

Panicking 151

Chapter 151: You Don't Have to Do Anything, and Men Will Try to Please You

Elias Langley turned off the phone screen unhurriedly and looked at him.

Quinn Shepherd said, "There was a little misunderstanding between them and Philip Preston from Entropy Drive Motors, but it was resolved within a day."

The air was silent for a few seconds.

Elias Langley asked lightly, "That's it?"

Quinn Shepherd lowered his head slightly, "Sometimes no news is good news, right?"

Elias Langley's eyes turned obscure, "Compress all the schedules further; I'll need to go to Kenton in three days."

Quinn Shepherd, "..."

Great, not only is there no need to sleep, there's no need to eat either.

...

Juliana Jacobs felt uncomfortable all night and only got better at dawn.

The doctor said she could have some light liquid food, so Adrian Langley immediately arranged her breakfast.

Summer Shaw parted the messy strands of hair on her forehead, still bitter about her reckless actions.

"Must you keep Aetherflame safe? Is Aetherflame more important than your life?"

Juliana Jacobs took a deep breath; her voice was weak but firm, "If I don't want to be under someone else's control for the rest of my life, I must protect Aetherflame. One day, you'll stand at the pinnacle of Aetherflame, admired by others."

Summer Shaw suddenly understood, "Don't worry, Aetherflame is fine now. I haven't told anyone about your situation, except Adrian Langley."

Juliana Jacobs nodded. That was best.

Adrian Langley brought freshly made rice porridge and returned with some news.

"Just now, two ambulances came into the hospital. Guess who I saw?"

Juliana Jacobs looked at him but did not respond.

Adrian Langley put the rice porridge by the window to cool, "It was Philip Preston and his assistant. I heard they were both suffering from alcohol poisoning."

He chuckled, "I hadn't figured out how to deal with them. Who was so helpful?"

Summer Shaw blinked at Juliana Jacobs, "Could it be him?"

With Adrian Langley present, she didn't mention that person's name directly, but Juliana Jacobs understood.

"I... don't know." Juliana Jacobs glanced down at her phone, "Check it out. If it was him, thank him for me. If not, never mind."

Her tone was indifferent.

Summer Shaw's heart sank slightly.

It felt like the two hadn't even started and were already at an end.

...

At Abyssal Reach,

Isaac Grant was lying on the bed; a whole day had passed, and he still couldn't walk.

He didn't dare to lie flat to sleep, because it hurt like hell whenever he exerted any pressure.

Those two bastards were not human.

Because no human could play such scathing tricks, treating him like a toy, almost killing him.

George Grant brought a nurse to administer an IV and relayed the news that Aetherflame was operating normally and that Philip Preston had damaged a kidney due to drinking.

Furious, Isaac Grant smashed the water cup next to him, letting out a faint hiss.

The nurse who was injecting medicine into his IV bottle was so startled that her hand trembled.

However, he didn't notice, and instead roared, "Who's helping that woman!"

Stella, who was standing nearby, said, "Isn't that your own fault? I warned you he would become a stumbling block for you, and now it's come true, hasn't it?"

"Shut up!" Isaac Grant glared at her viciously, "Does she think she can escape imprisonment by mere luck?"

Stella pursed her lips, "She talks about taking a path to cleanse her name, but if you don't use your own best skills, you can't do anything to her. So, this is how it is."

Isaac Grant, "Come here."

The nurse prepared the medication and was about to leave.

George Grant interjected, asking, "There were no other medications available yesterday. Why are there today?"

The nurse quickly replied, "Young Master Isaac's inflammation is poorly controlled, so the doctor added a different anti-inflammatory drug to help him get back on his feet as soon as possible."

"Be cautious with your life once you leave, and don't say anything you shouldn't." George Grant instructed.

The nurse nodded quickly and left.

Stella moved closer to George Grant, crouching down to listen to what he had to say.

But Isaac Grant raised his hand and slapped her across the face.

"Ugh," George Grant frowned in displeasure.

Isaac Grant looked at him, "You feeling sorry for her?"

George Grant's expression changed, "Your Auntie Windsor asked me to take care of her before she died."

Isaac Grant snorted, "Don't you ask her how much trouble she's caused me by acting on her own accord?"

He then took out his phone, "I've long since dug a pit for that woman, ready to bury her alive at any moment. Now I need to find an excuse to get Evan Grant out of the way for a few days, so she'll find herself helpless."

...

The next day, Juliana Jacobs was discharged from the hospital.

Her stomach was still very sensitive; she couldn't do strenuous exercise and could only consume liquid food; otherwise, severe bleeding might occur easily.

Summer Shaw and Adrian Langley were both busy and couldn't leave.

So Caleb Shaw helped her with the discharge procedures.

"Go home and rest well, and within ten days to half a month, you'll recover," Caleb Shaw said while sorting out the paperwork.

Juliana tilted her head and thought, "By then, I should be heading to the Civil Affairs Bureau with Evan Grant to get the divorce certificate."

Caleb opened his mouth but finally forced a smile, "May your wish come true."

He escorted Juliana to the hospital's lower-level entrance and then turned around to message Evan Grant.

"She's safely discharged. Philip Preston will need at least a month in the hospital. His family is causing quite a fuss; be cautious."

Evan Grant quickly replied, "That's a dispute between them and the bar, unrelated to me. Remember not to let her know."

Juliana was heading towards the hospital entrance while calling for a ride on her phone.

Suddenly, she bumped into someone directly in front of her.

Her phone fell to the ground. As she was about to pick it up, the person stepped on it.

Juliana frowned and looked up, discovering it was Chase Miller, someone she hadn't seen in a long time.

However, back when he was a doctor, he was always cleanly dressed, but now he had a messy beard and wrinkled clothing, radiating a deep sense of disillusionment.

Juliana was about to ask him what had happened, but Chase grabbed her wrist, pulling her toward him, while also pressing a knife against her waist.

"If you want to live, don't scream, and come with me."

Juliana frowned, "Then you should at least let me pick up my phone."

"Pick it up and give it to me, no tricks."

To maintain the knife at her waist's artery position, Chase squatted with her.

Juliana picked up the phone and pressed the screen, but Chase grabbed it from her.

"I told you not to play tricks. Do you think I wouldn't dare do anything to you here?"

Juliana was anxious, "Look for yourself; you stepped on my phone and broke it."

Chase didn't look; he put her phone into his pocket.

"Let's go."

He seized her arm, shoving her into a tricycle parked at the hospital entrance.

Because Chase stayed close to her the whole time, their struggle appeared like a quarrel between lovers, rendering Juliana's plea for help ineffective.

A while later, the tricycle stopped at the gate of a noisy residential area.

Chase led her into a rented room.

The conditions inside were extremely shabby.

Juliana's eyes roamed around, searching for a place to contact the outside world, but Chase pushed her onto the couch.

Then, he leaned against the edge of a broken table across from her, glaring.

Juliana's stomach began to ache faintly, and her knuckles turned slightly pale, but she maintained an innocent expression and spoke softly.

"Is this where you're staying? It's so shabby. Why would you live in a place like this? When I entered earlier, that breakfast shop called 'One Side' seemed very unsanitary. Do you often eat breakfast there?"

"Shut up!" Chase yelled, "Isn't it all thanks to you that I've ended up like this? You got me fired from the hospital, then from the small clinic, and had patients create medical mishaps to extort money from me. Now I'm left with nothing, all because of you, you bitch."

His anger flared as he spoke.

Juliana quickly responded, "Why would I get someone to do such things? You must have misunderstood."

However, this only fueled Chase's rage.

He approached and grabbed her collar, "You don't need to do anything; men are eager to please you. Today, I'll see what charm you have that makes these men willing to risk their lives for you"

With that, he started to tear her clothes.

"Since you're doomed anyway, might as well die in greater disgrace!"

Chapter 152: She Is the Prime Suspect

"Let go of me!"

Amid the struggle, Chase Miller's knee pressed against Juliana Jacobs' abdomen.

Juliana, momentarily dazed by the sudden pain,

came back to her senses and slapped him hard across the face.

"Not being a doctor anymore, now you're just doing heartless things?"

Chase stopped his hands.

Juliana glared at him, panting.

Though she was nervous, her aura didn't dim.

"How could someone who used to love helping stray animals turn into this? Your change breaks my heart."

"Heartbroken? I'm like this because of you!"

Chase still looked angry, but his eyes cleared up a bit.

At least he didn't pounce on her again or do anything to her.

Juliana's stomach hurt unbearably, and she cautiously turned over, and Chase didn't warn her not to move.

She curled up, still glaring at him.

"Because of me? Did I make you accept Lily Windsor's bribes to turn against me? Did I make you so money-hungry that you abandoned professional ethics? There's a devil inside you; if it wasn't me, you'd do the same to someone else. I didn't ruin you completely before, and now you're biting the hand that fed you?"

Chase yelled at her again because of her last words, "Sending me to a small clinic and hiring someone to pose as a patient to extort me? Losing all my savings still wasn't enough, and now I can't even find a place to stand in Kenton. Just yesterday, someone warned me that if the compensation wasn't in place, they'd send loan sharks after me. Is this what you call kindness?"

Juliana was bewildered by his words.

