

Panicking 141

Chapter 141: Some Men Can't Stay Away from Lust Even for a Moment

Rosalind Linton looked at her, her gaze gradually becoming surprised.

"The Langley Family? The one that claims to rank third in Kenton, and aside from Evan Grant, no one dares to claim second place?"

Stella nodded, "Has your adopted daughter not told you anything?"

Rosalind covered her mouth and laughed, "She would like to, but where could she have such luck? Marrying Evan Grant is already reaching a high branch, and she has to handle all of the Grant Family's dirty laundry."

Speaking of this, Rosalind deliberately lowered her voice.

"Your cousin is truly indiscriminate, even relishing in what's tainted. My Juliana really finds him filthy, and even divorce seems impossible, isn't that infuriating?"

Stella struggled to maintain her composure, keeping her mask from cracking.

Rosalind seemed to realize her words were inappropriate, paused, and forced a smile, "Sister, you won't be mad at what I said, will you?"

"No." Stella forced a smile.

Rosalind seemed pleased and escalated, "His stepsister... I've never seen such a shameless woman, clearly taking ethics as a game. Those two brutes should be locked up to avoid disgusting normal people, don't you think?"

Stella couldn't listen any longer, "Auntie, I still need to go pay respects to my mom, I'm leaving now, let's talk another day."

With that said, she hurriedly vanished beyond a few rows of tombstones.

Until her figure disappeared, Rosalind's smile grew wider.

"Little bitch, you think I don't recognize you? Trying to harm my Juliana, not a chance!"

...

Juliana went to the cemetery in the afternoon.

She had just placed a bouquet of white chrysanthemums in front of Old Man Linton's grave when she looked up and saw Adrian Langley.

She didn't greet him warmly but merely gave a cold smile, "Didn't you decide to leave two or three days ago? Suddenly can't bear to leave your father?"

Adrian's expression was calm, his fingers unconsciously pinching the sleeve of his coat, "Father handed the company's strategic project to me. It was always Jared in charge before."

"Oh," Juliana chuckled lightly, "Ultimately, you can't let go of the Langley Family's wealth and glory."

"Juliana, it's not that." Adrian's voice carried subdued emotion.

Juliana shrugged, "The Langley Family can offer the 'man's dignity' you've always wanted; it's understandable you're reluctant to let go."

Finishing her words, Juliana bowed to Old Man Linton's gravestone and turned to leave.

Adrian watched the distant mountains but still didn't immediately tell her the truth.

Firstly, not knowing what means Mrs. Langley might use against Juliana.

Secondly, she already had enough troubles; he didn't want to add to her pressure.

But thinking of something, he shouted, "Juliana."

Juliana stopped in her tracks.

Adrian said, "Don't associate with Jared anymore; the Langley Family is no place for a person."

Juliana turned and looked at him, "Don't worry, I want nothing from the Langley Family, including the people."

Adrian, "..."

Juliana returned to Aetherflame around six o'clock.

Summer Shaw came to discuss with her, holding an invitation card.

"Tomorrow Blackstar Technologies is launching an intelligent home experience system at the convention center. I've heard they're staging it with several rooms in a 1:1 real scene display. They invited Aetherflame, but I have a client to entertain tomorrow, can't make it. Can you represent the company?"

Juliana took the invitation card and asked, "How come you always have a client at just the right time?"

"It's true," Summer held her, "Who turned our Juliana into someone with upturned corners of her mouth?"

Juliana calmed her emotions, leaning on her, "Living a normal life is so hard."

Summer raised an eyebrow, "Our family is quite ordinary, so marry my brother?"

Juliana, "?"

Summer, "Honestly, I once thought of introducing you to my brother. You know, he bullied me since childhood, sending you into 'enemy lines' would be like cheating for me! But at that time, you were with Aidan Linton, and later you even married Evan Grant... sigh!"

She blinked and changed the subject, "But if you want to turn back now, I'm still willing to set you two up~~"

Juliana got up, poking her on the forehead, "Your abacus beads are bouncing off my face, keep dreaming."

...

The launch event was at half past two in the afternoon.

Juliana planned to go just in time but received a text from Jared at noon.

He asked her to go to Blackstar Corporation, not explaining the details.

Recalling how he helped her last time, Juliana informed Summer and left without even having lunch.

This time, after she reported her name, the receptionist dutifully escorted her to the 17th floor, right to Elias Langley's office, then left.

Juliana wasn't sure if she should go in, so she called Jared, but it was busy.

She gently pushed open the door.

Inside was a large office, oppressively silent.

Juliana glanced around, realizing no one was there.

Just as she wanted to retreat, she heard a woman's voice.

She instinctively took a few steps inside, noticing a half-open hidden door on the wall next to the desk.

In a room resembling a lounge.

Jared lay half-naked on a white bed.

And his secretary hadn't worn her jacket, the contours of a black bra visible beneath her white silk shirt.

The woman sat at the edge of the bed, her black pencil skirt clinging to Jared's strong waist, but Jared seemed unfazed.

Juliana was momentarily surprised, intending to quietly leave, but her injured foot couldn't exert force.

Afraid to take a step and create noise that would alert them, she stood stiffly.

"President Langley, although the smart home is not the Group's main business, Chairman Langley's consent for you to promote it loudly is evidently granting you a chance. As long as you can prove yourself superior to the Vice President, the Project Helios will eventually return to you."

But Jared remained silent, letting the secretary's hand soothe the pain caused by dressing his wound.

Juliana looked away.

Workplace ambiguity is merely a transaction for mutual needs.

The secretary uses her body for security and a high salary.

And people like Jared know best how to balance benefits with desires.

Juliana inexplicably thought of Evan Grant, a mocking smile appearing on her lips.

These four years of marriage may count as a "clean" period in his life. At least other than her and Stella, he hadn't turned his mind toward female secretaries.

Some men can't stay away from the boudoir for a moment.

While the conversation continued from within the lounge.

"The Vice President is just an illegitimate child, no match in education or experience..."

The secretary spoke while leaning down seductively.

But Jared suddenly raised a hand to make a stopping gesture.

"Enough," Jared's voice was low but carried an undeniable coldness, "No matter how my brother is, it's not up to outsiders to comment. My secretary should better understand boundaries."

"I'm sorry, President Langley."

Jared pushed her away and sat up himself.

As he looked up for a moment, he suddenly saw Juliana standing outside.

Chapter 142: Admiring You, Regardless of the Form

Jared Langley quickly put on his clothes.

The secretary calmly adjusted his collar beside him.

Only when he resumed his usual meticulous and solemn demeanor did the two of them leave the lounge one after the other.

"Would Miss Jacobs like something to drink?" the secretary asked with a smile.

Juliana felt a bit awkward initially, but after the composed question from the other party, she surprisingly calmed down, pressed her lips together, and said, "No, thank you."

The secretary chuckled softly, "Miss Jacobs seems quite leisurely, watching for so long without saying a word. Could it be our President Langley's dressing has a more appealing view?"

"Lynn, go out," Jared said as he walked to the desk, turning to the secretary.

Lynn nodded, picked up her coat, and left.

"Don't misunderstand; she's been with me for years. Maintaining certain relationships is necessary to ensure loyalty, but I never cross the line," Jared said.

Juliana's expression became less engaged, "President Langley is overthinking. It's just a small scene among friends, whether misunderstood or not, it's not really important."

Jared imperceptibly furrowed his brows, "Did you come to see me for something?"

Juliana showed him messages on her phone, "You contacted me without stating the reason, but I came. Are you happy now?"

"I didn't..."

"No need to say more."

Juliana interrupted him.

When Jared asked her earlier, she already speculated it was the secretary who quietly took his phone to send her the message.

However, between her and Jared, "no need to explain" was the best distance.

"I have other matters to attend to, I'll take my leave."

Juliana turned around slowly, her injured foot healing, making her walk slower.

Jared had a back injury too, so he couldn't move too swiftly.

But as Juliana reached the door, he still managed to catch up.

Jared instinctively wanted to reach out and hold her back, but before his fingertips could touch, Juliana had already turned the doorknob.

Yet, just as she opened the door, Juliana felt her vision darken, her whole body turning weak and falling forward.

At that moment, Adrian Langley happened to be passing by outside the door.

Without any hesitation, he stepped forward to steadily support the nearly fallen figure, then drew her to his side.

Juliana leaned into his arm for a moment, gradually regaining clarity in her vision.

Adrian promptly released her, but still asked, "What happened?"

Juliana rubbed her forehead, "Forgot to eat lunch, a bit of low blood sugar."

Jared's gaze gradually deepened.

Adrian checked the time, "However important work is, you can't forget to eat. Come with me to the company cafeteria."

Saying that, without even glancing at Jared, he took Juliana and left.

