

Love Me Or Leave Me

#Chapter 281 - Read Love Me Or Leave Me Chapter 281

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Carly smiled and nodded. "Sure." The Carter family was indeed kind, well-educated, and decent. Carly looked at Isabella and suddenly became happy again as she was glad for the latter to meet such a kind family.

That afternoon, they completed the discharge procedures for Ronald. Then, they packed up their things at the rented house and moved back to Isabella and Adrian's mansion. When Damian saw Ronald was back, he rejoiced and immediately invited him to play with Lego.

Isabella was a little worried about Ronald's injury. She repeatedly told the children to be careful, especially reminding Damian to take good care of Ronald and look out for the wound on his forehead so he wouldn't get hurt again. Damian nodded and promised not to fight with Ronald.

After moving back to the mansion, Carly felt relieved. It was a prestigious residential area. Even if the Zane family were discharged from the hospital, they couldn't enter the area even if they knew they lived there.

After settling Ronald's issue, Carly couldn't help worrying about work. She had previously wanted to quit her job, but after the Carter family spoke with her about it, she thought she could continue to work hard. 'But is it really okay to go to Strico with Becky?' she thought, still feeling concerned. She was different from Becky, who got divorced but still had a strong family backing her up and could rest assured of living the life she wanted. However, Carly was different. She was alone and had to take care of Ronald, so she needed to plan her life. She had to think carefully about every step she and Ronald would take in the future to avoid making a mistake.

Late at night, when Carly was absent-minded, Isabella suddenly walked to her side and asked in a low voice, "Carly, what are you thinking about?" Carly was silent for a while and said, "I'm thinking about the future."

At the mention of this, Isabella became serious and asked with concern, "Have you made up your mind?"

Carly shook her head. "Not yet."

Isabella hesitated and added, "Carly, why don't you go to Strico with Becky just like what Patrick said?"

Isabella looked at Carly and advised thoughtfully, "Carly, you don't have to think so much. The Carter family business is huge. It's not difficult for them to take you in. If you can follow them and learn, your future will definitely be brighter than instead of you wandering around."

Carly sighed. "Of course, I know that, but Isabella, will it be too much trouble for the Carter family if we do this? I don't think it's appropriate to always let someone take care of me."

As Carly spoke, she couldn't help but add, "The Carter family is willing to help us because they are kind and well-educated. But we can't take advantage of them all the time. That's not nice."

Hearing this, Isabella fell silent. In fact, she was as sensitive and thoughtful as Carly. Undoubtedly, she also had the same concern before. However, if Carly could stay with the Carter family and learn jewelry design from them, her future would be much brighter. "Carly, I get what you're talking about." After a long time, Isabella continued, looking at Carly, "But it's really not troublesome for the Carter family to take you in. Besides, they are willing to. Carly, do you remember what you said to me before? When Adrian and I got married, he wanted to buy me a mansion. I didn't want it, but you told me the Carter family owns a large business, so it wasn't a big deal for them. Since they were willing to give it to us, let's accept it. We don't have to be too bothered by it. Anyway, after marriage, we are all family and live together. As long as we live well in the future and treat them wholeheartedly, that's good enough. Carly, I'm telling you the same thing now. I think we are the same. The Carter family is capable and willing to be kind to us. The help they give is really good for us, and it won't cause them too much trouble. I think we can accept such help. We just need to remember their kindness. If they need our help in the future, we should try our best to help them and repay them. Don't be ungrateful."

Carly looked at Isabella. She

suddenly felt the latter had grown up and was much more mature than before. "Sure After a long time, Carly also smiled and agreed. She couldn't stop thinking about it before. Perhaps her character from childhood made her not

accustomed to accepting others' Kindness, but she thought Isabella was right. They really didn't need to feel pressured. As long as she remembered the Carter family's kindness, she would repay them when possible. After thinking it through, she felt relieved a lot, and

suddenly, she wasn't so anxious.

"It's getting late. Go to bed and sleep early. Don't stay up all night." After clearing the concern in her mind, Carly suddenly realized that it was late and that Isabella should go to bed at this time.

Seeing that Carly had figured things out, Isabella was in a better mood. She smiled and nodded. "Okay."

Another month passed by in the blink of an eye. The injury on Ronald's forehead had completely healed, and Stacey and Hayden came back from their honeymoon abroad.

When Stacey and Hayden returned, they immediately visited Carly and Ronald with gifts. They also talked about moving to Strico together. Stacey was happy to hear that Carly decided to take Ronald with her to Strico.

Later on, Carly and Becky had to deal with passing down their work. As they were going to leave Hivalis and move to Strico, their work must be handled well. In fact, Carly didn't have much work. After all, she

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still learning. The most important thing was Becky's work. She had a lot of things to deal with, and it was very troublesome. She took care of it for a whole month before everything was arranged. Only then could they go to Strico.

However, before they left, Patrick gave Stacey a document with information about the company branch in Strico. The information was not as simple as they had imagined. The business also had some internal problems, but Patrick didn't assign Becky to handle the troublesome matters back then. He just wanted her to rest assured and live a good life.

However, now that Becky's life was back on track and would get better in the future, he thought it was time for her to slowly learn how to manage all the troublesome problems in the company. Only when Becky learned to manage them and could suppress the people in the company could she inherit the company and run it well.

Soon, Becky moved to Strico to live with Hayden and manage the Carter family's business in Strico. Carly also wanted to go, but not for the time being. She had to wait for Ronald to finish his semester before transferring to another school next semester. However, she was no longer worried about the future, as she believed it would only get better.

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After leaving Hivalis, Carly neither saw Connor again nor heard any news about the Zane family, which brought her a deep sense of peace and happiness. The most significant change in her life was that she could finally provide Ronald with a warm and stable environment to grow up in. Although she couldn't afford a house in Strico, she meticulously decorated their rented apartment, transforming it into a cozy and inviting home. Every day after school, Ronald would quietly practice his writing and reading.

Once he finished his homework, he would head outside to play for a while, enjoying the simple yet peaceful life they had created.

Whenever Stacey had some free time, she would occasionally bring her children over to visit Carly and Ronald. These visits were always filled with joy and laughter. Sometimes, Carly would take Ronald to Hayden and Becky's place for a playdate. Over time, Ronald and Jeremy developed a close friendship, and Carly and Becky became inseparable friends as well.

After getting to know Becky better, Carly realized that, much like herself, Becky had started with little knowledge of jewelry design. Becky wasn't even proficient in drawing initially, but through hard work and determination, both women honed their skills. They shared a belief that perseverance and effort would lead to improvement over time.

Isabella would occasionally visit and teasingly complain that Carly was now closer to Becky than to her own sister. Carly often found herself reassuring Isabella, but fortunately, Isabella was only joking and was genuinely happy that Carly had found a good friend in Becky. Knowing Carly had friends and found joy in Strico made Isabella feel relieved and happy.