"Listen carefully. First, I don't know anything about what you're talking about. Second, Evan Grant did give you a hard time before, but he's been too busy to deal with you lately. As for our past grievances, I've already moved on, so why would I bother you? If you had any sense, you'd realize something is off here."

"Something's off?" Chase calmed down a bit more, the grip on the dagger not so tight as before.

"I did hate you when you and Lily Windsor tried to take my bone marrow, but you received your punishment. Do you think I'm so free that I remember every grudge? And with those patients you mentioned, why not call the police?"

The light in Chase's eyes was gone, and he looked defeated.

"They did it flawlessly; they couldn't find anything on them. There's no one to clear my name."

"So, because of this, you kidnap me to seek some psychological balance? Why couldn't you approach me in a friendly way, and we could figure something out together? That would be more effective than you trying to solve it alone."

Chase, reminded by her, looked at her in disbelief.

"You... you're still willing to help me?"

Juliana was just about to nod when Chase's phone in his pocket vibrated.

He took it out and saw a low battery alert, and the call was still connected.

It was Juliana's phone.

Chase instantly erupted, pressing the dagger to her chest again. "You've deceived me again!"

Afraid he would seriously stab down, Juliana held his hands, calmly saying, "I'm helping you stop before it's too late! Some things can't be undone once done, just like accepting Lily Windsor's bribe. Today you haven't made an irreparable mistake, leave Kenton and start anew; you can still be a doctor and take care of stray animals."

Chase slowly lowered his hand holding the knife.

Juliana, pale-faced, beads of sweat gathering on her forehead, continued speaking to calm Chase.

Not long after, Summer Shaw arrived with the police in tow.

She was rescued.

"Did that guy hurt your stomach?" Summer asked.

Juliana nodded.

Summer cursed under her breath, and just then, a police officer stepped forward.

"Preliminary investigation shows this person has a psychiatric record. If legal procedures are pursued, it may be difficult to hold him accountable."

Despite her pain, Juliana softly said, "I won't press charges against him. But please, try to talk him out of taking extreme actions again."

The police officer nodded, "Understood, we will document his behavior."

Juliana couldn't bear the stomach pain any longer and was too weak to continue talking with the police, so Summer quickly took her back to the hospital.

And so, two hours after being discharged, she found herself successfully back in the hospital bed.

When Adrian Langley rushed to the hospital after a meeting, Juliana had completed all her checks, and Summer was sitting by the bed scolding her.

"Honey, is this bad streak going for a full year? If it's not someone setting you up, it's you getting kidnapped. Tell me, do you want a full-body armor for protection or should I just get you a million-dollar insurance policy with me as the beneficiary? Taking care of a 'reverse human koi' like you is quite exhausting."

Juliana's stomach hurt, and she was tickled by her words, wanting to laugh but couldn't.

Adrian Langley came forward, "Her luck isn't something any ordinary company can insure. Most people would profit from a claim, turning 'disaster movies' into 'inspirational films,' but she turns every disaster into success, so she's a genuine 'koi,' not reverse."

Summer gave Adrian a look of 'scorn' for defending Juliana.

"Well, well, your mouth has become eloquent? Knowing how to protect her now?"

Adrian's ears flushed for a moment, not responding to her jab.

Meanwhile, Juliana looked seriously at him, "Speaking of setups... I can't shake the feeling that Chase's situation isn't over. Could you help me investigate? Find out who's been stirring things up; then we'll know if there's a plot behind it."

"Sure, I'll get on it right away."

After Adrian spoke, Summer remembered something urgent.

"Just now, Jared Langley came to Aetherflame to discuss his smart home battery matter. But I could tell he was finding an excuse to see you. No one at the company knows you're hospitalized, but it won't stay that way for long. If you don't have feelings for him, you'd better sort it out, or he'll keep pestering you."

Juliana pursed her lips, staying silent,

Everyone seemed to want to use her as a shield.

Was she invulnerable or something?

After getting the test results, Juliana left the hospital again.

With Summer busy, Adrian personally took her home and cooked her some fragrant rice porridge before leaving.

In the coming days, she could only eat liquid food.

That night, Juliana fell asleep early and heavily, not even noticing the extra pair of shoes at home.

The next day, the ringing of the doorbell woke her up.

She washed up briefly and opened the door.

Four police officers were standing there.

They didn't say much but directly showed a search warrant.

"Ms. Juliana Jacobs, Chase Miller was found dead in his rental apartment last night. Given your recent disputes with him, we need to legally search your residence."

Juliana trembled slightly, then frowned.

"I've had issues with him, but he's had conflicts with others as well. Why are you only investigating me?"

"Please understand, we will screen all relevant personnel. This is a standard random check, and we hope you'll cooperate."

In other words, she was the biggest suspect.

Juliana had no choice but to allow them into her home.

"What's going on?"

Adrian Langley, carrying a thermos, was stopped at the door.

The officers briefly explained the situation to him and informed him that he couldn't enter at this time.

Upon hearing this, Adrian got frustrated, "She slept alone last night. Who's going to prove her alibi? Are you bullying single people now?"

Chapter 153: Coerced Confession

However, the police did not pay attention to his agitated remarks.

After a while, a policeman found a pair of sneakers from the cupboard under the kitchen sink.

After initial comparison with the shoe sole patterns, the officers' expressions immediately became serious.

"Miss Jacobs, it looks like you'll have to come with us to the station to cooperate in the investigation."

In other words, if she couldn't distance herself from these shoes, she would be taken into custody.

Juliana stared at the shoes, feeling they looked familiar but couldn't recall where she had seen them.

"These... these aren't my shoes, I don't remember ever wearing them," she said.

"Whether or not you've worn them, our forensics department will provide the answer. Please cooperate and come with us for the investigation now."

Adrian wanted to step forward to defend her.

But Juliana shook her head at him and cooperatively followed the officers.

...

Interrogation room.

The harsh, glaring light made Miss Jacobs' face appear even more bloodless.

The policeman opposite her slammed the forensic report heavily onto the table.

"The fabric fibers found inside the shoes match exactly with the socks you frequently wear! It's ironclad evidence, are you still trying to argue?"

Juliana furrowed her eyebrows but her voice remained calm, "That's impossible, I have no impression of these shoes."

The young policeman snickered, pressing her, "The soles also tested for traces of blood, even after being washed. The blood type matches! If you're not the one cleaning the evidence, who else is? Spill it! How did you do it?"

Juliana took a deep breath, raised her eyes to meet his, "I didn't commit murder, nor would I be foolish enough to hide bloody shoes in my home."

"Still hard-headed!" the older policeman stood up abruptly, moving closer, "Only footprints of you and Chase Miller were found at the scene, and your fingerprints are on the couch in his rental apartment. You left these shoes at home because you didn't have time to handle the evidence, and we caught you

red-handed. Confessing willingly means leniency, resisting means severity. Confess now, and it counts as voluntarily turning yourself in."

Juliana looked at him and responded calmly, "Yesterday when he kidnapped me, I was wrestling on his couch which is why my fingerprints are there. Your deployment records fully prove this can be checked..."

Suddenly, she paused, as if she had caught onto something, then stated directly: "Just because of a pair of shoes with unknown origins, you insist I'm the culprit... Officer, you seem to have been guiding me to confess from the start."

The older policeman's expression didn't change, but his gaze subtly shifted for a moment.

He immediately stabilized his tone and said solemnly, "I am giving you a chance for leniency."

Juliana understood that these two seemed to have come with a "mission."

So she stopped cooperating, "I did not commit murder."

Afterward, no matter how much they asked, she only repeated these five words.

The young policeman lost patience, "The evidence chain is complete, the motive is clear, how much longer do you think you can stall?"

Juliana remained silent.

After a brief stalemate, the older policeman deliberately sighed in frustration, "Refusing to confess, then continue to stay here. When you're willing to explain, we'll talk again."

The iron door slammed shut, and Juliana's stomach ached faintly.

Calculating the time, it should be afternoon now.

She hadn't eaten anything since her arrest early this morning, and her injured stomach was protesting sharply.

She reluctantly walked to the door, raised her hand and knocked on the iron door.

A long time passed, footsteps sounded from outside, and an impatient voice spoke, "What is it?"

"Can I have something to eat?" she asked softly.

The person outside mocked, "You think this is a dormitory, where you can order food? Wait patiently, it's not yet dinner time!"

The footsteps faded away, Juliana held her stomach, and leaned against the cold iron door before sitting on the floor.

Clearly, everyone she had encountered now had been bought off.

Juliana closed her eyes, pondering how to save herself.

Meanwhile, Summer Shaw was also in a panic.

She had contacted almost every lawyer in the city, but none were willing to take Juliana's case.

Having exhausted all options, she resorted to pushing Adrian out there.

In theory, lawyers could meet with their clients.

But the detention center was stalling with all kinds of excuses, not letting Adrian meet Juliana, let alone bail her out.

This was obviously manipulated from behind the scenes.

And the only one with such influence could be Isaac Grant's backer.

Summer couldn't care less and wanted to find Evan Grant.

Adrian held her back, "Do you want Juliana's divorce to proceed smoothly or not?"

Summer snapped, "What's more important than not getting a divorce—going to jail?"

