

Panicking 171

Chapter 171: With You... I Really Have 'Put My Mouth' to Use

"Juliana!" Elias Langley had a serious look on his face, "I'm not joking with you, choosing you, I'm serious about it."

Juliana bit her lip, her delicate brows slightly arched.

"I'm serious too. If it weren't for me, he wouldn't have ended up like this, I'm bound by an emotional debt. Besides, doesn't President Langley have a 'nominal late wife' to keep order at home?"

She paused for a moment, then her smile widened.

"We're even, so let's not call each other's scripts melodramatic."

Elias Langley was momentarily speechless, almost losing his stern expression, "Are you deliberately trying to irritate me?"

"Oh, how dare I," she feigned obedience, but there was a gleam of mischief in her eyes, "I'm only acting with him to cure his illness, but with you... I've really 'used my mouth', I..."

Before she could finish, Elias Langley pinched her chin and sealed her lips.

What was meant to be a punitive kiss softened when it touched her tender lips.

After a while, he released her, pressing his forehead against hers, "You've got me."

Juliana's breath was a bit uneven, yet she was still smiling, "This is the equipment room, aren't you afraid someone might come in?"

"If they want to watch, let them," his arm wrapped around her waist, pulling her closer, "Acting is fine, but don't do with that brat what you've done with me, got it?"

He spoke with the tone of a proper suitor.

Juliana chuckled into his chest, "Never thought President Langley had a jealous streak."

"It's my first time being so reckless in liking a woman. If you dare start something without finishing it, I'll tie you to my side and make you act for me every day."

Despite his harsh words, Elias Langley's lips couldn't help but curl upwards.

Juliana left the equipment room first, and as luck would have it, she ran into Summer Shaw carrying flowers right as she stepped out.

Seeing her come out of the equipment room, Summer Shaw wore a puzzled expression, "Is Jared Langley hospitalized in the equipment room?"

As she pretended to want to go in, Juliana quickly pulled her away.

She led Summer Shaw toward the ward.

"Why are you going to see Jared Langley?"

Summer Shaw laughed, "The wider your social circle, the better business you can do."

"And you?" She took a couple of steps, her attention returning to Juliana, "Just got back and you're already at the hospital, why not go home and rest?"

Before Juliana could answer, the two of them had arrived at Jared Langley's ward door.

She pushed the door open, and Leona Sheridan immediately questioned, "Did you bring back Jared's medicine? Is there still IV medication today? Can Jared eat normally?"

Juliana was taken aback, having completely forgotten because of Elias's kiss.

"The doctor isn't in the office."

Leona Sheridan instantly flared up, pointing at her and scolding, "The doctor's not in, can't you actively go find them? You handle things so carelessly, how can you be fit to be the Langley Family's prospective daughter-in-law? You're taking it too easy as the fiancée. No wonder Evan Grant doesn't want you! I think we'd be better off letting Miss Caldwell in..."

"Mom, don't tear us apart!"

Jared Langley's face turned pale, his breathing rapid, Leona Sheridan hurriedly changed her tune, "Mom won't say it again! As long as you like it! No breakup, no breakup."

Jared Langley calmed down.

Leona Sheridan looked at Juliana again, her voice was no longer as sharp as before, but she still wore the demeanor of a critical mother-in-law.

"Since you're his fiancée, act like one. From now on, you wash the clothes he changes out of, stay overnight with him, and tomorrow's breakfast..."

By this point, Summer Shaw had almost figured out the situation.

Unable to hold back, she interrupted Leona Sheridan.

"Mrs. Langley, Juliana is the technical director at our company, and her projects are at a critical phase. If you want her to stay here all day, who will handle the work?"

Leona Sheridan responded, "The Langley Family won't shortchange her."

Summer Shaw laughed, "She can earn billions from a single project for us, how much can Mrs. Langley offer at one time?"

Leona Sheridan was taken aback by her words and, eyeing the flowers in Summer's hand, her expression suddenly turned disdainful.

Ever since Jared Langley was hospitalized, never-ending streams of visitors came to "see him," ostensibly out of concern but really just trying to assert their presence before the Langley Family.

After all, with the downfall of the Grant Family, everyone now deferred to the Langley Family.

She immediately snorted, haughtily saying, "You're here to see our Jared, aren't you?"

"No," Summer Shaw's expression was serious without a hint of jest, "This carnation is for my mother. If it were for President Langley, I'd get white chrysanthemums."

Leona Sheridan was furious, "You..."

Summer Shaw raised an eyebrow, cutting off her fury, "My dear Juliana is bound by sentiment, that's why she's temporarily constrained by you. But if you dare to let your son bully her, I won't mind giving your son a few more shocks."

To protect the patient's feelings, she lowered her voice on the last sentence.

Leona Sheridan was suddenly at a loss for words.

Juliana hid a smile, saying, "Mrs. Langley, I have affairs to attend to today, so I'll only be staying to help this much for now."

Saying this, she started to push Summer Shaw toward the exit.

"Juliana..." Jared Langley was reluctant.

Juliana turned back, perfunctorily saying, "Be good, actively cooperate with the doctor's treatment and recovery, and I'll see you again tomorrow."

As her words fell, she and Summer Shaw had already stepped out of the ward.

Jared Langley looked utterly forlorn, "Mom, could you stop being harsh to Juliana?"

Leona Sheridan, "..."

On the other side, after Elias Langley left the hospital and got into the car, he rubbed his brow.

Quinn Shepherd glanced at the boss's somber face through the rearview mirror, softly asking, "Do you really want Miss Jacobs to stay by the eldest son's side as the 'fiancée'?"

Elias Langley's gaze turned out the window, as the hospital building gradually retreated in his view.

He slowly spoke, his voice revealing little emotion, yet carrying an undertone of clarity.

"She may seem carefree and resolute, but deep down, she's more emotionally bound than anyone else. Otherwise, she wouldn't have taken Old Man Linton's dying request to heart, always considering Adrian Langley. Jared Langley almost lost his life for her; if this debt isn't settled now, she might carry it her whole life."

He paused, his fingers unconsciously tapping his knee.

"Her being with me isn't about moving from one shackle after Evan Grant to another. I want her to be with me in ease and happiness, without any burdens."

Quinn Shepherd nodded at his words, "Indeed, it's not suitable to publicize matters between you and Miss Jacobs right now, and having the eldest son as cover isn't bad. Old Mr. Sinclair just called, requesting you return to the capital to explain the misunderstanding about Dorian Lowell. His methods are always forceful, and if he learns of Miss Jacobs' existence, I fear..."

Even without the reminder, Elias Langley was aware, which is why he asked Juliana to wait for him for three years.

"Arrange the schedule. Bring Isabelle Sinclair to meet Juliana tonight," Elias Langley instructed, devoid of emotion.

Quinn Shepherd's breath hitched, with a hint of hesitation in his voice, "The third miss is so proud...will she agree?"

Chapter 172: Do You Choose Him, or Me?

Summer randomly gave the flowers she bought to a patient.

As she pulled Juliana by the hand to leave, she laughed, "Are you really going to juggle both uncle and nephew of the Langley Family?"

At this point, Juliana no longer had to pretend, her gaze somewhat helpless.

"Jared has saved me twice, I definitely have to repay this debt. Now I just need to cooperate with his treatment to help him get better. If I don't, my conscience will never be at peace."

Once it's done, I will have no regrets, and we'll be even.

Summer nodded in understanding, "But his mother isn't easy to deal with; be careful."

As they chatted, they had already reached the elevator.

Summer hesitated a bit, still asked, "Old Mrs. Grant is also hospitalized in this hospital, do you want to visit her?"

Juliana pressed her lips together, "No, I don't owe the Grant Family anything."

Summer approved of her decision.

"I heard that the Cortexa Group is about to file for bankruptcy. Evan's methods are impressive, managing to pull out perfectly before Isaac struck. Now, all the bad debts and losses are pinned on Isaac and his father. One is gone, the other is imprisoned. Those senior executives and shareholders who betrayed Evan are regretting it immensely now!"

As Summer spoke, she nudged Juliana's arm, "Do you think he can adapt to a life of ordinary people now that he has nothing?"

Juliana lowered her eyes, not responding to her.

Summer dropped Juliana off at her place and rushed off to a social event.

Having been away for three days, the food in the fridge was no longer edible.

Juliana was just picking up her phone to order takeout when the doorbell suddenly rang.

She frowned slightly.

Among the people she knew, only three could be directly let in by security.

Summer had just left, and it couldn't be her.

Juliana took a deep breath and walked to the door to open it.

Evan stood at the door, his shabby suit full of wrinkles, a blue stubble on his chin, his gaze maintaining a pride that was already shattered.

It felt like an eternity had passed in just three days.

Looking at him in this state, the rumors of the Grant Family's downfall seemed confirmed.

"Won't you invite me to sit inside?" Evan asked.

Juliana stood by the door, showing no intention to let him in.