Now, Carly's only lingering concern was her career. She didn't want to rely on the Carter family's support indefinitely and felt a strong sense of indebtedness to them. Fortunately, after a year of hard work, she began to find success in her jewelry design endeavors. Her creations were finally market-

ready and started generating real commercial value and profit. She hoped her designs would bring financial gains to the Carter family and repay the support they had given her.

Carly's talent and hard work proved to be more than capable. Over the next few years, she designed numerous jewelry pieces that, once launched, generated substantial profits for the Carter family. Despite receiving lucrative offers from other jewelry companies, she turned them down without hesitation, always remembering the journey that had brought her to her current position.

Seven years later, her designs played a crucial role in saving the Carter family from a major crisis at the World Jewelry Design Competition. Not only did her design win first place in that competition, but it also caught the attention of Eklonna, a prestigious jewelry brand. Eklonna extended an invitation for her to join their team, but Carly chose to remain loyal to Carter's Jewel. She made it clear that as long as Carter's Jewel was in business and the Carter family was in charge, she would not consider switching companies. Many believed she missed out on significant opportunities by declining Eklonna's offer, but Carly felt content with her decision.

Over time, people began to notice the jewelry pieces worn by royal families worldwide featured designs that were distinct from Eklonna's signature styles. These new pieces

were unique, elegant, and luxurious. Only a select few with access to the elite circles knew that these designs came from Carter's Jewel in Zentscape.

As a result, Eklonna ceased to be the sole exclusive supplier for royal families. Carter's Jewel gradually rose to prominence, with its designs becoming increasingly popular among royalty worldwide.

After many years of dominance, Eklonna's designs began to feel stale and uninspired to the elite clientele who craved something fresh yet still befitting their noble status. Carter's Jewel emerged as the perfect solution, offering jewelry pieces that were both luxurious and uniquely designed.

The added prestige of the brand being led by Hayden's wife made Carter's Jewel even more appealing. The elite were eager to own pieces from this new brand, seeing it as a fresh, desirable addition to their collections. But that tale of success would be one for another time.

Carly could not have foreseen the future success of Carter's Jewels from the outset. She simply stayed true to her heart, driven by the kindness and support the Carter family had shown her. As she grew and achieved her own success, she felt a

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deep sense of loyalty and gratitude toward the Carter family. Leaving them or appearing ungrateful was never an option for

her.

Eight years after her divorce from Connor, Carly unexpectedly ran into him again. Ronald had just finished his middle school exams, proudly placing second in the city. It was Jeremy, Hayden's son, who had taken first place. To celebrate their children's achievements, the families planned a trip together. It was during this trip that they encountered Connor.

Connor appeared to have remarried. He was with a tall woman who had a rather fierce demeanor, and they were accompanied by a little girl, around three years old, perched on Connor's shoulders.

"Daddy, Mommy, look! The flowers over there are so pretty!" The little girl wriggled with excitement, her tiny feet kicking and bouncing up and down.

Connor, struggling to keep his balance, instinctively let go of her as she wriggled, causing the child to nearly fall off his shoulders. The woman beside him quickly caught the child and gently lifted her off Connor's shoulders. In a split second, she raised her hand and slapped Connor across the face. "What is wrong with you, Connor? Can't you

even hold a child properly? You're useless!" she scolded him harshly. Connor appeared timid and remained silent, not daring to utter a word.

Carly was not the only one who noticed the commotion; Ronald saw it as well. After so many years, Ronald almost failed to recognize Connor. However, after a moment and a closer look, he managed to identify his father. As Ronald focused on the scene, Connor noticed him too. Initially, Connor did not recognize Ronald, but when he saw Carly standing next to him, he immediately realized who they were.

Carly turned away, unwilling to engage with Connor. "Let's go check out another place," she said to Ronald. He nodded slightly and followed her, both of them turning their backs on Connor.

Watching their retreating figures, Connor began to panic. Realizing what was happening, he instinctively tried to follow them. However, just as he moved to run after them, his current wife noticed the situation and stopped him. "Connor, what are you doing?" she asked, glaring at him.

Following his gaze, she saw Carly's retreating figure. Quickly, she handed their daughter to Connor and hurried after Carly.

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The woman sped off. Connor came to his senses and panicked. He hurriedly caught up with the woman with his daughter in his arms. "Jessic, what are you doing? I... Aren't we here to travel? Let's go somewhere else!" His voice grew anxious as he spoke.

However, Connor could not stop Jessica at all. Jessica quickly rushed to Carly. She was shocked when she saw Carly's face and then sneered.

Connor quickly chased after her with his daughter in his arms, but the next moment, Jessica slapped him hard across the face. "I was wondering who had you so captivated just now. Turns out it was your first love," Jessica said with a sneer.

Carly and Ronald were dumbfounded.

Stacey stood off to the side, watching Connor and the woman who seemed to be his wife. Her mood darkened. "Let's go," Stacey said to Carly. She thought, 'It was so many years ago. There's no need to dwell on it anymore!'

"Don't leave!" Jessica's voice turned fierce as she saw them getting ready to go.

Ronald quickly stepped in front of Carly, eyeing the menacing Jessica with displeasure. "What do you want?"

Jessica looked at Ronald and then Connor. After a long time, she recognized the boy. "Are you Ronald?"

Ronald frowned and said unhappily, "It has nothing to do with you." Then, he turned to Carly and said, "Mom, let's go."

"Wait a minute!" Jessica immediately shouted.

"Do you still carry the surname Zane?" Jessica asked. After saying that, she turned around and ordered Connor, "Connor, since you have divorced Carly, let's change Ronald's surname. Let him take his mother's surname!"

Connor was tired of hearing this. He could not help but retort, "Jessica, don't be unreasonable!"

Jessica was furious when she heard this. "Am I being unreasonable? Don't you and your mother dislike me for giving birth to a daughter every day because of this child? Connor, let me tell you today. I want you to change Ronald's surname today. If he still uses your surname, I will leave. You and your mother can go screw yourselves."

Connor's face was extremely gloomy. He glared at Jessica in disbelief and shouted, "Jessica!"

When the adults were quarreling, the little girl next to Jessica also stared at Ronald and shouted in disgust, "I hate you!"

Ronald instantly frowned and was unhappy. However, he was quite tempted by Jessica's suggestion. He had actually wanted to change his surname long ago. For many years, he had always wanted to follow his mother's surname. His last name constantly reminded him of his useless father. Ronald thought about it and said to Connor, "Then let's go change my surname. It happens that I don't want to be a Zane either."

"No way!" Connor's neck stiffened, and his face turned red. He refused immediately without a second thought. Connor looked at Ronald and took a deep breath before saying coldly, "Ronald, don't think about changing your surname. You will be a Zane for the rest of your life!"

Hearing this, Ronald sneered. "Are you dreaming? Stay a Zane for the rest of my life? If it weren't for needing both my parents' approval, I would have changed my last name long ago. Even if you

don't agree, I'll still change it once I'm an adult."

"You!" Connor flushed in anger again.