Adrian nodded, "For Juliana, if forced to choose between the two, she would certainly choose the latter."

Summer paused at his words...

Adrian returned to the company.

Jared Langley had just finished a meeting and was slightly surprised to see Adrian appearing in his office.

"Project Helios is in a crucial phase, how does Vice President Langley have time to grace my place?"

Adrian ignored the sarcasm in his words and asked, "Brother, do you know when Uncle will be back?"

In fact, since Adrian was recognized by the Langley Family, the relationship between the two brothers had always been tense.

They only barely maintained the "brother" label in front of their elders.

At other times, they even felt addressing each other by full names was unnecessary, referring to each other simply with "you."

Jared paused, sat back in his chair with a slight snort.

"Uncle's itinerary is confidential, even Father doesn't know. What's the matter, facing issues with the project and wanting to use his connections to get through?"

He mocked.

"You've miscalculated! Uncle is famously impartial. Frankly, the Langley Family's development today hasn't benefited from him in the slightest. Even wagging your tail before him won't help."

His words were harsh, but Adrian unexpectedly refrained from countering and instead humbly asked, "Do you have his phone number? I haven't been back long, and I haven't interacted with him much or kept his contact."

Jared scoffed, "He doesn't take calls from strangers."

Adrian realized that there was no way to get anything from Jared, so he turned to leave.

Jared sensed something was amiss and ordered, "Stop!"

Adrian paused.

Jared asked, "What's happened?"

Adrian turned around, "Kaelan Detention Center is it connected?"

"Who do you want to see?" Jared eyed him.

Adrian contemplated for a few seconds, "Juliana."

...

Elsewhere, Mrs. Langley was having coffee with Stella Windsor.

Mrs. Langley always regarded her reputation highly, not wanting to associate with women like Stella Windsor.

But after repeated requests saying it concerned her son, she reluctantly agreed to meet.

However, she refused to share a table with her, so they sat at separate tables in the rented café space.

Stella Windsor's face showed slight discomfort, but she forced a smile to close off Juliana's chance of survival, saying, "You might have heard about my sister-in-law's affair with my brother, she..."

Mrs. Langley raised her hand to interrupt, "Get to the point, I don't have much time."

Stella Windsor pressed her lips, "My sister-in-law is promiscuous, always enticing men. This time, caught red-handed, imprisoned for murder, there's no way she'll come out. The Grant Family won't bother with her, I'm only worried she might reach out to Langley Family men for help."

Chapter 154: Elias Langley Is Back

Mrs. Langley focused her gaze: Juliana Jacobs has been imprisoned?

It's truly a cause for celebration.

She pressed her lips down, feigning displeasure, "Our Langley Family is not the Dragon King Temple, granting every request. Besides, the people from your Grant Family are filthy beyond measure, my son has a cleanliness obsession and avoids that woman entirely, he would never help her. To come to me for such a trivial matter, you must be mad!"

After speaking, she stood up and left.

...

The situation at Kaelan Detention Center was more complicated than Jared Langley imagined.

Juliana Jacobs's condition inside was unknown.

He tried using his connections to put in a word but was only advised not to get involved in the matter.

After some contemplation, Jared Langley finally approached his father.

As he was about to inquire, Leona Sheridan entered through the door.

She was relieved to have come here directly after leaving the café, just in time.

"Husband, guess what I heard on my way here?"

She walked over to Victor Langley's side.

Victor Langley was busy and not interested in the trivial gossip of women.

Leona Sheridan spoke proactively, "Evan Grant's restless wife has been arrested for murder. The Grant Family is bustling now, with murderers and adulterers. As long as our Langley Family remains pure and innocent, it won't be long before we become the number one family in Kenton."

Victor Langley's gaze remained on his documents, ignoring both her and their son.

"Fame is useless; the Langley Family simply needs to focus on itself."

"Exactly, husband." Leona Sheridan leaned on him, "Now is definitely not the time to meddle in the Grant Family's mess. Right, son?"

Jared Langley detected his mother's implicit warning.

His expression unchanged, he replied "Yes," then found an excuse to leave.

Leona Sheridan breathed a sigh of relief.

Only then did Victor Langley glance up at her, "What is it?"

Leona Sheridan sat on his lap, speaking coyly, "It's still that seductress, who's captivated your son. Luckily, I interrupted earlier, preventing him from asking you for help. But I'm worried, he might ask your younger brother."

Victor Langley spoke firmly, "The second brother is very busy lately, but even if he were free, he would never meddle in these affairs."

"That's good," Leona Sheridan responded, "You also need to give Jared and Adrian a good talking-to. As for Evan Grant's wife..."

Victor Langley's brows knitted, interrupting her, "Why is Adrian even involved?"

Leona Sheridan raised an eyebrow, "That's why I said that woman is a vixen."

Victor Langley's visage darkened, "Any men of our Langley Family who dare to get involved with the Grant Family's married woman, I'll expel them from the family, strike them from the family records!"

A light shone in Leona Sheridan's eyes.

To her ears, the thought of a chance to expel Adrian Langley was a cause for joy.

...

At dusk, at Kaelan Detention Center.

Juliana Jacobs's stomach ached so intensely that she was drenched in sweat.

She curled up on the ground, unable to get up.

A guard came by to collect bowls, noticing hers untouched, frowned, "These meals were specially prepared on someone's request; don't be ungrateful!"

Juliana Jacobs weakly lifted her head, her voice faint to the point of being inaudible, "The rice is too hard... My stomach is in agony, please... Let me see a doctor..."

The guard snorted coldly, a taunting tone, "Feigning illness here won't help. If you truly want comfort, confessing would be better than anything!"

The violent pain almost swallowed her remaining consciousness.

In a trance for a moment, she seemed to see Isaac Grant's sinister face and Stella Windsor's malevolent grin.

No, she couldn't allow herself to be trapped here, to let them succeed.

"Not eating?" the guard asked.

Juliana Jacobs slowly lifted her head, her face ashen white as paper, but her eyes were extraordinarily bright, as she fiercely spat out two words, "I will!"

...

Outside the detention center, Summer Shaw and Adrian Langley anxiously stood at the gate.

Seeing Jared Langley come out, Summer Shaw quickly asked, "How is it? Did you see her?"

Jared Langley replied solemnly, "I can only ensure she won't be mistreated inside."

"And then?" Summer Shaw asked.

Jared Langley, "That's all."

Adrian Langley snorted softly, "I thought President Langley was omnipotent."

Jared Langley frowned, "Still better than you, dealing with the pressure from Kingsford, I've managed this much. Can you?"

Adrian Langley was about to retort, when Summer Shaw impatiently said, "You're both useless, stop arguing."

Saying this, she took out her phone, dialing Quinn Shepherd's number again.

This time, the call went through.

"Miss Shaw, is there something you need?" Quinn Shepherd asked.

Summer Shaw's nose tingled upon hearing his voice.

"Where are you?"

Quinn Shepherd glanced at Elias Langley.

The man showed no reaction.

"We'll catch the last flight to Kenton," he replied.

Summer Shaw burst into tears, "Then bring some white chrysanthemums, to collect my sister's remains."

Silence ensued on the line, followed by Quinn Shepherd's voice again, "We'll arrive in an hour and a half."

Ending the call, Summer Shaw's crying ceased abruptly.

"As long as the person can be found, it's not a problem."

She wiped her face, put away her phone, as if the distraught and nearly collapsing person earlier wasn't her.

Jared Langley and Adrian Langley were stupefied by her series of actions.

Never before had they realized that their uncle's secretary was so easily manipulable.

Jared Langley was first to collect himself, "What are you standing around for, instead of doing nothing here, let's head to the airport, think about how to persuade uncle to make an exception while waiting."

Just as he finished speaking, his phone rang.

It was from Victor Langley.

"Where are you?"

Jared Langley glanced at Adrian Langley, "Heading to the airport with the third brother to pick up uncle."

Victor Langley was surprised, "The second brother is returning today?"

Jared Langley confirmed, "Yes."

Victor Langley paused for a few seconds, "Once you've picked him up, come back quickly, I'll have the kitchen prepare a snack for you."

"Alright, father."

Jared Langley hung up the call dutifully, the next moment he was in Adrian Langley's car.

"What did father say?" Adrian Langley asked.

Jared Langley shot him a sideways glance, "Said you shouldn't keep competing with me."

Adrian Langley, "..."

Summer Shaw nudged him from the backseat, "What are you dithering about, drive quickly, the longer Juliana stays inside, the more danger she's in."

Meanwhile, after hanging up the phone, Leona Sheridan nervously asked, "What about now? Are they still going to involve themselves in that woman's matters?"

Victor Langley replied, "They're going to the airport to pick up the second brother."

Leona Sheridan, "Are you sure they won't ask the second brother for help?"

Victor Langley, "Don't worry, Jared never dares to defy me. And given the second brother's temperament, even if they ask, he'll only escort them back."

Indeed, the second brother's way of handling matters was always impartial and just, unyielding.

Leona Sheridan finally felt somewhat reassured.

"Then I'll hurry to have the kitchen prepare the ingredients."

...

Two hours later, at the airport.

Elias Langley's private jet arrived.