Jared didn't chase after them, but returned to the office to make a phone call.

Lynn entered the office, placing a small box of medication in front of him, "Time to take your medicine."

"How long have you been with me?" Jared's voice was thin and cold.

"Three years and ten months," Lynn replied.

Jared's gaze was icy, "Three years and you still don't understand my limits?"

Deep down, Lynn was panicking, but with a good mental fortitude, she remained steady, even seizing the opportunity to break the ice.

"President Langley, I admire you, in any form."

Jared's expression grew darker, but soon softened again.

"I don't like crossing boundaries; I keep business and feelings very clear."

Lynn realized she was finished, biting her lip.

Jared, "You should go to the logistics department. I'll have Ben Hayes take over your work."

"President Langley..." Lynn cried.

Jared remained unmoved, "Return when you come to your senses."

Lynn knew well that this was enticing her with promises.

Having been by his side for years, knowing too much about him, suddenly cutting ties might provoke her unwillingness, causing retaliation against him. He needed to buy time to handle all things she's entangled with.

Yet this was Jared's exceptional skill. Even when she saw through his scheming, she couldn't wield the knife against him.

Lynn turned dejectedly, walked a few steps, then turned back and asked, "Do you like Miss Jacobs?"

Jared looked at her.

Lynn continued, "Will there ever come a day when you'll like a woman without any desires or pursuits?"

Jared's gaze fell on the documents, remaining unresponsive.

Over there, Adrian had the kitchen prepare two dishes, quietly watching Juliana finish her meal before speaking, "I told you not to get close to Jared, why won't you listen?"

Juliana wiped her mouth, not looking at him, "Didn't want to owe any favors."

Adrian chuckled, "You're too straightforward; you borrow one bit, repay one bit. But this world is all about exchanging favors; you owe me, I owe you - that's what living means. Don't be so sincere all the time, being too clear is tiring."

"Is there a possibility," Juliana tossed the napkin into the trash, "that exactly because I don't want further entanglement, I need to settle accounts thoroughly. When nothing is owed, we can be completely free."

Adrian's slightly furrowed brows relaxed.

"I don't know if Jared has a woman by his side, but his mother is very strict. If she discovers him with a woman she disapproves of, she'll certainly intervene. These years, whether Jared or Victor Langley, there hasn't been a single scandal, thanks to Leona Sheridan."

Juliana's eyelashes fluttered, understanding everything at once.

This is the reason for his persistence.

Adrian picked up the car keys, "Let's go. It's nearly two-thirty, I have to head to the exhibition center, you can come along."

He hurriedly took a couple of steps, remembering Juliana's foot hadn't fully healed, he turned back, scratched his head, and laughed, "Sorry, because Uncle is going too, I'm worried about being late and affecting his image."

Juliana glanced at him lightly, "He doesn't have time to notice such trivial matters."

They arrived right on time.

Jared had already arrived, speaking with Elias Langley.

Standing beside him was a male secretary instead.

Adrian's gaze darkened, "That's Ben Hayes."

"Is he impressive?" Juliana asked.

Adrian pondered for several seconds, summing up various meanings into one sentence, "Jared treats him differently from others."

Juliana blinked: Is it what she thinks it means?

As she was about to ask, her eyes suddenly caught a figure not far away.

Evan Grant was there too, not only that, he brought Stella Windsor along.

This man's scandals abound, yet he's completely carefree about it.

Yvonne Quinn awaited judgment in custody, while he openly dotes on her stepsister.

Juliana's lips twitched; just as she was about to turn away, Stella noticed her, immediately nudged Evan's arm, "Brother, it's the sister-in-law."

Evan's gaze lingered on her legs for two seconds, then he left the conversing CEOs and walked straight towards her.

Disgust flickered in Juliana's eyes; unwilling to entangle with them here, she turned to extend a smile, proactively approaching the Langley uncle and nephew not far away.

Evan's steps halted.

Beside him, Stella whispered, "Brother, sister-in-law is getting close to him; it's not unfounded."

Yet Evan merely cast her a glare, "Are you here to work and learn or to spread rumors?"

Stella's face paled.

Just wait, soon you'll be overshadowed with green.

Before Juliana could come closer, a staff member hurried over to Jared, reporting, "The data stream for the battery group in the reality showcase is abnormal, posing a definite safety risk, but we can't handle it at the moment."

Jared furrowed his brows, "Noticing this at such a time, do you want me to abort today's launch?"

The staff member bowed his head, "Everything was normal during the morning inspection."

Jared's gaze suddenly fell upon Juliana, he smiled softly, "Miss Jacobs, it's perfect timing for help. Maybe we can settle the account?"

Juliana pondered slightly, "Sure, lead the way."

Elias Langley watched Juliana's slow departure, his gaze deepened, suddenly speaking to Jared, "You handle the guests, I'll go over and take a look."

Jared quickly nodded.

Juliana noted Elias Langley catching up with her, opened her mouth, but ultimately didn't speak.

Because it was a 1:1 perfect replica, even the intelligent central control and battery systems that controlled the entire house were genuinely embedded in the walls, indistinguishable from ordinary home setups.

Juliana glanced at the flickering overhead light, feeling puzzled, and said to the staff, "Go to the main control room and check if the LED's driver code is normal."

As the staff left the room, the door lock clicked into place.

The flickering headlight abruptly extinguished, a dim white emergency light illuminated, casting Elias Langley's face in shadowy obscurity.

Chapter 143: His Strategy Succeeded

Juliana quickly rushed to the window, attempting to open it to call for help outside.

However, as her fingertips just touched the window frame, a cold mechanical female voice suddenly sounded in the room: "Performance malfunction, safety isolation activated."

This smart experience pavilion was a perfect replica of a high-end residential four-bedroom two-living-room setup. All walls, doors, and windows were built physically. Jared Langley was willing to spend money. Once the safety isolation was activated, breaking through from the inside was as difficult as ascending to the heavens.

She turned around, her gaze falling on Elias Langley, her tone tinged with blame and impatience, "Why did you follow me in here?"

Elias glanced at his signal-less phone, and said indifferently, "This is Langley Family's territory. Letting you fall into a pit alone would make me a very negligent host, wouldn't it?"

Juliana was slightly startled, but quickly collected herself, muttering under her breath "You choose the strangest times to act like the host," and then went to check the control box.

"The main control panel is completely dead, and all exits are locked. But if people outside notice we're trapped, they should come to rescue us quickly, right?"

She looked at him with uncertainty.

Elias calmly glanced at her, "When Jared contacts the experts and they rush over here to find the fault... if we're lucky, we might get to enjoy the sunrise together."

As soon as he finished speaking, a strong wind suddenly blew from the air conditioner vent.

Juliana was standing right under the vent; as soon as she exclaimed "It's so hot," Elias had already pulled her in front of him.

The indoor temperature suddenly soared.

Elias took off his jacket, loosened his tie, his gaze becoming dark and deep.

"We can't see the sunrise, but spending time with you isn't bad either."

He was still joking at a time like this.

Juliana anxiously looked around.

Elias watched her reaction, the corners of his lips forming a cold yet seductive arc, "I came in with you, so this time you're not the dumbest one."

Whether it was the stifling indoor air or his words being too heated, Juliana's heart was uncontrollably stirred.

She hurriedly suppressed her chaotic thoughts, wiped the sweat from her forehead, and said seriously, "I've seen the design plans. To simulate a power outage scenario, all smart systems are connected to a backup battery. As long as we cause a small short circuit, and you still have the strength to kick the door, we can get out."

Elias panted slightly, "Then you better hurry; once my body water evaporates completely, I won't even have the strength to carry you, let alone kick the door."

Under usual circumstances, Juliana would definitely be allergic to his teasing words, but in this situation, it effectively eased her anxiety.

She found a metal strip and pried open the control panel, revealing complex circuitry and a compact backup battery pack inside.

She discovered a manual pressure release and maintenance interface on the battery pack, but its location was tricky; it required one hand to reach in and a lot of strength to unscrew it.

She tried several times, sweat soaking her temples, but still couldn't succeed.

"You show me how, I'll do it."

Elias rolled up his sleeves and stepped forward, taking the metal piece from her hand.

Juliana succinctly told him the operational essentials as Elias reached in.

Perhaps because he was unfamiliar, the metal scraped his fingers on the battery, blood gushing out.

"How could you be so careless?"

Juliana grabbed his hand; almost instinctively, she lowered her head to suck the dirty blood off his finger and spat it to the side.

Concentrating too much, she didn't realize her lightweight clothes had long been soaked through with sweat, sticking wetly to her skin and faintly exposing the outline beneath.

The man's gaze darkened slightly, yet he maintained a calm tone, "Last night in the bar, I wasn't there to find women."