"I promised not to make our divorce public, and you agreed we wouldn't contact each other anymore. You should honor your promise."

Evan wore a faint smile on his lips, "When we exchanged rings, I also promised to take care of you for a lifetime, shouldn't I honor that promise too?"

Juliana smiled lightly, but there was no warmth in her eyes.

"When your dear sister sent me a 'surprise' and your brother arranged 'special treatment' for me, I didn't see you keeping your promise. Talking about a lifetime now... I guess the Cortexa Group is really going bankrupt, because you even have time to dream."

Evan accepted her sarcasm, looking at her with still gentle eyes, "I've been worried about you ever since Angus abducted you."

Juliana looked away, "I can't afford to receive your concern, it's not necessary."

"Juliana, it's all in the past," Evan lowered his stance.

"What's in the past?" Juliana leaned against the door, "To you, the big picture comes first, the Grant Family second, responsibilities third, I never make the list. Next time another Stella, Isaac, or whatever comes along, I'll have to gamble with a lifetime of luck. Can't you just..."

Juliana hadn't finished speaking when Evan immediately reached out to grab the back of her head, pulling her out of the door.

She staggered a step, barely had time to break free, when she heard a calm voice from the direction of the elevator.

"The Grant Family has fallen off the wealth list, yet the heir still has the leisure to pester his ex-wife?"

Both looked over simultaneously, only to see Elias Langley walking over leisurely, a faint smile on his lips, but his gaze was cold.

Juliana seized the moment Evan was distracted, stomped on his foot, forcing him to let go.

She stood three meters away from him, glaring at him displeased.

Evan, however, kept his composure, smiling lightly at Elias Langley, "Three days ago, my men failed to do a proper job, so I had to trouble Mr. Langley to step in. Now that we've met, I'd like to thank you in person."

Elias Langley heard that this was intended for Juliana's ears.

He steadily walked up to Evan, his face showing no emotion, only responded faintly, "No need to be polite. I stepped in, not for you."

Evan tugged at the corners of his mouth, continued to speak calmly, "Since I hinted to Juliana that I had no choice, we haven't discussed a word, but have tacitly feigned a breakup to confuse those with ulterior motives until their efforts were in vain. You can also take some credit for this, Mr. Langley."

Elias Langley surely heard that he was boasting about how in sync he and Juliana were.

He didn't get angry, instead continued in a steady tone, speaking clearly, "Juliana is righteous, she only cooperated with you to complete this drama because she received favors from the Grant Family before. Don't mistake her gratitude for you as leftover feelings. If you..."

He naturally took Juliana's hand into his palm.

"...make us unsure of what to do with an obsessed person."

Evan finally found it hard to maintain his outward composure, his eyes locked tightly on their clasped hands, his chest slightly heaving.

Eventually, he snorted coldly, looking at Juliana, "Do you know him? Do you know how complex he is? You will never get a status being with him. Think carefully, do you choose him or me?"

Juliana, with almost no hesitation, leaned against Elias Langley's arm, her voice gentle yet firm, "I said I never take choices like a test. Standing beside him today is a decision I've already considered carefully."

Evan seemed hit with a thousand shocks, his body swaying slightly.

"If choosing me made you feel it was a mistake, then choosing him is the greatest mistake!"

After speaking, Evan pulled a cold "you'll regret it" smile, striding away.

In the empty doorway, only Juliana and Elias Langley were left.

Juliana raised her eyes to Elias Langley, before she even had a chance to ask why he suddenly came, he pulled her into his arms.

His warm kiss fell with gentle insistence, not allowing refusal.

Just when Juliana thought she might be kissed into hypoglycemia, Elias Langley restrained himself, let her go, and whispered, "I'll take you somewhere."

"But I haven't eaten yet, I'm starving."

Elias Langley gently tapped her forehead, "Deliberately leaving your stomach empty waiting for me to treat, but you can't starve like this, you're not being good to yourself."

After speaking, without letting her expend more energy, he picked her up and left.

After a while, they arrived at a private room in The Apex Hotel's restaurant.

Isabelle was arranged in advance to wait for them in the private room.

Seeing the two enter, she quickly stood up.

Juliana was taken aback at the sight of her.

"You, why did you bring me to see her?"

She turned to leave but was pulled to a seat by Elias Langley.

"Sit properly."

He pressed her into a chair, sat next to her, and then looked at Isabelle, speaking lightly, "Start."

Isabelle reluctantly said, "I'm sorry, Miss Jacobs, I'm not Elias's wife. At that time, I thought you were pursuing him, so I deliberately lied to you."

"This is Isabelle, my fiancée's sister," Elias Langley briefly introduced.

Juliana suddenly understood, Elias Langley brought her here for Isabelle to apologize to her.

Isabelle bit her lip, her fingers digging into her nails, evidently she'd never suffered such humiliation in her life.

Elias Langley gently raised a brow, "Hope this incident teaches you a lesson, you can leave now."

Isabelle ran off resentfully.

Elias Langley turned his face to Juliana, the previous sternness had completely vanished.

"Is it clear now?"

Juliana looked down without speaking.

Elias Langley sighed, "Take me off the blacklist, I don't want to be treated worse than Jared."

Juliana couldn't help it, she burst out laughing.

Isabelle stormed back to her room, extremely furious.

That woman... looked so much like the picture and also captured her brother-in-law's heart.

She rushed back to her room, slammed the door.

Took out her phone, found a number, and called.

"Help me investigate a woman, see if she provided a blood test sample at Hospital 547 over two months ago."

Chapter 173: Move Back In—Let's Live Together Again

After dinner, Juliana Jacobs was preparing to leave.

Elias Langley grabbed her hand, "Aren't you going to come up for a bit?"

Juliana smiled faintly, "You want me to see your little friend in a sheer nightgown again?"

Elias couldn't help but smile. He took her hand and walked out of the hotel.

He carefully fastened Juliana's seatbelt, suddenly thought of something, and turned his head to ask, "Is the apartment you're staying at yours?"

"No, Summer helped me rent it."

"You have some money, why not buy one?"

Elias leaned against the car door, his gaze falling on her face.

Juliana blinked, hesitating for two seconds before replying, "I'll think about it when I truly want a home."

Elias pressed his lips together, said no more, and turned to the driver's seat.

"I'm going back to Kingsford." He said.

Juliana looked at him, intending to ask why, but instead asked, "How long will you be gone?"

Elias smiled faintly, "If you don't miss me, it'll be a bit longer. If you do, it'll be shorter."

Juliana laughed, not responding to his words.

The next morning, she went to Aetherflame.

Summer Shaw showed her an agreement.

"This is the collaboration agreement we just signed with Cryovault Titanium, it's already notarized. In a few days, the teams from both sides will go to inspect the site and choose a factory location."

Owen Jacobs glanced through it, "You're better at handling collaborations than I am. If you think it's okay, then it is."

Summer Shaw put away the documents and reminded her, "Tomorrow night we're hosting a business dinner with Cryovault to formally announce the collaboration. Remember to report it to your President Langley and attend on time."

Juliana smiled as she stood up, "He's going back to Kingsford today, so I'll be completely free tomorrow night."

Summer Shaw laughed, "Oh, is he reporting to you now?"

Juliana smiled slyly, "You bet, before he left yesterday, he even contacted a cake shop and arranged for them to deliver desserts to me every evening so I don't go hungry when I'm busy with work."

Summer Shaw felt happy for her, "If he can think of such little things, then you have found the right person."

Juliana didn't respond and walked out of the office, the smile on her face subtly reaching her eyes.

The feeling Elias gave her was just right and comfortable.

It wasn't the suffocating control of "I can give you everything" nor the superior attitude of wanting to turn you into a qualified Mrs. Langley.

What he gave was just a sense of ease.

This was exactly what she wanted.

...

Meanwhile, at the Langley Residence.

Leona Sheridan held Isabelle Sinclair's hand and said to Elias Langley, "You can rest assured, Isabelle can stay here just like at her own home. When she comes to Kenton in the future, she mustn't stay at a hotel anymore, just come home."

She deliberately emphasized the words "come home" with extra warmth.

"I hope I'm not imposing on you, Mrs. Langley. My brother-in-law worries about me staying alone at hotels, so he insisted I choose between coming home or staying with you. Since I haven't finished my project yet, I couldn't go back, so I had to inconvenience you."

Isabelle Sinclair's lips curved in a polite smile, as she gently withdrew her hand, nodding slightly, giving Mrs. Langley enough face, yet subtly keeping her distance.

"How could it be an imposition? We're more than happy to have you."

After saying this, Leona Sheridan looked at Elias Langley and said tactfully, "You can focus on your work; I will take care of her in every way possible."

Isabelle blushed at her words and lowered her head.

However, Elias did not respond to Leona's matchmaking attempt. "She has a lively character; if she does anything inappropriate, please feel free to correct her."

"Brother-in-law..."