Hearing what Ronald said, Jessica glanced at Carly and Ronald with a pleased expression. However, since she didn't know

them well, she didn't say much.

Connor refused to let Ronald change his surname, but Jessica said she had a way to convince him. She exchanged contact information with Ronald and told him to wait, assuring him that she would get Connor to agree. After they parted ways, Carly's mood remained complicated.

"Will it affect Ronald's grades if he suddenly changes his surname after the examination?" Carly couldn't help but worry.

"It's not a big deal. I'll ask someone to arrange it," Hayden said.

Hearing this, Carly was momentarily stunned. But she quickly realized that the task would be much easier with Becky and Hayden's help, considering their status. Then, when she thought about how Ronald could take her surname instead of Connor's in the future, her heart beat faster, and she was filled with joy.

The remainder of the trip unexpectedly became enjoyable. They happily extended their stay for a few more days and finally took the Hoggard family's helicopter back to Strico. They had some fun, and life moved on.

Ronald and Jeremy also became busy. They were planning to start a game company together. Although the two children had just graduated from junior high school, growing up in a prominent family like the Hoggard family had made them different from ordinary kids. Jeremy, in particular, showed a talent for business. He and Ronald had been close friends since childhood, and under Jeremy's influence, Ronald had been exposed to various experiences. Nowadays, even Carly, his mother, felt she didn't fully understand her son. The only thing Carly was certain of was that both children were good kids who would never do anything against the law. In that case, she wouldn't restrict them too much.

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Stacey and Hayden also knew that Jeremy used the summer vacation to start a game company with Ronald, so they didn't stop him. There was nothing wrong with children developing their own hobbies, as long as it didn't disrupt their learning.

Stacey was quite curious whether Jeremy's company would really succeed. Neither she nor Hayden interfered. They just watched the children move forward. A month later, when Ronald and Jeremy launched the game they had developed together, Stacey and Hayden were surprised and immediately downloaded the game designed, planning to play it themselves.

The game was simple, but its artistic style was appealing. Stacey couldn't help but play it for several days. A few days later, Stacey exclaimed, "Jeremy is too smart."

"And Ronald," Hayden added, feeling amused. Jeremy didn't design this game alone.

Stacey also remembered and nodded with a smile. "Yes. And Ronald."

"They're so smart," Stacey commented seriously.

Hayden looked at her and laughed. "You're smart too."

Over the years, Carter's Jewel had flourished under her management.

Stacey suddenly remembered and said, "I wonder if Ronald can change his surname."

Hayden was silent for a moment and then said, "I'm not sure. But it doesn't matter whether he changes his surname or not."

Stacey smiled and nodded. "Yes, it doesn't matter." Ronald knew Connor's character well. Even if he had the Zane surname, the Zane family couldn't take advantage of him.

When Stacey was thinking about it, Hayden hugged her and showered her with kisses. Even after many years of marriage, their feelings for each other hadn't faded at all. Every day when Hayden came back from work, he loved spending time close

to her.

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When Charlie was 35, he had no intention of getting married, and no one could persuade him otherwise. He seemed destined to remain single. The Carter family felt helpless and anxious, worrying about him but unsure what to do. Everyone thought Charlie might live this way forever - never marrying, having children, or finding companionship.

One day, Abigail Carter and Aaron Carter, who were playing hide-and-seek, sneaked into Charlie's private storage room and accidentally discovered his secret. By the way, Abigail and Aaron were the children of Stacey and Hayden. They were twins and very adorable kids.

Abigail, the elder sister of the twins, resembled Hayden more, while Aaron, the younger brother, took after their mother.

In the Carter family, adults generally respected each other's private spaces, such as rooms or personal storage areas. They had a mutual understanding to allow each family member their own independent space. The exception to this rule was the children.

Children were young, didn't know much about many things, and were naturally curious about everything. Especially when a group of kids played hide-and-seek together, they would explore everywhere, regardless of whose private space it was.

That evening, Abigail and Aaron, along with Yolanda Carter, the daughter of Adrian and Isabella, played hide-and-seek with three other children. Abigail and Aaron were responsible for hiding, while Yolanda was the seeker. Abigail and Aaron quietly hid in Charlie's personal storage room. While hiding, they accidentally opened Charlie's cab, causing photos and a diary to spill out.

Charlie was a vivacious man. Since the birth of Abigail and Aaron, he had taken them on many adventures, so the two kids were very close to him. When the twins saw a photo of Charlie crying, their eyes widened with concern. They quickly took the photo and hurried to their mother.

"Mom, Uncle Charlie is crying!" Abigail handed the photo she had just picked up to her mother.

Hearing this, Stacey was confused. But the moment she took the photo and saw it, she was stunned.

"And this!" Aaron added, holding up the diary that had accidentally fallen out earlier and handing it to Stacey.

Stacey hesitantly took the diary from Aaron. Normally, she wouldn't peek into someone else's personal belongings, but the photo she had just seen worried her. After examining the photo and diary for a moment, she looked down at Abigail and Aaron and asked seriously, "Abigail, Aaron, where did you find this photo and diary?"

"Over there in Uncle Charlie's room," Aaron said immediately.

Stacey took the diary but didn't open it, knowing it belonged to Charlie. Her conscience told her not to violate Charlie's privacy and that she should return the diary and photos immediately. But as Stacey looked at the photo and thought about how Charlie had never married all these years, she hesitated. After a long pause, she decided to take these things to Debra. Stacey didn't show them in the living room. Instead, she called her mother to her room and, after closing the door, carefully took out the diary and the photo for her to see.

"What is this?" Debra asked, puzzled. But the next second, Debra saw the photo. Shocked, she asked, "Is there someone Charlie likes?" Stacey thought for a while and couldn't help but add, "Maybe someone he liked before."

"When?" Debra asked subconsciously. However, it was obvious that this question was unnecessary because Stacey didn't know the answer either. Debra held the photo and stared at Charlie in it. Although she didn't know when the photo was taken, she vaguely

recalled her son's growth and recognized the shirt he was wearing in the picture. "Did he take this when he was in college?" After a while, Debra muttered to herself. She looked at the girl in the photo again and couldn't help but be excited. "I wonder if this girl is married or not. If she isn't..."

Stacey was rendered speechless.

She had mixed feelings about this. Charlie was 35 years old, and if the girl in the photo was around his age, she wouldn't be young either. She had probably gotten married by now. Despite this, Stacey and Debra were curious about the girl Charlie had liked.

Debra wondered, 'What if the girl's not married yet? Maybe there's still a little chance? Will finding this girl change Charlie's attitude of not wanting to get married?'

Debra thought and looked up to ask Stacey. "Have you read this diary?" she asked.

Stacey shook her head. "No."

Debra nodded. She thought for a while, then stood up with her things and walked toward Charlie's room. Abigail and Aaron immediately followed behind Debra. The two kids were very happy.

Yolanda, who had been playing hide-and-seek and trying to find Abigail and Aaron, lit up when she saw them. She immediately ran over, holding them in her small hands, and exclaimed, "I got you!"