Juliana's hands paused slightly, her gaze still focusing on his fingers, but she softly responded, "I know, always follow your heart no matter the time."

Hearing this, the dark color in Elias's eyes thickened significantly.

However, given the urgent situation, it was no time for a heart-to-heart.

He withdrew his finger from her hand, laughing playfully, "Right now, my wish is to get out immediately."

He turned around and reached back in without delay.

"Be careful with your wound."

Elias cheerfully said, "It's fine, your saliva has already stopped the bleeding."

The heat had reached a level where even the clothes sticking to the body felt scorching.

The man's wet shirt clung to him tightly, clearly outlining the taut and powerful lines of his chest and arms.

Admittedly, his stratagem had succeeded.

Juliana's heart inexplicably skipped a beat.

Meanwhile, outside at the venue.

The contacted experts wouldn't arrive for at least another hour, and Jared was striving to keep control.

Stella counted the time, reckoning that the two inside were already too hot to bear. She anxiously approached Evan, not avoiding the fact that several other company presidents were present.

"Brother," her voice was clear, just audible for those around to hear, "About ten minutes ago, I think I saw sister-in-law going into the experience pavilion with Mr. Langley, but they haven't come out yet... could something have happened to them?"

This statement triggered a wave of speculation.

The mysterious Mr. Langley had resided in Kingsford for years, always acting low-key with no scandals, let alone being involved with someone from the Grant Family.

The company presidents exchanged glances, their expressions inquisitive.

Evan's expression darkened slightly, about to speak, when Stella suddenly spotted Jared not far away and quickly approached him.

"President Langley! My sister-in-law and your uncle..."

Jared's smile was polite, interrupting her words, "Sorry, I don't know your sister-in-law."

Stella insisted, "I'm Evan's sister and also her secretary. I just saw it with my own eyes..."

Jared interrupted her again, his smile unchanged but his voice clearly reaching the ears of those around.

"Isn't Evan's woman you, the 'sister' and secretary? Everyone in Kenton knows about the Grant Family's 'anecdote.' Which 'sister-in-law' are you looking for now?"

His words elicited hidden laughter from those nearby.

Stella felt extremely embarrassed, yet unwilling to miss this chance to ruin Juliana's reputation.

"President Langley, now is not the time for jokes, what if something really happened to them?"

Before Jared could respond, Evan intervened, taking over, "How can you question the safety of President Langley's place?"

Stella could tell Eva was defending Juliana. Her mind raced, trying to think of a way to lead everyone to the experience pavilion, when she heard a loud "boom" from the pavilion direction...

She immediately seized the opportunity, "What are they doing inside?"

Jared's expression turned cold, "I invited Director Jacobs to check the battery module for me. What's wrong with my uncle accompanying her as the host?"

"Even so, everyone is concerned. How about we all go have a look?"

Stella encouraged everyone to head toward the experience pavilion.

She was walking the fastest, and just as she turned the corner, she unexpectedly bumped into someone coming her way.

Chapter 144: No Germ Can Survive Her Saliva

Adrian Langley gentlemanly pushed her away, "This is an important place, don't run around. Why don't you have your brother tie a rope to you?"

Stella Windsor wasn't bothered by his sarcasm. As she brushed past him, she said, "So much smoke here; what happened inside?"

As soon as she finished speaking, the crowd she attracted turned the corner and immediately saw the severely deformed door behind Adrian Langley.

Stella Windsor was delighted.

Even if Juliana Jacobs and Elias Langley had nothing happen between them, if they came out with their clothes disheveled, Evan Grant would inevitably be humiliated.

She didn't believe Evan would tolerate such an insult. If this could spur him to act against the Langley Family, it would weaken him. In the end, with Isaac Grant attacking from within and outside, Evan would become a man who needed to rely on her, and she would win him over.

This two-birds-with-one-stone plan couldn't fail today.

However, when people gathered at the experience hall's entrance, they only saw the mess caused by a small explosion inside, and not a single shadow of a person.

"President Langley, has Cortexa Group's smart home system malfunctioned?" an executive questioned Adrian Langley, "Blackstar's product quality doesn't seem to be as reliable as advertised."

But before Jared Langley could answer, Juliana Jacobs' voice came from a distance, "There's no problem with Blackstar's smart home system."

She had changed clothes, unnoticed by others, but Evan Grant immediately sensed something was amiss.

Stella Windsor smiled faintly and chimed in, "Sister-in-law, what were you doing inside with Mr. Langley just now?"

Juliana Jacobs raised an eyebrow, "You've been saying I was with Mr. Langley from the beginning, so sure of yourself—how did you see it?"

Stella Windsor turned pale.

Did they withdraw so quickly?

Impossible!

Just as Stella was about to speak, Juliana Jacobs didn't give her the chance.

Juliana raised her voice, "Half an hour ago, someone accessed the main console on-site, entered the home's exhibit back-end control system, causing a program malfunction, trapping me inside while I was inspecting the battery module. I had no choice but to blast my way out. I have reason to believe that President Langley is facing a commercial espionage operation against him."

Jared Langley hurriedly interjected, "Such a thing, who is it?"

"It's her!" Juliana pointed to Stella Windsor.

"Saying something like this comes with responsibility. Either present surveillance evidence to accuse me, or apologize publicly for your slander."

Stella had long disabled all surveillance near the experience hall, confident Juliana had no evidence at hand.

But Juliana asserted, "I believe the U-Pan with data is still on you."

Stella was initially startled but then laughed.

"Why would I have it on me? And you have no right to search me."

"She doesn't, but others do."

Elias Langley's voice came from behind the crowd, and they instinctively parted to make way.

The man's suit was immaculate, unchanged from before entering the experience hall.

He looked at Stella Windsor with a gaze so indifferent, she seemed close to vanishing from this world.

Stella forced a smile, "Mr. Langley wouldn't search me just to favor Miss Juliana, right? As a fellow woman, such treatment seems unfair. Besides, it seems you don't have the authority either."

Elias Langley couldn't be bothered to indulge her with a single word.

Quinn Shepherd, standing nearby, picked up the conversation, "It's the police who deemed it necessary to take this action."

In the direction he pointed, two police officers approached.

Stella was extremely surprised.

One of the female officers stepped forward, looked her over, and then took a U-Pan from her suit pocket.

Instantly, the crowd was in an uproar.

"This isn't mine, this is... this is..."

The only person she had physical contact with was Adrian Langley, so the U-Pan must have been planted by him at that time.

Stella hadn't expected Juliana to turn the tables on her.

The female officer said sternly, "The tech team will conduct a professional examination of the data source on the U-Pan. The truth will come out. Currently, Blackstar Group has officially reported to the police, accusing you of suspected commercial espionage. Please cooperate with the investigation and come with us."

"Brother..." Stella looked to Evan Grant for help.

But Evan Grant merely said indifferently, "Let the police determine right and wrong."

Stella was at a loss for words, led away by the police.

Juliana Jacobs barely smiled; without her pawn, Stella Windsor would also be badly hurt.

Elias Langley looked lightly at Evan Grant, "President Grant, your people borrow technology from others so nonchalantly. Could Cortexa's core technology all be patched together from others' codes?"

His words provoked a wave of laughter.

Evan Grant instinctively looked at Juliana, only to see her quietly discussing countermeasures with Adrian Langley, completely unconcerned about his embarrassment. A surge of indescribable bitterness welled up in his heart.

The press conference ended in an accident.

Ben Hayes said, "In the end, it wasn't completed smoothly."

"Although the process was interrupted, the advertising effect was maxed out. The technology Cortexa Group wants to steal..." Jared Langley laughed quietly, "This round, we won't lose."

He looked around, "Where's Juliana?"

Ben Hayes recalled, "Upstairs in the lounge, probably thanking your second uncle."

In the temporary lounge, Elias Langley's finger wound was deep, requiring disinfection and then stitching.

Looking at the gaping wound, Juliana Jacobs unconsciously complained, "Couldn't you do it less forcefully?"

Elias Langley lifted his eyelids to look at her, a slightly playful smile forming, "If I didn't use force, would you have been happy?"

Juliana Jacobs, "..."

Just then, the doctor spoke softly, "To be safe, a tetanus shot is necessary."

Elias Langley's gaze remained on Juliana's flushed face, his reply to the doctor laced with a hint of teasing, "No need. No bacteria survive her saliva."

He paused, then deliberately lowered his voice and said seriously, "Director Juliana's 'disinfection' kills all viruses."

The atmosphere froze instantly.

The doctor's tweezers clattered onto the tray, and Quinn Shepherd closed his eyes.

If he could, he would cover his ears too.

Juliana retorted angrily, grabbing a piece of gauze to cover his mouth.

