go?"

"Then don't go," Isabel suggested.

I told him that, but he insisted it's important for children to have both parents around. If I don't go to his place, he'll come to mine. Can you believe that?" Yvette's frustration grew.

Isabel paused, considering her words before replying, "I didn't expect Max would be so responsible about things like this."

Yvette shot her a sharp look. "Are you defending him now?"

"I'm not defending anyone. I just think what he said makes sense."

"You're defending him!"

Isabel peeled a banana and handed it to Yvette, hoping to ease her temper.

"I really think Max is a good guy. And his family situation ... well, it's something."

Isabel hesitated for a moment.

There were things about Max she hadn't shared with Yvette.

It wasn't that she was hiding the truth on purpose, but Max's family background was on par with Xander's. If Yvette knew the full extent of Max's situation, she would worry nonstop. If the Hunts ever targeted her baby, how could someone like Yvette possibly fight back?

So Isabel kept quiet, not wanting to burden her friend with unnecessary fears.

Max, too, had kept the details from Yvette. It was clear he was just as cautious.

In that sense, Max was a good person.

"But what does his family's condition have to do with me? My family's fine too," Yvette retorted.

Her parents had stable jobs, enough to cover their living expenses, with a little left over—around 5,000 or 6,000 a month.

They owned an old house in Daytonia, though it would soon be demolished. When that happened, they'd receive a decent payout.

For an ordinary family in Daytonia, they were doing well. But that only applied to people considered "ordinary."

Max, with his wealthy family, was far beyond that.

At that moment, Max entered, holding a thermos.

"Isabel, thanks for saying nice things about me. If you and Xander have any more issues, I'll definitely take your side."

Yvette raised an eyebrow, her attention shifting from Isabel to Max.

"You and Xander had a fight? What happened? Did he treat you badly?"

"It's nothing serious, just a little misunderstanding," Isabel explained.

"What happened?" Yvette asked, her curiosity getting the better of her.

"Don't worry about other people's business—focus on your own," Max said, uncapping the thermos to reveal the enticing scent of truffle and lobster soup. "I had my family make this for you. It's really nourishing. Want to try it?"

Yvette gave him a skeptical look, her eyes lingering on the soup.

Truffle and lobster soup ... she had seen it before but never tasted it.

Her family wasn't exactly wealthy, and such luxuries were out of reach for them.

"Take it away. I don't want any," she said flatly.

"It costs 4,000 per bowl. Still don't want any?" Max teased, holding up a bowl.

"Four thousand per bowl? Are you trying to prank me?" Yvette scoffed, not buying it.

Max pulled out the receipt and showed her. "See for yourself."

"What ... " Yvette's eyes widened as she glanced at the receipt, her shock growing as she saw the total.

"You're crazy! Wasting money like this!" she said, fuming.

Max simply smiled, unfazed. For the Hunts, this amount of money means nothing.

"Well, are you going to drink it? If not, I'll just throw it out," he teased.

Yvette's eyes widened. "You can't just throw it away! Four thousand per bowl, and you're willing to toss it?"

"I can't help it if you won't drink it." Max shrugged, as if it would be her fault if the soup went to waste.

Yvette glared at the bowl while gulping.

Her stomach was growling despite having just eaten.

She wasn't really hungry, but the temptation was too strong.

After a brief internal battle, she made up her mind.

I'm going to eat it!

Not for myself, but for the baby.

"Give it to me!" She reached for the bowl.

Max, however, scooped up a spoonful and offered it to her.

"You're weak, so let me feed you."

Yvette froze.

Seeing them squabble, Isabel shook her head and quietly left the room.

Back when she was with Xander, everyone else was just in the way. Now, she was in the way.

As she pondered this, a sharp pain suddenly gripped her abdomen.

The pain was so intense, she thought she might tear apart, sweat pouring from her face as she leaned against the wall, sinking to the floor.

At that moment, a voice came from behind her.

"Are you okay? Are you feeling unwell?"