A bright smile instantly appeared on Abigail's face. Aaron also beamed at Yolanda.

Debra took the photo and diary to Charlie's room, where she carefully placed them on the table. Before leaving, she couldn't help but take out her phone and take a picture of the girl in the photo.

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In the photo, Charlie and a girl were sitting on the green grass, leaning against each other. The girl had a bright smile on her face as she looked toward the sun while Charlie was staring down at her, his eyes red and clearly crying.

After Debra took a picture of the photo, she couldn't help but look at it for a long time. Charlie had always been a playful boy, and as his mother, she never knew he had once been in love and even cried.

"Granny, Uncle Charlie is crying." Abigail tugged at Debra's clothes and emphasized again.

"His eyes are red," Aaron described it vividly.

Stacey looked at the photo and then

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at the two kids. Abigail and Aaron had a close relationship with Charlie. Even just seeing a photo of him crying made the kids very worried, prompting them to quickly tell her and Debra about it. Thinking of this, Stacey comforted the two kids, "It's okay. Uncle Charlie is fine now."

Abigail and Aaron didn't understand, nor did Yolanda.

"Why is Uncle Charlie crying?" Yolanda asked curiously and felt a little worried. The next moment, Yolanda pursed her lips and said seriously, "Don't cry. It's not good to cry."

Hearing this, Stacey was amused. She looked at Yolanda and nodded with a smile. "Yeah. It's not good to cry. But Uncle Charlie isn't crying now; that's just a photo."

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Abigail, Aaron, and Yolanda didn't understand, so Stacey had to take them outside and patiently explain everything to them. After a long explanation, they finally understood that Charlie wasn't sad anymore. However, he had cried in the past and had been very sad before.

That evening, when Charlie returned home eager to see the children, he was immediately surrounded by a swarm of little ones. The three youngest, Abigail, Aaron, and Yolanda, ran over and encircled him. Charlie gazed at the children before finally squatting down. He embraced each of them, planting kisses on their cheeks, and felt utterly blissful. Despite his happiness, he couldn't hold all three at once, especially the older ones. Lillian, Kevin, Jeremy, and Damian were older now and didn't cling to people as much as they used to, but Charlie still adored them. After attending to the younger children, he went to find the older children, giving each a hug to ensure no one felt left out. The number of children in the Carter family had grown significantly over time, making coming home a vibrant and lively experience.

After the excitement settled, Debra called Charlie over. Initially, he was all smiles, but his expression stiffened when he heard that Abigail and Aaron had accidentally entered his room while playing hide and seek and had rummaged through his things. Charlie quickly stood up and rushed upstairs. Debra hadn't thought much of it at first. After all, who hadn't experienced relationships in their youth? It was normal to have a broken heart now and then. She assumed that after all these years, that girl wouldn't hold much significance for Charlie. But as she witnessed his reaction now, a sudden realization hit her. Debra wondered, 'Does Charlie still love that girl? If he didn't, he wouldn't react so strongly to the children finding his things. Could it be that Charlie hasn't dated all these years because of her?'

Stacey could clearly see that Charlie still cared about that girl. She hesitated for a moment before saying, "I'll go upstairs to check on him." She made her way upstairs quickly but instinctively softened her steps as she approached Charlie's room. Stacey did not enter and stood at the door. Charlie was inside, and she found it inappropriate to intrude into his private space without first receiving his permission.

Debra soon arrived and, like Stacey, paused at the door. Lillian, Kevin, Jeremy, Damian, Abigail, Aaron, and Yolanda joined them. Before long, a sizable group of children gathered around the door to Charlie's room. As Stacey and Debra had not entered, the children, following their lead, also refrained from going inside. They did not go in but waited outside obediently. Lillian, finding it a little strange, couldn't help asking, "Mommy, Granny, what happened to Uncle Charlie?"

Kevin, equally curious, chimed in, "Yeah. What is Uncle Charlie doing?"

"Uncle Charlie is crying!" Abigail said in a voice she believed was discreet.

"Yeah. His eyes are red from crying. He's crying really sadly!" Aaron added seriously.

"No, Aunt Stacey said that Uncle Charlie isn't crying now. He cried in the past. The photo was taken before," Yolanda quickly and loudly corrected.

It suddenly got noisy outside the room. Inside, Charlie's mood was already low, but hearing the children's chatter outside made him feel helpless. He thought that with some effort, he could suppress the sadness in his heart. Charlie swiftly stashed the diary and photos away, then turned to face the group of children gathered at the door, deliberately adopting a stern expression. Abigail, seeing Charlie looking at them, immediately brightened up. She ran in and exclaimed, "Uncle Charlie!"

Yolanda also ran into the room. She was very curious. "Uncle Charlie, why did you cry before?"

Holding the two in his arms, Charlie was speechless. He tried to keep a straight face, saying, "I didn't cry. Don't slander me."

"You cried!" Aaron exclaimed, and he analyzed seriously. "Your eyes are super red. You must have cried very loudly." Charlie was unsure of what to respond next.

Stacey found it amusing and promptly entered the room to remind the children, saying, "Abigail, Aaron, stop bothering Charlie all the time." Yolanda glanced at Stacey and then at Charlie.

Debra entered last, sighing softly as

she looked at Charlie. She then turned to Stacey and said, "Becky, take the children downstairs." Stacey understood that Debra wanted to have a serious conversation with Charlie, so she nodded in

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agreement. She gathered the large group of children and led them downstairs, ensuring they didn't stay to interrupt Debra and Charlie's discussion. In the room, Debra saw that all the children had gone out, and it was quiet. She then looked at Charlie. Feeling conflicted, she hesitated for a moment before trying to speak in a gentle voice. "Charlie, these past years..."

Charlie forced a smile and

responded, "Mom, it's all in the past." He then added quickly, "It's been so many years; and it doesn't matter anymore. Let's not dwell on it. Let's head downstairs. There's nothing more to say. I... will go tidy up my things. Do you want to go downstairs and get some rest?" As Charlie said that, he wanted to send her away.

How could Debra leave? Charlie had avoided marriage for so long, and she never understood why. She had almost come to believe that he simply preferred being single. Now, Debra realized he had been harboring unrequited love for a girl all these years. Thinking of this, Debra couldn't help but say, "Chuck." She called Charlie by his nickname, one she hadn't used in many years. Hearing Debra's words, Charlie instantly froze, unable to continue asking her to leave. "Chuck, can I ask what her name is? When... did it all start?" Debra inquired cautiously. As she spoke, she was overwhelmed with guilt and apologized. "Chuck, I'm sorry. It was my fault for not paying more attention to you in the past. I-I didn't know you were in a relationship before."

Charlie hesitated for a while and couldn't help but say, "Mom, why don't you just call me Charlie? It's weird hearing my nickname after all these years.

It gives me goosebumps."