Isabelle playfully dragged out her words with a hint of affectionate complaint in her tone.

"...I'm the most well-behaved one."

Leona quickly added, "Your brother-in-law knows that; he just cares about you."

These words were music to Isabelle's ears.

Just as she was about to coquettishly say more, Elias spoke coldly, "It was Mr. Sinclair who specifically called and said safety is paramount when away from home, so take care of yourself."

With that said, he turned and left.

Not even sparing Isabelle a glance after getting in the car.

The smile frozen on Isabelle's face felt like a chisel grating against her heart.

Is it because of that woman that he no longer looks at her directly?

...

Juliana worked in the lab until the afternoon when Leona pulled her out with a phone call.

When she arrived at the hospital, Jared Langley was still in a rage.

Juliana glanced at his empty bedside table, thinking something must have been thrown.

Since his head injury, Jared had become emotional, a far cry from his previous calm and reserved demeanor.

Before she could speak, Leona was already sitting on the sofa saying, "Jared got hurt so badly because of you, yet you still can comfortably go about your worthless work. A man is your sky, your reliance! Since you're his 'fiancée', you should put everything about him first. Otherwise, how will you ever enter the Langley family?"

Juliana stood at the door and calmly responded, "Thank you, Mrs. Langley, for reminding me that I'm Jared's 'fiancée', so the most important thing right now is to help him recover quickly, remember the past so that everyone's life can return to normal. Isn't that right?"

Leona understood what she meant and, fearing Juliana might not cooperate, suppressed her inner displeasure, stood up, her tone regained its elegance but with an undertone of warning.

"Miss Jacobs is a smart person, best to stay that way. I'll leave Jared to you; I hope some people will act in good conscience."

After teaching Juliana a lesson, she sensibly left.

Once the door was closed, the ward became so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

Juliana walked to the bedside and picked up a fallen phone from the edge of the bed.

The screen was already shattered, but Juliana asked nothing and placed it on the bedside table.

"You're not happy?" Jared asked.

"You only have a memory disorder, not a drop in intelligence, so don't use this trick to trouble me. Your mother can't trap me."

Saying this, Juliana took out a box of medicine from the drawer to check if he'd taken his afternoon medication.

Hearing her words, Jared's eyes, initially trying to seek sympathy, immediately calmed down.

"I don't know why, but I have this feeling of gaining and losing you, and I want to see you every moment."

Juliana looked up at him, her gaze deep and meaningful.

"Have you ever wondered why you feel this insecurity?"

Jared's brows immediately furrowed.

Followed by an overwhelming wave of pain crashing down.

He clutched his head.

Juliana's gaze darkened for a moment as she placed her hand on his elbow.

"You saved me, I owe you a debt, but I was indeed too busy today to come see you. That's my mistake."

Jared felt slightly better, but he was trying to find some care from her eyes while panting.

Yet in her eyes, there was nothing but anxiety and helplessness.

"The previous Jared was excellent, admirable, and with the current you..."

She poured him a glass of water and placed it on the bedside table.

"Am I a disappointment to you?" Jared asked.

Juliana merely smiled, offering no reply, "Here are your meds. Don't forget to take them. Tomorrow there's a company business dinner, I can't come over, so please don't act out."

Jared's eyes dimmed; he only wanted her concern, but in her eyes, it was childish.

After saying this, Juliana was about to leave, when Jared suddenly called out after her.

"Don't stay outside, come back home. I promise I'll protect you in front of my mother."

Juliana was taken aback, "What?"

Jared frowned, "I know my mother took her anger out on you because of my hospitalization, forcing you to move out. I'll recover into someone you like soon; move back in, let's continue living together."

Chapter 174: Pretending to Be Strangers in Public, Getting Cozy in Private

Juliana Jacobs felt a wave of panic in her heart, but she quickly suppressed it.

She looked calmly at Jared Langley, "What images are still in your head now?"

Jared Langley pursed his lips and thought for a while, "...I don't remember what you look like in pajamas anymore."

Had she not known about his memory disorder, Juliana would have already punched him by now.

"You know how hard it is to deal with your mom. Go back to the Langley Family? Dream on! Focus on getting better and stay out of trouble!"

With that, she left the hospital room.

However, as soon as she reached downstairs, she ran into Leona Sheridan.

Obviously, the other party had been waiting for her there.

"I'll have the driver accompany you home to pack your luggage."

Leona Sheridan's tone was arrogant, as if ordering a servant.

Juliana raised an eyebrow at her leisurely, "If you're in such a hurry, why not start planning our wedding right now."

"What nonsense are you talking about!" Leona Sheridan nearly jumped, her voice suddenly sharp, "It's just a play to help my son with his treatment. Do you think you're worthy to enter the Langley Family's door?"

Juliana wasn't angry; instead, she laughed, "Precisely, and you're not worthy to be my mother-in-law, so we just don't have that kind of destiny. Don't fantasize anymore."

The next second, she put away her smile.

"Also, since you remember we're just acting, it shows you're still sane, so stop acting crazy along with the patient."

Leona Sheridan's face turned an angry shade of green, "What's with your attitude! How dare you..."

Juliana returned a contemptuous look, "Save that wicked mother-in-law face for your future real daughter-in-law, don't come humiliating yourself in front of me."

With that, she continued to leave the hospital.

Leona Sheridan was so angry she could hardly stand, fortunately supported by the driver.

The next night.

The welcome reception for the strategic collaboration between Aetherflame and Cryovault was held in the exhibition hall of Cryovault Titanium's new headquarters building.

Juliana and Summer Shaw took great care, spending three hours changing dresses and doing makeup.

Juliana chose a knee-length pearl white halter dress, with simple and elegant lines, a small diamond hairpin in her hair, exuding a gentle air.

While Summer Shaw wore a champagne-colored satin strap gown, charming and lively. She used a pearl mother-of-pearl hairpin to fix the loose strands behind her ears, giving off an indescribable allure.

Summer Shaw stood in front of the mirror, spinning around, always feeling something was off.

Juliana asked puzzled, "What, are you turning into a top?"

Summer Shaw spotted the hairpin in her hair, suddenly realizing what was wrong, and swiftly took her hairpin off, also roughly removing her own.

A few strands of hair got caught in the hairpin, and now they were pulled out, causing Juliana pain.

"Be gentle, I barely have much hair, if you pull it all out, are you going to pay for a wig?"

Summer Shaw said nonchalantly, "Oh, I yanked out a few of mine too, let's get a 1-for-1 deal at the wig store, we'll profit."

Juliana found her logic exasperating.

Summer Shaw attached her own pearl mother-of-pearl hairpin to Juliana, checked the mirror, and smiled brightly.

"A swap, and now it feels right."

After dinner, they headed to the reception.

The reception for the collaboration between the two companies invited quite a few business executives.

The regional manager of Cryovault Titanium, Ms. Thorne, was a woman in her thirties.

She wore a deep-sea blue velvet gown with sharp cuts, exuding a composed and confident aura, radiating a seasoned calm.

She smiled, observing Juliana for quite a while, "When I first saw Miss Jacobs, I was pleasantly surprised, I honestly didn't expect the Tech Director of Aetherflame Dynamics to be so young. You're rare, with both the grace of a householder and the capability to manage things independently."

Juliana smiled politely, "Ms. Thorne, you're too kind. Your outstanding management of Cryovault Titanium is truly admirable."

"I hope for a pleasant cooperation between our two companies in the future."

Luna Thorne smiled, raising her glass in a toast.

After taking a sip, each naturally moved off to mingle with other guests.

While they were mingling with other guests, a slight commotion arose at the entrance of the hall.

Juliana looked over and was momentarily stunned.

Still hospitalized, Jared Langley turned up at the reception in a sharp black suit, and the partner on his arm was Isabelle Sinclair.

Summer Shaw looked at Juliana, silently asking: What is he doing here?

Juliana shrugged, returning an equally puzzled glance.

At this moment, Jared Langley appeared just like any normal person. Save for that small piece of white gauze on his temple, it was as if the event of falling off the cliff never happened.

Juliana put down her wine glass and approached him.

Jared Langley saw her too, whispered something briefly to Isabelle Sinclair, and then disengaged, walking directly towards her.

"Juli..."

As soon as he got a bit closer, Juliana subtly took a step back, maintaining a socially polite and distant space between them.

Jared Langley thought she was jealous and hurriedly explained, "She is Isabelle Sinclair, she's temporarily staying at the Langley Family for these few days. She insisted on coming tonight; given the longstanding friendship between the Sinclair and Langley families, I couldn't refuse, so I brought her."

But Juliana didn't pick up on this and asked, "Why are you here?"

There was a hint of unwelcome in her voice.

Jared Langley's face turned pale quite suddenly, "How could I miss such an important occasion for my fiancée?"

Concerned that he couldn't handle any more stress, Juliana eased up her tone, "I meant, has the doctor allowed you to be discharged?"

