

Panicking 241

Chapter 241: Let Me Officially Introduce Juliana Jacobs, My Wife

"If your ambition is this big, then we have more to discuss."

His voice carried a teasing tone.

Juliana Jacobs calmly looked at the face so close to hers.

"If we must talk, it's not impossible, but right now my heart is full of Summer Shaw's heart, and I'm afraid I don't have the energy to discuss with you?"

Jared Langley understood her hint and said in a deep voice, "I won't do anything that touches the interests of the Sinclairs, so I won't introduce you to the other person in charge of the laboratory, but apart from this, I can promise you anything."

Juliana Jacobs regretfully said, "Then there's nothing to be done, the negotiations have broken down."

"Juliana!"

Jared Langley's usually calm eyes were finally ignited by her indifferent attitude.

He almost gritted his teeth as he said each word, "You cannot ignore my sincerity."

Juliana's indifferent face smiled even deeper, "So while the young master and I are here discussing marriage alliances, what about your woman? She's waiting for you foolishly, how do you intend to deal with her?"

"Don't mention her!"

Just as Jared Langley spoke, the door to the hospital room was pushed open.

Sylvia Sheridan stood at the door, her face colorless, her body trembling slightly due to intense emotional fluctuations...

At this moment, in the elevator lobby downstairs in the inpatient department.

Victor Langley had just stepped into the elevator when Elias Langley followed.

The two happened to bump into each other in the elevator.

Elias Langley glanced at the elevator showing the 8th floor, so he didn't press any floor.

Victor Langley asked, "Are you here to see Jared?"

Elias Langley watched the ascending numbers and replied indifferently, "No, I'm here to pick up my wife."

Victor Langley was shocked, thinking he misheard.

"You... you're married?"

"Yes."

Elias Langley remained calm and composed.

Victor Langley's shock turned into rage.

"How could you not seek my opinion on something so big? You're supposed to be the one marrying into the Sinclair Family, how could you just marry any woman? Even if it's a physical need, you could keep

her hidden, but how could you marry her? You just honored the Sinclair's treasured gem by marrying her, and now you're doing this, how will I explain this to the Sinclairs?"

Elias Langley looked at him lightly, "Can't go three sentences without you, are you my dad?"

Victor Langley almost exploded with anger, "An elder brother acts as a father, I'm qualified to manage you!"

Elias Langley smiled faintly, "The law provides for free marriage, don't impose your lifestyle on me because... I also hate rotten cucumbers."

Victor Langley was so choked by his words that his chest ached.

The elevator door opened, and Elias Langley strode out, heading toward Jared's hospital room.

Victor Langley was determined to see which money-loving woman his brother married, so he tightly followed him.

Before they got close to Jared's room, they heard the sound of an argument inside.

Sylvia Sheridan has apparently been standing outside the door for a while, hence her very intense reaction.

Jared Langley's brow twitched, he looked at Juliana, "Was it you who brought her here?"

Of course, it was.

But before Juliana could speak, Sylvia Sheridan interjected, "Are you scared seeing me here?"

Jared Langley frowned deeply and finally withdrew his arm propped against the wall, walking toward her.

"Things are not as you think. This is just a transaction. Being with her complements me, and I get more resources and bargaining chips, only this way we might..."

Before he could finish, Sylvia Sheridan slapped his face.

"Might what? Be your mistress?"

Sylvia Sheridan always spoke gently, but now her voice was full volume.

"Jared Langley, you're the one who pursued me, yet you don't have the courage to take responsibility, and you have the nerve to use our future as an excuse to marry someone else."

Tears streamed down her face, she pulled a folded paper from her handbag and flung it in his face.

"Luckily I've seen your true face in time, this is an abortion form. When I decided not to have this child, it was over between us. So, I don't want you!"

Jared Langley picked up the abortion form from the ground, so shocked he forgot his own last name.

"You... you can naturally conceive my child?"

Sylvia Sheridan bit her lip, "The father of my child would never be someone like you."

Having said this, she glanced at Juliana, acknowledging their past grievances, though she was in the wrong first.

She said nothing to Juliana and turned to leave the ward.

But as she stepped out, she almost bumped into Victor Langley.

Sylvia Sheridan's gaze flickered briefly, ultimately mustering the courage to glare at Victor Langley before running away.

Jared Langley chased after her and paused when he saw his father.

Victor Langley, having just been angered by Elias, now faced another big shock from his son.

He immediately burst into anger, "You bastard! Whether she is related by blood or not, she is your uncle's daughter, your cousin! I held you in such high regard, and you... you've embarrassed our entire Langley Family!"

Jared Langley didn't want to argue about his relationship with Sylvia, he only replied softly, "Dad, we were sincere."

"Sincere, my foot! If your uncle finds out you stole his precious cabbage, you're in for a chop."

Victor Langley was furious enough to curse.

In the midst of chaos, Elias Langley calmly walked past them and into the ward.

"Mrs. Langley, shall we go?"

Juliana smiled softly and nodded.

Under the surprised gazes of Victor Langley and Jared Langley, Elias took Juliana's hand.

"Allow me to formally introduce, Juliana, my wife."

Victor Langley looked as if he'd been struck by lightning, stumbling back a step, all color drained from his face.

Jared Langley suddenly felt enormously embarrassed, "Uncle, when did you two start?"

Elias Langley looked calmly at his slightly distorted face and said lightly, "Before you broke your head and mistook my wife for your fiancée, she was already mine."

His tone paused slightly, and his eyes filled with ridicule.

"What, just because you weren't clear-headed for a few days, you really took my wife's humanitarian cooperation as a charity performance, mistaking it for your own love story?"

Jared Langley felt incredibly awkward.

But Elias Langley no longer looked at him, turning to Juliana and warmly saying "Let's go," then leaving the hospital room with her, not looking back as they went toward the elevator.

Victor Langley, who had been silent, finally came to his senses.

"You... each and every one of you... are trying to drive me to death..."

He lifted his hand, unsure whether to point east or west.

After a violent tremor, his vision went black, and he swayed as if about to fall.

"Dad!"

Jared Langley hurriedly caught him...

The elevator descended, Juliana looked at Elias Langley's profile.

Perhaps due to work fatigue, several nights without sleep, there was a hint of blue under his eyes.

"Did we agree on a secret marriage first? Telling your brother like this, can he handle it?" Juliana asked.

Elias Langley released her hand but then wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

"They're my family, they ought to know, just say it, whether they can handle it or not doesn't concern us."

Juliana almost burst into laughter at his words.

Later, Elias drove them back to their apartment.

The first thing Elias did upon entering was to find the medicine box and count the pills.

Seeing that Juliana had taken her medication daily, his brow finally relaxed.

"Taking your meds on time, good girl."

He turned and naturally pulled Juliana into his arms as she came near, his chin lightly rubbing her hair, his voice carrying a touch of weary relief and relaxation.

"Have you been eating on time?"

Juliana let him hold her, neither responding to his affectionate gesture nor answering his question.

After a few seconds of silence, she asked in a clear, cool voice, "Why did you bail out Sylvia Sheridan?"

Chapter 242: Find a Way to Stop Her

Elias Langley's arm barely loosened for a moment before he pushed her slightly away and looked down into her eyes.

"The last time at the bar, I arrived just in time because she tipped me off. I owed her a favor, and now we're even."

However, Juliana Jacobs wasn't pleased with his explanation.

Elias Langley pulled her to sit by the sofa.

"The investigation results of Mason Sheridan's case are favorable to Sylvia Sheridan. Although she provided the incense, it can't be proven that she was the one who added 'Stone Marrow Chrysanthemum' to the incense used by Mason Sheridan."

Juliana Jacobs' fingertips trembled slightly.

She had heard of "Stone Marrow Chrysanthemum," a rare medicinal herb that in small doses acts as a powerful stimulant but in excess can erode the nerves.

"The official conclusion is that Mitchell Shepherd, seeking quick results, mistakenly increased the dosage, causing poisoning due to operational error," Elias Langley's voice was flat as if reading a dry report. "He brought it upon himself."

Juliana lowered her eyes. She cared more about the truth behind the incident than the outcome of the case.

The box of incense with "Stone Marrow Chrysanthemum" was originally given to her by Sylvia Sheridan.

This meant that had she used that box of incense, even if an incident had led to a police report, the result could easily have been twisted to her "seeking instant success and misusing a home remedy."

The thought sent a chill creeping up her spine.

"Juliana," Elias Langley turned his head to look at her, "if it's my bailing her out that upset you, I apologize."

"You've explained, I won't pursue it," Juliana Jacobs replied softly.

But despite her words, she couldn't shake the feeling of unease.