"If you speak again, I'll have the doctor sew your mouth shut first."

Elias Langley looked at her, his gaze so deep it seemed to draw her in.

Something very subtle was spreading between the two of them.

Quinn Shepherd and the doctor both averted their eyes.

Just then, Juliana's phone chimed.

She collected her thoughts, glanced at the message, paused momentarily, and put down the gauze, "I have to go,"

Elias Langley looked up, "My wound isn't treated yet; aren't you going to take care of it?"

"It's urgent."

Juliana pressed her lips together, took her bag, and turned to leave.

The lounge fell silent immediately.

Quinn Shepherd tried to ease the situation, "Maybe it's really a company matter..."

Elias Langley didn't respond.

The wound was quickly taken care of.

He went downstairs to leave, only to see Juliana getting into Jared Langley's car as he arrived at the parking lot.

Elias Langley's gaze darkened for a moment—so Jared was her urgent matter?

Chapter 145: Saving a Spot for You, Waiting for Your Divorce

In the Jaguar, Jared Langley handed Juliana Jacobs a bottle of water.

Juliana took it, tilted her head back to drink, and droplets glistened in the sunset as they slipped from her lips.

Jared's hand, gripping the steering wheel, gently lifted and then dropped back down.

Juliana had an untamed vitality, like a tree growing in the wild, carrying its own glow without needing to bend.

"Is your back wound healed?"

She drank, only then realizing he was driving.

"So you still care about my injury," he chuckled.

"Just asking casually."

Juliana turned her face away, looking out the window.

When she didn't like someone, she would subtly distance them with small, inconspicuous gestures.

Jared fell silent.

The car continued up the mountain.

The sun set, and the sky gradually darkened.

Jared unbuckled his seatbelt, pulling at his injury, and he drew a breath.

Juliana chose to ignore it, and after getting out of the car, she found a bare stone to sit against.

"Did you bring me here for a wild barbecue?" she asked.

Jared handed her a box of sushi and sat down beside her.

Not picky about food, Juliana opened it and started eating.

Jared lit a cigarette.

"The battery module of the Blackstar smart home system indeed has design flaws, thank you for your professional technical support this time."

Juliana's attention was on the sushi, "Disrupting your press conference, consider this little gesture as an apology."

"No, Stella Windsor exploiting the loophole in my territory was my oversight," Jared said.

Juliana did not argue with him, "So, is a box of sushi deemed adequate compensation?"

Seeing how quickly she changed, Jared laughed.

"Whatever you want, I'll give it to you."

Juliana froze for a moment, not understanding his words, when suddenly fireworks blossomed in the distance.

The sky had just turned dark, and a fiery red rose bloomed against it.

Juliana watched for two seconds, then laughed and said, "Who's confessing? So corny."

Jared was not thwarted by her words, but rather calmly admitted, "Arranged by my secretary."

"Lynn Zane was transferred to the marketing department," he added deliberately, "The current secretary's surname is Hayes."

Juliana set down the leftover sushi, "I'm not an actress, I can't play the role you want."

Jared frowned, "I'm serious."

Seeing she wasn't speaking, he continued, "Receiving my message, without asking the reason, you came running to me without even eating, I think... I can give it a try with you."

Juliana tilted her head and asked, "Could it be that I'm eager to break ties with you, so I didn't even eat?"

Jared was stunned.

After a moment, he laughed, his eyes grew dark and unclear.

"Recently, my family is pushing me to go on blind dates, can you..."

"No!"

Juliana interrupted him.

She was unwilling to be a shield for him and Ben Hayes.

"I'm afraid of your mom. Besides, if you need an actress, at least find someone who's single, I haven't even divorced yet."

Having said that, she got up and walked toward the car, indifferent to the fireworks blooming brightly.

"I'll keep the spot for you until you get divorced," Jared said.

"Get lost, hurry up and take me home, I have work tomorrow."

Jared extinguished his cigarette, rose without showing any emotion...

In Langley Courtyard.

Elias Langley watched the fireworks in the sky, his jawline tight.

Quinn Shepherd came out with packed luggage and asked, "You're urgently returning to the capital, should you inform Miss Jacobs?"

Elias Langley's expression remained unmoved, he only asked calmly, "Why should I inform her?"

Quinn Shepherd closed his mouth.

Elsewhere, at Cortexa Group's Vice President office.

Evan Grant was still working overtime.

Ethan Carter walked in, "President Grant, Ryan Warner submitted his resignation."

Evan Grant frowned, just about to speak, George Grant walked in.

"You're ignoring Stella's situation?"

Evan Grant's expression returned to normal, he said lightly, "The lawyer has already gone. This time she's caught red-handed, I will bail her out after the police finish questioning."

George Grant became furious, overturning the documents on Evan's desk.

"You managed to get Yvonne Quinn out, she's your sister, how can you..."

"Then get her out yourself," Evan interrupted him.

George paused, pointing at him angrily, "You're the Grant Family heir, protecting her is your duty. If you break your promise, I will... I will..."

Evan Grant slowly stood up.

"What will you do? Bring Isaac back, you did that. Push Isaac into the director's position, you did that too, what haven't you done?"

George angrily replied, "If you upset me, the Group will be your brother's."

Evan smiled slightly, "Don't think your inability to act is my generosity. The directors who helped grandpa build the empire are all cunning old foxes, unless they actually see Isaac can make them money, otherwise, no matter how much you talk, they won't give him the president's position."

George's face turned pale.

"Evan, Stella holds leverage over me, if it's exposed, the Grant Family will lose face. You're the heir, it's your duty to protect the family's reputation."

But Evan had grown indifferent to such manipulations.

"Let Isaac take over, being the heir only adds fuel to the fire, and in the end, I lose my marriage, it's not worth it."

Upon hearing this, George immediately shifted his tone, "Your grandfather's greatest wish was for you to lead the Grant Family, how can you let him down? And your grandmother, after grandpa passed, she personally taught you."

But playing the emotional card had grown old for Evan.

"Stella forgets who owes her, letting her suffer a bit is a way to make her reflect. When the time is right, I'll get her out."

The conversation reached this point, this state of father-son relationship was such that George couldn't say much further.

...

One day later.

Juliana finally tracked down Ryan Warner's news.

He was about to leave Kenton.

Adrian Langley had men posing as ride-sharing drivers, picked up his order, taking him to a secluded open field in the suburbs.

Upon getting out of the car, they pinned his head down and beat him, avoiding his face deliberately.

Ryan Warner begged for mercy, and Juliana only then came out to tell them to stop.

"This is the sincerity Senior Warner wanted me to see."

Seeing it was her, Ryan Warner immediately knew why he was beaten, and promptly apologized, "Sorry, I only taught Stella Windsor a bit of operational concepts, I didn't expect her to use it against you."

Juliana corrected him, "You didn't expect I would figure out it was you teaching her."

Ryan Warner closed his eyes and knelt before her.

"Stella Windsor has been arrested by the police, she will surely implicate me. Please let me leave before the police come looking for me."

Juliana asked slowly, "Having finally latched on to Evan Grant's connection, aren't you reluctant to leave like this?"

Ryan Warner was speechless from her words.

Juliana asked, "How did Stella Windsor get you to cooperate with her?"

"Her intention was for Evan Grant to know that I was working for him because of her. She also assured me that regardless of the outcome, she'd make sure I'd get paid."

Juliana nodded, "Then go back and keep working."

Ryan Warner looked at her incredulously.

Juliana said calmly, "I'll give you some technical support, but you need to ensure Cortexa Group keeps investing in it, while also giving Stella Windsor enough face."

Chapter 146: Now, She Sees Schemes Everywhere

Ryan Warner was momentarily surprised.

"But I'm afraid of going to jail."

Juliana Jacobs glanced at him, "Evan Grant wouldn't let his beloved suffer, he'll get her out in a couple of days."

Ryan Warner's look towards Juliana Jacobs suddenly changed.

"I've hurt you before, how can I trust that you'll let me have the money and set me free?" he asked warily.

Juliana Jacobs bent down and adjusted the collar of his shirt.

"You don't have to trust me. You can continue to the airport."

Having said that, she hailed a real ride-share car for him to continue to his destination.

Juliana Jacobs got into Adrian Langley's car.

"Do you think he'll stay?" Adrian Langley asked.

"He loves money and fame, just like Quentin Quinn."

"But people like them can betray their allies anytime. You need to be wary when dealing with him," Adrian Langley cautioned.

"I'm not collaborating with him," Juliana Jacobs smiled, "it's just mutual benefit."

Adrian Langley nodded, "Calculating Evan Grant is not an easy task, be careful."

Juliana Jacobs pressed her lips together without speaking.