"I took a leave." His face was not as pale anymore.

"Tonight is busy, I can't look after you, don't stay too long, go back early."

With that, Juliana turned to attend to others.

But Jared Langley caught her hand.

Juliana shook it off as if electrocuted, making Jared Langley freeze for a moment, "I can't even touch you?"

Juliana looked around, relieved no one noticed them, carefully responding, "Did you forget? Though I'm your fiancée, you didn't wish to make our relationship public."

Jared Langley furrowed his brow, his tone slightly confused, "Is that so? Then it's too unfair for you."

Juliana replied calmly, "You're still injured, and your memory hasn't recovered. Until everything is clear, we should continue as before."

With that said, she turned around, exhaled a long breath, and walked away.

Jared Langley looked up at the crystal lights above: How did they interact before? Act like strangers in public, cuddle and kiss in private?

This thought barely crossed his mind when he suddenly felt a slight itch on his skin...

Summer Shaw had to go to the washroom to freshen up her makeup and took Juliana along.

Isabelle Sinclair promptly followed them.

According to the information she had found, these two had simultaneously appeared in Hospital 547 a few times, but whether one of them left a blood sample was uncertain.

But that was no setback for her.

Tonight she insisted on Jared Langley bringing her here, with the goal of getting their hair.

Then a test would reveal the truth.

Chapter 175: The Duel Between Two Men Officially Begins

Restroom.

Both of them took off their hairpins and placed them in the basket beside them, tidying their hair.

This time, Summer Shaw's movements were much gentler and she didn't pull out a single hair.

"Before we officially announce our companies' partnership, you should demonstrate our new product," Juliana said to Summer Shaw.

"How does that work? It's your research achievement, you should be the one to showcase it to everyone," Summer Shaw replied.

Juliana smiled lightly, "The company is ours, and you're the head. If you demonstrate it, it will increase your exposure and that's also beneficial for our brand's enhancement."

Summer Shaw understood her intention and agreed.

At this moment, Isabelle Sinclair walked in from outside.

She glanced at the basket placed between the two of them at the sink.

She walked over and squeezed herself between the two of them.

Summer Shaw frowned and glanced at her, but she looked at Juliana instead.

"Miss Jacobs, what a coincidence running into you here," she said with a smile.

Juliana's smile was faint, "Indeed, quite the coincidence. Coming to the restroom for an encounter usually means there's something questionable brewing inside, feels uncomfortable if not relieved."

Isabelle Sinclair was left speechless, her smile immediately faded. As she turned to leave, her hand "accidentally" knocked over the bamboo basket on the sink.

"Oops, sorry about that."

She bent down to pick it up and quickly took the hair from the hairpins.

She remembered the two hairpins: Summer Shaw's was diamond, and Juliana's was pearl.

The hair she removed was placed in separate sections of her handbag, distinguishing the inner and outer layers.

There was no way she'd get it wrong.

She moved swiftly, and to Juliana and Summer Shaw, it seemed as though she was simply picking up stuff from the floor.

"These hairpins didn't break, sorry about that."

She said, placing the bamboo basket back on the sink before leaving.

Juliana stayed silent, not even giving her a glance, as she picked up her own hairpin and pinned it back.

However, Summer Shaw noticed a problem: someone had cleared the hair from the hairpins.

She looked in the direction Isabelle had left, her mind puzzled, but being uncertain, she said nothing to Juliana.

Both finished touching up their makeup and returned to the event.

The host began the official announcement ceremony.

"Firstly, let's invite Mr. Sharp from Aetherflame Dynamics to the stage to demonstrate a new product developed by their company."

Summer Shaw walked up confidently, demonstrating a "high-energy-density solid-state battery pack."

"The solid-state battery developed by our company can provide instantaneous high power support for large data centers, high-performance computing, and AI training, with improved stability and safety."

As soon as she finished speaking, someone interrupted from the audience.

"This level of instantaneous power is theoretical; how do you prove it?"

Summer Shaw slightly raised an eyebrow, "If used in airborne directed-energy weapons, its energy output is equally adept, does that answer satisfy you?"

The person said nothing more.

It's known that if Aetherflame's product is genuine, it will establish Aetherflame Dynamics' leading position in the industry.

Following that, the demonstration ended amid applause and admiration from the crowd.

Next, Ms. Thorne took the stage.

"It is our honor for Cryovault Titanium to establish a strategic partnership with Aetherflame Dynamics. Next, please allow me to solemnly invite the founder and chairman of our group, and the key driver of this collaboration, to the stage to witness this moment with Mr. Sharp."

Just as Summer Shaw and Juliana were surprised that Cryovault Titanium's chairman would personally show up, the door beside them slowly opened.

Evan Grant walked in from outside, impeccably dressed.

He looked entirely different from his previously downcast appearance.

Not only Juliana and Summer Shaw but everyone present was shocked.

After the downfall of Cortexa, the entire Grant Family had fallen from grace, yet Evan reappeared here with a new identity.

Cryovault Titanium's development overseas wasn't achieved overnight, meaning Evan's escape from the mire of the Grant Family began years ago.

And as his wife at that time, Juliana knew nothing about it.

After Evan took the stage, he gave Juliana a meaningful look and then spoke confidently and calmly, "Hello everyone, Cryovault Titanium's focus had been overseas, and this collaboration with Aetherflame Dynamics marks a strategic shift towards a domestic focus. Director Jacobs, our connection is far from over."

Juliana's face turned pale, her hands subtly trembling.

Summer Shaw gritted her teeth.

Never did she expect, after keeping him from extending his influence into the company, to stumble here.

Right then, Quinn Shepherd emerged from the crowd below the stage.

No one expected that Elias Langley's secretary was there, so a path was automatically cleared as Quinn stepped onto the stage.

Quinn handed a document to Juliana.

"Mr. Langley has high regard for your company's battery technology prospects. So, welcome to join the Helios Energy Association."

Juliana looked down to see a "membership agreement."

The terms were favorable, especially the statement "ensure unlimited support for R&D funding," making this agreement not only substantial but also enviable to peers.

Before Juliana could speak, Summer Shaw snatched the agreement, "Sign it now, I brought the company seal."

Quinn smiled and nodded.

Juliana instinctively scanned the room, not spotting Elias Langley.

He must still be in Kingsford, unable to leave, hence sending Quinn for this task.

Evan Grant clearly understood Elias Langley's move.

This was just the beginning of the contest between the two men.

"Congratulations to Aetherflame Dynamics."

Evan Grant's face displayed a faint smile, his words were exceptionally cordial.

What followed was a time for informal discussions.

Jared Langley and Isabelle Sinclair left the event early, while Juliana and Summer Shaw were surrounded by the crowd.

Before long, Juliana had gathered a stack of business cards.

Some even wanted to add her on WeChat, which Summer Shaw blocked.

Summer Shaw skillfully dealt with everyone, noticing beads of sweat on Juliana's forehead, she took all the attention on herself, allowing Juliana to quietly slip away from the crowd's view.

Juliana went to the restroom to wash her face, and upon coming out, she encountered Evan Grant leaning against a wall.

She instinctively took two steps back.

Evan Grant saw her wariness and sneered, "Even with Elias Langley's involvement, I won't give up on you. Juliana, I need you to know one thing: I married you not for benefit, but because I genuinely like you."

Juliana seemed to hear something ridiculous, her eyes full of disdain.

"You know full well the roots of the Grant Family are rotten; your chances of turning it around are slim, so you've already paved a way out for yourself, capable of a smooth retreat regardless of success or failure. As for me, you just watched me struggle in the mire, letting me fend for myself, never considering even a bit for me. Now, where do you get the face to say you like me?"

Evan Grant was not embarrassed by her accusations. Instead, he stubbornly declared, "Whether you choose me or Elias Langley, you must learn how to be a qualified 'Rich Lady.' If you put emotions first, you won't survive. I'm teaching you survival skills, but you only see me as unfeeling."

Juliana let out two cold laughs, "If following your rules means becoming a lonely outcast like you, then you truly exemplify that theory. You can keep such a great thing to yourself!"

With that, she turned and walked away.

Evan Grant's voice came leisurely from behind her, "One day, you'll realize that only I truly have your best interests at heart."

Juliana maintained a stern face, walking quickly, as if she couldn't bear to stay a moment longer.

Just as she passed a tightly closed door, a large hand suddenly grabbed her wrist and swiftly pulled her into a nearby room.

Chapter 176: I Have a Girlfriend, So Why Should I 'DIY'?

Juliana was pushed against the door by a force, instantly enveloped by the fresh scent of pine.

"Elias..."

She wasn't used to being restrained like this from behind and instinctively wanted to break free, but the man was pressed tightly against her, motionless.

Warm breath brushed against her ear as Elias's fingers continued to entangle and play with her hair.

The questioning voice was low and seductive, "What, I've been gone for less than two days, and you're tangled with my nephew one moment and entangled endlessly with your ex-husband the next? Are you doing this on purpose to provoke me?"