On the surface, it seemed like Elias Langley had bailed Sylvia Sheridan out without discussing it with her, but the whole matter highlighted the major power imbalance between them.

Elias Langley always wielded the power to set and break rules, while she... whether his actions stemmed from good or ill intentions, she couldn't change that.

Elias Langley saw her fall silent and changed the subject, "I've heard that Aetherflame's next-generation solid-state battery research is nearly complete?"

Juliana looked up to meet his deep gaze, "Yes, it's still being tested."

Elias Langley noticed she didn't want to say more and lightly brushed his fingers over the back of her hand.

"If the technology draws too much attention, it might be safer to operate through a shell company. If necessary, I can arrange that."

"We'll see."

Juliana quietly withdrew her hand, picked up a cup from the coffee table, took a sip, and gazed at the deep night outside the window.

"We're not at that point yet."

Elias Langley watched her serene profile, his eyes growing darker, but ultimately said nothing more.

The next day, Juliana left without telling Elias Langley what she was going to do, but Elias Langley knew her schedule.

Two hours later, they were going to meet at a forum.

Perhaps there, he could find an opportunity to do something for her, to compensate for the displeasure caused by the Sylvia Sheridan incident.

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The final and most important forum of the Energy Storage Summit was held at the new convention center.

Many big names in the new energy industry who hadn't shown up in the previous sessions made an appearance at this forum.

The entire venue was purposefully designed to resemble a futuristic laboratory.

The backdrop of the main stage was a giant circular screen, and the center of the stage had a transparent demonstration area, fully equipped with various interfaces and instruments.

The forum hadn't been going on for long before it was Aetherflame's turn to speak.

Caleb Shaw, in a dark suit, walked steadily to the front of the stage.

Behind him, the giant screen was filled with the PPT presentation, showcasing Aetherflame's new corporate logo, and the name imbued with deep meaning—"Genesis."

"Ladies and gentlemen," Caleb Shaw's voice spread throughout the venue via microphone, "today, Aetherflame Dynamics is honored to introduce a technology that can redefine energy storage, and we've named it 'Genesis.'"

He had practiced yesterday for these two minutes on stage.

The PPT displayed astounding new battery theoretical parameters: energy density surpassing existing top products by dozens of times, charging and discharging efficiency near theoretical limits, and a cycle life of up to ten years.

The audience began to stir, and even many seasoned experts expressed disbelief, saying, "That's simply impossible."

Caleb Shaw did not flinch.

"I know many of you may not believe it, just like a month ago, I didn't believe I could transition from a surgeon to the head of a new energy R&D company. Any technology that outpaces its era needs data to support it, so please give us a moment, and we'll demonstrate it for you."

Juliana Jacobs and several company R&D personnel, already wearing masks and holding equipment, waited at the side of the stage.

In the audience seating, in the center.

Quinn Shepherd hunched over and hurried to Elias Langley, whispering in his ear.

Elias Langley watched as Juliana was about to step on stage, his brow furrowing deeper.

On stage, Caleb Shaw announced loudly, "Next, please welcome the core developer of 'Genesis,' our Technical Director Ms. Juliana Jacobs, to give a demonstration."

In the audience, Elias Langley said in a low voice, "Find a way to stop her."

Quinn Shepherd hesitated for a moment, uncertain if he could succeed, then hurried backstage.

The audience's attention was instantly drawn to the demonstration platform, as if attracted by a magnet.

Juliana entered the demonstration area, dressed in a moonlight blue work uniform, her face masked, with only her calm eyes and unhurried steps revealing her identity.

Though her face was not clearly visible, the audience was abuzz.

"So young, could she really be the Technical Director?"

"I heard she was once a top student in the Materials Department at Huacheng, groomed as a promising talent, but then disappeared into R&D."

"So the credibility of this technology should be quite high, right?"

"Hush, be quiet, watch her demonstration."

Just as Juliana picked up the connecting cable to link 'Genesis' to an industrial laser device needing substantial external power, a faint pop was heard, a burst of electrical sparks erupted at the connection point, and smoke billowed.

The laser's indicator lights went out instantly, leaving the core power on the demonstration stage dark.

The audience was immediately in an uproar.

Some skeptics among competitors and experts wore anticipative smiles as if watching a spectacle.

Quinn Shepherd wiped his forehead backstage, pulling out his phone to send Elias Langley a "done" emoji.

Though it might make Juliana a laughingstock, a little embarrassment was trivial compared to personal safety.

Juliana hadn't anticipated such an accident either.

She glanced at the burnt power interface, and just a second later, did something that left everyone stunned.

She went directly behind the laser, tore off the burnt power module with her bare hands, then took the wire connecting to 'Genesis' and directly connected it to the laser's internal core circuit.

"What's she doing?" the audience exclaimed in shock.

Elias Langley immediately furrowed his brow.

Chapter 243: Elias Langley's Most Indefensible Weakness

Without specialized equipment, without complex procedures, the moment the wire was connected, the laser control screen suddenly lit up, and a clear system prompt sounded, "External emergency power has been connected, the system is ready."

The entire process took no more than two or three breaths' time.

Juliana pressed the start button, and a giant laser beam roared out, quickly melting through the thick steel plate in the distance.

The light clearly illuminated every speechless face in the audience below.

It should be noted that what she just did was akin to using a small battery to forcibly start a stalled tank.

The demonstration ended, and the entire venue fell into dead silence.

Caleb Shaw held the microphone and said in an extremely faint voice, "Our power remains at 100%."

After a brief silence, even those who were initially skeptical were convinced.

The audience erupted into thunderous applause, and immediately some reporters wanted to interview Juliana, but Caleb Shaw blocked them.

As long as the world knows Juliana's name, that's enough.

He protected her, leaving the stage side by side.

In the backstage, Quinn Shepherd touched his forehead and closed his eyes.

Trying to be clever backfired, but instead, it further contributed to Juliana's success.

This time, he probably would face some consequences.

In the company car, Juliana and a few colleagues were organizing the equipment.

Quinn Shepherd walked over, stood by the car, and hesitated to speak.

Juliana saw him and got out of the car.

"Did I drag you down?"

It seemed like she knew everything.

Quinn Shepherd was embarrassed for a moment, then gestured with his chin towards the nearby red flag, "He's a bit angry."

Juliana turned back, said a few words to her colleagues, and proceeded towards the red flag car.

She opened the car door; Elias Langley was sitting in the back seat, not turning his gaze at her movements, simply staring at the open space ahead of the concrete pillars.

Juliana sat inside, and the car was filled with a refreshing scent of snow-white gentian.

"Do you know the consequences of doing this?"

Elias Langley's voice was low, without any fluctuations, but the hand resting on his thigh, with visible knuckles, betrayed the emotions he was trying hard to suppress.

Juliana was indifferent, "I am famous now. In the future new energy industry, the name Juliana Jacobs will be an unavoidable presence."

Elias Langley frowned at her words, "Was it necessary to do this?"

Juliana nodded truthfully, "Isn't this just envy of you all? A person the police don't want to catch can be easily caught with just one word, and someone they don't want to release, with just one word... gracefully termed 'bail.'"

For the first time, Elias Langley turned his head to look at her, and in those deep eyes were emotions she couldn't fathom.

He sighed softly, "I've already explained Sylvia Sheridan's matter to you. You shouldn't act impulsively like this; the danger you're exposing yourself to is too great."

Juliana pursed her lips, "I accept your explanation, but it still bothers me. Elias Langley, how long do you think you can protect me? Can you ensure that you will never face a situation in your life where you must choose between two options? If such a time comes, will you be able to abandon everything and resolutely choose me?"

Her words pierced the area where Elias Langley was most vulnerable and unable to argue.

The pain in his eyes deepened, and he closed them, opening them again to reveal nothing but an unfathomable exhaustion.

"Juliana, you have no idea what you are dealing with now. There are some risks you shouldn't encounter."

"Oh?" Juliana raised an eyebrow, her tone carrying a hint of amusement, "It seems like President Langley knows some insider information? How dangerous is it, why don't you tell me?"

Elias Langley's Adam's apple moved, words came to his tongue, but meeting her clear yet playful eyes, they were pushed back deep inside.

The experience of Sebastian Sinclair was vivid in his memory, but he couldn't bring it up.

Juliana took in his momentary struggle and silence, and let out a cold, light laugh.

"Since you can't be sure, what right do you have to criticize my act of 'protection' today? Choosing the lesser of two evils, isn't that a form of helplessness?"

She finished speaking and simply pushed open the car door, getting out.

On the other side, Caleb Shaw also returned from the venue, exchanged a few words with her, and they, along with other colleagues, got into Aetherflame's company car.

Quinn Shepherd returned to the driver's seat and stole a glance in the rearview mirror.