Adrian Langley thought of someone else, "As for Jared Langley, avoid him when you can. With my uncle out of Kenton, he might act a bit crazy."

However, what Juliana Jacobs focused on wasn't Jared Langley, "Your uncle left?"

"Yes, he returned to Kingsford the day before yesterday. Officially, he's the president of the Helios Energy Association, but in reality, he holds an unusual status. Many military projects have to go through him. He's not a simple figure."

Juliana Jacobs didn't pay attention to the latter part of the sentence.

She noted that Elias Langley left the day before yesterday.

Which means after they parted ways at the exhibition center, he left.

And he didn't mention a single word.

Moreover, in the past couple of days, she sent him messages asking about his finger injury, but he didn't reply to any.

Juliana Jacobs felt like something had scratched her face, it stung a little.

The closeness in the experience center and his teasing were just his way to relieve tension under pressure.

But she took it seriously and replayed it in her mind over and over. It was quite laughable.

After experiencing Evan Grant, how could she still believe in those illusions?

Juliana Jacobs gave herself a hard pinch on the cheek.

"What are you doing?" Adrian Langley stopped her.

Juliana Jacobs released her hand, leaving a red mark on her face.

"It's nothing, just got a bit muddled, but now I'm clear-headed."

Adrian Langley assumed she was tired, "What time did you sleep last night?"

"I'll settle the matter with Jared Langley. Help me investigate Isaac Grant. We can't just let Grandpa go like this," Juliana Jacobs said.

Upon hearing this, Adrian Langley's eyes darkened slightly, "Alright."

At this moment, Juliana Jacobs's phone rang.

It was the landline from the old Grant family estate.

Juliana Jacobs was stunned for two seconds and then answered it.

The butler said Old Mrs. Grant was ill and hoped to see her.

Juliana Jacobs thought for a moment and agreed.

Adrian Langley drove her to the entrance of the old Grant estate and, to avoid awkwardness, didn't wait for her.

Juliana Jacobs walked into the old estate alone.

The plants and trees remained the same, yet it felt unfamiliar in its silence.

This was once the first family in Kenton, every brick and stone exuded an oppressive force, but now that sharp edge had dissipated, leaving only a deep emptiness.

As soon as she reached the living room, she smelled a strong scent of traditional medicine.

The butler came out, "The young madam has arrived."

Juliana Jacobs smiled lightly, "Uncle Dawson, I'm about to divorce Evan Grant, you can call me Miss Jacobs."

The butler respectfully replied, "As long as you and the young master haven't finalized it, you're still the young madam of the Grant Family. We can change it after it's done."

Juliana Jacobs didn't argue with him and followed him to Old Mrs. Grant's bedroom.

Old Mrs. Grant was half-lying on the chaise lounge, and when she saw her, she immediately wanted to get up.

Juliana Jacobs quickly approached, adjusting her pillow, "Please remain lying down, ma'am."

Having not seen her in days, Old Mrs. Grant's once energetic spirit had diminished considerably.

She sighed and said, "At my age, I've long seen through life and death. What keeps me from closing my eyes is not my unwillingness. The senior ministers who followed my husband to establish the company, my grandson treated them well, yet after a few words from George Grant, they turned to support Isaac Grant. Evan is really having a hard time right now."

Juliana Jacobs's expression remained unchanging, she gently patted Old Mrs. Grant's hand.

"He is Evan Grant. He has the ability to handle everything, please take care of your health."

Old Mrs. Grant turned her gaze to her, "Oh? You still haven't underestimated him?"

Juliana Jacobs thought there was something wrong with the way Old Mrs. Grant spoke, so she replied, "He is the successor you raised with your own hands. You should trust your own judgment."

Old Mrs. Grant let out a bitter smile, "He's been sensible since he was young, and because he's too sensible, he sees family duty as more important than anything else, which led to your misunderstanding him."

Juliana Jacobs remained silent.

Seeing her expression, Old Mrs. Grant continued, "Girl, I know you still have feelings for Evan. Although he's never said anything to me, I can tell he and that woman are not like what you imagine. Please forgive him, okay?"

Saying this, Old Mrs. Grant clasped her hand.

"Madam," Juliana Jacobs calmly said, "even if it's a second marriage, with the Grant family's status, what kind of prestigious young lady can't Evan Grant find? There are plenty more outstanding than me, you don't have to be fixated on me."

Old Mrs. Grant's facial wrinkles tightened for a moment, then her gaze became slightly sharper.

"Their sincerity can't compare to yours, at least you wouldn't stab Evan from the side when he's besieged on all fronts. In my old heart, you are still the best."

Juliana Jacobs's expression remained unchanged, but she had already weighed the weight of Old Mrs. Grant's words.

She was summoned to be warned.

If her psychological resilience were inadequate, she might have been startled immediately, exposing her intentions.

Back when Evan Grant provided a cozy nook, she naively didn't want to assume people to be too complicated, leading to her being bruised all over.

Nowadays, she saw everything as a setup.

Old Mrs. Grant's tactics, to her, were just ordinary psychological warfare.

Thinking of that, she smiled warmly.

"Madam, the stones that trip in the yard must be removed, but if they aren't removed nor dealt with, it only proves the owner still likes them. Your grandson's heart, you still don't fully understand."

After saying this, she found an excuse to leave.

As Juliana Jacobs left, the butler entered.

Old Mrs. Grant swiftly got up from the chaise lounge, sitting upright, with no trace of cloudiness in her eyes.

With a solemn face, she said coldly, "She is indeed targeting Evan."

Peter Dawson frowned, "Then we must inform the young master immediately. The young master is already struggling to deal with Master George, Young Master Isaac, and those stubborn elders in the company. If madam stabs him from behind, the young master will truly be finished!"

Old Mrs. Grant shook her head, "Evan wouldn't believe it. Even if he did, he'd let her do as she wishes."

Peter Dawson seemed to understand the old madam's meaning, with shock surfacing in his eyes.

"You mean... to act first against the young madam?"

Chapter 147: Taking Her for Sterilization

Old Mrs. Grant looked at him indifferently, "If I deal with her, won't Evan turn against me?"

Oh, I misunderstood.

Peter Dawson lowered his head.

But then, Old Mrs. Grant snorted coldly, "A woman who can get Lily Windsor out of the way is definitely not soft-hearted. She has just pointed out a path, Stella staying by Evan's side is a hidden danger."

...

Over here, Stella was released on bail by the lawyer.

Evan Grant didn't come to pick her up.

She's a smart person and immediately understood that he was deliberately giving her the cold shoulder.

So she didn't go to the company to find him at once, but instead went straight to the airport.

Ryan Warner had been pondering for over an hour in a café next to the airport, finally making a decision and got up to leave.

Just as he reached the door, he was stopped by a few shady-looking people.

Without a word, they forcibly took him to a vacant lot under construction opposite the airport.

Once there, they started hitting him, mercilessly raining punches and kicks, all landing on his face.

Two beatings in one day, Ryan Warner was beaten until he howled in pain.

Not until the blood on his forehead flowed so much that he couldn't open his eyes did they stop.

Stella walked out from behind those people, her gaze towards him was extremely cold.

"What was Mr. Warner doing at the airport?" she asked with a smile.

Ryan Warner, his mouth swollen, could only respond vaguely, "Picking up a friend."

Stella kicked his damaged suitcase, "Do you need luggage to pick up a friend?"

Ryan Warner lay on the ground, saying nothing.

Stella squatted in front of him and slapped him again.

"Thought you could run off just because I was locked up, did you? Let me tell you, we are on the same boat, if I drown, I won't let you off either. There's no way you can get off halfway."

Ryan Warner no longer spoke forcefully, only nodding tearfully to show that he had received a severe lesson.

Stella was satisfied with his submissive demeanor now.

"This time I'll give you a warning. You know Isaac Grant's methods. Even if you escape to the ends of the earth, to him, getting rid of you is as easy as squashing an ant. Go obediently back to work with Evan Grant, understood?"

Ryan Warner nodded.

Stella stood up, cursed "spineless" and then instructed those people to take him to the hospital.

An hour later, she bathed with pomelo leaves and then went to Cortexa Group, heading straight to Evan Grant's office.

"Brother, Ryan Warner... isn't leaving."

Evan Grant, who was focused on handling documents, paused his pen upon hearing this and looked up at her.

Stella walked to his side.

"He said it was because Professor Quinn was no longer here, and he felt insecure working with you, so he offered his resignation."

She paused, fingers unconsciously gripping her clothes, her eyes reddened.

As if she had made a huge sacrifice.

"To ease his mind for work, I agreed to be his girlfriend."

However, Evan Grant was unmoved by her falling tears and even coldly looked away.

"You didn't need to do this for me."

