

## Chapter 46 Xander Gifts Flowers to Isabel

The delightful fragrance enveloped him, permeating the dish with richness that left a lingering taste, making it feel almost comforting!

He had briefly considered feigning indifference towards the meal, thinking that if he claimed it was just average, it might give Isabel a reason to distance herself from his brother.

Yet deep down, he realized that such a notion would be completely against his conscience.

Enough. No more overthinking; Isabel's cooking is far too exquisite to disregard!

"How's it taste?" Isabel inquired, her confidence shining through as she anticipated his feedback on her culinary creation.

Samuel lowered his gaze, warmth flooding his cheeks. After biting his lip, he looked up at Isabel, resolve filling his voice as he said, "Sister-in-law!"

Isabel halted, taken aback. She had only been teasing Samuel earlier and never expected him to actually call out her name.

Her confusion was evident.

Xander couldn't help but chuckle lightly, glancing at Samuel, "Just one time?"

With Xander's reminder, Samuel finally recalled the bet he had made with both Xander and Isabel.

In total, he should call her "Sister-in-law" twice.

Clenching his jaw, Samuel raised his voice again, exclaiming, "Sister-in-law!"

Huh? Isabel stared at both Samuel and Xander, utterly bewildered.

What is happening?

Neither Xander nor Samuel seemed willing to clarify the situation.

The more Isabel observed, the more she sensed something unusual—something that clearly involved her.

But judging by their expressions, it appeared neither of them was ready to reveal the truth.

In the days that followed, Isabel explored both the interior and exterior of the villa, preparing for her next assignment.

This time, her goal was to find an emerald guardian angel pendant. Normally, she wouldn't take on missions like this, but the moment she laid eyes on the pendant, an overwhelming sense of familiarity washed over her.

It felt as though she had encountered this piece long ago, in a time so far back that the details had faded from her memory. Not only did it evoke a wave of nostalgia, but there was also a profound affection associated with it.

Isabel had grown up in an orphanage in her previous life. At the age of six, she had suffered a high fever, and afterward, her memories from before that time became clouded.

She had overheard the orphanage director mention that on a day blanketed with heavy snowfall, they found her—then just a six-year-old—lying at the door, burning with fever.

After being rushed to the hospital for treatment, her memories turned foggy, lost to the passage of time.

As Isabel strolled through the garden, lost in her thoughts, she absentmindedly plucked a flower from its stem.

Suddenly, the sharp voice of a maid broke through her daydream.

"Ms. Zimmerman! You're in big trouble! That's Mr. Xander's favorite flower! We take great care of it—losing even a single petal pains us. And now, you've ripped the whole bloom off! You're in for it!"

Isabel glanced down at the flower in her hand. While she wasn't an expert on blooms, she could tell this particular kind was special.

If it weren't, Xander wouldn't cherish it so much.

At that moment, as if mocking her fate, Xander appeared.

Seeing him, the maid hurried over to complain.

"Mr. Xander, she ruined your favorite flower!"

The maid's hostility was unmistakable. Isabel had sensed from her very first day at the villa that the staff harbored resentment toward her.

Yet whenever Rachel was around, they treated her with the utmost deference, as if she were the lady of the house.

Isabel had a talent for reading people; Rachel may seem like a refined woman, but her cunning rivaled that of any schemer.

And Xander was nothing like Kaleb. Kaleb was oblivious to the truth, only thinking about his own interests, while Xander was astute and perceptive.

He had the ability to see right through people and situations, sticking firmly to his own principles.

Isabel considered it improbable that Xander would truly develop feelings for Rachel.

As she mulled this over, Xander came closer, his gaze fixed on the flowers in her grasp.

Isabel silently gasped, feeling a shiver of discomfort. While she wasn't intimidated by Xander, it wasn't fear that consumed her at that moment. Instead, she felt a twinge of guilt for damaging something he cherished.

Honestly, if someone had ruined her favorite item, she would surely react with fury.

"I—"

"Do you like it?" Xander inquired.

Isabel raised an eyebrow in surprise, puzzled by his question.

"Uh, the flowers are quite beautiful," she replied.

Before she could finish, Xander reached over and snapped another blossom from the branch, extending it toward her.

"Here."

What? Isabel blinked in disbelief, staring at the flower he offered, utterly confused.