Elias Langley sat with a face as dark as water, the back of his hand on his knee with protruding veins, his knuckles white with tension.

Having followed him for so many years, it was rare to see him this angry.

Quinn Shepherd steadied his nerves and cautiously spoke, "Boss, the base is urging you to go over quickly."

Elias Langley rubbed his temples and said in a deep voice, "Let's go."

He picked up his phone and sent a message to Juliana, indicating he would not return in the evening, and Juliana did not reply.

The summit ended in the morning, and Aetherflame's phones were bombarded in the afternoon.

This previously almost unknown small company in the industry had its website and switchboard inundated within hours by transcontinental calls from global capital and giants, its valuation soaring as if injected with superconducting fuel, skyrocketing in the venture capital market.

But Juliana remained calm, not even attending the victory banquet organized by Caleb Shaw.

She went to Summer Shaw's hospital room to say goodbye.

She went alone to Summer's hospital room.

The pure white room was silent, only the regular beeping of the monitor proving that the person on the bed was still alive.

Juliana gently grasped her cool hand, pressing it against her cheek.

"Summer, I'm leaving now, going to Kingsford..."

She felt a sourness in her nose, forcibly pressing down her rising emotions to continue.

"I must find the most optimal heart for you, to wake you up."

At this moment, the door to the ward was gently pushed open.

Juliana quickly wiped the tears from her eyes and turned her head.

Adrian Langley entered, seeing her eyes red, immediately asked, "Did you have a fight with Elias Langley?"

Juliana looked away, her voice hoarse: "It's none of your business."

Adrian Langley walked to her side, gazing at the comatose Summer Shaw in the ward, his expression complex.

"You're going to Kingsford without telling him?"

Juliana placed Summer's hand back under the covers, walked to the window, once again suppressing her emotions, then took a deep breath and said, "I remember everything now."

Adrian Langley was shocked, "You remember who your parents are? Know where your home is?"

"I am a person abandoned by them; whether I remember them or not is not important. But regarding Elias Langley..."

Juliana turned her eyes to him, the pain in them unmistakably clear.

"I cannot bring myself to hate him, yet I cannot let go of the thorn he drove into my heart. Going to Kingsford for a while is the best option now."

Watching her stifle her grief, Adrian Langley felt a tightness in his chest, an unprecedented impulse shattering his rationality.

He stepped forward, grasping her shoulders firmly, forcing her to face him.

Chapter 244: Setting a Trap for Florence Sinclair

"Juliana, actually I..."

Juliana Jacobs placed her hand on the back of his, interrupting what he was about to say.

"Thank you for taking me back to the Linton Family back then, letting me know what 'family' feels like. Whether or not we have a blood relation, you are my most important family."

Adrian Langley instantly understood the rejection beneath her calm words.

He said no more, just smiled gently, and clasped her hand in his palm, sincerely saying, "In my heart, we'll always be family. Whatever you need in the future, feel free to ask. Even if my abilities are limited, I'll do my best."

"I know." Juliana Jacobs nodded.

"Let's go, your luggage is all packed in the car, I'll drive you to the airport."

She agreed and followed him to the door.

As her hand reached for the doorknob, Juliana paused, glancing back at the sleeping figure on the hospital bed.

"Summer, you must wait for me."

...

Juliana Jacobs and Raine Kane arrived in Kingsford late at night.

She neither video-called Elias Langley nor sent him a message, as if she was trying to draw a clear line with him in this resolute manner.

After spending a night in a hotel, the next day Raine Kane rented a car and, with the address provided by Caleb Shaw, found the company named "Vivacore Bio."

Raine Kane stayed downstairs while Juliana went up alone.

At the front desk, Juliana politely said, "Hello, I'd like to speak with your person in charge of application approval. It's about my friend's cell-cultured heart application, and I want to discuss some matters face to face."

Her tone was sincere, but the receptionist merely lifted her eyelids, giving her a glance, her gaze even carrying a programmed scrutiny.

Seeing Juliana dressed plainly, the receptionist's tone took on a trace of disdain.

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No, but can I make one now?"

The receptionist snorted lightly from her nose, "Do you think this is some countryside diner booking a table?"

Patiently, Juliana said, "At least tell me the process, what do I need to do to meet your person in charge?"

"The process is that without an appointment, you can't meet them. To make an appointment, you're not qualified. Get out, don't damage our company's image here."

The receptionist waved impatiently, her tone becoming increasingly rude.

Just as she finished her words, her face filled with scorn suddenly changed, swiftly switching to one of utmost respect and humility.

Her gaze moved past Juliana, looking at the figure coming out of the elevator, bowing deeply, "Hello, Mr. Sinclair!"

Florence Sinclair usually couldn't be bothered with such greetings, but the figure standing by the front desk today made her steps falter a bit.

Juliana looked at her, a slight smile on her lips, "Miss Sinclair, we meet again."

Florence Sinclair paused, surprise briefly flashing across her face, then replaced by an appropriately warm smile, her voice gentle and poised.

"Ah, it's Miss Jacobs, what a coincidence. Let's talk in the conference room. Please follow me."

Juliana followed her to the conference room,

The moment the conference room door closed, arrogance immediately crept up Florence Sinclair's brow.

"Since you're here, I'll officially inform you that your friend's heart cultivation application is rejected due to failing the body function examination."

"Exactly what was unqualified?" Juliana pressed.

"Do I need to explain to you?" Florence Sinclair raised her eyebrows with a cold smile, "If you're so eager to save her, why not give her your own heart instead of pestering here?"

Juliana seemed to be grasped by her, not daring to lash out, her tone even carried a plea.

"Second Miss Sinclair, please, my friend's situation is critical. Could you tell me what I need to do to pass the review? I'll cooperate immediately."

Seeing her so submissive, Florence Sinclair sneered, "Do you think Kingsford is some small place in the country? Vivacore's cutting-edge technology is meant for the elite, not every Tom, Dick, and Harry has the privilege to use it. Be grateful we even entertain the process for her. Now get lost, don't outstay your welcome."

Juliana seemed provoked by her words, her voice extremely aggrieved.

"If not for the Sinclair Family adopting you, giving you the opportunity for elite education, what right do you have to stand here today and categorize people, belittling ordinary lives?"

This sentence pierced Florence Sinclair's sore spot like a sharp blade; she hated it when people mentioned her adoptive daughter status.

"You!"

Florence Sinclair's face suddenly darkened. She stopped arguing, picked up the phone to call the reception.

"Send security to the conference room to remove this troublemaking woman who's attempting to steal our company's secrets!"

In no time, several security guards arrived.

Two of them took hold of Juliana, one on each side.

"How am I causing trouble? Clearly, Florence Sinclair has one face for the public, another behind the scenes! Let go of me!"

"What's going on?"

A deep male voice sounded from behind the group.

The security guards quickly made way, respectfully greeting, "Mr. Hughes."

Auden Hughes, wearing a simple white shirt, with a dark suit jacket casually draped over his arm, had sharp, wise eyes behind gold-rimmed glasses.

He walked into the conference room with a composed stride.

"Auden, you came just in time. Someone is here causing trouble, I'm handling it."

Florence Sinclair stepped forward, habitually linking arms with him.

Auden Hughes's gaze swept over her arm before meeting Juliana's eyes.

A fleeting look of amusement passed through his eyes behind the glasses, so quick it seemed like an illusion.

Juliana almost imperceptibly pressed her lips together,

Auden Hughes gently adjusted his glasses, his voice carrying a clear chill.

"Our 'Rebirth Project' is at the critical stage of applying for national key project funding. At a time like this, any negative public opinion, even just an unfounded rumor, could cause the evaluators to doubt our professionalism and stability. So I have some skepticism about this lady's purpose in causing trouble here now."

After he spoke, Florence Sinclair feigned sudden realization.

"So that's her plan... I didn't see it. Juliana, you're vicious."

Auden Hughes looked scrutinizingly at Juliana, his tone very serious.

"This lady has already impacted our company's image. Take her to my office. I'll personally... evaluate her."

"Yes, Mr. Hughes."

Two guards escorted Juliana to the office.

Auden Hughes pulled back from Florence Sinclair's grip and walked off.

"Auden!" Florence Sinclair anxiously called after him, "How do you plan to handle her?"

Auden smirked indulgently, "Don't worry, I'm quite experienced at dealing with drama queens like her. After all... I watch you every day."

With that, not waiting for her reaction, he turned and walked to the office.

Florence Sinclair felt something wasn't right but couldn't pinpoint what it was.

At that moment, the receptionist rushed over to her.

"Mr. Sinclair, madam's car has arrived at the parking lot downstairs."

Florence Sinclair felt a momentary panic.

