

### Chapter 43 Xander's Heartache

The moment Leo finished speaking, he felt the heavy pressure around him lift instantly. He glanced back at Xander and wondered if he was mistaken. Why did it seem like the Boss was looking at him with kindness?

Kindness wasn't a word one would normally use in this context, but in the current situation, it seemed like the only one that fit.

Is it simply because I had referred Isabel as Mrs. Bennett?

After leaving the restaurant, Isabel opened the car door. "Reg, hop in. I'll drive you back to the hospital first."

Reggie frowned, casting a glance at Xander.

"Isa, is he really your boyfriend?"

Xander's gaze immediately fell on Isabel upon hearing this. He was curious to see how she would respond. Would she admit the truth about their relationship and tell Reggie that they were actually married?

Just as Xander squinted his eyes and anticipated her reply, Isabel said, "We're just friends. He's helping me out by playing a part."

Xander's expression darkened instantly, his mood shifting like a cloud covering the sun. His face now carried an unsettling gloom.

"Just friends?" Reggie asked, unconvinced.

"We're definitely not what you think," Isabel said, technically not lying.

Reggie mistakenly believed they were in a romantic relationship, but in reality, they were legally married.

"Good to know," Reggie sighed in relief.

He had been worried that Isabel, in a fit of desperation after the wedding disaster, had grabbed just anyone to be her boyfriend.

But what worried him most was Xander's good look—he was far too handsome, like one of those guys who worked in certain ... shady professions.

"Get in the car," Isabel said.

"Alright."

...

After dropping Reggie off at the hospital, Isabel returned to the car, only to find Xander's face as dark as a storm cloud.

What happened? He had been behaving so well earlier. How did his mood change so quickly? Could it be because of what Colin said to him?

"Don't let that old fool's words get to you. It's not worth wasting your energy on someone like him," Isabel said.

"You think I'm that petty?" Xander never cared about the words of people who didn't matter.

What bothered him was Isabel calling him just a friend.

Isabel was confused with his response.

"Then, why did your mood suddenly change?"

The storm on Xander's face only deepened. After a few moments of silence, he placed his hand on the steering wheel, pressed the gas, and began to drive.

Isabel studied him with a suspicious gaze. They say that women are difficult to understand, but Isabel was beginning to believe that the man beside her was equally difficult to comprehend.

Well, there's no point in attempting to guess. She'd only waste brainpower.

"Stop at the farmer's market up ahead," Isabel pointed to in the distance.

Though clearly upset, Xander still followed her instructions and pulled over near the market.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

Isabel unbuckled her seatbelt and said, "You helped me out a lot today. I'm going to cook a big meal to thank you."

"You can cook?" Xander looked at her, surprised.

Isabel flashed him a mysterious smile before getting out of the car.

Xander frowned for a moment. After a pause, he opened the car door and stepped out as well.

Hearing the sound, Isabel glanced back. "You're coming with me?"

"Why not? Am I not allowed to?" Xander shot back with a question.

"That's not what I meant. It's just that the market is pretty dirty," Isabel said, looking down at his polished, high-end shoes. The contrast between him and the typical farmer's market crowd was jarring.

A man like Xander, who held a prominent position and handled significant issues daily, probably hadn't visited a location such as this—or even a high-end grocery store, for that matter.

Isabel's words struck a nerve with Xander. Was she trying to tell him they came from different worlds? That their lifestyles were completely incompatible?

"You're a rich girl too. No matter how harsh the Zimmermans were to you, they wouldn't have cooked a young heiress like you, right?" Xander asked. Xander said.

Even most regular girls in today's world lack cooking skills, let alone a girl from a wealthy family.

"Well, you're wrong there. As the true heiress, I could never compare to the Zimmermans' fake one. When the old fool was home, Amelia would play the role of the perfect wife and mother. She'd let me have a bite to eat. But when he wasn't home ... let's just say I ended up cooking for her and her daughter," Isabel said as she started picking out vegetables from a stall.

The way Isabel handled the produce with ease made Xander realize she wasn't boasting.

"Why didn't you tell your father?" Xander asked.

"Would it have made a difference? You saw him today—he's biased to the point where it's ridiculous," Isabel responded.

Xander frowned, his heart aching for her. "You never fought back?"

From what Xander knew of Isabel, she didn't seem kind enough to accept things without a fight.

"Of course I fought back. And the result? My stepmother beat me up, locked me in a dark room, and left me without food. It was like living in a twisted fairytale—Snow White or Cinderella, take your pick," Isabel said casually, her tone light despite the heaviness of the story.

Hearing her speak so lightly about such painful experiences, Xander felt something inside him twist, as if his heart was being squeezed tightly and bleeding.

Overcome with emotion, Xander suddenly reached out. He grabbed Isabel's arm and pulled her into his embrace.