Debra was currently overwhelmed with guilt, but Charlie's words left her feeling helpless and somewhat nonplussed. She couldn't help but respond with a lecture, "Stop joking around. I'm serious."

Charlie sighed and sat down. "I'm serious too. It's been so many years. There's no need to think about it anymore."

"You still love her, don't you?" Debra asked. Charlie was unsure of what to respond next.

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"It's all in the past," Charlie murmured. Debra hesitated for a moment, then walked over and embraced him. Charlie, feeling sullen, nestled in her arms. He said nothing and did not attempt to resist.

After a long silence, Debra asked softly, "Can I go see that girl?"

Charlie felt amused and said with a bitter smile, "Mom, let it be. She'll have her own life, and I'll have mine. We'll both be fine. There's no need to disturb her life."

Debra's heart ached even more when she heard his words. "I'm not trying to disturb her life. I just want to discreetly take a look at her. After all, she's the girl you truly loved. I'd like to know what she looks like in person. Is that okay?" said Debra. She then quickly clarified and added, "Chuck, don't worry. I won't go and disturb her life. If she's doing well now and you want to stay out of her way, I won't let her know we're there. We'll just observe her from a distance like a passerby and see how she's doing now. Is that okay?"

Charlie's silence deepened Debra's heartache. She remembered Charlie's lively personality and had always thought he had a devil-may-care attitude, believing that everything was always fine for him. Debra never imagined he had been hiding such a deep wound for so many years. If Abigail and Aaron hadn't accidentally found the photos, they might never have known about the emotional scar Charlie carried. "She wouldn't want us to see her," Charlie said in a low voice after a long pause.

Debra's heart ached further. The proud Charlie seemed so vulnerable when it came to that girl, and he even feared that she didn't want him to see her. "We'll just take a look quietly. If she's doing well, we won't disturb her. But if..." As Debra spoke, she patted Charlie's back gently and added, "Chuck, I might be a bit selfish, but I want to take a chance that she might still not be married." Charlie was at a loss for words. Debra continued, "What if she's married but not doing well?"

Charlie, exasperated, replied, "Mom, don't jinx her!"

Debra looked at him helplessly. Feeling both amused and heartbroken, she quickly nodded. "All right, I won't jinx her." Despite this, Debra couldn't help but hope that if the girl was still unmarried, they might be able to play matchmaker and help them reconnect. Noticing that Charlie hadn't outright rejected the idea of discreetly checking on the girl's current situation, she sensed there was still room for negotiation. After a brief pause, Debra asked more about the girl. Charlie remained silent for a long time before finally sharing what he knew. However, the information was already 12 years old, and he wasn't sure if it would still be useful. Debra was delighted to receive the information. "That's all right. With the Carter family's connections, we should be able to find her."

The girl's name was Claire Sullivan, and she was a university classmate of Charlie's, majoring in economics. Charlie had originally planned to introduce her to his family after

graduation. Unexpectedly, in their final year of university, Claire abruptly broke up with him just before graduation. Charlie had asked her many times for an explanation, desperate to

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understand what had gone wrong, but Claire remained tight-lipped and refused to provide any reasons for her decision. After graduation, Charlie heard from classmates that Claire had gone abroad to

Yowhayton. With so little

information, Charlie felt lost. He wondered, 'Will it really be possible to find any news about Claire?' Debra reassured him, saying, "You don't have to worry about this. I'll have someone look for her." Charlie remained silent. Debra looked at him for a moment, then bent down to give him a comforting hug.

After leaving the room, she immediately contacted Patrick, Adrian, and Bryce, mobilizing the whole family to use their works to help find Claire. Stacey also asked Debra for Claire's information and quickly sent it to Hayden, asking him to assist in the search. Unexpectedly, as soon as Stacey sent the information, Hayden responded with a question. He texted: [Is her name Claire Sullivan?]

Without much thought, Stacey immediately replied: [Yeah.]

Hayden sent an image and asked: [Do they look alike?]

Stacey was stunned when she saw the photo. Instinctively, she compared Claire's photo with the one Hayden had sent. They looked remarkably similar as if they were the same person but dressed differently, Charlie's photo of Claire made her appear younger, like university student. However, in the photo sent by Hayden, the girl appeared much more mature and dignified, suggesting her identity was far from simple. In fact, this was not just Stacey's imagination. With the Hoggard family's connections, the people Hayden knew were far from ordinary. Realizing this, Stacey suddenly felt that things might be more complicated than they appeared. She quickly asked: [Who... is she?]

After ten minutes of silence, Hayden finally replied: [Her name is Kelly Jones. She's the daughter of the chairman of Jones Group in Yowhayton and the current sole heir.]

Having been married to Hayden for the past few years, Stacey had gained some knowledge of royal families and top conglomerates worldwide. Jones Group was one of the most renowned conglomerates in Yowhayton. It was said that while Yowhayton appeared to be governed by their president, in reality, the president was merely a puppet controlled by the three major conglomerates, which controlled all the significant affairs of the country. Thinking of this, Stacey couldn't help shaking her head. She responded: [Maybe we've got the wrong person. They shouldn't be the same person.]

Hayden texted: [They do look somewhat alike.]

Stacey was also in agreement. She examined the photos multiple times, finding the similarity increasingly convincing. She pondered, 'If she's the heir to a top conglomerate in Yowhayton, does that mean Charlie might not be able to match her

status if he wants to be with her?

With that in mind, Stacey sent Hayden a new text: [I'll go and ask.]

She then took her phone and went to find Patrick and Debra. Stacey thought, 'Maybe it's just a misunderstanding? Perhaps it's merely a case of looking similar? The person Charlie knew was clearly a university classmate. How could she possibly be the heir of such a powerful family?' Debra had dispatched the task of finding Claire and was currently feeling anxious. She was uncertain of how Claire was doing now. Regardless, the family was overjoyed to learn that Charlie had once loved a girl.

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Holding the phone, Stacey hurried over to Patrick and Debra. She quickly clicked on the photo and showed it to them. Both Debra and Patrick were stunned when they saw the image. "You found her so quickly?" Debra exclaimed, her surprise evident in her voice. However, her smile slowly faded because the girl in the photo was clearly no ordinary person. Patrick's smile also vanished, especially after he read the message sent by Hayden. After a moment, Debra couldn't help but say, "Maybe it's just a resemblance?" She pondered, 'If that girl is from an ordinary family and not married, we'll do our utmost to help Charlie win her over. But if she's truly who we think she is... she is out of our reach!

Patrick added, "Charlie and Claire met during university. If she's studying here, she likely isn't the heir to Jones Group." This explanation seemed reasonable. After all, why would the heir of Jones Group come to study in Zentiscape?

Stacey couldn't help but interject, "But she is in Yowhayton."

At this, everyone fell silent again. The location indeed seemed a bit too coincidental. After a moment of thought, Patrick turned to Stacey and asked, "Becky, could you reach out to Hay to see if he has more details on Kelly?"