No matter if Juliana was the lost daughter of the Sinclair Family, Florence's first instinct was to prevent her adoptive mother from meeting Juliana.

"Why is she here at this time? Didn't you tell her over the phone that we're very busy?"

After complaining, Florence Sinclair hurriedly walked to the elevator.

The general manager's office door closed.

Auden Hughes casually threw the jacket draped on his arm onto the sofa, rolling up his shirt sleeves as he walked towards Juliana.

"Stop pretending, hand it over."

Chapter 245: My Courtesy Always Depends on the Person

Juliana Jacobs's expression of frailty instantly vanished, replaced with a look of fearlessness as she pulled a slender recording device from inside her coat pocket and tossed it onto his desk.

"Every minute, it automatically sends remotely during recording. A new gadget for you."

Auden Hughes paused in his step as he passed her, then continued towards the bar area.

"Old classmate, you've become quite the celebrity since yesterday. You shouldn't play like this. What would you like to drink?"

"I've already filled up on the atmosphere here; what more could I drink?"

Juliana settled into the chair in front of his desk.

Auden was amused by her remark and made her a cup of milk tea, placing it in front of her.

"Florence isn't usually like this. Did you guys have a misunderstanding?"

Juliana looked at the milk tea cup but didn't pick it up.

"You mean I'm like her hormone trigger, and she acts hormonally charged whenever she sees me, exposing her true nature?"

Auden laughed again at her words.

"In high school, you were such a quiet little girl. How did you become so sharp-tongued? Aidan didn't raise his sister well."

"You've probably forgotten, but my courtesy has always been person-specific."

Auden closed his eyes briefly and clasped his hands in acquiescence.

"Aunt, I yield. Is that satisfactory?"

Juliana raised her chin slightly, "Then let's get down to business."

Auden put on a serious face and nodded.

Juliana blinked, "Do you really like Florence Sinclair?"

Auden almost fell off his chair.

"Is that business?"

Juliana nodded, "An opening closely related to business."

Auden was completely at her mercy, but his reply was nuanced.

"In small places, it's all about romance, but in Kingsford, you first consider each other's leverage. If romance can be added, then all the better."

Juliana sighed internally at the marriage views in this feng shui blessed land, inadvertently thinking of Elias Langley.

He too grew up in such an environment, but he...

Juliana quickly quelled her thoughts, a sly smile curving her lips.

"I plan to edit your girlfriend's spectacular performance into a short video and post it on Aetherflame's account, titled 'Unveiling the True Nature of the Sinclair Family's Adopted Daughter: The Scandal Behind the 'New Life Plan'.'"

Auden knew she was serious and stopped laughing.

"What are you aiming for?"

"Approve my friend's heart transplant request."

"Old classmate, that's a threat. I can retaliate in the same manner."

Juliana laughed, "Doesn't matter. Extending human life is your leverage, and what I've created can assist certain devices to do all or destroy all. Isn't this world about the mightiest being king? I'm not sure you can afford my drink."

Auden paused for two seconds at her words, "There's no need for this between us."

Juliana looked away, "I've struggled this far to not endure injustice anymore."

Auden jiggled the mouse to wake up the computer.

"What's your friend's name?"

"Summer Shaw. This month, your people went to Kenton to examine her body."

Auden searched the application list, but there was no entry.

It was likely Florence's directive to remove the applicant's name.

But since an examination was done, the information was still in the database and could be retrieved with some time.

Auden remained expressionless, "Heart transplants developed from one's own cells show no rejection, but it's not suitable for everyone. Without analyzing her data, I can't immediately answer you on this."

Juliana looked at him without speaking.

Auden leaned back in his chair, "I promise to objectively and fairly analyze your friend's data and reach a truthful conclusion."

"You only have one shot at earning my trust, make it count."

Auden gave an exasperated smile, "Classmate, don't talk to me like this, it's unsettling."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sinclair had been sitting in Florence's office for quite some time.

She checked the time, "How much longer will Auden take?"

"I'll call and ask him."

Florence was also uneasy, unsure what Juliana and Auden could be discussing that took so long in the office.

But as she took out her phone, Mrs. Sinclair stopped her, "Never mind, don't disturb his work. Pass this box of American ginseng on to him for me. Your grandfather's been saying you haven't come home for dinner together in ages. Is there any issue between you two?"

"No, absolutely not," Florence replied with a steady face.

"Then make some time to come home together for dinner."

Having said that, Mrs. Sinclair prepared to leave.

As for Juliana, she held no sympathy for Auden's kindness.

She stood up, "Resent by association, you'll have to endure it first."

Auden burst out laughing.

He wanted to escort her, but Juliana refused, "Go review my friend's documentation right now. I want your prompt response."

Auden knew her independent nature and nodded, "Next time, just say you're looking for me; the front desk won't dare stop you."

Juliana nodded, "If this goes well, I'll treat you to a meal next time."

Auden laughed again.

Juliana opened the door and walked out on her own.

Florence reached the doorknob before Mrs. Sinclair.

As the door opened a crack, Juliana was just passing by.

Their gazes locked.

From Juliana's position, she couldn't see inside the office.

Mrs. Sinclair was about to step over.

Florence tossed a glare at Juliana, slamming the door shut.

Juliana was momentarily stunned, murmuring "Crazy" as she left.

Florence clutched her stomach, crouching down, Mrs. Sinclair hurriedly approached.

"Florence, what's wrong?"

"Mom, I suddenly have a stomachache."

Mrs. Sinclair quickly helped her over to the sofa.

"It's probably because I had cold water in the morning for convenience," Florence muttered, frowning.

"You already have poor uterine health; in this season, you can't take cold things."

Mrs. Sinclair quickly poured her a glass of water.

"After you marry Auden, you should immediately plan to have kids, so take care of your health."

Florence slowly finished drinking the water, estimated that Juliana was long gone, and only then did her "stomachache" subside.

"Okay, Mom, I'll take care of it. Let me see you off."

She stood up, linking her arm with her mother's.

"Are you really okay?" Mrs. Sinclair was still worried.

Florence smiled, "The water you pour can cure all my pain."

Mrs. Sinclair laughed at her words, "Looks like you and Auden are doing well. Only a cherished woman can speak so sweetly."

"Mom," Florence opened the door, "My brother-in-law seems very busy in Kenton, and doesn't like coming back to Kingsford. Isabelle seemed quite down after her last visit, keep an eye on her."

Mrs. Sinclair lightly patted her hand while walking.

"Victor Langley called a while ago saying he'd visit Kingsford after he wraps up work; he probably wants to discuss Isabelle's marriage. Elias has someone over there, which surprised your father and me. But the truth of it all, we'll ask him directly when he returns before deciding."

Mrs. Sinclair frowned slightly as she spoke.

"The Sinclair Family won't tolerate infidelity. Others might call a mistress a 'second lady', but in our family, it's impossible."

Florence nodded, "Actually, my brother-in-law's always been upright and very self-disciplined. If he did slip, the other party's tactics were too clever."

Mrs. Sinclair wanted to say something more, but the elevator arrived.

So she advised, "You and Auden should be good. In a relationship, loyalty is fundamental; it's more important than anything else."

"Don't worry, Mom, we're doing fine."

As Florence finished speaking, the elevator door had already closed.

The smile vanished from her face as she swiftly turned towards Auden's office.

Down in the parking lot.

Raine Kane sat in the driver's seat, eating candied hawthorn sticks. With two pieces left, Juliana got into the car but didn't rush her, waiting for her to finish.

"So, will the recording make Florence listen to reason?" Raine asked while eating.

Juliana stared listlessly at the windshield ahead, "I don't intend to use the recording to control anyone, just to secure a fair opportunity."

Raine turned to look at her, not yet saying the word 'right' when, not far away, the elevator doors opened, heralded by Vivacore Bio's front desk clerk's respectful voice.

"Mrs. Sinclair, please take care."

Chapter 246: Isabelle Sinclair Comes Knocking Herself

The two of them simultaneously turned their attention to the scene.

They saw Mrs. Sinclair nodding to the person who had escorted her, then stepping out of the elevator with a graceful stride.

Underneath, she wore a dark green dress with excellent drape, over which she had a silk long coat in sandalwood color, her neck adorned only with a strand of lustrous South Sea Pearls matching the two simple pearl earrings on her earlobes.

She looked serene and dignified.

Juliana's sense of time froze at that moment.

That was her mother, fourteen years had deepened her natural elegance, making it more solid and... unfamiliar.

She recalled the last night before leaving home, when the rain drizzled outside.

Juliana was squatting on the hallway carpet playing with puzzles, the study door not fully closed, letting light spill out along with her father's and Elias Langley's grave conversation.