Once off the plane, Quinn Shepherd asked, "What's the situation?"

Summer Shaw briefly explained the matter.

Jared Langley was about to speak on behalf of Juliana Jacobs, hoping to sway the second uncle, but he saw Elias Langley first say "Let's go."

He paused, momentarily stunned.

The red flag L5 sped down the airport highway.

Quinn Shepherd made several calls, his expression changing slightly.

He turned to look at Elias Langley, "Miss Jacobs has vomited blood and fainted in the detention center and is being sent to the hospital."

Summer Shaw immediately started crying.

This time it was genuine.

"Her stomach is severely injured, she can only consume liquids, they must have given her hard food, those bastards!"

"Have them transfer her to Hospital 547."

Elias Langley instructed, then calmly looked out the window.

She did it deliberately to cause her stomach to bleed.

If she felt her life was in danger inside, she would surely gamble on a chance to get out.

...

Juliana Jacobs was taken to Hospital 547, where the hospital immediately took action.

Her condition stabilized, and she was then transferred to a monitored isolation room for detention.

Elias Langley's car pulled up at the hospital entrance, Summer Shaw hurriedly got out, but Quinn Shepherd looked towards the man in the back seat.

"Boss, although the visit was specially approved, seeing her at this juncture isn't in your best interest."

Elias Langley pressed his lips together silently, got out, and went on.

Inside the ward, Juliana Jacobs woke up not long after losing consciousness.

A police officer in charge of her custody walked up to her bedside, informing her in a perfunctory manner, "Juliana Jacobs, someone has requested a special visit. However, as per regulations, due to your current situation, it is not permitted. We now require your consent: do you agree to meet with them?"

Chapter 155: Hurry Up, I Want to See Her

Juliana clutched the corner of her hospital gown, remained silent for a moment, then replied with just three words: "I won't see him."

Quinn Shepherd was slightly startled upon hearing this response.

Though he couldn't understand her reasons, this "refusal" unexpectedly enlivened the most challenging path in the game.

It ensured his boss wouldn't be embroiled in scandal, yet allowed him to do what needed to be done for her.

Elias Langley focused his gaze for two seconds, then looked at Adrian Langley, "Apply to see her as a lawyer."

Jared Langley, worried about a possible short departure, quickly added, "Before, we couldn't even see the person; someone was applying pressure from behind. At least now with Uncle here, all regular procedures can continue."

Just as he finished speaking, Elias Langley's phone rang; it was Victor Langley calling.

"Have you reached Kenton?" Victor Langley asked.

"Yes, I'm here."

"Then why haven't you come back yet?" Victor Langley inquired.

"I'm staying at a hotel."

Victor Langley paused for a moment, "Let's talk."

Langley Residence, study room.

At two in the morning, the lights were still on.

Victor Langley looked at the brother he had never felt close to since childhood, "Do you know how difficult it was to get to where you are now?"

Elias Langley remained expressionless, "Do you want to know, brother?"

Victor Langley was momentarily speechless, "I know you've spent more time with the Sinclairs than the Langleys since you were young. If that's the case, why not stay in Kingsford to fulfill your filial duties to your in-laws when you're free?"

Elias Langley did not answer.

Victor Langley continued, "Since you've married into their family, you should act like a son-in-law. Besides, the Sinclairs have two daughters, you could..."

Elias Langley interrupted him, "If you called me here so late just to say this, then I'm leaving."

"Elias!" Victor Langley sighed, "Don't get involved in Jared's matters!"

Elias Langley looked puzzled, "I've never interfered with him."

"Jared is still too young and easily confused by emotions. Of course, the other person lacks restraint, having a family but still seducing him. As elders, we can't just let him act on impulse."

Elias Langley thought for two seconds, "I still don't understand what you mean, brother."

His brother was just emotionally insensitive, always preferring to talk things out clearly.

"It's Jared's business if he seeks you out. I can't let it go. If something happens to Evan Grant's woman, naturally, the Grant Family will handle it. It's not up to an outsider like him to overstep. The Langley Family's reputation is not something to be tarnished by him."

After hearing his words, Elias Langley slowly stood up.

"If it's your concern, brother, that's your business, and it has nothing to do with me. As I've always said, I do not interfere in his affairs. If there's nothing else, I'll leave now."

"Elias..."

Victor Langley knew him fairly well. His brother's lack of absolute refusal meant there was a possibility he would agree with Jared.

"...I absolutely won't agree to that woman entering the Langley Family."

Elias Langley was about to leave but turned back to look at his older brother upon hearing this statement.

"The Langley Family's reputation has always been well-maintained by you, brother. If you truly feel Jared is a disgrace to the family, then you can stop all contact with him forever."

Victor Langley was instantly infuriated, "He's my son; we're family. How can you say such a thing?"

But Elias Langley, displeased, offered no explanation and left without looking back.

Is everyone blind?

Why does everyone think Jared is entangled with her?

Could it be he's too old to qualify as the lover?

...

Adrian Langley's visitation application was quickly approved.

He brought Summer Shaw's personally made porridge to Juliana.

Juliana, having vomited blood yesterday and still looking very pale, managed to take only two sips before her stomach discomfort made her gently push it away.

Adrian Langley had a serious expression.

"Second Uncle said you'll stay here until you clear your name. He won't let you return to that place again. But the biggest problem now is those sneakers. They've found the victim's blood on them, as well as fiber remnants on your socks. The pressure from above is likely being pushed by Isaac Grant's backer. You've really hit a wall this time."

Juliana slightly raised her eyes, her tone unusually calm, "I remembered those shoes—yes, they're mine. But I rarely wear them; they've always been stored in the shoe cabinet at Platinum Bay. I didn't take them when I left. Currently, the only person with free access to Platinum Bay is Stella Windsor."

Adrian Langley had a moment of realization, "You're saying Stella Windsor and Isaac Grant are working together?"

Juliana gave a slight smile, "Those two have probably been in cahoots for a while now."

She paused and returned to the main topic, "I want the fingerprints on the sneakers re-examined. Also, please arrange for someone to collect samples from the walk-in closet at Platinum Bay—if they find Stella Windsor's fingerprints there too, my suspicion will be considerably reduced."

Adrian Langley smirked, "Juliana, I can handle these tasks for you."

Juliana maintained a calm demeanor, "If you want to be absolutely sure that I get out, let your Second Uncle handle it."

Adrian Langley was speechless.

After conveying Juliana's request, Quinn Shepherd personally executed the procedures to have the trace lab re-evaluate the evidence.

However, a stunning piece of news came from over there.

The crucial evidence, the sneakers, had surprisingly vanished.

In a bar, in a private room.

"The evidence room records show that the sneakers had been 'legally retrieved,' but the person who supposedly signed for them denies ever picking them up," said Quinn Shepherd.

Elias Langley gently swirled the wine glass in his hand, "What about the surveillance?"

"It can't be accessed."

It wasn't that it couldn't be accessed; it was Isaac Grant's backers testing his resolve.

Elias Langley let out a mocking laugh, "Then investigate all the related personnel at the detention center, as well as the bank records of their immediate family."

Quinn Shepherd was stunned. That's a huge undertaking.

"Can't do it?" Elias Langley asked.

Quinn Shepherd pursed his lips, "It's possible. But since Evan Grant is on a business trip and not at Platinum Bay, do you mean to use drastic measures to enter and collect fingerprints?"

"No," Elias Langley said firmly, "everything must be done through proper channels. I remember she has a good relationship with the housemaid at Platinum Bay. Let Adrian Langley go to the hospital to get the maid's contact information."

Miles Monroe, sitting nearby, had a smile playing at the corners of his mouth, "Isn't this... a bit too attentive?"

Elias Langley remained silent.

Miles Monroe simply moved over to his side, "Just be honest for once in front of us brothers, are you really invested? If you say yes, I won't pursue her."

Elias Langley clicked his tongue.

Miles Monroe burst into laughter, "How intriguing, something you dare to do but don't dare to admit."

Elias Langley shifted his gaze, looking elsewhere.

Miles Monroe put an arm on his shoulder, speaking with rare seriousness.

"You fulfilled the marriage contract, marrying a memorial tablet, but at the end of the day, it's just a transaction. Using three years of marital status to repay Mr. Sinclair for saving your life and to obtain the remedy to lift the curse on the Langley Family. You kept your promise, which was right. But legally, you're still single and have the right to pursue your own happiness, which is also correct."

He clinked his glass against Elias Langley's.

"For someone like you, in your thirties now, how many women will there be in your life whom you take the initiative to pursue? Some fates, once missed, are gone forever. Why tie yourself down with a ghost marriage?"

After speaking, he downed his drink and stood up.

"I'm advising you, not out of kindness. But make up your mind quickly, otherwise, I might just make my move."

The private room door closed softly, cutting off Miles Monroe's departing figure.

Elias Langley put down his drink, looked at Quinn Shepherd, "No need to check into Dorian Lowell's identity anymore; treat her as if she's who she appears to be."

Quinn Shepherd's eyes widened in surprise.

Has he made a choice?

Elias Langley ignored his shocked expression, eyes clear and resolute, continued, "Move quickly, I want to see her."

Chapter 156: Even Poaching Is This Competitive Now?