Stacey quickly agreed, replying, "Okay." She picked up her phone and texted Hayden. He received her request and promptly agreed to help. However, it would take some time to gather the information, so they had no choice but to wait. The news about Kelly left everyone uneasy.

They wondered, 'If the girl Charlie likes is truly the heir to Jones Group, his chances of winning her heart seem slim. If that's the case, could Charlie end up single for the rest of his life?'

Charlie had secluded himself in his room for several hours, eventually stepping out. The household was bustling with numerous children, with whom Charlie had developed a deep bond due to his affable and playful demeanor. As soon as he appeared, the children swarmed around him enthusiastically. Charlie, always quick to engage, crouched down and embraced several of them in his arms. Had there been only one child, he might have lifted them immediately. However, with the multitude of children around him, it was impossible for him to carry them all without causing a commotion of disappointed cries; such was the conundrum of his popularity among them.

Three days later, the atmosphere turned somber as Hayden's message arrived. Kelly was not raised within the Jones family. She was the offspring of the Jones family's eldest son during a visit to Zentscape with his then girlfriend. Typically, Kelly's background would preclude her from being a legitimate heir; however, a severe internal conflict had eradicated all direct descendants a few years prior, leaving no clear heir. Unexpectedly, the direct line introduced a girl from Zentscape as the last remaining descendant. A paternity test confirmed her as the legitimate daughter of the eldest son, establishing her as Kelly Jones, the sole heir to the Jones empire.

However, the final part of the file mentioned Kelly's current marital status. She was 34 years old, single, and unmarried. With the current precarious situation of the Jones family, it was imperative for Kelly to marry and produce heirs promptly. Nevertheless, she staunchly refused to marry, which exacerbated the tensions within the Jones family. The branches mocked the direct line, predicting their eventual downfall due to the lack of heirs, while even openly supporting Kelly's decision to remain unmarried. Other supporting families expressed dismay and urged Kelly to fulfill her duties by marrying soon.

"Why hasn't she married yet?" Stacey queried, unable to contain her curiosity. The question lingered in the air as everyone's gaze shifted between Stacey and the file, pondering the implications,

"I'll go talk to Chuck," declared Debra, picking up the file as she made her way toward the garden. The news had cast a shadow over their expectations, and Stacey, after a brief hesitation, decided to follow Debra.

In Carter Villa's garden, where playground equipment had been installed for the children's entertainment, Charlie was thoroughly enjoying his time with the young ones. As Debra approached, carrying the important documents, she observed Charlie engaging with the children and sighed softly. "Chuck, can we go upstairs to talk about this?" she requested.

Charlie paused, turning to face her. As soon as he noticed the document in Debra's hand, Charlie realized it must be

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something connected to him, or more specifically, to Claire. His thoughts immediately raced, 'Did they finally manage to track her down? Judging by Mom's expression, it doesn't look good. Could it be that Claire gotten married?' These

thoughts brought a wave of bitterness crashing over him. Despite this, he forced himself to flash a bright smile. Having spent years in the entertainment industry, Charlie had honed his acting skills to perfection. No one in the Carter family could penetrate his carefully constructed facade.

He continued to ponder, 'Honestly, this isn't such a surprising turn of events, is it? I'm 35 now, and Claire is 34. Most people our age are already married, and many have children by now. Claire...

she might be living a blissful life right now, right?' With these thoughts swirling in his mind, Charlie followed Debra back to the room, maintaining his smile. Meanwhile, out in the garden, the group of kids who had been watching Charlie couldn't help but want to follow him as he left. However, Stacey stepped in to stop them, staying behind to entertain the children and ensuring they wouldn't disrupt the conversation between Debra and Charlie.

Debra led Charlie to the door of the room, and then turned to face him. Seeing his smiling face, she sighed deeply and said, "Stop pretending." Despite Charlie's flawless acting, she was his mother, and she could see right through him.

Charlie glanced at her, and the carefree smile that had adorned his face slowly began to fade. It transformed first into an expression of bitterness before finally settling into a smile that attempted to convey his best wishes. "Is she married?" he asked.

"No," Debra replied bluntly, unwilling to leave Charlie in suspense any longer.

Charlie opened his mouth to tell Debra to stop investigating and to leave Claire's life undisturbed, but he caught himself before the words could escape. His eyes widened in disbelief. "What did you say?"

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Seeing Charlie's shocked expression, Debra realized he still hadn't been able to let go of Claire. Reflecting on this, she reiterated, "She isn't married yet."

Charlie's eyes widened even more, and he tried to speak but found himself too choked up to form words. "W-Why?" he finally managed to ask, his voice hoarse and strained.

Debra sighed and guided him into the room, handing him the file she had brought. Charlie took the documents and began reading them urgently. However, after only a short while, he found himself unable to continue. He looked up at Debra with a blank expression, his mind racing, 'Is there a mistake in the file? Did we get it wrong? The sole heir of Jones Group... Is it the same Jones Group I know? No way. That's impossible! Claire is just an ordinary girl, cheerful and adorable, with an ordinary background!'

Seeing the confusion and turmoil on Charlie's face, Debra knew how much this was affecting him. Though she shared his concern, she said, "Her true identity is a bit... complicated. Chuck, what if her family is beyond our reach? They're urgently trying to find her a husband so she can quickly provide heirs, but she's been unwilling to marry. I've been thinking about this for a while and can't help but wonder if it's because there's still a place for you in her heart." Debra couldn't help but reach out to pat Charlie's head and added solemnly, "Chuck, if that's the case, there might still be a chance for you. While marrying her might be unlikely, there could be an opportunity if you're willing to make some sacrifices and marry into her family." Charlie was at a loss for words.

Seeing his dazed expression, Debra considered it for a moment before saying, "If all else fails, the Carter family can offer a ten-year warranty. After you marry into her family, if any issues arise within ten years, you can be sent back to us for servicing. Of course, we have our limits. At most, it's a warranty with no returns. You must make it clear that our family isn't to be taken lightly, and the boundary cannot be crossed."

Charlie was left speechless upon hearing this. He wondered, 'Is she really my mom? Am I adopted?' Despite his incredulity, Debra's playful banter had significantly eased his sadness.

After sending Debra out of the room, Charlie returned to his own space. He opened the file and carefully reviewed the information within. After thoroughly going through the materials, Charlie turned on his computer to search for news about Jones Group. However, he couldn't find a single photo of Claire. Feeling a pang of disappointment, he knew the information his family had gathered was accurate. He wondered, 'Is Claire really the sole heir of Jones Group?' His mind buzzed with questions, and he struggled to calm himself. After thinking for a long time, Charlie stood up and began pacing the room, repeating to himself, 'Claire isn't married yet. Does that mean... I still have a chance with her?'