Elias Langley was reporting on the itinerary, repeatedly emphasizing safety measures.

It seemed this was his first mission with her father, and he was quite nervous.

Her mother came carrying a cup of herbal tea, gently patting her head as she walked past, then entered the study.

"Since it's a mock tourist trip, take Juliana along. With her there, it looks more genuine, and it's safer for you. I trust Elias, you both will return safely."

Juliana didn't remember what was said after that.

Before leaving the next day, her mother bent down with a smile, reminding her, "You must behave on the road, don't bother your father, help me protect him, okay?"

At that time, although Juliana was already 12, she didn't know much about her father's situation.

She nodded in confusion, joyously following her father out the door.

Unexpectedly, a few days later, she became a shield for her father, ultimately abandoned in the icy river water.

"Juliana? Juliana!"

Raine Kane gently shook her arm, pulling her back from cold memories.

"What were you thinking about so intently? I called you several times without any response."

Juliana lowered her eyes to hide their redness, replying, "What did you say?"

Raine Kane nodded toward the departing white Alfa.

"I said, you and she look somewhat alike in your bone structure."

Juliana lifted an eyebrow slightly, her tone as faint as a wisp of smoke.

"There's no need to doubt my background. If I were, Elias Langley would've found me long ago."

Raine Kane blinked: Is this why Mr. Langley forbids anyone from acquiring Juliana's biological materials?

"Drive," Juliana instructed.

"Oh."

Raine Kane started the car.

Vivacore Bio General Manager's Office.

Florence Sinclair pushed open the door.

The first thing she did was turn on the office ventilation system.

She couldn't stand the scent of another woman in Auden Hughes's office.

Auden Hughes kept his eyes on the computer screen, ignoring her actions.

"What were you talking about with Juliana for so long?"

"Personal matters," Auden Hughes said, still not looking up from the screen.

Florence stood in front of the desk, her tone questioning, "Didn't you say you were going to interrogate her? How did it become flirting instead?"

Auden Hughes remained silent, his fingers still typing rapidly on the keyboard.

Not getting a response, Florence's anger soared, she hurried to the desk and yanked out the computer's power cord.

Auden Hughes finally looked up at her, his brows slightly furrowed.

"I have nothing to say about fabricated matters."

"I'm warning you, she's a promiscuous woman! If you're with me, you must stay clean!"

Auden Hughes met her gaze, speaking calmly, "Could you act like this in front of your parents?"

"Auden Hughes!"

Ignoring her fury, he got up, reconnected the power, and in a low clear voice said, "Sometimes, I wish your parents could see the real you. If I don't comply with Juliana's request, tomorrow your parents will see it."

"What... what did you say?" Florence said incredulously.

Auden Hughes picked up the voice recorder on the table, tossing it in front of her.

"Listen well. I don't care what grudge you have with him, but your personal matters shouldn't affect the company. Vivacore is our reputation, even though we're a couple, I can't allow you to tarnish it. Be careful next time with Juliana."

The recording had barely begun when Florence smashed the recorder.

"Juliana, how dare you set me up! Auden Hughes, you will not approve his friend's application!"

Auden Hughes, unfazed, leaned back into his chair.

"Fine, as long as you retrieve the recording from her phone, I'll reject it instantly."

Florence gritted her teeth.

She had to maintain her image, so she couldn't personally ask Juliana for the recording.

But Isabelle Sinclair could...

Thinking of this, she felt calmer.

"My mother came by, she wants us to find a time to go home for dinner."

Without thinking, Auden Hughes replied, "Not today, I have a dinner tonight."

...

Back at the hotel, Juliana and Raine Kane were living as if on vacation.

"Juliana, aside from waiting for the results, what's our plan in Kingsford?"

Raine Kane, holding a fruit plate, lounged in the chaise longue bored, popping an apple slice into her mouth.

"I can't seem to sit still, something feels off with me."

Standing by the window, Juliana looked out at the lined skyscrapers, her tone calm, "No plan."

"Huh?"

Raine Kane quickly popped a lychee into her mouth.

Juliana turned to look at her, her lips curling into a smile, "Why rush? We won't be idle for long; someone will soon come looking for trouble. I'm waiting for them... to drag me into the game."

In the afternoon, Juliana took a shower, changed into pajamas, and prepared for a nap.

At that moment, the room door was opened with the hotel's master key.

Raine Kane raised an eyebrow towards the door, musing: Here comes the action?

The door opened, and Isabelle Sinclair entered unceremoniously with the hotel's director of room service and a few bodyguards.

"How do you even have the nerve to come to Kingsford, you bitch?"

Isabelle got angry just looking at Juliana's face.

Juliana didn't even bother to lift her eyelids, slowly tidying her sleeves.

"If Kingsford is a refuge for people like you, then yes, I've come rather unexpectedly."

Isabelle almost boiled with rage.

"Mr. Wyatt, how can someone like her stay at your hotel? Get them out immediately!"

Not daring to offend the Sinclair family, Mr. Wyatt had no choice but to step forward, "Miss Jacobs, an extremely important guest has specifically requested this suite. Please assist us by moving to another five-star hotel."

Juliana glanced at him nonchalantly, "Can you just throw out a guest who's legally extended their stay for the sake of an 'important guest'? Is your hotel a stellar establishment or merely a symbol of currying favor?"

The director of room service was at a loss for words.

"What's the point of talking to her!"

Isabelle shoved him aside, ordering the bodyguards, "Throw these two out along with their belongings."

"Especially..." She pointed at Raine Kane, "this woman who can fight well, beat her to a pulp."

Raine Kane instantly brimmed with excitement.

The bodyguards moved at the command.

Two of them clearly aimed for the bedroom, intending to search through chaos for Juliana's phone to erase Florence's recording.

Yet before they reached the bedroom door, two loud thuds were heard.

Chapter 247: Sis, It Looks Like You're the One Getting Cheated On

Their two colleagues were immediately "wiped out" by Raine Kane.

The two of them didn't advance further but instead turned around for "rescue."

The result was equally futile.

Isabelle Sinclair was so furious she pointed at Juliana Jacobs and started cursing, "Juliana Jacobs, how dare you unleash a dog to bite people! I'm calling my brother-in-law right now!"

Saying that, she pulled out her phone.

Juliana casually sat down on the chaise longue and leisurely said to Raine Kane, "She just called you a dog; aren't you going to do something about it?"

Raine Kane was initially hesitant, restraining herself, but upon hearing what Juliana said, she immediately walked towards Isabelle Sinclair.

"You, you, you... what are you doing?"

Isabelle Sinclair wanted to escape but was grabbed in an instant.

Raine Kane swept her leg, making Isabelle fall flat on her face, and then stepped on her back.

Juliana Jacobs said slowly, "The Sinclair Family is a prominent family; how did they raise a daughter who spews such foul language? Since your parents haven't disciplined you, I'll educate you in their place today."

"Who do you think you are, to educate me? Juliana Jacobs, if you dare touch a single hair on my head, my brother-in-law will surely stand up for me."

At this point, Elias Langley was the only hope she could cling to.

Juliana couldn't be bothered with her, got up and went to the entrance, taking two long shoehorns from the cabinet next to it, and handed them to Raine Kane.

"Use this to hit, it won't tire your hands."

Raine Kane took them, tested their feel, and laughed, "This thing's great, holding it feels like I'm her grandfather."

With the rise and fall of Raine Kane's hand, Isabelle Sinclair's screams filled the entire presidential suite.

"Ah! Let me go! Juliana, I won't let you get away with this! I'm calling the police! Police!"

Isabelle Sinclair was crying and sniffing, looking nothing like a socialite at all.

The housekeeping supervisor nearby didn't dare to intervene and could only watch helplessly.

However, the louder Isabelle screamed, the harder Raine struck.

The first shoehorn broke, then they moved onto the second one.

Juliana picked up the fruit platter Raine hadn't finished at lunch, leisurely sat on the chaise, eating while saying, "Calling the police is a good idea. Call them after you're done, and meanwhile, talk about your illegal drug purchases from the black market. I wonder if two shoehorns will render you useless; if not..."

She glanced at the housekeeping supervisor who was already breaking into a cold sweat, "Go and bring me another dozen."

"Miss... Miss Jacobs, no, President Jacobs, this is all a misunderstanding, you're going to beat her to death."

Juliana gave a cold smile, "Then lie down next to her and get beaten in her place."

The housekeeping supervisor naturally refused, looking distressed, his legs were welded in place.

At this moment, the hotel manager walked in briskly.

Seeing Juliana sitting by the chaise, he bypassed the beaten Isabelle Sinclair and reached out towards Juliana from three meters away.

"President Jacobs, I deeply apologize! Allowing such unwarranted harassment to occur in our hotel is a severe negligence on my part."