Juliana instinctively turned her head to speak to him, nearly kissing his lips.

Her breath caught, she moved her head a few inches away, and managed to pull out a polite smile: "Thank you for tonight."

Elias chuckled, "I gave you unlimited research funding and backed you up against Evan Grant, and all I get is a verbal thank you?"

Juliana smiled, pressing her lips together, "Don't worry, I'll make sure your investment sees great returns."

"How great a return?"

Elias suddenly tightened his grip on her waist.

Juliana felt the heat emanating from him, instinctively thinking he meant something more intimate, leaving her at a loss for words. She looked down, avoiding his gaze.

Seeing her timid look, Elias chuckled softly and released her.

Then, as if performing a magic trick, he pulled out a document and handed it to her.

"Take a look at this first. You can start thanking me here."

So that's not what he wanted...

Juliana was suddenly ashamed of her mistaken assumption.

She calmed her emotions and took the document to look at it.

It was a personal medical examination report, with Elias Langley's name boldly printed on the cover.

The heart that had just returned to its place leapt again.

Could something be wrong with his health?

An indescribable mix of worry and another emotion gripped her, prompting her to eagerly flip through the pages.

Most of Elias's indicators were within normal range until she noticed that the value for letter "T" was significantly higher than the upper limit of the reference range.

"What's this T..."

Remembering what the letter abbreviation stood for, Juliana's cheeks uncontrollably flushed slightly.

Seeing her flushed face, Elias laughed low and deep, "The doctor said that this indicator being too high... is not good for physical or mental health, and suggested... regular, periodic relief."

Juliana slapped the medical report against his chest with a "smack", "Can't you handle it yourself?"

A turbulent undercurrent swirled in Elias's eyes as he slowly grasped her hand on his chest and drawled, "I have a girlfriend, why should I 'take care' of it myself?"

Juliana was completely defeated by him.

Fortunately, at that moment, her phone rang.

It was Summer Shaw calling for her.

"The party's over, where are you?"

"I'm... I'll be right out." Juliana's face was still a bit red.

"No need to come to the showroom, let's meet directly at the parking lot."

With that, Summer hung up the phone.

Juliana put down her phone and touched her face, "You're the worst, making me blush like this, how can I go out?"

Elias smiled lightly, "The blush looks nice, just walk out naturally."

Juliana found herself unable to respond to him, ignoring him, and opened the door to leave.

She thought he would avoid attention, but he unexpectedly followed her out.

The few remaining executives, upon seeing Elias, greeted him as if they had seen a celebrity.

And so, the Great Langley was escorted into the elevator.

Elias looked around and realized Juliana hadn't entered. Seeing someone about to close the door, he immediately shouted, "Hold on!"

Then he looked at her standing at the door, "Aren't you coming?"

Just those three words, yet delivered in a tone not as cold as usual, made the executives in the elevator suddenly fall silent.

Unable to withstand their scrutinizing gazes, Juliana stepped into the elevator.

As they descended, an awkward atmosphere spread through the cabin.

No one spoke.

Not until the elevator doors opened did Juliana quickly step out and head eagerly towards her car.

Summer was waiting for her in the car.

Yet, just as she arrived at her car, the red flag stopped behind her.

"Ride with me back." Elias said.

"I have my own car."

No sooner had Juliana spoken than she heard the central lock of her car engage.

"Well... she might also end up without a car."

Having said that, Summer hit the gas and drove off.

Elias immediately laughed out loud, "You've got a good friend there."

Juliana was left with no choice but to get into Elias's car.

Once back home, as soon as Elias was through the door, he pulled her into a kiss.

The scene quickly shifted to the couch.

Juliana was pinned down, unable to move.

Elias's kisses were intense and searing, irresistibly forceful, as if he was intent on devouring her whole.

Juliana felt weak all over, her rationality almost completely evaporated.

Just as his hand slipped under the hem of her shirt to caress her waist, Juliana snapped back to clarity, pushing him away, turning her head to prevent more kisses.

"What's wrong?" Elias sensed her sudden resistance to him.

"Did you get what you needed done in Kingsford...?"

Elias's eyes glimmered, clearly aware of what she truly wanted to ask.

He planted a kiss at the corner of her mouth, "Every step forward is progress at this point."

Juliana could tell he was facing significant difficulties.

"Until things are settled on your end, no one outside can know about us."

Elias squinted slightly, "So far, there's nothing I haven't accomplished. Don't you have faith in me?"

Juliana averted her gaze, "A woman always needs a backup plan. And your nephew, he can't be upset again."

Elias considered this for a few seconds, "Fine, I'll do as you wish."

With that, he leaned in for another kiss.

This time, the kiss went deeper.

But just as they were about to progress to the next step, his phone rang.

Glancing at the number, he saw it was Isabelle Sinclair calling.

Reluctantly, he released her and stood up to take the call by the window.

Juliana felt the emptiness, bringing her back to cold reality.

In truth, she was still hesitating on whether to take things further with him.

"Brother-in-law, I've got a high fever." Isabelle's weak voice came through the phone.

"No one's at the Langley Family, and you're calling me from afar, as if I can fly over to save you?"

Elias's harsh words left Isabelle stung.

"You're heartless; I'll tell Grandpa that you don't care about me."

"You've already said I'm heartless, do you think I care if you tell?"

A surge of resentment clenched Isabelle tightly.

He must be with that woman right now!

When the DNA report comes out, if it confirms she is indeed the biological daughter of his foster mother, she'll secretly get rid of her!

Elias hung up the phone, frowning as he gazed out the window.

Isabelle was becoming more and more troublesome, and her gratitude seemed misplaced.

Seeing his distracted look, Juliana stood up and adjusted her clothes.

Evan Grant used to leave whenever Stella Windsor called.

She figured Elias couldn't escape the "sister-in-law calling" rule either.

With a mocking smile, she headed to the bathroom, saying, "Make sure to close the door when you leave."

However, after she finished her shower, she smelled stir-fried rice coming from the kitchen.

Looking closely, Elias was busy in the kitchen, wearing her apron.

The sight of the man's tall figure wrapped in a domestic aura easily sparked a woman's desire to conquer.

Juliana's heart fluttered for a moment, and she walked into the kitchen, embracing him from behind.

Elias chuckled, "What, you missed me already?"

Chapter 177: Or... I Could Just Eat You Instead

Juliana said nothing.

He turned off the stove, turned around, and playfully tapped her nose with his finger, "Not even if you want it."

Juliana tilted her head and asked, "Why not?"

The man leaned down, placed a kiss on her forehead, and pressed his fingertip where her heart was.

"Because... you're not ready here yet."

Juliana looked at his handsome face, so close to hers, with mixed emotions in her heart.

Can a man really be so good to the one he loves?

So good it feels unreal.

"But what about your high blood pressure?"

Elias Langley laughed.

His laughter was bright and cheerful.

"That was just an excuse to sleep with you. After all these years, what could go wrong? Silly, so easy to fool."

Juliana lowered her head, didn't speak, and took the fried rice to the dining table outside.

The fried rice was so delicious she wanted to praise him.

"If you ever lose your job, you could open a fast-food place, just selling fried rice."

Elias Langley laughed, "Is that the highest compliment I can get?"

Juliana nodded.

"Then I'll sell fried rice, and you sell your steamed custard?"

Juliana was taken aback for a moment.

Elias Langley's smile gradually faded, "I came back to the hotel yesterday and found the steamed custard you made had gone bad."

Juliana was a bit surprised, "Why didn't you just throw it away if it had been sitting so long?"

Elias Langley said tenderly, "I couldn't bear to."

Those three words struck heavily on Juliana's heart.

She thought of how she used to cook for Evan Grant, but he would throw it away without a second glance due to last-minute engagements.

But Elias Langley...

Juliana suppressed the emotions surging within her and said softly, "You're so childish."

Elias Langley moved his bowl next to hers and sat down beside her.

"I didn't get to taste it. Make me another batch, will you?"

Juliana didn't say anything, just buried her head in her meal.

The man quietly leaned closer, whispering in her ear, "Or... maybe I could just have a taste of you."

Juliana paused, realizing what he meant, and her face instantly flushed red.

This meal was impossible to eat now.

Juliana immediately set a rule for Elias Langley: No flirting during meals.

As he was leaving, the man shamelessly leaned against the doorframe, saying, "Get some rest early tonight. Bring me the custard by noon tomorrow."

Juliana straightened his collar, "Why don't you stay with the Langley Family?"

Elias Langley raised an eyebrow, "Where do you want me to stay?"

"It's not that... but is staying in a hotel convenient?"

Elias Langley seemed to understand.

"It's not convenient, so I'm waiting for your invitation to move in together."

Juliana's face turned red again, and she promptly "chased" him out of her house.

The next morning, when Juliana woke up, she found there was still an untouched portion of fried rice in the fridge.