Despite his many years as an actor, Charlie couldn't control his emotions at this moment. After a prolonged period of thought, he couldn't help but collapse onto his bed,

pulling the blanket over his head and laughing maniacally. Charlie laughed for a while, but eventually, the laughter gave way to tears. Alone in his room, there was no need for pretense. He cried quietly, with tears flowing continuously. After his tears subsided, his mood began to lift. Charlie thought, 'I'm going to find Claire and ask her if there's still a chance for us, no matter the reason for our breakup or how small the possibility might be. I don't want to give up. Determined to act immediately, he couldn't wait a moment longer and quickly took out his phone to book a flight.

The plane was set to depart in two hours. Charlie booked the ticket and packed his things immediately. He simply packed a few clothes, informed his family, and left in a hurry. Everyone was

initially puzzled, but soon they understood what he was planning and silently wished him well. However, Claire, or rather, Kelly's current identity was not someone Charlie could

meet at will.

After Stacey informed Hayden of Charlie's actions, he fell silent and then sent a message to Charlie. Upon landing, Charlie eagerly checked the file on his phone. He saved the information Debra had sent him and could see Claire's current appearance whenever he checked his phone. Claire had matured considerably and looked much colder and more serious than before. Despite this, Charlie's mind couldn't help but recall how sweet and cute she had been in university. As he reminisced, a silly smile spread across his face. After he was done, Charlie immediately turned off his phone, disregarding

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the other notifications. He couldn't wait any longer and was eager to head straight to Jones Group to see Claire again.

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The capital city of Yowhayton was vast. After leaving the airport, Charlie took a taxi for over 40 minutes before finally reaching his destination. Standing before the imposing gates of Jones Group, he took a deep breath and wheeled his suitcase forward. However, Charlie was stopped by the security guard at the entrance. He quickly tried to communicate in Yowhaytonian, but his face

showed signs of growing distress as the security guard refused to let him through. Charlie became increasingly worried, thinking, 'What should I do?'

Back at Hoggard Villa, Hayden checked the time repeatedly and noticed that Charlie hadn't responded to his messages despite having been off the plane for a while. He

wondered, 'Has he not seen my message?' After waiting for another hour with no response, Hayden decided to call Charlie directly.

At the entrance of Jones Group, Charlie was still trying to figure out how to get in when his phone rang unexpectedly. He was momentarily stunned and irritated but stepped aside to check the call. Seeing that it was Hayden calling, Charlie was slightly surprised but quickly realized that Hayden's call was likely related to his situation. After all, the Carter family's swift discovery that Claire was Kelly was thanks to the Hoggard family's assistance. Without Hayden's help, it might have taken them much longer to uncover this information. With this realization, Charlie's impatience vanished. He stepped aside and answered the phone.

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However, Charlie was still reluctant to leave. He wanted to see Claire again, even from afar. 'If I didn't see her in person, it somehow feels... not quite real,' he thought. Without realizing it, he sat down at the entrance of Jones Group. However, he merely sat for a while before standing up and forcing himself to leave.

Charlie mused, 'I can't continue sitting here. Hayden will come over in a few days and take me to see Kelly for work-related reasons. By sitting here, I may damage Hoggard Technologies' image. I can't drag Hayden down.' With that, he reluctantly left with his suitcase.

A few minutes later, Charlie checked into a hotel near Jones Group's headquarters. Unbeknownst to him, three black luxury cars appeared at the entrance of the headquarters building just after he left. Among them, the middle vehicle looked the most luxurious and expensive.

The doors of the three luxury cars opened almost simultaneously, with bodyguards rushing out from the front and rear vehicles. They moved quickly to the door of the middle luxury car to guard Kelly as she stepped out.

After the 34-year-old Kelly got out of the car, she walked straight into the headquarters building of Jones Group flanked by the bodyguards.

At the same time, Charlie also settled down in the hotel. However, after putting his luggage away, he couldn't resist opening the window of his room and looking toward Jones Group's headquarters.

Anxiety, restlessness, uneasiness, and an indescribable worry and fear overwhelmed him. He was afraid the files he had previously seen were all fake and that he had rushed over only to be happy for nothing.

Meanwhile, Hayden got his assistant to contact Jones Group for work-related reasons. Given Hoggard Technologies' exceptional global standing, the result was as expected, and they soon secured an appointment.

All Hayden had to do was swiftly accomplish the tasks at hand, and he could head over to Yowhayton to meet Kelly. After arranging this, he immediately forwarded the good news to Charlie to dispel his worries.

Charlie read Hayden's message, and seeing he could follow the latter to meet Claire in two days, he was relieved yet worried. 'I'm relieved because I'll surely meet Claire with Hayden's help. What worries me is... Could she have forgotten me after all these years?' he wondered.

One should avoid dwelling on certain issues too much, as the thought of them would reduce confidence and increase anxiety. Even Charlie couldn't escape it, wondering, 'Why didn't Claire explain to me back then? Why didn't she come looking for me if she still loved me? Even... A message would be nice. I kept my previous phone number all these years, worried she might suddenly want to contact me one day but couldn't reach me. I've also worked hard to maintain my popularity onscreen, to stand in the most conspicuous place so she could easily locate and come to me whenever she desired. I waited so long, year after year, with no news at all...'

While Charlie's mind wandered, Kelly put down her pen and began taking a break after handling a series of contract documents in the headquarters building of Jones Group.

However, the cooperation she just dealt with was always in her mind during the rest, an invitation from Zentscape's Hoggard Technologies to meet for a pleasant cooperation.

Given her assistant's presence earlier, she didn't dare to display unusual emotions, merely agreeing to the meeting in her usual business-like manner. However, after her assistant left and she was alone in the spacious office, her thoughts spiraled out of control.

'Hoggard Technologies is

undoubtedly powerful, and Jones

Group requires the various smart massage robots they developed. Hence, when they sent an

appointment to meet and discuss cooperation, I didn't need to hesitate much and agreed directly. But that's not what I care about. I've been secretly following certain matters in Zentscape with my alternate account. A few years ago, the trending news in Zentscape reported that the award-winning actor, Charlie, had found his younger sister,' she thought.

She couldn't help feeling happy when she saw the good news, knowing Charlie must've been overjoyed at finding his lost sister after thinking about her constantly.

To be exact, she was genuinely happy. She also saw footage of Charlie joining variety shows and filming movies and TV series later. The light in his eyes told her that he was genuinely ecstatic.

His happiness also made her not want to and dare not disturb his life. Her world was too complicated. She didn't want to get him involved in the deception and manipulation of the Jones family.

Years passed, and the only thing she couldn't let go of was his marriage. 'He's still not married. Why? Hasn't he found someone he truly loves over the years? But, he should get married soon. He's already 35 years old, an old bachelor,' she mused.

On countless late nights, Claire couldn't help but secretly pray to the heavens, asking the deities, if there were any, to bless Charlie so that he could find a girl who shared his love soon and then marry and live happily ever after.

'When we were together, Chuck

often mentioned his three-year-old lost sister to me. So, I couldn't help but pay more attention to Becky after she returned to the Carter family, hence my awareness that

she's now with Hayden. this

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mean I'll meet Chuck's brother-in-law in two days? As Kelly thought about it, her lips quirked up,

and she couldn't help but smile happily.