Juliana's face showed no expression, she didn't even stand up when shaking hands with him.

The manager understood she was unhappy because it hadn't been properly addressed.

"Regarding today's matter, Second Miss Sinclair broke in illegally, intending to damage personal property, which was clearly observed. If you decide to call the police, the hotel will fully cooperate and provide all surveillance evidence."

He paused, then turned to his housekeeping supervisor.

"Supervisor Wyatt has abused his power and behaved inappropriately, he is immediately suspended and handed over to the group for internal review."

"Mr. Miller..." The housekeeping supervisor wore a pained expression, but his words were stifled by the manager's stern look.

Juliana could tell he was giving her a way out, and being a pragmatic person, she gestured for Raine to stop.

Isabelle Sinclair's buttocks throbbed with pain, and she sucked in sharp breaths, utterly embarrassed.

The manager hurriedly called for two employees to help her away.

"Mr. Miller, this is me giving you some face," Juliana said coolly.

The manager nodded quickly, "Yes, I guarantee, this will never happen again."

Finished, he tactfully left with the suspended housekeeping supervisor.

The housekeeping supervisor, unable to grasp the situation, complained quietly, "The Sinclair Family's status in Kingsford is immense; offending them because of this woman, are you seeking your own suspension?"

The manager shot a disapproving glance at this person who remained oblivious even facing ruin.

"Fool, your shortsightedness will not ruin our hotel!"

Raine Kane closed the door and flexed her wrist.

"This is the first time I've ever been so satisfied with spanking someone's butt, but... will it cause any trouble for you?"

"What do you mean by causing me trouble? Didn't I just instruct you to take action?"

Juliana's response made Raine Kane break into a grin.

After a pause of two seconds, Juliana turned her head to look out the window, lifting her chin.

"I want to stir up the Sinclair Family, to see what capabilities these two sisters have to stop the Sinclair Family from approaching me."

Raine didn't completely understand her plan, just stood perplexed, scratching her head.

...

Isabelle Sinclair's butt was left bruised and battered, yet she didn't immediately inform her adoptive parents, instead she first called Florence Sinclair.

By the time Florence reached the hospital, Isabelle was already receiving an IV.

"Sis... The recording couldn't be retrieved," Isabelle sobbed, "Juliana Jacobs stole my man and even beat me up. Are we seriously powerless against her?"

Seeing her sister in such a state, Florence was both furious at Juliana's ferocity and annoyed at this useless sister who couldn't even serve as a tool.

"I told you before, her bodyguard is very skilled, take more people with you, yet you wouldn't listen. Now see, you didn't gain any advantage and got a severe beating instead."

"How was I supposed to know she was so tough? Even four men couldn't fend her off. Let's tell mom, mom surely has a way to handle her."

"Are you stupid? Just because she bears some resemblance to mom, do you think mom could heartlessly take actions against her?"

Florence's words made Isabelle furrow her brow.

"So am I supposed to swallow this humiliation? I can't stand it!"

"I've already arranged for someone to monitor her," Florence replied coldly, "Once we catch her doing something incriminating, there'll be plenty of means to deal with her."

By the time Isabelle finished her IV, it was already evening, and not wanting her parents to know about the injury, she couldn't stay in the hospital, she had to go home as usual.

She tried to get up from the hospital bed; with just a slight movement, sharp pain shot through her, causing her to gasp, making it difficult to move steadily.

"Do you need a wheelchair?" Florence asked.

Isabelle was sweating profusely, shaking her head, "I don't dare to sit."

"If this injury doesn't come back at her tenfold, you'll become the laughingstock of all Kingsford."

Florence scolded and then supported her all the way to the parking lot slowly.

It was then that her phone rang.

The call was from the person tailing, saying Juliana went to a couple's restaurant.

"My brother-in-law isn't even in Kingsford, why would she go to a couple's restaurant alone?" Isabelle wondered aloud.

Florence was somewhat disdainful of her sister's intelligence, "Of course, she went for a date; the couple's restaurant wouldn't let you in unless you're a pair."

Upon hearing this, Isabelle momentarily forgot her pain, her eyes sparkling.

"Juliana Jacobs is cheating! Quickly, take some photos, then send them to my brother-in-law, without him as a backup, let's see how arrogant she gets!"

Florence was thinking the same.

So, Isabelle lay on the back seat, as Florence drove to the restaurant, ready to secretly photograph Juliana's date.

Once they arrived, they quickly found Juliana.

Juliana was in a well-tailored long-sleeve dress, indeed looking more dressed-up than her usual casual style.

At that moment, she was conversing with a man sitting opposite her, facing away from them.

She appeared relaxed, with a pleasant smile, easily sparking the imagination.

Isabelle hid behind a column, enduring the stinging pain in her bottom, raised her phone aiming at that direction, gritting her teeth and whispering, "I have to see, who is this 'little white...'"

The word "face" had not yet formed when she suddenly stopped.

"Sis!" She tugged on Florence's sleeve, "It looks like you're the one being cheated on."

Chapter 248: At This Moment, She Misses Elias Madly

Florence Sinclair fixed her gaze, and the man facing away from them turned his head to speak to the waiter.

The face was undoubtedly Auden Hughes, who had refused to join her for lunch at the Sinclair Family home earlier, citing a social engagement.

Florence Sinclair felt her blood freeze in an instant, her phone almost slipping as she was about to take a photo.

She had suspected these two were up to something; it seemed her intuition was correct.

"Sis," Isabelle Sinclair nudged her, "Why are your eyes so red? Do you have high blood pressure?"

"Juliana... Juliana! I'll make you pay!"

Florence swallowed her anger, quickly finding a number among her contacts and dialing it.

Auden Hughes was chatting with Juliana Jacobs about funny high school anecdotes when a walking stick suddenly dropped behind him.

Caught off guard, he took a solid hit.

He turned around, not daring to show anger, and stood up respectfully.

"Grandpa, what are you doing?"

By now, the entire restaurant was watching them.

Old Mr. Hughes pointed at Juliana Jacobs and said, "The Hughes Family's reputation is not yours to squander in such places with this kind of woman!"

"This kind of woman," the words whipped through the air like a lash, full of humiliation.

"How can you face Florence with what you're doing!"

The old man was so furious he jabbed his cane hard.

"Grandpa, who tattled to you? We're just having a normal meal here..."

"Old man!"

Juliana grasped her glass tightly, her knuckles slightly pale, but her face maintained a composed smile.

She interrupted Auden Hughes, taking over the confrontation.

"Saying your grandson is disgracing you—aren't you disgracing yourself by labeling a gender as indecent without knowing the facts? Is it in your heart that only your kind of gender is noble and respectable?"

"Juliana, let's not say anything more," Auden Hughes murmured in dissuasion.

But Juliana ignored him, "Don't forget, you were also born into this gender you label as 'indecent'."

"You..."

The old man's face flushed red, appearing unsteady.

Auden Hughes quickly supported him, "Grandpa, don't be upset."

"Old Mr. Hughes!" Juliana deliberately raised her voice, "Was it the Sinclair Family's second daughter who sent you here? She doesn't trust her boyfriend and violates others' privacy to track me, while you indiscriminately insult people and act if you're passing out pretending to extort sympathy. The Hughes and Sinclair Families are quite the match—hurry up and get them married; I'll definitely contribute."

Her words prompted laughter from the restaurant patrons.

Old Mr. Hughes, his faux fainting exposed, couldn't maintain his composure and immediately instructed his accompanying bodyguard, "Escort this woman back, let's have a good... discussion."

"Old Master Hawthorne, it's been a while, still so fiery."

Everyone turned to see Evan Grant walking forward with a calm demeanor, finally standing beside Juliana Jacobs.

Juliana's gaze darkened.

"Chairman Grant," Old Mr. Hughes's attitude improved noticeably, "You and her... are you..."

Evan Grant smiled faintly, "She is my ex-wife; we're here on a business trip to Kingsford. Old Master Hughes didn't know, she and your grandson are high school classmates."

Indeed, Old Mr. Hughes did not know and was momentarily speechless.

Continuing with a smile, Evan Grant said, "In the afternoon, I heard your grandson booked this restaurant to invite my ex-wife for a meal. My ex-wife didn't know this was a couples-only place, which I found inappropriate, but your grandson said there's a dish here unavailable elsewhere."

Everyone could understand; Auden Hughes had schemed against his ex-wife.

With a slight pause, Evan Grant gave Auden Hughes a sharp look, "Thanks for the hospitality, but she won't be visiting the Hughes Family, we bid farewell."

With that, he reached to put his arm around Juliana, intending to lead her away.

But Juliana anticipated his move first, picking up her bag and stepping forward.