Three days later, the "mole" responsible for tampering with evidence in the detention center was uncovered.

Fortunately, he had left himself a way out and didn't destroy the evidence he took.

The trace examination department successfully extracted a partial fingerprint from an inconspicuous spot on a sneaker that didn't belong to Juliana.

Meanwhile, another team entered the walk-in closet at Platinum Bay for evidence gathering and managed to collect several fingerprints on the inside of the wardrobe door.

Upon comparison, one of the prints matched perfectly with the partial fingerprint found on the sneaker.

Subsequently, Elias Langley requested further examination of dust composition on the sneaker sole, comparing it with all shoe prints found in Chase Miller's rental apartment.

The results showed that apart from the complete shoe print found beside the bloodstain after Chase Miller's death, which came from these sneakers, there were no matching prints detected elsewhere.

This suggests that someone had entered the house with these sneakers, deliberately left the shoe print in blood to frame Juliana, thus increasing suspicion towards framing her while significantly reducing her own suspicion of the crime.

Upon receiving the news, Isaac Grant was scolded harshly, his backer called him a fool for his misplaced priorities and declared he would no longer be involved in this matter.

Although Stella's fingerprint comparison wasn't done yet, a week later, Juliana was officially cleared of suspicion and gained freedom.

During her hospital stay, her stomach had also recovered considerably.

On the day of her discharge, Summer Shaw specially prepared a bottle of "Lucky Water" and sprayed it around Juliana in several circles.

Juliana rubbed her nose and couldn't help but ask, "What is this? The smell is a bit unusual."

Summer Shaw replied with a smile, "It's water infused with grapefruit leaves, willow branches, and peach blossom petals to help dispel bad luck and turn your fortunes to romance!"

Juliana laughed and said, "Getting rid of bad luck is fine. The romantic luck can be left for you, since you're the one who's still single."

Summer Shaw immediately put on a serious expression, "If there wasn't a cooling-off period, you would have been..."

Before she could finish saying the words "single dog," her eyes spotted Evan Grant standing beside the Maybach, and her words came to an abrupt halt.

Following her gaze, Juliana turned around, the smile fading from her face.

"I'll wait for you in the parking lot."

Summer Shaw whispered after finishing, and quickly slipped away.

Evan Grant looked at the woman, who had finally gained some weight, but now seemed thinner again, and couldn't help but feel a bit heartbroken.

He just stepped forward and before he could speak, Juliana retreated a step and spoke in a cold voice.

"I now feel that even hitting you would soil my hands."

The words pierced into Evan Grant's heart like a knife.

After a few breaths, he finally said, "I'm sorry I wasn't there for you when you needed me."

Juliana shook her head, "It's not about whether you're there or not. You have the right to choose who you love, to pamper anyone you want, but it has nothing to do with me. However, you can't lend her convenience to harm me."

A bitterness spread in Evan Grant's heart.

"I didn't indulge Stella, nor did I... I didn't..."

Seeing his hesitating form, a sneer appeared on Juliana's face.

"Didn't what? Didn't secretly keep her while hiding it from me? Or didn't constantly put her priorities ahead of mine?"

"I..."

It felt as though something was gripping Evan Grant's throat, leaving the words stuck painfully in his chest.

Seeing his speechless condition, the sarcasm on Juliana's face deepened.

"Evan Grant, if you hadn't used me as a shield for your matters, I wouldn't have been dragged into all this. Now, I don't love you anymore, yet they still won't leave me alone. I survived purely by luck. If you have any conscience left, you should stay away from me."

Pain, layer upon layer, like waves, washed over Evan Grant's chest, each one deeper than the last.

This was the pain of being slowly tortured by the person you love.

A pain she once had to endure.

Turns out it hurt so much it was hard to breathe.

Yet, Juliana's gaze at him lacked any warmth, as if his pain had nothing to do with her.

She turned to leave, brushing past him with only a faint message, "Remember to get our divorce certificate from the civil affairs bureau in a few days."

Nearing the parking lot, Juliana spotted that black car amidst the dense array of vehicles at a glance.

Although she couldn't see inside the car, it felt as if a calm and familiar gaze landed on her.

She paused, intending to turn and walk over when two cars suddenly stopped in front of her.

Jared Langley and Adrian Langley got out almost simultaneously.

They had come directly from the company after finishing a meeting.

Adrian Langley, eager to beat Jared, didn't even realize his suit was on backward.

Holding a big bouquet of sunflowers, he hurried to Juliana, speaking excitedly, "Just made it! Here, wishing you never have to come back to such a place and always live towards the sun."

Before Juliana could take the flowers, Jared placed a hand on Adrian's shoulder, pulling him aside.

Then, standing before her, he leisurely pulled a thin red envelope from his suit's inner pocket, speaking calmly, "Giving flowers is outdated, nowadays it's all about practicality when it comes to gifts."

The envelope was thin, but it contained a check.

Adrian protested, "You're the outdated one! It's called a sense of ritual, do you understand? Someone who's all about throwing money around, like you, is actually the 'poorest' kind of person."

He added, "Spiritually poor."

Jared frowned slightly, "It's hard to explain anything to someone who wears their suit backward."

Just realizing his clothing mistake, Adrian was about to retort, but Summer Shaw stormed in and quickly grabbed Juliana.

"There's an urgent matter at the company! Hurry, come with me!"

Before the brothers could react, Juliana was already pulled into the car.

Discontent, Jared looked at Adrian, "You're not even being urged to marry soon, why are you always competing with me?"

Adrian raised an eyebrow, "I'm just preventing another innocent woman from falling into a 'Jared-style marriage trap'."

Jared looked at him for two seconds before turning back with a deep glance into his own car.

From afar, Evan Grant saw the scene unfold, then returned to his car with a stern expression.

Ethan Carter whispered, "Recently, the police have been everywhere trying to contact Stella to compare her fingerprints at the police station. I've already arranged for her to stay at Dreamfall Manor."

"Drive," Evan Grant's voice was cold.

Meanwhile, in the black car, Quinn Shepherd glanced at the rear-view mirror and intentionally complained, "Nowadays, even the competition for cutting in line is so intense among young people. My nephews were rushing over with shovels even before I left the field."

Elias Langley didn't respond to him, instead pulling out his phone to send a message.

The moment Juliana was pulled into the car, her phone beeped.

It was a message from Elias Langley.

"Six o'clock, The Azure Pavilion, The Sovereign Hall."

Juliana put her phone away without responding.

Because Summer Shaw had already started babbling.

"I should have told you about Cryovault Titanium earlier, but these days only Adrian could see you. They have strong market resources, and the joint venture subsidiary has a large profit margin. Today, even Ms. Thorne from the Tahoe District is coming in person to finalize the agreement, and as the largest shareholder, you must be present."

Juliana was flipping through the other party's documents, "Have you thoroughly investigated this company?"

Summer Shaw paused, "I had overseas friends check it, no irregular transactions were found, their background is very clean, and they're quite strong."

Juliana tapped her nails, "Aetherflame hasn't made its move yet, and there are many companies better than us domestically. Why did she specifically choose us?"

Summer Shaw fell silent at her words.

To ease the tension, Juliana quickly added, "I don't mean to veto our collaboration, just that we should investigate thoroughly before signing any agreements."

Summer Shaw nodded, "That's what I was also thinking, let's discuss it with her today."

Ms. Thorne from Cryovault Titanium was professional and efficient, facilitating smooth communication between the parties.

Her detailed analysis dispelled Juliana's concerns, and the collaboration details were swiftly agreed upon.

After seeing her off, Juliana checked the time, it was already half-past six.

Surprisingly, Elias Langley hadn't called to urge her yet.

Juliana didn't have time to go home and change, hastily heading to The Azure Pavilion.

It was her first time meeting Elias Langley at an agreed time, yet she was an entire hour late.

Inside, Juliana was already in turmoil.

Elias Langley was sipping tea as the server, dressed like a palace maiden, lifted the beaded curtain for her.

Juliana didn't notice the 5-centimeter-high platform drop at her feet.

She tripped over it, exclaiming in shock as she fell forward.

In a moment of panic, she braced her hands against the tea table's edge.

However, the table was too light, causing it to shake violently.

Elias Langley held the table down with one hand, stabilizing both her and the table.

"I'm sorry."

Raising her head, Juliana found herself ensnared in the deep gaze of the man right in front of her, as if containing a thousand unspoken words...

Chapter 157: First Official Date

Juliana instinctively looked at him, only to realize that he was dressed very formally today.

Meanwhile, she was dressed casually, perhaps even carrying a hint of The Shaw Corporation's special Lucky Water scent.

She suddenly felt a bit embarrassed and casually picked up a cup of tea.

"Sorry, let me drink this first out of respect. I'll go back and get ready before coming again."

She finished speaking and turned to leave.

Elias quickly called out to her, "Juliana!"

Juliana paused and turned back.

"Running around like this, aren't you worried about low blood sugar?" he asked, speaking as usual.

She did feel a bit dizzy at the moment.

Elias said, "It's just a meal, why are you so nervous?"

Juliana clutched her chest and took a deep breath.

It would have been better if he hadn't dressed so formally.

Now she felt like a married woman on a blind date; how could she not be nervous?