She was in a good mood today, despite knowing it was just the husband of Charlie's sister. 'But... After Hayden and Becky married, they should see Chuck often,' she thought, her mood further lifting. 'Since Hayden meets Chuck often, and I'm meeting Hayden, does this mean I'm meeting Chuck indirectly? Besides... If there's a chance, I might meet Chuck's sister in person someday.'

Just then, Kelly heard footsteps outside. The smile on her face instantly disappeared, returning to seriousness, and she sat down behind her desk. However, the person entering the office the next moment made Kelly relax again. "Why are you here?" she asked in Yowhaytonian, somewhat tired. The woman in the slip dress chuckled, replying in the same language, "What? Are you disappointed it's me?"

Kelly was momentarily speechless before asking, "What's the matter?"

Anna came over, sat directly on the desk before Kelly, and said, "Your mom has found another man for you to go on a blind date tomorrow."

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Kelly instantly frowned, obviously unhappy.

Anna took out her phone, dug out some photos, and passed her phone to Kelly to see.

Kelly did not want to look at them, so she turned her head away and leaned back in her seat.

Anna started seriously, "Kelly, the person introduced this time is actually quite good. He's tall and gentle, and I hear he's quite decent in private too. Lydia has tried her best to find the best match for you."

"I don't like him." Kelly opened her eyes and stated unhappily. She continued coldly, "Tell her to stop trying so hard to find someone for me. No matter who it is, I don't want it." The next moment, Kelly turned on the computer in front of her and continued to work.

Anna was silent for a moment before concluding, "Kelly, you just haven't seen Aiden right now. If you did, you would fall in love with him."

When Kelly heard his name, her mouth twitched. She blurted, "In Zentscape, Brayton sounds like beaten."

"Huh?" Anna was stunned, but then it dawned upon her. She did not understand at first, but once she did, she was surprised. She thought, 'Does the name Brayton sound that bad?' She really wanted to laugh. "Okay, sure. If you want to beat him up in the future, you can do so any time. I'll probably be happy to see it happen," Anna gloated.

She smiled and teased, "Kelly, seeing that you like Zentscape so much, I heard that there's a saying in Zentscape called 'tough love.' If you can hit Brayton so often, it means you love him very much right?"

Kelly was speechless and ignored Anna.

Two days passed quickly, and Hayden arrived in the blink of an eye. Charlie rushed to the airport early in the morning to pick him up. He couldn't wait anymore.

Looking at Charlie's anxious face, which he found a little funny, Hayden still comforted him. "Don't worry too much."

Charlie replied, "I can't help it."

"I understand," Hayden said with a smile.

Charlie took Hayden back to the hotel. He knew that Hayden would be coming back, so he booked a suite that had several rooms in it. Once Hayden arrived, he could just stay in one of the rooms.

That was settled in the morning. In the afternoon, Hayden took Charlie to the headquarters of Jones Group. As they had made an appointment in advance, they went in smoothly this time.

Kelly also arrived not long after. When she stepped into the conference room and saw the man standing beside Hayden, she stopped in her tracks. Charlie was also excited. He almost wanted to go over immediately, but Hayden gently grabbed him.

Charlie instantly realized that he could not be too obvious, as there were outsiders present.

Hayden walked over and greeted politely, "Ms. Jones."

"Mr. Hoggard, please take a seat." Kelly quickly reacted and immediately extended her hand to invite him.

They soon arrived at the conference room.

Hayden sat down and asked with a smile, "Would you mind if we talked alone?"

Kelly's heart was beating quickly, but she appeared composed. She glanced at Charlie calmly and suggested, "Let's go to my office."

The reception room had company surveillance cameras that many people could access. However, in her office, the surveillance cameras could only be viewed by the direct lineage of the family, preventing monitoring by those with ill intentions.

Hayden nodded and said, "Okay."

Charlie was anxious, but he knew that Claire's current status was special, so he couldn't casually pull strings.

Kelly quickly got up and led them to the office. Once they entered the office, Kelly closed the door. Almost immediately after closing the door, Kelly looked at Charlie.

Charlie was also nervous, or rather, aggrieved.

"No one except my parents, grandparents, and me can check the surveillance cameras here. Don't worry," Kelly said the next moment.

Charlie's eyes immediately turned red, and he went over and wanted to grab Kelly's hand.

Kelly froze slightly and instinctively dodged.

Charlie also knew that with Hayden here, he should not be too clingy with Claire, especially since she had always been very sensitive about her image.

Hayden fell silent for a moment and then said, "I came here mainly because he wants to see you."

Kelly was speechless.

"If it's convenient, you can exchange contact information so that you can chat privately next time," Hayden added.

Hearing that, Charlie immediately looked at Kelly and asked anxiously, "Claire... Can we?"

Although she really wanted his contact information, she hesitated again after hearing him call out her name.

Kelly replied in a hoarse voice, "Chuck, we're not suitable for each other."

Charlie was desperate. "Why? I..." Charlie had a lot to say and he wanted to defend himself. Yet, when he looked at her, he did not know what to say.

Charlie's eyes were teary, and he begrudgingly uttered, "Why not? At least give me a reason. You were like this before, and it's still the same now... You're too much!"

Kelly's eyes turned red too. She looked away, took a deep breath, and said, "Go back. Don't come and find me again next time."

"No way!" Charlie got angry instead. He ran to Kelly and declared angrily, "I'm not leaving unless you can give me a good reason to convince me this time!"

Hayden remained silent.

Kelly did not say a word. She didn't want to talk.

Hayden also knew that the conflict between the two was not something that could be resolved quickly, so he chose not to interfere.

Knowing that Stacey was probably

still worried about this at home, he took out his phone and sent a message to Stacey, informing her that he had already brought Charlie to see Kelly.

Kelly was indeed Charlie's first girlfriend, but there might still be some misunderstanding between them now that needed time to resolve.

The tense atmosphere persisted for a long time until there was a knock on the door outside.

Kelly got up, went out, and opened the office door.

"Kelly, these documents need your urgent attention," said the assistant as he handed Kelly some papers.

Kelly took the file and acknowledged, "Okay."

Then, Kelly closed the door, blocking the assistant's curious glances at Hayden and Charlie inside the office. Outside, the assistant looked at the closed door and couldn't help but secretly lean against it and peek inside.

Just then, the door of the office opened again.

"Zea, what are you doing?" Kelly asked coldly, glaring at the assistant, who was clearly eavesdropping by standing at the door.

Zea panicked and quickly replied, "Nothing... Nothing, I'm leaving right away." After saying that, Zea hurried away.

Kelly knew she couldn't delay any

longer. She closed the door once again and went back to her office. Then, she walked up to Charlie and started, "There is a fierce internal struggle in the Jones family. I don't want you to get involved." Kelly said with a wry smile, "Chuck, you don't have to be with me. You can marry another woman. In fact, no matter who she is, it should be better than being with me."