He must have purposely made extra, leaving some for her breakfast.

The portion was quite large, and Juliana didn't eat it all by herself. Instead, she warmed it up, packed it in two lunch boxes, and took it to the office.

Summer opened the steaming lunch box, both surprised and touched.

"See, I told you, you would thank me for leaving you alone last night. How did it go? Did you make any progress?"

It would have been better if she hadn't mentioned it. When she did, Juliana took her milk, drank it in one go, and still looked at her angrily.

"Alright, I won't mention it."

The look on Juliana's face was enough to show that nothing happened last night.

Summer took big bites of the fried rice.

"Juliana, your cooking has improved again."

Juliana casually said, "It was made by Elias Langley."

Summer was momentarily shocked and picked up the dropped grains of rice from beside the lunch box, putting them in her mouth.

Juliana held back her upward-curving lips and started eating too.

They hadn't finished eating when an arrogant voice broke the quiet outside the office hall.

"It's good enough I'm not making her kneel to welcome me in, and you still make me wait here. Do you know who I am? Such a small company dare to mess with Blackstar, are you looking to go bankrupt?"

Upon hearing Leona Sheridan's voice, Summer immediately stood up.

Juliana grabbed her, "She's here for me. You continue eating, I'll go."

With that said, she wiped her mouth and stood up to leave the office.

In the hall, things from the front desk were scattered all over the floor.

The young lady who had just started working for less than three months was so intimidated by Leona Sheridan's presence that she didn't dare speak loudly.

Instead of greeting Leona Sheridan right away, Juliana nonchalantly surveyed the messy office and told the young receptionist, "Go get a cloth and a bottle of disinfectant spray. Clean up everything she touched."

Leona Sheridan felt insulted and angrily said, "What kind of attitude is that? Don't forget, you're currently my son's fiancée, which makes me your future mother-in-law."

Juliana sneered, "Are you getting old, or do you have amnesia? Shouldn't that 'fiancée' be in quotation marks? As for a future mother-in-law, my last mother-in-law died under mysterious circumstances. Are you hoping for the same fate?"

Leona Sheridan was so choked by her words that her face turned pale.

"I don't care what you think. Jared was disappointed not to see you this morning. From now on, you must meet him every day. Once he leaves the hospital in a few days, you'll move in with the Langley Family."

Juliana was about to say something when Leona Sheridan added, "I'm informing you, not consulting with you. You're lucky my son even likes a divorcee like you! Don't push your luck!"

Such words would anger anyone, yet Juliana just laughed.

Leona Sheridan couldn't understand, "What are you laughing at?"

"Isn't Mrs. Langley and Chairman Langley's relationship more like roommates?"

"How dare you! What right do you have to comment on my marriage?"

Juliana gave a faint smile, "To me, Mrs. Langley seems more like an antique Qing Dynasty relic brought home to ward off evil, with a mind full of male dominance and social hierarchy. It's no wonder Chairman Langley prefers fresh and lively scenery outside; after all, facing an unearthed artifact every day must be quite dispiriting."

Leona Sheridan's face turned beet red in anger, "You, you're utterly disrespectful and talking nonsense!"

Juliana's smile faded, "If Mrs. Langley feels that my pretending with her son is not enough to repay his kindness, then I won't act anymore. Name a compensation price. If I can repay it, I will; if not, I'll pay in installments. From now on, we won't interfere with each other."

If Jared heard this, he'd probably have to use a defibrillator again.

Leona Sheridan certainly didn't dare agree to such terms.

"I say one thing, you retort ten. You've got some nerve!"

With that, she raised her hand to slap Juliana's face.

But her noble, pampered hand ended up landing squarely on a dirty mop.

Leona Sheridan looked at Summer, who was holding the broom, in shock, disgust, and anger, but she couldn't say a word.

"You old witch, are you bullying us because we don't have a demon-slaying mirror at the entrance? Your stench of manure can be smelled from the office. Hurry up and wash up with the mop."

Leona Sheridan was repulsed by the smell on her hand.

She gave Summer a fierce glare and suppressed her anger, saying, "If you want to stand up for her, think of the consequences. This world is full of unexpected events; don't bring trouble upon yourself."

With that, she turned to leave, her pointed heels stomping heavily on the tiles as if trying to pierce through them.

"Summer, you shouldn't have..."

Juliana's words were cut off by Summer, "I'm not doing it for you. Aetherflame is my place; I can't let an old hag run wild here."

Every time she says it's not for her, yet every time it really is.

Juliana's eyes reddened a little, and she immediately lowered her head to hide it from Summer.

At noon, she didn't forget to bring Elias Langley the custard.

When she asked where he was, Elias Langley sent her a location.

Upon seeing it, she knew that place required a pass to enter.

Unexpectedly, when she arrived at the entrance, Quinn Shepherd was already waiting for her.

Quinn Shepherd led her through layers of security checks.

The corridor was so quiet only the sound of footsteps could be heard, and the cool, solemn black walnut doors on either side exuded an untouchable authority.

It wasn't until he opened the last unmarked walnut door that Elias Langley looked up from behind a spacious desk, his gaze, initially cold, instantly softened upon seeing Juliana.

Quinn Shepherd sensibly retreated, and Elias Langley stood up to greet her.

He naturally took the food box from her hand, wrapped an arm around her waist, pulled her into his embrace, and lowered his head to kiss her...

Chapter 178: So Juliana Jacobs Is... She Understands, Completely

Juliana was kissed breathless, her body limp, until he let go, and she could lean against him, gasping for air.

She instinctively tightened her arms around his waist to steady herself.

Overhead came Elias Langley's low chuckle, "What, can't bear to let go?"

Juliana caught her breath, embarrassed, and punched him lightly in the chest.

"What are you doing in a place like this?"

Elias raised an eyebrow, "You don't let me kiss you in public or do anything in private. Do we look like a couple?"

That left Juliana speechless.

"Did you visit Jared today?" he asked.

Juliana lowered her eyes, "Not yet."

Elias said, "I found the best neurologist for him. If it can't be treated, we'll replace his brain."

As soon as he finished speaking, there was a knock on the door.

Juliana quickly pulled away from his embrace.

Elias, uninterested, placed the food box on the desk and called out, "Come in."

Unexpectedly, it was Raine Kane who entered.

Her voice held a hint of excitement, "We have evidence against Isaac Grant. This lab, claiming to develop new energy batteries, is full of hazardous materials. There are also smuggling records, and proof of a master-servant relationship between him and Angus Slade. He'll at least be sentenced to life imprisonment."

Just as Juliana was about to speak, Quinn Shepherd hurriedly pushed open the door, looking grave.

"Bad news, we just got word. Isaac Grant had a sudden heart attack in detention, didn't survive the rescue efforts, and died."

In less than a minute, Juliana's emotions were like a roller coaster, constantly rising and falling.

She exclaimed in disbelief, "A heart attack? I'd believe it if you said he'd starve to death, but a heart attack? Evan Grant never mentioned he had such an ailment."

She was about to take out her phone to call Evan Grant and get an explanation.

However, Elias Langley held her hand.

"It's useless," he said, voice steady, as if seeing through everything, "In some places, a 'sudden heart attack' can also be classified as a heart attack."

Everyone instantly understood.

Someone was afraid of being implicated by Isaac Grant and acted first.

"But dying like this is too easy for him."

Juliana's tone was filled with reluctance and resentment.

Elias enveloped her cool hand in the warmth of his palm.

"Death is the best punishment for Isaac Grant. And those behind him, as long as they remain greedy, will continue to stretch their hands further. It's only a matter of time before they stumble, just a different way of courting death."

Juliana found some comfort in his words.

...

It's said that after Isaac Grant's death, Evan Grant did not show up to claim his body. In the end, Old Mrs. Grant arranged for someone to handle the aftermath.

Cryovault Titanium, controlled by Evan Grant, is far more powerful than Cortexa. But unlike Cortexa, Cryovault Titanium is solely owned by him. The Grant Family's collateral relatives and even Old Mr. Grant's old followers can no longer benefit from it in the slightest.

"Evan Grant purchased a nursing home for his grandmother to enjoy her twilight years. I think it's part of his plan, removing any future concerns so he can fully focus on his rivalry with Elias Langley," said Summer Shaw.

She learned all these inner workings of the Grant Family from Caleb Shaw.

"You need to be careful, Juliana."

These days, Juliana spent her days visiting Jared at the hospital and her remaining time busy in the lab, while in the evenings, she would have dates with Elias Langley at her little apartment.

Except for Jared always wanting her to "move back" to the Langley Residence, life was relatively peaceful.

After listening quietly to Summer Shaw, she remained mostly unaffected.

"Healthy competition isn't a bad thing. Regardless of why he signed the strategic agreement with Aetherflame, now that Aetherflame has Elias Langley's protection, he would have to think twice before causing trouble for personal reasons."