"For me?!"

"Didn't you say it was beautiful?" Xander remarked casually, as if it were the most natural thing to do.

Isabel was completely taken aback.

The maid, recovering from her shock, quickly stepped aside to capture a photo and send it to Rachel.

When Rachel received the image, her jealousy surged, and tears threatened to spill over.

She knew Xander like the back of her hand, fully aware of his preferences and habits. This flower was one he particularly valued. She remembered how she once accidentally knocked off a petal and had been banned from that garden ever since.

Now, Isabel had picked an entire flower, yet Xander showed no signs of anger; instead, he broke off a branch to give to her.

How could this blatant favoritism not make Rachel seethe with envy?

"Thanks for your help. If anything happens, let me know right away," Rachel wrote the maid before transferring her some money as a thank-you.

Isabel! Just wait—tonight's family gathering will be your undoing!

That evening, Isabel joined Xander at the Bennetts' residence for the gathering.

This event was not only for the main branch of the Bennetts; it also included relatives from the side branch family. Almost everyone was in attendance.

As soon as Isabel stepped out of the car, she felt the weight of countless curious gazes on her.

These individuals regarded her with odd, scrutinizing expressions.

It didn't take a genius to realize why they were so intrigued; they were likely wondering how she had managed to marry into the Bennetts and become Mrs. Bennett.

Christian Bennett was particularly fixated on Isabel, his eyes gleaming with unfiltered desire.

Calvin Bennett approached and positioned himself to block Christian's view.

"What are you staring at? Can't you keep your eyes to yourself?" Calvin teased.

"Get lost!" Christian rolled his eyes, yet his gaze drifted past Calvin, landing back on Isabel.

"Hey!" Calvin moved forward again, obstructing Christian's line of sight. "We grew up together; I know what you're thinking. I'd suggest you rein in those thoughts. Even if this girl used some special means to rise up, she'll eventually be pushed out of the family. For now, she holds the title of Mrs. Bennett. If you pursue her, you'll be making Xander a cuckold."

"What's the issue? Xander doesn't even like her," Christian countered, his intense gaze still glued to Isabel as if he wanted to see straight through her.

"I consider you a brother, so I'm giving you a heads-up. If something happens and you find yourself in hot water, don't expect me to bail you out," Calvin said, exasperated.

"Got it. Don't worry. I know my limits."

Not far away, Rachel overheard their entire exchange, and a wicked scheme began to form in her mind.

Of course, she wouldn't collaborate with that lecherous Christian unless absolutely necessary.

After passing by the two men, Rachel walked directly to the piano on stage.

"I see there aren't any special entertainment options tonight, so if nobody minds, I'd love to perform a piece on the piano for you all," she announced.

Upon hearing this, Christian's focus immediately shifted from Isabel to Rachel.

Although Rachel might not be as striking as Isabel, her talent stood out.

He had no shortage of attractive women, but a gifted beauty like Rachel was a rare find.

Unfortunately, Rachel was fixated on Xander, and considering her status as a foster child of the Lawsons, Christian didn't dare to take advantage of her.

"Ms. Lawson, you're being overly modest. You placed third in the city's piano competition; how could we possibly dislike your performance? We'd be lucky to enjoy it," he said, eager to compliment her.

Rachel ignored Christian, taking her seat at the piano. With a graceful gesture, she placed her hands on the keys, smiling at Xander before beginning to play.

Isabel redirected her attention from Rachel back to Xander. "She's beautiful and plays the piano quite well. Aren't you even a little tempted?"

Isabel was merely curious, engaging in light-hearted gossip.

Though she believed Xander wasn't as foolish as Kaleb, she considered Rachel and Xander's families compatible enough that they might end up together.

Isabel's casual remarks, however, did not sit well with Xander.

"Are you feeling jealous?" he asked, his tone tinged with amusement.

As he spoke, Xander leaned in closer, his dark eyes locked onto hers, unwavering.

At that moment, they were so close that Isabel could feel the warmth of his breath on her skin.

"You're overthinking this."

Isabel dismissed the closeness, assuming he was just leaning in because the piano was loud, making it difficult to hear.

Meanwhile, as Rachel finished her piece, she believed her remarkable skills had left Xander utterly entranced.

Feeling proud, Rachel turned to glance at Xander.