"Brother," Stella was a bit agitated, "this is my way of making it up to you."

Evan Grant coldly chuckled, "Do you really know your mistake?"

Stella bit her lip as if too remorseful to speak.

Only then did Evan Grant slowly look at her, "You have tried hard to smear Juliana Jacobs for betraying me just to confirm my decision to divorce her, but you overlooked that I'm a man, and I care about saving face."

"I know I'm wrong, brother."

Stella's tears burst forth.

Thus, Evan Grant's eyes softened, and he stood up to hand her a tissue.

"Don't cry anymore. If Ryan Warner is someone worth trusting, I won't oppose you being together. If he's not, don't force yourself. Whoever you marry in the future, I will prepare a generous dowry for you."

"But I can't help wanting to be good to you," Stella said.

Evan Grant had little reaction to her flattering words, "My affairs with her don't require an outsider's interference, remember?"

Stella nodded.

Seeing that she didn't take the tissue from him, Evan Grant personally wiped her tears.

At this moment, the office door opened, and Old Mrs. Grant walked in.

Seeing the two in such a state, Old Mrs. Grant's expression was unpleasant.

"You two have no blood relationship; there's no need to be so intimate as siblings."

Evan Grant threw the tissue into the trash, a smile still on his face.

"Grandma, what's the matter?"

Since handing over the company to Evan Grant, Old Mrs. Grant never came in person.

This time, appearing in his office must be because of something significant.

"I'm here for her."

Old Mrs. Grant looked at Stella.

Stella was frightened, shrinking closer to Evan Grant's arm.

Old Mrs. Grant's gaze gradually became sharp.

"This woman staying by your side will eventually cause trouble, disgracing the Grant Family. To avoid unnecessary trouble, I want to take her to get sterilized."

Stella was very shocked.

This old hag and Isaac... truly, those who are not from the same family don't end up in the same house.

She hurriedly grabbed Evan Grant's hand, "Brother, I don't want to."

The old lady snorted coldly, "This is not up to you."

With that, she instructed Peter Dawson to come forward and grab her.

Evan Grant thought for a moment, then raised his hand to stop Peter Dawson.

"No need for this, grandma."

The old lady, whose eyes had weathered many storms, narrowed slightly, a dismissive glint passing over her gaze towards Stella.

"The Grant Family is not a shelter; not any stray cat or dog can enter the door. If you really want to take her in, she must first be sterilized to avoid future troubles. Sterilized, hidden by your side so no one knows, maybe I can turn a blind eye."

Stella cursed the old lady for her cruelty in her heart, then cried as she knelt down, begging her not to do this.

"Grandma," Evan Grant's voice still revealed no emotion, but each word was clear and unwavering, "I will handle my affairs; you don't need to intervene anymore."

The old lady's sharp gaze held a trace of icy chill, "Would you protect her so much, without caring about Juliana Jacobs' thoughts at all?"

Evan Grant kept his lips closed and said nothing as if this was also his private matter and not for the old lady to interfere.

"Very well, very well!"

The old lady's hand, propped on a cane, shook vigorously.

"Since this is the case, I won't meddle at all! Manage it well by yourself; I hope you won't regret it in the future!"

Her face ashen green, she leaned on Peter Dawson for support to leave, yet couldn't suppress murmuring, "The Grant Family is doomed... the Grant Family is really doomed..."

In the office, Stella gratefully looked at Evan Grant, "Thank you, brother."

However, Evan Grant wore a cold expression, displeased for some reason.

"Just out from the detention center, rest for two days, and take this time to think clearly about what thoughts should be cut off and who should not be missed."

Stella obediently responded, though her fingertips quietly pinched into her palm.

Just wait, I'll definitely make you believe that Juliana Jacobs has long made you wear a green hat.

In the evening, Juliana Jacobs and Summer Shaw went to a bar to socialize.

Their counterpart was the purchasing director of Entropy Drive Motors.

Entropy Drive Motors is currently selecting parts suppliers for their next-generation flagship model, and the company's sales in the domestic auto market have always been among the top.

Summer Shaw thought they should seize this lucrative opportunity.

So, when their counterpart suggested meeting at this bar, she agreed without hesitation.

However, the moment Juliana Jacobs pushed open the room door, her gaze suddenly froze.

Because Isaac Grant and his father were also present.

Chapter 148: Sensing Something Fishy, She Strikes First

Cortexa Group has a segment of its business in new energy vehicle parts.

Though Isaac Grant has entered the board, it's difficult for him to gain respect without performance, so George Grant is eager to push him to showcase his skills.

During the selection phase, it's reasonable for the client to meet two potential suppliers at the same time.

Juliana composed herself, walked in with Summer Shaw, and greeted the other company's boss.

Mr. Preston, in his forties, was stout and appeared quite amiable.

He immediately introduced them to Isaac Grant and his father.

George Grant looked warily at Juliana.

Isaac, with a sinister smile, extended his hand to her, "So, you are the director from Aetherflame, I've long heard of your esteemed name."

Juliana felt a slight chill down her spine but maintained her professional smile as she shook hands with him.

His hands were cold as a corpse.

Mr. Preston said to Summer Shaw with a grin, "I love a drink or two, so I arranged the meeting here. I hope you don't mind, Mr. Shaw."

Summer Shaw responded calmly, "You're too kind, Mr. Preston. As long as we're here to discuss cooperation, anywhere can be a meeting room."

Mr. Preston continuously praised Summer Shaw for his straightforwardness and then, along with his assistant, briefly explained the procurement intentions and standards.

Summer Shaw sat next to Juliana and asked quietly, "Is that Isaac Grant?"

Juliana nodded slightly.

Summer Shaw said, "Because of my brother's relationship, I saw him when I was a kid. Even back then, he looked like an alien, and it's even more so now."

Juliana didn't engage with her comment and took a sip from a bottle of mineral water that a waiter had brought over.

Taking advantage of the assistant's presentation, Mr. Preston asked Juliana with a smile, "Why aren't you having a drink?"

Summer Shaw took over the conversation, "She has to drive later, so I'll drink with you instead."

Mr. Preston laughed heartily.

Isaac saw something was up and suddenly slapped his forehead, laughing, "Mr. Preston, I almost forgot! Knowing you love to drink, my dad specially prepared two bottles of 30-year-old finest wine for you. They're in the trunk, and I forgot to bring them up."

After saying that, he turned his gaze filled with a smile towards Juliana, "Both my dad and I had a drink and are feeling a bit dizzy, so we'd appreciate it if you two lovely ladies who haven't had much to drink could help us to fetch them, would that be alright?"

The intention to send them away was so obvious that even a fool could see it.

Summer was just about to frown, but Juliana tugged at the corner of her clothing behind her and then stood up, responding with a graceful smile, "You're too kind, Young Master Grant, it's no trouble at all. We'll go get them now."

Mr. Preston nodded with a smile, seeing no trouble with it.

Though George Grant didn't know the plot his son was hatching, he handed over the car keys, warning softly, "Just take the wine, don't touch anything else."

Juliana smiled, "Don't worry, Master Gunn, we are well-mannered and won't sniff around like dogs."

George knew she was calling him a dog.

But due to the occasion, he couldn't react and had to suppress his displeasure, sitting back down.

When they left the room and the door closed, Isaac's sly smile could no longer be hidden.

He leaned towards Mr. Preston, speaking with a hint of intimacy.

"Mr. Preston, Director Jacobs is competent, but her private life is a bit too 'open', her reputation isn't great in the circles. I'm not trying to slander a competitor in front of you, I'm considering the long-term cooperation with your esteemed company. After all, if some negative rumors arise during the project, it might affect the progress and the reputation of your company."

However, Mr. Preston didn't show any signs of disdain upon hearing this, but rather seemed quite interested, "Is that so? She seems quite aloof to me."

George Grant snorted, "That's just for show."

Seeing the timing was right, Isaac took out a bag of powder.

"This stuff dissolves in water, and once ingested, one won't remember what they did, exposing their true self. More importantly, nothing can be traced after 12 hours, Mr. Preston, you'll know I'm not lying after trying it."

Mr. Preston, being an experienced man in such matters, understood everything upon seeing the powder.

George Grant laughed from the side, "It just so happens there are two of them, Mr. Preston, and your assistant. After things are successful, Isaac and I will leave and leave the wonderful night to you, how about it?"

Mr. Preston glanced at his assistant, with whom he had been longstanding partners; there was no reason to refuse such a thing.

Thus, the four men laughed aloud...

Isaac called a waiter to arrange the cocktails and juices on the table in the order as he specified and to clean the table.

The waiter had just left when Juliana and Summer Shaw returned.

Isaac picked up a bottle of cocktail from the table, gesturing toward them, "Thank you for your effort, I toast to you."