Elias, appearing composed, was about to gesture for her to go to the dining table when his elbow bumped into the teapot.

The teapot clattered, and both of them reached out in a hurry to steady it.

Juliana was a fraction slow and ended up placing her hand on the back of Elias's hand.

She wanted to withdraw as if she'd been shocked, but Elias flipped his hand over and held hers down.

Juliana's heart skipped a beat; she didn't dare to breathe or look up at him.

Sure enough, she still felt more at ease when she could punch and kick him.

Elias looked at her profile so close and his voice naturally turned low and hoarse, "The tea you just drank... I already drank from that cup."

Juliana was too shocked to respond, her ears quickly turning a faint red.

She instinctively wanted to pull her hand away from the teapot, but Elias held it firmly.

Juliana could clearly feel the warmth of his palm and an imperceptible caress.

Her heart was pounding like a drum, and she forgot the rhythm of her breathing, just staring at him dazedly.

"Drinking my tea, isn't that an agreement?" Elias asked.

"A... A... Agreement to what?" Juliana squeezed out after a long moment.

"I'm not some young guy in my twenties, I don't want to beat around the bush. I came to Kenton because of you. This meal isn't just a dinner between friends, and you should know the purpose behind inviting you here."

Juliana swallowed and looked at him. His eyes held no mockery, just sincerity and a seriousness that left her with nowhere to hide.

Her nervous heart calmed a little.

"You're very excellent, it's easy for people to like you. But why me?"

Elias smiled at her question, "Isn't it because you keep appearing in my life on your own?"

Juliana was stunned by his words.

"Even on your wedding anniversary, I had to personally take you there. Do you dare say all of this isn't fate guiding me toward you?"

Juliana's heart was in turmoil; she opened her mouth but didn't know how to refute him.

Elias suddenly leaned forward, closing the distance between them, his breath enveloping her.

Juliana thought he was going to kiss her and her heart surged in confusion, debating whether to push him away or let it happen. Then she heard him speak with clear intent, "If you're not hungry and don't want to eat, let's change venues and chat."

Juliana, "..."

Suddenly, she felt as if he'd played her.

Elias's face wore a faint smile as he released her hand.

Juliana calmed down, realizing just how passive she had been.

Despite having experienced relationships before, how had she let him handle her so easily?

"Elias!" she called out to the man walking towards the dining table.

The man turned his head, his deep gaze warm and kind.

"You're still wearing a wedding ring," she said.

Elias looked down at it and nodded.

"This isn't a wedding ring in the conventional sense. I don't have any unethical intentions toward you, but I will handle it."

Juliana didn't understand what he meant.

Not a conventional wedding ring?

Could it be he's in a non-traditional marriage?

A few minutes later, a server wearing a golden brocade robe brought the food.

Each dish was like a delicate work of art, every bite worth its weight in gold.

Elias nonchalantly categorized the lavish feast as a "high-end low-calorie meal," so she could eat more freely.

The final dessert was a "steamed sugar custard."

He even managed to explain it, "Natural sugars, fast metabolism, doesn't affect blood sugar."

Juliana couldn't help but smile, "Why doesn't President Langley go raise pigs with your art of persuasion? With your skill, pigs would easily grow to five hundred pounds."

Elias smiled softly, "Your suggestion is taken. Though I've never raised pigs, I can start with you and gain some experience."

Juliana's heart fluttered for a moment, but she quickly regained her composure.

After taking a few bites of the "steamed sugar custard," she gently pushed the white porcelain bowl away.

"Not to your taste?" Elias, observing her every subtle move, immediately asked.

Juliana wiped her mouth, "It tastes good, but I can make it better."

Elias lightly raised his lips, "I wonder if I could have the chance to taste the Director Jacobs-made version that surpasses 'The Azure Pavilion'?"

She understood the implication in his words.

But she fell silent.

Neither of them were single, and perhaps meeting tonight was overly impulsive, but the long-lost stirrings in her heart were tangible.

Elias was great, but who could predict the future?

At first, Evan also treated her well, if not for a single photo...

As the car arrived at the entrance of her apartment complex, Juliana returned to her senses.

"Thank you for dinner, and thank you for bringing me home. G... goodbye."

She unclasped her seatbelt and her fingertips had just touched the car door when he gently caught her wrist.

"Your hair..."

Elias leaned closer and removed a white fiber that had somehow gotten caught in her hair.

The proximity between them closed in an instant, his breath brushed her face, and Juliana's mind was in chaos.

And Elias seemed to be guided by some invisible force, slowly and tentatively drawing closer.

Juliana's heartbeat went off-kilter, and just as his lips were about to touch hers, she quickly turned her head.

Elias's kiss fell on an empty spot.

"I'm sorry," she said, catching her breath from nerves, "I can't accept it until the divorce is through."

How could Elias not understand her retreat, "I'll give you time to consider, okay?"

Juliana nodded and hurriedly got out of the car.

It's not her first time in love, yet in front of a man like Elias, she was as flustered as if she'd never loved.

How disappointing!

Juliana walked away, covering her face.

...

Meanwhile, at Dreamfall Manor.

Evan's alternate residence.

Stella sat awkwardly in the living room. As soon as she saw him return, she got up quickly.

Yet she always lacked confidence, hesitant to speak.

Mrs. Young greeted him, "President Grant, dinner is ready."

Evan handed his coat to her and nodded, "Let's start dinner."

After saying this, he gave Stella only a brief glance before turning towards the dining room.

"Brother..." Stella said excitedly, causing Evan to pause.

"That pair of shoes was taken by Isaac forcing me to sneak into Platinum Bay for. He said if I didn't do it, he'd marry me off to the old man. I was desperate, so I did something bad for him."

"Isaac?" Evan's gaze shifted slightly, "Since when did you become so close with him?"

Stella quickly explained, "No, he's been trying to get close to me, threatening me."

"How did he threaten you?"

Stella's face filled with hatred, "He wanted me to break up with Ryan, but brother, you need him, so I have to keep Ryan."

Evan laughed, "You're certainly loyal to me."

Stella instantly began to cry, "But now the police are looking for me to take a fingerprint test. I don't know what to do."

The fact is, the plan failed, and she is at significant risk of exposure; Isaac plans to send her to neighboring Valtara.

In that place, people who go are treated like livestock.

If it weren't for George stopping him, she wouldn't even have had the chance to flee.

If Ethan hadn't brought her here today, she would have had nowhere to go.

Evan raised an eyebrow and asked, "Did you kill Chase?"

Chapter 158: Personally Cutting Off Her Suitors Before Getting the Divorce Certificate (Part 1)

Stella hastily denied, "It wasn't me, it was Isaac Grant who had someone do it. This isn't the first time he's done such a thing."

Evan Grant's face showed no emotion, but his voice had softened significantly, "Let's eat first."

Mrs. Young brought over a bottle of red wine, "President Grant, shall I open it?"

Evan Grant nodded.

Mrs. Young brought two glasses and poured wine for them both.

Stella was just a bit surprised when she heard Evan Grant say, "Isaac Grant left your fingerprints there as his backup plan, fearing that Juliana Jacobs could clear her name and shift the blame onto you. Do you see now that you've been tricked?"

He hadn't mentioned it, and Stella hadn't thought about it in that way.

As soon as he mentioned it, it instantly made sense.

Evan Grant continued, "I promised my father to take care of you, and I won't go back on my word. Stay here for now, and I'll think of how to help you through this."

She felt extremely touched, just as she was about to speak, Evan Grant picked up the wine glass.

"Take a sip and relax, and then we'll talk."

It was unclear whether it was the wine, or Evan Grant's gentle smile that had too much of an impact on her.

Stella felt a bit dizzy and heat flared up throughout her body, and gradually she lost consciousness.

Evan Grant put down his wine glass, an untouched chill in his eyes.

Mrs. Young led in a man whose face was bloodless and asked, "Do you remember what you've been told?"

The man nodded, "You've paid enough, I'll ensure your satisfaction."

Saying this, he picked Stella up and carried her away.

"President Grant." Mrs. Young bowed her head slightly.

Evan Grant swirled the wine glass, "You should leave too, go abroad, stay away from all this to avoid trouble."

Tears welled up in Mrs. Young's eyes as she nodded, "President Grant, if you still love Miss Jacobs, please let her go."

The night was hazy, and Evan Grant fell into silence.

The next day, Stella awoke in the bedroom.

Naked, covered in marks, and with pain in certain areas, even with no memory, her body's sensations made her fully aware of what had transpired.

At that moment, Evan Grant emerged from the bathroom in a bathrobe.

Stella hurriedly covered herself.

Evan Grant's eyes darkened slightly, "Why cover up? All's been seen, get dressed and come out."

Did they sleep together last night?

Stella could hardly believe it.

She dressed neatly and walked out of the room; Evan Grant was already dressed in a suit, sitting on the balcony drinking coffee.

"I'm sorry, brother, I don't know what happened last night."

Evan Grant didn't look at her, "I don't mind being with you."

Stella looked at him in surprise.

"But there's nothing I can give you right now," Evan Grant said.

Stella quickly squatted down beside him, "As long as I can be with you, I don't care about anything else."

Evan Grant smiled slightly and stood up.