Evan Grant awkwardly lowered his hand, dutifully falling into step.

Passing Auden Hughes, Juliana's gaze was calm, her voice cutting.

"Fake friendship isn't worth much; I hope Mr. Hughes gives a fair judgment on my friend's application. I'm brave enough to release the recording; it's up to you."

Auden Hughes frowned, "A misunderstanding, I'll explain another day."

But Juliana ignored him, leaving directly.

Old Mr. Sterling's expression became colorful,

Auden Hughes continued to support him, "Grandpa, you don't know what Florence's nature is? You've been provoked by her."

Thus, the grandfather and grandson left the restaurant under the eyes of curiosity, bearing the embarrassment.

Juliana proceeded to the restaurant door, the night wind hitting coolly against her face.

Evan Grant hurried to catch up, gripping her wrist with an unyielding gentleness, "I'll take you."

Juliana pulled her hand free, "Chairman Grant, you arrived quite coincidentally. Don't say you're waiting for Luna Thorne again; an old trick doesn't stay fresh."

Evan Grant pressed his lips, "Juliana, you blocked me, I couldn't reach you, so I had to check into you, follow you—it's all because you forced me to."

So it was all still her fault.

Juliana considered giving him a smile of irritation redundant, even reluctant to converse further.

"Stop being stubborn; let's discuss somewhere else," Evan Grant suggested.

"We have nothing to discuss."

At this point, Raine Kane had already pulled up with the car.

Juliana opened the car door and turned her head back, her gaze tranquil.

"Evan Grant, a conversation is two-way, not your unilateral announcement. When you're ready to speak to me in terms of 'discussing,' not 'ordering,' perhaps I'll consider giving you a few minutes."

"Also, your intervention tonight was utterly unnecessary, don't expect my gratitude."

With that, she stepped into the car.

Watching Juliana's car decisively merge into the traffic, Evan Grant's expression remained unaffected, yet his jawline tightened.

Ethan Carter approached quietly, "Chairman Grant, your appointment with the other party is coming up—you need to depart immediately."

Evan Grant withdrew his gaze with a dark mood, returning to his usual authoritative demeanor, "Let's go."

In the car, Juliana remained silent.

She found herself thinking of Elias Langley.

That man would never talk to her with Evan Grant's superior tone.

In her memory, every time they quarreled, no matter who initiated it, he would bow his head, take fault and soothe her in the end.

Juliana had never sought to argue for right or wrong in their marriage, but Elias's almost instinctive concessions and patience made her keenly feel she was someone he loved cautiously and appropriately.

Despite the past embedding a thorn in her heart, it still faintly ached.

Yet this pain couldn't obscure the fact she was fiercely missing him now.

Raine Kane didn't know what she was thinking, glanced at the rearview mirror, and called "Juliana" to bring her back to reality.

"Our original plan was to tempt Florence Sinclair to appear, making a fool of herself in front of everyone. The more embarrassed she becomes, the more she'll lose her composure. However, Evan Grant disrupted this; should we adjust our strategy?"

"No need to adjust," Juliana replied calmly, confidently, "I planted a thorn in Auden Hughes's heart. After going back, he'll certainly trouble Florence Sinclair."

Just as she finished speaking, Juliana's phone rang.

It was Elias Langley calling.

After forty hours of cold war between them, he took the initiative to call.

Chapter 249: The Resources He Commands Far Surpass Elias Langley

Juliana looked at those familiar digits, thought for a moment, and hung up.

The other end did not call back.

Auden Hughes watched his grandfather get into the car heading back to Hughes Manor, the gentle and respectful demeanor on his face vanished instantly.

With a blank expression, he picked up his phone and dialed Florence Sinclair's number.

At that moment, Florence Sinclair and Isabelle Sinclair were heading towards the parking lot, and the sudden ringing startled them both.

The name "Auden Hughes" on the screen made Isabelle more panicked than Florence.

"Sis, is he... is he going to come after you?"

Florence took a deep breath and pressed the answer button.

As soon as the call connected, Auden's icy voice came crashing through.

"I know you haven't gone far, get back here!"

Florence forced herself to stay calm, "If there's something, let's talk back at the place."

Auden agreed.

When Florence pushed the door open and entered the room, Auden was standing with his back to her by the window.

Isabelle originally didn't want to go up with her, but Florence said she'd take her home after resolving the conflict with Auden, so she had to gather her courage and follow inside, cautiously shrinking into the shadows of the entrance.

Auden turned around, looking at his girlfriend with eyes devoid of warmth.

"Florence Sinclair, does stalking, secretly photographing, and tattling make you feel proud today?"

Florence's pent-up anger flared instantly.

"And you? Auden Hughes, you knew it was a couple's restaurant, but still agreed to meet her there, what are your intentions?"

"Just a couple's restaurant, having a meal, not like going to a hotel room. Normal social engagement, and you see it as something so filthy?"

Florence wanted to say they agreed never to do anything that could be seen as betraying their relationship.

But with Isabelle there, she turned passionate instead, "You're clearly up to no good. Let me tell you, her friend's application, I will absolutely reject it!"

"Don't bring your personal grudges into company decisions, the company's not your battleground for petty fights."

"You... you're calling me a shrew?"

Florence couldn't believe it, and even more couldn't accept it, she stepped forward intending to grab Auden's arm to make him explain.

But Auden intensely didn't want to be touched by her then.

So he brusquely brushed away her pointing hand.

Florence lost her balance, staggered, and knocked down Isabelle who was about to step forward to intervene.

"Ah..."

Isabelle fell back, her bruised and sore hip suffered another hit, the already swollen and bruised subcutaneous blood vessels burst instantly, and dark red blood beads seeped out rapidly, staining her light-colored pants red.

The argument came to an abrupt halt.

Isabelle was in such pain she couldn't even make a sound...

The next day, as Juliana was about to head out for some business, Caleb Shaw's call came in.

His voice carried an uncontrollable excitement.

"Old Mr. Paxton's secretary just contacted me, he's very interested in our new battery, and asked specifically to meet you."

Juliana frowned, "Who is this old man?"

Caleb was momentarily choked by her bluntness.

"Let me put it this way, a lot of rules and methods we're following in our current work trace back to standards he set in the past. Many big names today were once under his guidance, which is why he's seen as someone rules can't bind. Because he himself is the standard."

"Like the Living Devil?"

Caleb admired her perceptiveness, "His public image is still 'kind'."

"Why're you so happy about being targeted by someone like this?"

"It's a double-edged sword, Old Mr. Paxton is... not, that's not what I mean, I didn't say that, even though he's retired, he wants to contribute to his family. He thinks highly of Aetherflame, and as long as he's willing, he can immediately make us the leader in national new energy! You must know, his words carry more weight than Elias Langley."

"Aetherflame has its own path, I don't want to grow it forcibly." Juliana's tone was calm yet firm, "If the Paxton Family doesn't have a solid foundation in the industry, and only rely on power, I refuse to collaborate."

The other end went silent.

Juliana softened her tone, "I understand, you want to give Summer a surprise when she wakes up. But I still hope Aetherflame progresses one step at a time."

"Alright, I'll refuse him."

After saying that, Caleb hung up the call.

"Kingsford, Paxton Family?" Raine Kane asked from the side.

"You know?" Juliana looked at her.

Raine's gaze drifted to the ceiling, she blinked, her expression somewhat subtle.

"Uh... Mr. Langley should know more. I heard Quinn Shepherd mention that even though Old Mr. Paxton and Mr. Langley don't get along now, Mr. Langley was once helped by Old Mr. Paxton."

Juliana pondered silently, didn't ask further, and the two of them went out together.

In the afternoon, Ethan Carter's call came in.

Juliana answered, only to hear Evan Grant's voice on the other end.

"I know you don't want to see me, but you'll be interested in what I have to show you," Evan said.

Juliana raised an eyebrow, "What have you found now? Trying to negotiate with me."

"Aren't you interested in who Mitchell Shepherd is working for?"

Juliana's slender fingers tapped on the phone case, "Alright, send me the time and place."

The other end paused for a moment, "You need to take me off your blacklist first."

Juliana didn't reply and hung up the call.

Five minutes later, Evan sent her the time and place for their meeting that night.

He added a final line: "If you can't find it, I'll come pick you up."

Juliana didn't respond to him.

In the evening, at The Cardinal Art Club.

Juliana wore a charcoal gray stretch suit set as she arrived on time.

Ethan Carter guided her and Raine Kane upstairs from the ground floor.

"You must not have been here in Kingsford these past few days, right?" Ethan explained as they walked, "This club only accepts private invitations, and members have a certain asset threshold."

Juliana heard this and only smiled faintly, not replying.