Seeing the array of drinks on the table, Juliana and Summer Shaw casually picked up the ones in front of them and clinked glasses with them.

George Grant returned from the restroom and was delighted upon seeing the two had drunk the drinks placed in special positions.

When he returned to his seat, he accidentally knocked over a drink, wetting Isaac's jacket.

Being a custom order worth five digits, Isaac was visibly displeased yet couldn't lash out.

George hurriedly said, "There's a dry cleaner nearby, take it off, and I'll have it cleaned for you."

Isaac didn't hesitate to give him the jacket.

After a few more drinks, Isaac became increasingly red-faced and seemed to be losing control of his actions, leaning toward Mr. Preston.

Mr. Preston and his assistant were clear-headed.

Especially Mr. Preston, when Isaac's icy hand touched his cheek, he was momentarily taken aback, but then his eyes filled with interest.

"It's rare to see a man's skin as good as yours. Is Young Master Grant's good complexion because of drinking?"

"It's natural!"

Isaac was already so befuddled about his gender, tugging at his tie and smiling charmingly.

Seizing the moment, Juliana and Summer Shaw stood up.

Summer Shaw politely said, "Since Mr. Preston has had enough to drink, let's call it a day. We welcome you to Aetherflame for an on-the-spot investigation."

Mr. Preston looked at Isaac with satisfaction but said nothing, while his assistant couldn't wait to see them off.

The door to the private room closed.

Summer Shaw gagged as if about to vomit.

"I didn't expect Mr. Preston to be a pervert, and even more, I didn't expect..."

She didn't finish but instead burst out laughing.

"Juliana, it's fortunate you kept your calm and figured something was fishy, quietly going out to bribe the waiter. So the problematic drinks were swapped."

Which means when Isaac was scheming against Juliana, Juliana was already counter-scheming against him.

There was quite a commotion coming from inside.

Summer Shaw took out her phone, excited, "Should we take some pictures? If we take some, the Grant Family will be done for."

Juliana stopped her, "Then you'd be done too, let's go quickly. Think about how to deal with revenge from the Grant father and son tonight."

Indeed, when George Grant returned with the jacket and heard the sounds from inside, he felt like the sky was falling...

The Grant father and son's revenge was swift.

Moreover, it was greater than expected.

The next day at work, Aetherflame received a 'Notification for Suspension of Operation for Cooperation with Investigation' issued by the market regulatory bureau.

The reason was that they were suspected of commercial bribery during last night's meeting.

Summer Shaw and Juliana also had to undergo inquiry by the regulatory department.

After much inquiry, Summer Shaw confirmed that this was based on testimony provided by Mr. Preston.

"But why would Mr. Preston listen to the Grant father and son?" Juliana was puzzled.

Summer Shaw gravely said, "After the incident on the highway was suppressed, Isaac has been unusually low-key. Now that even Mr. Preston cooperates with them, I suspect Isaac has found quite a backing, and even Evan Grant may not know about this."

"Juliana, this matter is beyond our ability to handle now. Perhaps only by contacting 'that person' can there be a turn of events."

"Him?" Juliana hesitated, "He probably wouldn't answer my call anymore."

She had sent him messages the day before yesterday and yesterday, and he hadn't replied.

"How do you know if you don't try? If they pin the bribery charge on us, not only Aetherflame will go bankrupt, but we might also go to prison."

Summer Shaw shoved the phone into her hand.

Juliana dialed that number that she was all too familiar with.

Surprisingly, the call was immediately picked up after just one ring.

But a strange woman's calm and composed voice came through, "Hello, who is it?"

Chapter 149: You Can Only Rely on Yourself

Juliana Jacobs had never been so embarrassed in her life.

"Sorry, I dialed the wrong number."

After saying that, she hung up the phone.

On the other end, Elias Langley came out of the laboratory.

A woman handed him both his coat and phone.

"There's an even more efficient DNA extraction technique, though it's still in the exploratory stage and will take some time. Do you want us to give it a try?"

Elias Langley took the coat, "You decide."

He always spoke like that in front of outsiders, his emotions were hard to gauge.

"By the way, you had a call, I answered it," the woman said.

Elias looked at her.

The woman laughed, "They said the tuition you paid during the Dragon Throne Era stock trading could be refunded. I asked if it could be refunded in Gold Ingots, and the person on the other side called me crazy and hung up."

Elias was about to check the call log but put down his phone because of her words.

"Don't imitate that mad girl."

After a chuckle, the woman asked seriously, "Are you still going to Kenton after you finish?"

Elias pressed his lips together without answering, and the woman immediately understood, "Got it, I won't ask."

His identity often meant his schedules were confidential.

After leaving the testing center and getting into the car, Elias turned off his phone.

...

On this end, Summer Shaw was astonished.

"Is that woman his wife?"

Juliana Jacobs remained silent.

Summer Shaw covered her mouth, "Will the couple fight because of your call?"

Juliana quickly dispelled her slight disappointment.

"Do you think if they fight, he'd hit back?"

Summer Shaw laughed at her joking words, "If it were someone he liked, he'd definitely be the one kneeling on the keyboard."

Juliana put her phone in her bag and stood up.

"Where are you going?" Summer Shaw asked.

"We have to resolve this ourselves. I'm going to see Mr. Preston."

Summer Shaw's face lost its smile, "You know he's a freak, and you still want to see him, are you crazy?"

It seemed Juliana had already made up her mind, "I'm going to the company to find him."

This was everyone's matter, Summer Shaw insisted on going with her.

The two arrived at Entropy Drive Motors HQ but were stopped by the receptionist.

The young girl, after hearing the company name, was indifferent to them, let alone passing the message on.

"This Mr. Preston predicted we'd come looking for him and is deliberately avoiding us. He's guilty," Summer Shaw said angrily.

But Juliana wasn't angry; in fact, she seemed a bit happy.

"We're the ones bribing him, yet he's still going to work as usual. What does that tell you?"

Summer Shaw got the hint from her words, "He's not entirely willing to cooperate, but can't refuse the higher-ups. There's a lot of room for negotiation."

Juliana nodded.

"But we can't even see him now. What should we do?" Summer Shaw asked.

Juliana considered for a moment and went back to the reception, "Hello, may I meet Mr. Preston's assistant?"

The young girl grew impatient, "How can you be so shameless? I already told you, Mr. Preston won't see you, and talking to his assistant won't help."

Juliana, however, didn't get angry at her words, a smile on her lips, but her words were sharp.

"I'm asking to meet Mr. Preston's assistant, whether I can see Mr. Preston or not is none of your business. It's best to listen to advice if you want to go far."

The young girl pretended to be displeased but still called Mr. Preston's assistant.

In no time, Mr. Preston's assistant came down personally to dismiss them.

Just as he was about to speak to Juliana, she placed a business card in front of him, "May I see Mr. Preston?"

This business card was given to her by Adrian Langley, initially to meet Lily Windsor, she didn't expect it to be used a second time.

The assistant's gaze instantly fixed on the business card.

In their circle, no one didn't know about the Helios Association.

After confirming the president's signature, the assistant turned around and used his phone to report.

A minute later.

"Miss Jacobs, Mr. Preston said you can go up alone."

Summer Shaw was about to say something, but Juliana held her back.

"Wait for me in the parking lot."

Summer Shaw understood the deep meaning in her eyes and nodded with pursed lips.

"If you don't come out in half an hour, I'll call the police."

The assistant rolled his eyes nearby.

At Mr. Preston's office, the assistant didn't go in.

Inside was only Philip Preston.

He certainly loved his wine, even keeping a stash at work.

"Miss Jacobs, you really are extraordinary. No one in the Grant Family is easy to deal with, but you don't think with just a business card, you can earn favor, do you?"

Juliana detected his frustration at being manipulated and didn't indulge him, "I don't seek Mr. Preston's favor, I only hope you can retract the false accusations against Aetherflame."

Philip Preston's chubby face twisted into a fake smile, "Words shouldn't be frivolous, that's solid evidence provided by Young Master Grant, nothing to do with me."

Juliana sighed, "I understand your reluctance to offend the Grant Family. But George Grant and his son are ruthless. Forced compliance today means tomorrow they might use last night's events as a perpetual hold over you."

Philip Preston narrowed his crafty eyes, "Before you threaten me, think about whether your company has the Grant Family's power. For them, it might only be a graze, but for you, it's potentially devastating."

Juliana sensed the bankruptcy threat against Aetherflame.

Calmly, she nodded, "Aetherflame may not be able to shake Cortexa, but when cornered, even a fight to the death is possible. But you're different, your foundation is here, and with the Grant Family's greed, you'll never find peace."

Philip Preston detected the hint in her words, "What makes you think you can stand against them?"