"Isaac Grant won't spare me. He's found backing now; I can't outmatch him. Enjoy happiness while you can. My promise to my father, I'll keep fulfilling it as long as I can."

With that said, he turned and walked away.

Stella clenched her fingers tightly.

Does this mean she's truly gotten what she wanted?

No, this isn't real.

Just then, her phone rang.

Only Isaac Grant and George Grant knew this number.

She answered, and Isaac Grant's voice came through, "Where have you gone?"

Stella's voice was no longer humble, "Somewhere safe, where the police can't find me for now."

"Don't be so sensitive. I'm just concerned about you."

Stella laughed, "You embezzled money from the group for contributions, yet you still couldn't achieve what you wanted. I'm more afraid of being free than you, so don't worry about me; you should think about what to do yourself."

After saying that, she hung up the phone.

It's not hard to find out who Isaac Grant's backing is for Evan Grant, but she's not sure if this man is sincere towards her, so she needs to test him more.

But below hurts too much; brother is so rough. She needs to rest for a few days.

On the other end, it was the first time Isaac Grant was defied by her, so angry he almost smashed the phone.

George Grant advised, "I think she's right. Ryan Warner is still asking you to invest money to expand the lab; you need to respond to him today."

...

When Juliana Jacobs arrived at Aetherflame's office, she was stunned by the room filled with roses.

Summer stood waiting at the desk.

"So many flowers, they're almost pushing you out. How do we handle this?"

Juliana instinctively asked, "Are they from Elias Langley?"

Summer took a card from a bouquet and handed it to her, "My Lucky Water worked. You managed to woo both uncle and nephew."

So these flowers were... from Jared Langley!

Juliana put down the card and took a deep breath.

Summer reminded her, "No matter how many boyfriends you have, I'll support you. But this, don't let Evan Grant find out, or if he's provoked and doesn't divorce you..."

At this, Juliana frowned and looked at her.

Summer paused, slapped her own mouth, "He'll divorce, he'll divorce, he definitely will. Um... about you and Elias Langley, are you just keeping him on a string?"

Juliana stood by the window, took a deep breath, suppressing the sadness in her heart, and said, "Summer, you know I've been afraid of relationships since Evan Grant. I thought all night... Elias Langley is too good, and his wife must be no less. I have no parents, and I'm ordinary. Why would he give up another woman for me..."

"Stop talking..." Summer approached and gently hugged her, "I understand, I really do. I only wanted to match you two so that there would be someone sincere to help you when you needed. If Elias Langley isn't suitable, then forget it, I just want you happy, not sad."

Along the way, it's good to have a close friend who understands her.

...

Juliana called Jared Langley, intending to clear things up.

But Jared Langley didn't answer her calls or return her messages.

Yet the flowers were delivered unfailingly to her office every morning.

Unless she cleared them out before the end of the day, her office would be submerged in floral seas the next morning.

A few days later, Juliana got angry and complained to the florist.

Finally, a call from Jared Langley came.

"All those roses didn't soften you a bit?" he teased.

"What does not answering mean? Forced deliveries?" Juliana asked.

Jared Langley laughed, his voice carrying a hint of laziness, "No, I was on a business trip. Without being able to see you in person after taking your call, I preferred not to answer."

Juliana was speechless at his excuse, "Stop sending the flowers."

"Dinner at six, and there will be no more flowers," Jared Langley said.

Juliana didn't refuse, and after hanging up, Jared immediately instructed Ben Hayes to book a restaurant.

At five in the afternoon, he took a shower in the lounge, changed his outfit, and was spiritedly getting ready to head out.

As he opened the door, Victor Langley and his wife happened to reach the doorway.

When a person harbors romantic feelings, their aura changes.

This was something Leona Sheridan was particularly sensitive to.

"Son, where are you off to?" she asked with a smile, scrutinizing him.

Jared Langley just smiled and replied with two words, "Social function."

Leona Sheridan looked somewhat surprised at her husband, "I just asked Ben Hayes— you don't have any official engagements tonight, so I invited Miss Caldwell over for dinner. If your meeting is with friends, cancel it."

Jared Langley frowned, "Mom, how could that be? Socializing with friends is also a part of networking."

Leona Sheridan squeezed her husband's arm, and Victor Langley spoke firmly, "Your uncle will also come; no one can be absent tonight."

With that, they walked away.

Jared Langley stood alone at the office door, feeling stifled with nowhere to vent.

...

The Valeron Restaurant.

Juliana Jacobs had just arrived at the entrance when she received a message from Jared Langley.

He had something urgent and couldn't make it.

A mixture of being toyed with and disappointment silently crept over her heart.

She prepared to call him, but as she turned around, she suddenly saw Stella also approaching the restaurant.

And Stella clearly noticed her too, her lips curling into a provocative smile as she approached.

Chapter 159: Cutting Off Her Suitors with My Own Hands Before Getting the Divorce Certificate (Part 2)

"Oh, it's my sister-in-law, what a coincidence."

But after she said that, she covered her mouth.

"No, I should change what I call you. I'll call you sister because I'm already with your brother."

After speaking, she laughed with a victorious demeanor.

Juliana frowned.

Stella saw her expression and thought she was angered.

So she became even more smug and said, "Brother is so vigorous, he almost broke me apart. It took me a few days of rest at home to recover. Was he like this when he was with you, sister?"

Juliana couldn't hold back and retched.

Then she looked at Stella with disgust in her eyes.

"Can't you live a day without disgusting people? Do me a favor and find a reflective surface, open your eyes wide and look at yourself. Your face is the living definition of 'disgusting.' I'm allergic to trash, so stay away from me."

Stella was infuriated by her words.

"Sister, I know you're jealous of me, but there's nothing you can do about it. Brother said you don't even know how to moan in bed, like a dead fish. He said only with me does he feel like a real man. A rigid woman like you being discarded by the Grant Family is the best luck you'll ever have in this life."

Juliana hadn't eaten and was slightly hypoglycemic, not wanting to waste time bickering here with her.

So she took out her phone.

Stella raised an eyebrow, "Are you going to call my brother to scold me?"

However, Juliana dialed the police.

"What are you doing?" Stella shouted without caring about her image.

Juliana lightly said, "You strut down the street as someone the police are watching, and if I don't report you, where is the justice in this world?"

As she finished speaking, the call connected.

Stella rushed up desperately to grab her phone.

They began to grapple with each other.

"What are you doing, stop immediately!"

Evan stepped forward with long strides.

A glint flashed in Stella's eyes: this was the time to test him.

She grabbed Juliana's hand, making it look like she was being strangled.

Then she cried out, "Brother, sister-in-law is trying to report my location to the police and wants to strangle me."

Evan didn't have time to ask more questions and immediately reached out to stop Juliana from calling.

But not controlling his strength, Juliana lost her balance when he pushed her, stumbling a few steps before falling heavily to the ground.

A sharp pain shot through her elbow and knee, and with hypoglycemic weakness in her legs, Juliana gazed at Evan with hatred.

Evan seemed to have not expected this, holding the phone he took from her, stunned.

Time seemed to freeze for a moment.

Stella rushed into his arms, "Brother, sister-in-law is so fierce, I'm so scared."

"Juliana!"

Elias's deep, angry voice came from afar, getting closer.

He pushed through the onlookers at the restaurant entrance and quickly walked to Juliana's side, squatting down to carefully check on her.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

Juliana pursed her lips.

Before she could speak, Elias simply picked her up and looked at Evan, his tone calm yet carrying a terrifying pressure, "Return her phone!"

Evan watched as the woman he liked was now held by another man.

And she was comfortably wrapping her arms around the other man's neck.

His heart felt as if it was being fiercely squeezed, pain and jealousy intertwining, nearly consuming him.

Yet, he couldn't show it in front of Stella.

He unobtrusively pushed Stella away, stepped forward, and handed the phone back to Juliana.

"You can't harm her," he said.

Juliana raised her hand and slapped him, retrieving her phone.

"Brother..." Stella rushed up again, hugging him with concern.

"This is the last time, if I see you bullying her again, I don't care what your last name is."

Elias warned Evan, suppressing the smile at the corner of his lips, and carried Juliana away.

Watching their car leave, Stella's heart ached even more.

"How can sister-in-law hug other men and even hit you?"

Evan hid the piercing pain in his eyes and calmly removed her hand that was trying to touch his cheek.

"Let's go, your location is exposed, the police will be here soon, we can't eat here."

Seeing Evan's powerless demeanor, Stella became excited.

For her, he had personally pushed Juliana away, which was enough to prove that she had carved a place in his heart.

"Brother," she grabbed his hand urgently, "I don't want to see you so passive. I'll find out who is supporting Isaac Grant behind the scenes for you."

Evan silently tightened his grip on her hand, deepening the bond of "shared hardships" between them.

But beneath his lowered lashes, deep in his pupils, there was only cold calculation and indifferent calm.

The prey was finally in the cage, but his Juliana...

Elias took out a first aid kit he kept in the car and used iodine to disinfect Juliana's scraped hand.

The cotton swab brushed lightly, and she didn't make a sound.

If it were a girl from the Sinclair Family, she would be pouting and complaining already.