Summer Shaw looked at her and smiled.

"Aetherflame is like our child. In times of crisis, you always desperately protect it. That I've never worried about. As long as you and Evan Grant don't rekindle, I can rest easy."

Suddenly remembering something, she continued, "The new factory site has been decided. Tomorrow I'm going to do an on-site assessment with Ms. Thorne, you should come too."

As her words fell, Juliana's eyelid twitched.

"What's wrong?" Summer Shaw saw her uncomfortable expression and asked.

"Nothing, can I skip it?" Juliana asked.

Summer Shaw laughed, "You're a shareholder of Aetherflame, try not to miss important company matters. Otherwise, if one day I fall sick..."

"Nonsense! Take it back!" Juliana interrupted her.

Summer Shaw laughed, correcting herself, "When one day I want to take a leave for romance, you'll have to hold down the fort at the company for me."

Juliana sighed with relief, glanced at her, "Our division of labor is clear, technical matters fall to me while management and external affairs are yours. It's great this way, no need for change."

Though she said that, the next day Juliana still accompanied Summer Shaw.

Upon arriving at the destination, she finally understood why her eyelid had been twitching.

The new factory location was not far from where last time, Stella Windsor had hired someone to pretend as a taxi driver and take her to be fed to the wild dogs.

The person showing them the factory explained, "This factory has been closed for several years now and is currently one of the best-preserved in terms of environment and facilities among the several nearby abandoned factories. Though this area has been desolate for a long time, it's now designated as a key development zone, with future plans to build enterprise factories all around."

Luna Thorne glanced at Juliana and asked, "Does Director Jacobs have any insights about this area's development?"

Juliana could tell she was hinting for her to inquire with Elias Langley.

She smiled lightly, "Ms. Thorne should trust her own judgment."

Luna Thorne gave a mechanical smile, sensing hostility, and wisely refrained from provoking further, instead chatting with Summer Shaw.

Reaching a corner, Summer Shaw considered for a moment and suggested to Juliana and Luna Thorne, "It's too large here to see everything at once. How about we split into three groups? Juliana, you check out the experimental functionality area, Ms. Thorne, you examine the spatial layout and load-bearing structure of Plant 1, and I'll check the second floor to see if the lifting outlets suit modifications. Let's regroup in ten minutes, shall we?"

Luna Thorne had no objections, but she took the "guide" along to accompany her.

"Summer, there are many wild dogs over there, be cautious," Juliana advised.

The guide, having taken a few steps with Luna Thorne, quickly turned back upon hearing this and assured, "Rest assured, that area's dangerous creatures have been cleared as per a top directive. Even the leadership didn't dare neglect."

Juliana was surprised.

It must have been Elias Langley's doing.

Summer Shaw laughed, "Don't worry, see you in ten minutes."

Juliana walked towards the experimental area, growing more anxious with each step.

A foreboding sense of something ominous looming overhead entangled her, prompting her decisively to stop moving forward and return to find Summer Shaw.

Meanwhile, Summer Shaw had already reached the second floor.

In the corridor stood a man.

"Hello, may I know who you are..."

The man, dressed in a tight-fitting leather jacket, turned around with sunglasses covering his face.

"Are you Summer Shaw?" he asked.

Summer Shaw barely nodded when he was suddenly in front of her.

Before she could speak, a dagger was already plunged into her heart.

Summer Shaw shuddered, yet unusually composed, softly asked, "Why?"

The man chuckled, "Because you carry blood that shouldn't flow."

Seeing her confusion, he coldly added, "I don't kill the confused. A DNA test was conducted on you, identifying your biological parents, but you shouldn't have been born into their family, understood?"

Summer Shaw suddenly recalled how Isabelle Sinclair had touched her hairpin at the gala, only to find the hair gone.

Unbeknownst to that woman, however, she and Juliana had swapped hairpins that day.

So Juliana was...she understood, completely understood it now.

Seeing her expression of sudden realization, the man assumed she had discovered her identity and pushed her down the stairs.

Just as Juliana arrived at the foot of the stairs...

Chapter 179: You... Don't Remember Your Childhood?

"Summer Shaw!"

Seeing her best friend fall down the stairs, Juliana Jacobs rushed up without a second thought and intercepted her halfway.

However, at this moment, a dark figure flew towards her.

Juliana didn't have time to see who it was before she shielded Summer, and then Raine Kane leaped over their heads.

The agile shadow swiftly returned to the second floor, prompting Raine to give chase.

"Summer!"

Juliana then had the chance to notice a dagger plunged into Summer's heart.

She held her, trembling uncontrollably.

Summer gripped her hand, opened her mouth to speak, but no sound came out.

Tears streamed down Juliana's face.

"Don't talk, calm your breath, just hold on a bit."

Summer glanced at her hair and then weakly passed out.

The assailant escaped, and Raine Kane, rather than continue chasing, returned.

Examining Summer's wound, she said gravely, "The dagger can't be moved, take her to the hospital immediately."

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By the time Mr. Shaw and Mrs. Shaw arrived, Summer had already been taken into the emergency room.

Juliana had just finished giving her statement and stood in front of them with her head down.

"How could you let her out of your sight?" Mrs. Shaw reproached.

Mr. Shaw patted her shoulder and said with grief, "Enough, she couldn't have foreseen this happening, don't blame her."

Juliana felt even worse because of these words.

Even though it was Summer who was attacked, she always felt the target was herself.

"The suspect's escape was swift, with a clearly chosen route, suggesting prior surveillance. Almost no clues were left at the scene, further investigation is necessary," the police said.

Mrs. Shaw nearly faltered, and Mr. Shaw held her up.

"We trust you to find the culprit," Mr. Shaw said.

After the police left, Elias Langley patted Juliana on the shoulder.

Seeing she didn't move, he pulled her into a hug.

Eight hours later, Caleb Shaw was the first to come out of surgery.

The first thing he said to Elias Langley was "Thank you."

Elias nodded.

If he hadn't urgently requested the top cardiothoracic surgeon from Kingsford to Harlan, Summer wouldn't have made it off the operating table today.

"How are things now?" Mr. Shaw asked.

Caleb couldn't muster the courage to meet his father's eyes, "Her heart's severely damaged, and the fall injured her head; right now, we can only keep her alive."

"What do you mean by just keeping her alive?" Mrs. Shaw asked shakily.

At this moment, Caleb's cardiology colleague came out.

"The patient experienced respiratory arrest and is now in a vegetative state. Based on current assessments, the chance of waking is slim. However, there is a potential method, but no guarantee of success."

"What method?" Caleb asked.

"A heart transplant might increase the chances of waking up."

Seeing Caleb's gaze, his colleague explained in a lowered voice, "Your sister's heart is so badly damaged that even without a transplant, it would barely last another six months. Now, Kingsford has successful cases of using a patient's own cells to cultivate artificial organs for 'zero rejection' transplants. You should try matching and contact the lab."

At least, this gives a sliver of hope.

Afterward, Summer was transferred to the intensive care unit.

Juliana wanted to see her, but Mr. and Mrs. Shaw wanted to see their daughter even more.

So, Juliana could only stand outside the window, quietly watching her best friend, who was covered in tubes.

Caleb looked at the elderly couple with hunched backs inside and said calmly, "When we were young, our parents were too busy to take care of two kids at home, so as soon as she was born, she was sent to relatives in the countryside to be raised. She only came back at 12. We thought there might be a rift

between her and the family, but she grew up to be a cheerful and sensible girl, always the one to make life easier for our parents. It was me who always worried them."

Juliana turned to look at him.

Caleb's eyes were red.

"Why isn't it me lying in there?" he said.

Juliana looked at the glass again, "That's because she got tired and wants a rest, while you have a lot more important things to do."

Caleb looked at her, lost for words,

Juliana continued, "It's not easy to wait for a heart, so start the matching now, and ask around which lab in Kingsford is doing the cell cultivation. She has some time before heart failure, maybe we can use the cell-cultivated heart technology to fight for a chance."

For the first time, Caleb realized how logical Juliana was in her speech.

"Think about how to save her, leave finding the culprit to me."

Juliana didn't provoke him further, speaking calmly before turning and leaving.

Elias Langley followed, concerned.

As soon as Juliana reached the elevator, Jared Langley's call came through.

"Has your friend made it out of surgery?" Jared Langley asked.

Juliana was in a bad mood and responded limply.

"Then why aren't you coming to see me?" he asked.

"Can't you understand me?" Juliana retorted.

Jared was taken aback.

Suppressing her erupting emotions, Juliana said, "My best friend is lying in the ICU. My mind is a mess. Can you let me adjust before I face you?"

"Su... sure,"

Jared intended to offer comfort, but was dumbfounded to find himself utterly perplexed, not knowing how to console her.

"Don't be too upset, we're engaged. If you're feeling down, you can come to me anytime."

"Take care of your injury."

Having said this, Juliana hung up the call.