Arriving at the 16th-floor revolving café, the hall wasn't very crowded.

"There doesn't seem to be a problem here for now, but I'll be nearby and can quickly be by your side if anything happens," Raine whispered.

Juliana nodded and walked to the reserved window seat.

Evan was already waiting there, wearing a custom suit, his smile as enigmatic as ever.

"I'm glad you came."

He stood up, trying to show courtesy, but Juliana pulled out the chair opposite him and sat down herself.

"Didn't you want to show me what you found out?"

Evan chuckled, "You initially refused to cooperate with me."

Juliana raised an eyebrow, "Curious about what you found doesn't mean I agree to work with you."

"Juliana, I genuinely want to help you."

"Doesn't seem that way."

Evan pursed his lips, "You made a name for yourself at the Energy Storage Summit, and I'm happy for you. Having fame doesn't necessarily mean having social power. Since you don't want to rely on me to build Aetherflame bigger, you should choose another shortcut."

Juliana's gaze was profound, every smile seemed laden with meaning, "Oh? You're saying there's a shortcut..."

Evan lowered his voice, "Old Mr. Paxton greatly appreciates your ability, the resources he holds far exceed Elias Langley's. As long as you're willing to work with him, you'll become the undisputed leader in the domestic new energy field."

Juliana gazed at him, her eyes gradually showing a knowing understanding of everything.

"So, what's your connection with this Mr. Paxton?"

As soon as Juliana finished speaking, four men in black suits, exuding a fierce presence, silently surrounded her from behind.

Chapter 250: Competing with Fists Is the Lowest Form of Victory and Defeat

A man in a dark cashmere suit approached and said, "Miss Jacobs, Old Mr. Paxton would like to invite you upstairs for a chat."

Juliana Jacobs instinctively glanced around the café.

The man, who looked like a secretary, smiled faintly and said, "Wherever Old Mr. Paxton resides, it is always safe."

Juliana felt a shock. Even the fact that she was searching for Raine Kane was known to him.

Outside the café, Raine Kane gritted her teeth as she looked at several men in black suits.

Her lowered hand clenched into a fist, tempted to swing it several times.

The leading man gestured with his chin toward the sniper's position, reminding her again, "As long as your body moves more than half a meter, the person you want to protect will lose their life. We always keep our word."

Raine watched as Juliana stood helpless over there, a fiery anger surged chaotically in her chest, intertwined with a great sense of powerlessness, making her feel as if her insides were out of place and extremely uncomfortable.

The opposing party, seeing her in this state, smiled even more broadly.

"Kidido, pitting fists is the lowest form of victory and defeat, right?"

Without waiting for Raine Kane to appear, Juliana Jacobs realized she had fallen into Evan's trap. Panicking was useless; she sat still, not even looking at the person speaking.

"I'm an ordinary person with no dealings with Old Mr. Paxton, so I really can't think of anything worthy of a special conversation. What does he plan to talk to me about?"

The secretary, a person with a keen mind, immediately understood the deeper meaning in her words, stepped back half a step, adjusted to a purely respectful professional posture, and smiled lightly, "President Jacobs, please."

Juliana wiped her hands with a warm towel and stood up.

Although she didn't give Evan a look, her action of throwing the towel onto the table clearly showed her anger toward him.

After being frisked by equipment, Juliana was "escorted" by several people, through the café, to a VIP elevator that required a special card to activate.

The elevator doors closed, leading directly to a higher and more private domain of the building.

On the club's top floor, after the elevator doors opened, was an extremely elegant Chinese-style study.

A redwood desk, brush and ink set, a banner on the wall reading "Tranquility leads to far-reaching," and an elderly man in a Zhongshan suit with gray hair standing with his back to her, admiring the night view of Kingsford outside the window.

"Old Mr. Paxton, she's here," the secretary stepped forward and said.

Dylan Paxton slowly turned around, the marks of time on his technologically preserved face far fewer than on his peers.

"Miss Jacobs, please sit."

Dylan Paxton's voice was gentle, carrying the ease of someone who has long been in a high position.

He pointed to the yellow rosewood chair opposite the desk, "Inviting you in this manner was abrupt of me, I hope I didn't startle you."

Juliana showed no sign of fear, removed her coat, draped it over the chair back, and then took a seat.

"Old Mr. Paxton has gone through such an elaborate setup, there's no need for polite words. If 'abruptness' could be planned with such meticulousness, then there would be no 'surprises' in this world."

The dense perfume she wore overpowered the four-digit-count-per-liang tea fragrance, it was a bit overwhelming.

Yet Dylan Paxton's face maintained a kindly smile.

"Thank you for the compliment. Talented, insightful young individuals like Miss Jacobs are indeed rare."

Dylan Paxton personally poured her a cup of hot tea.

"I've looked over the 'Genesis' technical report, entirely led by you, a true labor of love. It's truly remarkable. However, such technology should not be monopolized by an individual or a small company. It should belong to the nation, to more powerful platforms, to fully realize its value. It would be a pity in your hands."

Juliana sneered inwardly, indeed, the dagger hidden in the map has been revealed.

She looked into Dylan Paxton's seemingly dim but actually sharp eyes, speaking sharply.

"Old Mr. Paxton means that 'Genesis' should follow your family's most successful investment model, using 'technology sharing' as an entry point, like those companies from years ago that were 'empowered,' under the guise of sharing to actually swallow them up, eventually making Aetherflame yours as well?"

Dylan Paxton's smile faded slightly, after a sip of thick tea, his tone still revealed no emotion.

"It seems you have investigated me first. But your handling isn't smooth; it won't do you any good in the future."

Juliana laughed at his words, "I am someone who serves dishes based on the person. Those whom I share a bond with, whatever we talk about is pleasant; those I don't, an extra word is a waste of my time and energy. Old Mr. Paxton, which category do you think you belong to?"

Dylan Paxton did not get angry but looked at her with deeper eyes.

"Your stubborn demeanor and tone remind me of someone."

"Mrs. Sinclair?"

Juliana uttered these three words in an utterly calm tone, but Dylan Paxton shook his head.

"A colleague of my son before his passing. They shared hobbies, shared goals, like brothers. But later, his brother succeeded, while my son was gone."

Juliana suddenly understood, remarking lightly, "Then my condolences."

Her tone brought a trace of displeasure to Dylan Paxton.

"A tree that stands out in the forest is bound to be destroyed by the wind. You are a smart person; you should understand that without a sufficiently robust tree to shield you from the wind and rain, even the finest seedlings might wither prematurely in the storm."

Dylan Paxton's voice was no longer gentle.

Juliana held the tea cup, not to drink but to gently swirl it.

"Old Mr. Paxton is a god who is connected in all directions. As long as one catches your eye, even if it's just a dog, it can become the Divine Marshal's divine hound."

Juliana paused slightly, her eyes deepening.

"You remind me of the months I've spent in Kenton being hunted, with the mastermind slipping through the net, trying everything to put him in jail, yet he was silenced before he could be convicted. Perhaps behind this person, there was also a big tree like yours, which is why he was so rampant."

Hearing this, Dylan Paxton's facial muscles twitched slightly, but his expression showed no fluctuation.

"Then you should know even better how important it is to 'share' Genesis' technology."

At this point, Juliana confirmed that the person Isaac Grant emptied the Grant Group to pay tribute to and cling to was this one before her.

She smiled slightly, "I appreciate the 'kindness' of Old Mr. Paxton's invitation, but I'm sorry, your Paxton Family should find another way to amass wealth. If I have to give you even a penny from here, I won't be a Jacobs."

The air in the study immediately froze.

Juliana tore off the hypocritical mask with one stroke, leaving Dylan Paxton's omniscient composure nowhere in sight, only exposing the predatory, stark cold light that belonged to a hunter.

"The rigid are easily broken. I have some new 'cooperation' methods for you to choose from, such as making your brain extremely 'obedient,' causing you to willingly speak out all the technical details, then, every day for the rest of your life, you'll crave to work for me like you crave oxygen. How does such a cooperation sound?"

A coldness surged in Juliana's heart, but her face showed a peculiar, almost mocking smile.

"Instead of asking me your question, how about Old Mr. Paxton answer mine: what do you think of the perfume I wore today?"

Since she entered the room and took off her coat in front of strangers, this move already appeared odd, coupled with that extraordinarily intense perfume scent... Dylan Paxton's suspicion finally clarified at this moment.

His brow furrowed, "You mean there's poison in the scent you carry?"

Juliana smiled faintly, "Getting Evan to trick me here was a good idea, but you missed one thing—I loathe him, so I've been wary of him."

Dylan Paxton, shrewd and calculating, pondered for a few seconds before relaxing his brow and smiling.

"Impossible, you're bluffing."