"Don't hold it in, if it hurts, tell me."

Juliana withdrew her treated hand, "I'm not that delicate; a fall is no big deal."

Elias put away the kit, understanding in his heart: she was too independent, or perhaps they weren't close enough yet for her to show her vulnerability.

"You're not really here to eat, are you?" Juliana didn't quite believe in such coincidences.

And indeed, it wasn't true.

He'd heard Jared mention it last night, so he made an excuse to come by specially.

But Elias wouldn't tell her that.

"So you're delaying my dinner, aren't you going to make it up to me?"

Juliana tilted her head and thought for a while, "What I can afford is worlds apart from The Azure Pavilion. Even if I treat you, would you dare eat it?"

Elias's gaze deepened and his lips curved slightly, "You just pay."

Before long, they arrived at an old alley.

The car couldn't go through, so Juliana got out, and Elias followed closely behind.

Elias surveyed the area, seeing wall murals deliberately done up, and the garbage bins lined up neatly.

Even though the entire alley had been tidied up, it still exuded a faint, old fishy odor.

The place Juliana wanted to treat him was indeed a small, unassuming eatery hidden in this alley.

The restaurant had been around for years but was kept clean and tidy.

Juliana was familiar with the owner.

The owner looked at Elias, smiling as he asked her, "The same as usual for him?"

Juliana nodded.

In no time, the owner brought two plates of fish-flavored shredded pork fried rice and asked with a smile, "Haven't seen you in a while, what have you been busy with?"

Juliana picked up a spoon and sipped her seaweed soup, "Developed a liking for steak, busy taking care of the fine dining scene."

The owner wasn't offended and found it even more amusing.

He turned to Elias, noticing from his attire that he wasn't an ordinary person.

"Are you her boyfriend?"

Elias was momentarily taken aback.

Juliana put down her spoon, but the owner pretended not to notice, continuing to speak to him, "You're not a very attentive boyfriend, look, she's lost weight."

Juliana wanted to deny it, but Elias nodded and said, "Understood, I'll take note of it."

The owner didn't disturb them anymore and cheerfully attended to the other customers.

"Is it to your taste?" Juliana asked.

Elias nodded, "Initially, I thought you brought me here deliberately to show the difference between us. But after a few bites, I realized, you're simply sharing good taste with me."

He deliberately brought up her intention and gently dismissed it, as if telling Juliana: I understand your test, but I don't mind the difference in status between us.

"But the first time I thought the food here was good was over there."

She raised her hand, pointing to the garbage bins not far away.

Chapter 160: Personally Cutting Off Her Suitors Before Getting the Divorce Certificate (Part 3)

Elias Langley glanced in that direction for two seconds, then smiled lightly, "I've eaten raw meat in the jungle, unwashed. Can that compare with you?"

Juliana Jacobs was stunned by his words.

Elias's smile broadened, "With fried rice this fragrant, why are we competing over who's more 'wild'?"

This meal didn't have The Azure Pavilion's servers in golden brocade robes serving dishes, nor gold-rimmed stable bowl plates.

Yet, he even finished off the pickles sent by the owner.

Juliana should have felt upset, but after the meal, her mind actually calmed down.

Afterward, Elias drove her to the entrance of her residential area, but she didn't immediately get out of the car.

"What, reluctant to leave me?" he asked half-jokingly.

Juliana felt a bit embarrassed, "Can you take me back to The Valeron Restaurant? My car is still parked there."

She shook the car keys in her hand.

Instead, Elias took the keys away.

"I'll pick you up tomorrow morning."

"But..." Juliana hesitated, "I haven't thought it through yet."

Elias smiled gently, "Can't we even be friends?"

His demeanor was composed, without any oppressive sense of entitlement brought on by his status.

Juliana looked at him, her heart slightly stirred.

From the first time they met, he had always given her space to choose, and it was still the same now.

Being in a high position yet maintaining this respect was hard not to be moved by for any woman.

"Then... see you tomorrow."

She lowered her head and got out of the car, and Elias grabbed her hand.

Gently, but with enough force to make Juliana stop.

The man cast a sincere gaze at her, "I promise I'll handle my matters, and what about yours?"

Is it about divorcing Evan Grant?

For a moment, Juliana felt a bit confused, "It should be soon."

After saying that, she pulled her hand away and quickly walked into the residential area.

It wasn't until her figure disappeared behind the porch that Elias started the car and slowly drove away.

Not far away, a Maybach sat silently under the shadow of the plane tree.

Evan sat inside the car, a cigarette between his fingers with a long ash trailing off.

He watched the scene just now through the car window.

The hint of shyness on Juliana's face stung his eyes.

The reflection in the car window showed his taut jawline, and the air inside was filled with a cold silence...

The next day, afraid that Elias would arrive too early, Juliana got up half an hour earlier than usual, prepared herself, and waited for his call.

Just then, the doorbell at home rang.

She picked up her bag and opened the door, only to find Evan standing there.

Juliana's smile froze.

"What, seeing me makes you lose your smile?"

Instinctively, Juliana wanted to close the door, but he reached out to stop it, squeezing himself inside, pushing closer to her.

Juliana retreated repeatedly until she bumped into the sofa, about to fall over.

In a swift move, Evan was in front of her, pulling her into his embrace.

However, his ultimate intention wasn't to stabilize her, but to hold her waist tight and tumble into the sofa with her.

Panicking, Juliana struggled, but he held her shoulder with one hand and suddenly lifted her pant leg with the other.

"No, let me go!"

Juliana was so frightened that she kicked and punched him without hesitation.

Evan momentarily lost focus and took a punch to the face.

But he wasn't angry. Instead, he pinned her hands down and said in a low voice, "Stay still, let me see where you fell yesterday?"

Juliana's eyelashes grew moist, gritting her teeth, she said, "So early, not staying in bed with your sister, coming here playing the nice guy? You're filthy, let go of me!"

Evan laughed at her last words, "Jealous?"

There's no communicating with someone mentally sick.

Juliana turned her face away, refusing to look at him.

Evan forcibly turned her face back, making her look at him.

"Do you like Elias Langley?" His eyes were gentle, but his voice was very cold.

Juliana couldn't shake off his hand, through clenched teeth she spat out four words, "None of your business!"

Evan's voice got even colder, "From what I know, he's married."

Juliana retorted angrily, "Then great! Being with him, no one bears any burden!"

"Juliana!"

His grip on her cheeks tightened, eyes filled with suppressed pain.

"You clearly know everything, why can't you give me a bit more time? How can he possibly know you better, care for you more than I do?"

"What do I know?" Juliana forcefully argued, "All I know is the pain you've caused me time and again for others. Evan, I was blind to ever like you. Now I hate you, wish you'd disappear this instant!"

Evan suddenly stopped.

So she hated him like this, yet hate is the flipside of love!

After a moment, the anger in his eyes faded, he let go, even gently helping her sit properly.

"You still like me, don't you?"

Juliana shrunk on the sofa, looking away, refusing to answer him.

But Evan laughed, "My Juliana wouldn't do anything foolish. You hate every time I chose someone else and hurt you, so you're using Elias Langley to provoke me. Once I sort everything out, you'll come back to me, right?"

At this point, the doorbell rang again.

This time, it must be Elias Langley.

Since her phone was on vibrate, he'd called multiple times, but she didn't answer, so he must have come himself.

Juliana immediately stood to open the door, but Evan pulled her back.

"Think carefully about what you really want, before deciding whether to answer the door!"

Juliana was caught off guard by his words.

So is he here today to handle divorce proceedings?

Outside, Elias waited for ten seconds, hearing no sound from within.

He was about to call someone to handle the situation when the door suddenly opened a crack.

"Mr. Langley," Evan's clothes were disheveled, eyes full of mockery, "this early, my wife is still asleep, do you need something from her?"

Elias hid the surprise in his eyes, looking calmly at him, "What have you done to her?"

Evan laughed, "She's my wife, I couldn't possibly harm her. Isn't it inappropriate for you, a married man, to care so much about another man's wife?"

Elias remained unfazed, eyes steady, "Let her come out and speak."

The two men, separated by a crack in the door, locked eyes, the atmosphere suddenly tense.

Evan chuckled.

The door slowly opened wider, and he stepped aside, allowing a glimpse of Juliana. Her

Her hair was slightly disheveled, clothes... very wrinkled.

These traces of struggle could mean something else to Elias.

But Juliana had no way of explaining it to him now.

"Mr. Langley, you should leave... my husband is here, my matters... are none of your concern."

Elias pressed down all the turmoil in his eyes.

"Are you really okay?" he still wasn't reassured.

"I'm fine." Juliana said, surprisingly calm.

"Sorry to disturb."

No questioning, no lingering.

He turned and headed to the elevator, his retreating figure composed and crisp.

After closing the door, Juliana restrained her emotions and asked Evan, "Are you satisfied?"

Evan brushed against her face, "Of course."

Someone as proud as Elias, having been humiliated like that, would never turn back.

Even if there was some attraction between him and Juliana, it should now be thoroughly crushed, scattered to nothingness.

What Evan wanted was to personally break off any potential romances for her, leaving only himself.

Yet, Juliana pushed him away, her restraint evident as she said, "Can you leave now?"