From her bag, Juliana produced an evidence bag.

Upon seeing the bag, with traces of powder residue, Philip Preston's face darkened instantly.

Juliana explained, "It's got Isaac Grant's fingerprints on it, which might not prove much, but it can show we're the victims."

After a long silence, Philip Preston finally shed some of his superior demeanor.

"I will tell the supervision bureau... I don't remember what happened last night."

"No," Juliana pressed down firmly on the evidence bag with her fingers, "I want you to say clearly that it was all a misunderstanding."

Philip Preston's eyes turned cold, lowering his voice, "Impossible. I won't do anything that damages my reputation, don't push me."

Juliana said nothing, merely fixing him with an unwavering, stubborn gaze.

The oppressive silence permeated the air.

After a pause, Philip Preston suddenly laughed.

He had his assistant bring a goblet capable of holding six liters of liquid and poured all the wine from the collection cabinet into it.

"Drink it all, and I'll immediately call the supervision bureau, admitting I said it all in a drunken stupor."

Chapter 150: Elias Langley's Phone Has Her Photo

Juliana Jacobs' gaze lingered on the glass half-filled with mixed liquor for a moment.

"If Mr. Preston can't keep his word, I have my ways to drag you to hell."

After saying that, she lifted the enormous glass and gulped it down with a near-desperate resolve.

The strong liquor burned like flames down her throat, blazing and churning in her stomach. Her knuckles clenched, yet she didn't pause,

as the remaining liquor spilled from the corners of her lips, flowed down her neck, soaking her collar. That pitiful wet mark echoed her small and powerless desolation at the moment.

Bam!

Juliana slammed the empty wine glass heavily on the table. Her body swayed involuntarily, yet she still forced herself to stand firm, staring directly at Philip Preston.

"Call them now!"

Philip Preston's eyes were complex, his face darkened again and again, and finally, he kept his promise. He picked up his phone, admitted to the supervision bureau in front of Juliana that he had drunk too much last night and uttered nonsense.

Juliana put the evidence bag back into her purse.

Philip Preston hurriedly said, "Leave that thing with me."

Juliana chuckled, "That thing is not within the scope of our deal."

With that, she turned and left, walking quickly.

She drank so hard that even her assistant dared not stop her.

From the elevator to the parking lot, she headed straight for Summer Shaw's parking space.

Summer Shaw saw her staggering figure, her heart tightened, and she immediately pushed open the door and rushed over quickly.

Juliana almost fell into her arms, reeking of alcohol mixed with cold sweat, her breath hot and rapid.

Summer Shaw held her collapsing shoulders, tears surfacing instantly.

"It's okay if Aetherflame is lost, why do you have to push yourself so hard?"

Juliana was already dizzy, her stomach beginning to ache more intensely, and she was nearing exhaustion.

"I've already thrown up once, hurry, take me to the hospital, or I won't have the strength to walk."

Summer Shaw, her eyes red, quickly helped her into the car.

Once in the driver's seat, Summer made a call and sped toward the hospital.

The ambulance arranged by Caleb Shaw met them halfway.

Juliana was already unconscious.

"How much did she drink?" Caleb Shaw frowned and asked.

Summer Shaw, choking with sobs, couldn't speak.

Caleb Shaw immediately induced vomiting on Juliana in the ambulance.

Juliana felt awful, retching several times before choking out a few mouthfuls of red liquid mixed with alcohol.

The thing Caleb most feared actually happened.

"Prepare an IV line, urgent blood tests for blood count and coagulation function, alert the blood bank for four units of emergency blood!"

"Brother, she won't die, will she?" Summer Shaw cried uncontrollably.

Caleb Shaw took out his phone, "In case of gastric bleeding, I've got to notify Evan Grant."

Summer Shaw pressed down his hand, "She absolutely doesn't want to see the Grants right now."

"Don't be ridiculous!" Caleb shook her off, "She has no family now; her only legal husband is Evan Grant. If a critical condition notice needs to be signed, who will make that decision?"

Summer hesitated for a moment, her tone unusually firm, "Someone will take responsibility. In any case, Evan Grant must not be notified."

Within less than half an hour, Adrian Langley had arrived at the hospital and signed a series of documents for Juliana.

By this time, Juliana had been sent to the intensive care unit.

Caleb Shaw said to him, "The patient's bleeding situation is better than expected, but the greatest current risk is complications from acute alcohol intoxication, so close observation is still required."

Adrian Langley punched the wall, growling, "Is there no one who can deal with them?"

Summer Shaw was no longer crying, but her eyes were still very red.

"Are you willing to go against the Grants? What about the Prestons? Would your father agree with you going against him?"

Adrian Langley was stumped by her words.

"This world doesn't talk about justice, only leverage. What have you gained in your four years in the Langley Family? She has to clean up your mess, but when she needs someone to support her, none of you are reliable. If you truly care for her, show some ambition, make a name for yourself in the Langley Family, and become her support."

Summer Shaw's icy words struck Adrian Langley's heart, and suffocating silence spread.

Caleb looked at his sister, seemingly much more mature, and turned to the corner of the corridor.

He looked toward a man who had been standing there for a long time.

"Her gastric mucosa is severely damaged, she must rest quietly for a long time, otherwise it's easy to cause gastric bleeding. As for the effects of alcohol on the nervous system... it still needs observation."

Evan Grant's face showed little expression. The light cast a chiaroscuro on his tight profile, as if nobody could fathom his current emotions.

"When will she wake up?"

Caleb pursed his lips, "That depends on her own physical condition."

"When she wakes up, please notify me promptly. Let me know about her condition daily, thank you."

Having said that, he left without any visible emotion.

And Juliana woke up late at night.

The first thing she said was, "How's Aetherflame?"

Summer Shaw choked and said, "The closure notice was withdrawn."

Upon hearing this, the strength Juliana held onto completely dissipated, and the overwhelming discomfort surged through her.

On the other side, in Kingsford.

Elias Langley returned from the suburbs.

He opened his phone, looked at the messages and missed calls, an inexplicable sense of loss in his heart.

Only two days of not replying to her messages, and she no longer persisted.

So her feelings for him weren't that deep.

He flipped through the call records from the morning.

Seeing a number, his gaze suddenly turned cold.

He called back, only to hear the mechanical female voice, "Please leave a message and contact tomorrow."

"Old Shepherd..."

Elias Langley paused, pressing his tongue against his cheek.

Here, things aren't over yet; he can't book a flight to Kenton.

Quinn Shepherd looked at him, waiting for instructions.

"Check if there's anything special going on in Kenton?"

"Something special?"

Quinn Shepherd was momentarily stunned, then realized he probably wanted to know about the situation with Aetherflame.

"Boss," he teased with a laugh, "not seeing each other for a day feels like three years to you, is that it?"

Elias buried all his emotions and ordered, "Compress all subsequent schedules, I want the matters here wrapped up quickly."

"Yes," Quinn responded formally.

...

In Kenton, a bar.

Philip Preston drank alone in a private room.

In the morning, he was threatened by a woman, forced to admit he "spoke nonsense while drunk," which was utterly humiliating.

Just then, Evan Grant pushed the door open, a faint and unreadable smile on his face.

"Mr. Preston, what a refined hobby, sipping alone."

"Mr. Grant, Vice President?"

Philip instinctively stood up.

Although he had just been transferred to Kenton, he had long heard of Evan Grant's capabilities.

Even if the latter seemed sidelined now at the Cortexa Group, his presence hadn't diminished one bit.

Evan smiled and shook hands with him, patting his shoulder.

"I've heard for a long time that the head of Entropy Drive's Purchasing Department is astute and capable, with a bright future. Today, I see it's indeed true. I wonder if this Mr. Grant could have the honor of sharing a drink with Mr. Preston?"

Philip was flattered, quickly replying with a smile, "I'm honored, please have a seat!"

Evan's lips curved into a smile, and he snapped his fingers.

Immediately, a dozen young women and men filed in carrying drinks, filling the private room.

As the door closed, Philip's assistant was kicked inside by a member too.

Evan smiled without reaching his eyes, "Mr. Preston, they're all here to drink with you, please don't leave until you're drunk tonight."

...

Quinn Shepherd, having connections in Kenton, soon received information.

At 3 a.m., he walked into Elias Langley's study.

Elias was holding documents, but his gaze was fixed on his phone screen,

on which was a solo picture of Juliana at Quentin Quinn's birthday banquet.

She wasn't wearing a gown and was even leaning on a cane, yet her clean face exuded a touch of indomitable courage.

At this moment, Quinn understood.

Over the years, the boss had seen countless beauties, but only a steadfast spirit could truly capture his eye.

He then stepped forward and reported, "Boss, there's some situation regarding Aetherflame..."