Feeling all the more irritated, she should have gone downstairs but ended up on the rooftop.

The wind blew, making her eyes tear up.

Elias Langley frowned and put his jacket over her.

Juliana, however, tried to avoid him.

"What, are you disgusted?" Elias Langley asked.

Juliana shook her head and wiped her face.

"Summer has always been kind. The attacker definitely wasn't after her. I might be cursed. Anyone close to me meets a bad fate, you should stay away from me too."

Elias Langley smiled, "You were downstairs at the time. If their target was you, that dagger would have been aimed at your heart."

"Then they must have made a mistake, and it's still my fault Summer ended up this way."

Juliana finally reached her breaking point.

She cried.

"Because I'm cursed, my parents abandoned me. Just when I felt a bit of warmth with the Linton Family, Old Man Linton had an accident... I'm probably destined not to have happiness."

But Elias Langley pulled her into his arms and held her close.

"It's not your fault: your parents' choice or the events with the Linton Family. The fact that you've survived so many hardships shows you're stronger than so-called 'destiny'. Don't trap yourself in others' words, there's a long road ahead, let's take it step by step, okay?"

Seeing no response from the person in his arms, Elias continued, "And how can you be sure your parents abandoned you?"

Speaking of this, Juliana bit her lip hard.

"If they hadn't forcefully driven me away, how would I not remember their faces or even my name? I did a blood test to find them via DNA, and haven't matched with anyone. Doesn't that just prove they deliberately abandoned me and won't look for me?"

Elias Langley's heart tightened. "You... you don't remember your childhood? You've also had your blood tested at Hospital 547?"

Chapter 180: Can You Still Trust Elias Langley?

Juliana nodded.

Elias Langley, aware of prior investigative errors, steadied his breathing and softened his voice, "Did you go to Arlan Children's Home?"

Juliana nodded again, "I have psychological shadows, didn't go inside. Summer Shaw went to ask on my behalf, but nothing came out of it."

Elias closed his eyes and unconsciously held her tighter.

"Due to a fire, the records of the children taken in back then are all unclear at Arlan Children's Home. What...what are you trying to find out?"

Juliana, feeling breathless in his arms, pulled away slightly.

"Actually, even without the fire, they probably wouldn't have my records. I stayed there for less than a month, and even my name was randomly pointed out in a dictionary. No one would remember me."

"How old were you when you went there?" Elias asked.

"Thirteen."

But the incident with the Sinclair Family member occurred when they were twelve.

The timeline doesn't match, and Elias frowned: Could it be not her?

"DNA not matching doesn't necessarily mean they don't want to find you. Perhaps there's an unknown change that happened in between, or the information simply wasn't recorded in the system. It's the world's many speculations that lead to misunderstandings. Let's first get to the truth, and not let speculation hurt us."

Juliana nodded at his words.

Elias calmly said, "The person who attacked Summer Shaw is very skilled, even Raine Kane didn't get a clear look at them, but I'll continue to investigate for you."

Juliana wiped her face, "Thank you for talking me through this, I wasn't in a good mood today."

She turned to go downstairs, and Elias grabbed her wrist to pull her back.

He lowered his head, his eyes landing on her lips, "Sincerity can be shown with words, but language often comes off as pale."

Juliana understood his meaning, blushing momentarily.

He had always been the one to take the initiative. This time, he wanted her to take the lead.

"Then... close your eyes."

With a smile, Elias closed his eyes.

Juliana took a deep breath, stood on her tiptoes, and slowly moved closer to him.

Elias's lips were well-shaped, and perhaps only she knew how soft they were.

Unable to resist the bashful feeling of approaching a man proactively, Juliana intended only a fleeting touch on his lips, like a dragonfly skimming the water, to leave as swiftly.

However, Elias seized the back of her head, extending and deepening the brief kiss.

They parted only when their breaths were slightly irregular.

Juliana's cheeks turned rosy, she whispered, "You're not being honest."

Elias chuckled lightly, his thumb gently brushing the corner of her lips, small flames flickering repeatedly in his eyes, yet suppressed by him.

"My 'dishonesty' is for you alone to see, supported with a lifetime warranty, and you can even make more unreasonable demands."

Juliana's heavy heart was playfully uplifted by him, erasing all shadows.

No matter what, the criminal had to be identified, and "Aetherflame" had to continue its operations.

When Summer Shaw wakes, she would be given an explanation.

The following morning, Juliana arrived at the company to hold a meeting, announcing that due to unforeseen circumstances, Summer Shaw would need an extended leave, and henceforth, all business matters, both internal and external, should be reported directly to her.

A project leader raised a question.

"Director Jacobs, our collaboration project with Cryovault Titanium has utilized nearly half of our core R&D team's manpower. If we continue this investment, our in-house solid-state battery pre-research

project must be postponed. In the current stage, should we focus resources on ensuring the delivery of the collaboration project, or withstand the pressure to safeguard our own technology development progress?"

Juliana was momentarily at a loss for words.

She excelled at resolving technical issues, but this kind of balancing act was unfamiliar to her.

"Our partnership with Cryovault is a crucial cash flow source presently, requiring us to ensure delivery quality and maintain our partner relationships."

Somehow, Caleb Shaw was already standing at the office door.

His composed gaze swept over everyone present and continued, "However, proprietary technology is 'Aetherflame's' future core competitiveness and must not stall. Short-term reliance on collaboration for nourishment; long-term reliance on technology for sustainability. I'll coordinate this balance."

After speaking, his gaze fixed on Juliana's surprised face.

"Is there an issue with this arrangement?" he asked.

"Shouldn't you be at the hospital?" Juliana asked.

"Last night you were right; at the company's toughest time, my sister never gave up. Now she just wants to rest temporarily, so as her brother, my sole role is to allow her to recuperate peacefully, while also holding onto the dream she tirelessly fought for."

His gaze swept across everyone as he continued, "Until Summer Shaw returns, I will temporarily assume the role of General Manager, responsible for the company's operations and strategic decisions. Director Jacobs will continue to lead the technical team, focusing on enhancing the competitiveness of our core products. Although managing a company differs from managing a hospital, the underlying logic is similar. Are you all willing to work with me to drive Aetherflame's continuous growth?"

Thus, for Summer Shaw, he resigned from his hospital job to protect her enterprise.

A few seconds later, Juliana was the first to applaud...

Despite being surprised by Caleb Shaw's decision to join the company, she respected his choice.

Next, Caleb needed to familiarize himself with various company affairs, but with the assistant secretary, these were not difficult tasks.

"While we are seeking a matching heart for him, my father has also gone to Kingsford today to negotiate with the lab director, hoping for good news."

Juliana nodded.

About to speak, her phone rang; it was a call from Evan Grant.

Juliana didn't answer; she directly hung up.

Less than a minute later, a text message came through.

"Don't you want to know who hurt your friend?"

Juliana's fingers paused.

Then a second message arrived.

It was an address for an outdoor café.

Not far from where Elias Langley was working.

Juliana pondered for a moment and then went.

Evan Grant arrived first and ordered her an iced Americano.

He scrutinized her for a while, noticing she looked well, and chuckled, "I thought you'd be so upset about what happened to your friend, unable to eat or sleep. Turns out I worried too much."

Juliana merely smiled faintly.

There was no need for him to know what Elias Langley had done for her from last night till now, to prevent her from carrying a heavy psychological burden.

"Who's the culprit?" she asked.

Evan Grant wasn't in a hurry. He glanced outside the fence, a red flag car driving slowly by.

He suddenly reached out towards her hair.

Juliana pushed his hand away and stood up angrily, "Don't make me spill coffee on you."

Evan Grant still smiled gently, "I was checking how much he trusts you. Not thanking me is one thing, but wanting to spill coffee on me?"

Juliana kept a cold face, "Why did you call me here, anyway?"

Evan Grant leisurely produced a transparent evidence bag, handed it to her.

"Back then, when I was in a hurry, you would always counsel me to stay calm. So why are you acting like this now? Is it that Elias Langley doesn't know how to comfort people, or doesn't know how to care for you?"

Juliana didn't respond, her gaze focused on the item inside the evidence bag.

She furrowed her brow and asked, "What does this dead leaf signify?"

Evan Grant leaned back in his chair, speaking calmly, "This was found at the scene where Summer Shaw was injured. In an abandoned factory, dried leaves aren't noticeable and are easily overlooked, but this plant exists only in the Langley Family's garden."

Juliana was startled by his words.

Evan Grant continued watching her, "If you don't believe it, you can take the soil from the leaf and compare it with the soil from the Langley garden to see if the components match. This dead leaf from the Langley Family suggests that the perpetrator infiltrated the garden. Since there haven't been any reports of injuries in the Langley Family lately, it's most likely that he was there to meet the person giving him instructions."

Juliana remained silent in response to his words.

Evan Grant leaned slightly forward, tapping his fingers on the table: "So now... do you still want to trust Elias Langley?"