

Panicking 261

Chapter 261: Bitten by a Dog

"Steward Fay."

Juliana Jacobs called out, and Old Fay quickly rushed in from the living room.

"Madam, what can I do for you?"

"If a relative visits your home, would you let them stay here? For instance... in the servants' quarters."

Mrs. Dalton's face turned pale instantly.

Steward Fay smiled and said, "Of course not. The manor has rules; non-official staff, even part-timers, cannot reside here."

Juliana Jacobs gave a slight smile, "I just arrived in Kingsford and am not familiar with the customs here. I thought that after paying wages, one would also have to solve personal issues for the employees, bearing their entire family burden."

Understanding immediately, Steward Fay looked sternly at Mrs. Dalton.

"Mrs. Dalton, Mr. Langley took pity on you, which is why you were allowed to stay here. Yet after some time, you've started to overstep. Your daughter coming to Kingsford for work is your family's matter. Langley Manor will not accommodate unrelated people. If you're worried your daughter has no place to stay, your family can move out altogether."

Mrs. Dalton quickly replied, "No, no, no, I just felt you were approachable and mentioned it casually, thinking there wouldn't be an issue with one more person in such a large manor."

"It seems being approachable is my misdeed. Perhaps I should adopt a fierce and vicious demeanor to thoroughly put an end to such wishful thinking."

With that said, Juliana Jacobs left without having breakfast.

"Mrs. Dalton," Steward Fay said with displeasure, "Mr. Langley values 'sincerity' in people he employs. If you both wish to continue working here, you should remain honest and avoid underhanded thoughts. Otherwise, leaving may not be the only consequence; consider the cost!"

"Yes, yes, I was just asking, didn't expect to upset Madam. I'm sorry, truly."

After seeing Steward Fay off, Mrs. Dalton gritted her teeth so hard it looked as if it would dislocate her jawbone.

Silently, she spat out, "What's so great about it? Just you wait! My daughter will definitely live here!"

Juliana Jacobs had a busy day.

She called Caleb Shaw and proposed establishing the Aetherflame Innovation Center in Kingsford, aiming for synergy with the headquarters in Kenton.

In the future, Kenton will focus on the commercialization of civilian new energy batteries, while the center in Kingsford is positioned as a "Pioneering Laboratory" exploring next-generation high-end energy storage technology.

Caleb Shaw agreed to this forward-looking layout after five minutes of contemplation. Since Juliana Jacobs is the major shareholder, followed by Summer Shaw, this strategic decision didn't need to wait for a shareholders' meeting and quickly proceeded.

The first task was to select a site.

Caleb Shaw sent over several potential locations, but Juliana Jacobs was not satisfied with any of them.

In the meantime, Auden Hughes called her once, but she didn't pick up.

He is a smart person, he understood the reason why she didn't answer.

By late afternoon, it began to rain heavily.

"Juliana," Raine Kane suggested seemingly casually while driving, "it's commendable that you want to carve out your path independently. But Kingsford is essentially about connections. Sometimes making good use of existing resources isn't reliance, but a means to quickly gain a foothold and focus efforts where they matter."

Juliana Jacobs, observing the pedestrians rushing through the downpour, had a calm expression.

Raine Kane was right; even though at present, she and Elias Langley were deeply in love, she worried he might suffer loss and intruded into the Sinclair Family; he would provide her with the standing and grandeur befitting the lady of Langley Manor. Yet, when it comes to decisions touching core issues, who can ensure he won't once again place her on the lighter side of the scale?

The most stable foundation for interpersonal relationships, in the end, is the exchange of value. This rule might be cold, but it's realistic.

"I'll consider your suggestion," Juliana Jacobs responded with a faint smile, "Let's head back. I'm tired."

"Sure thing!"

Raine Kane turned the wheel, driving towards the courtyard.

As the rain intensified, Raine Kane slowed the car, yet upon reaching the lane entrance, an accident occurred.

A white figure suddenly rushed out from the dark veil of rain, colliding directly with the car's hood.

Raine Kane slammed on the brakes, and the car jolted slightly.

Juliana Jacobs leaned forward a bit, frowning as she saw a girl in a thin white dress sitting in the rain, soaking wet and pitiful.

Both quickly got out of the car.

Raine Kane, holding an umbrella, didn't help her immediately but asked cautiously, "This isn't a public area, and there are no shops around. How did you end up here?"

The girl lifted her head, rain streaming down her pale cheeks, her eyes flickering with confusion, and softly muttered, "I... I got lost."

At this moment, Steward Fay quickly arrived with an umbrella, followed by an anxious-looking Mrs. Dalton.

"What happened? Is it serious?"

Before Steward Fay could finish, Mrs. Dalton rushed over, disregarding the muddy water, hugged her daughter tightly, and cried, "My daughter! How did you end up here? How could you be so careless? If anything happens, how could I live on?"

Juliana Jacobs furrowed her brows.

Raine Kane whispered, "Ah, bitten by a dog."

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At the hospital.

When Elias Langley arrived, Mrs. Dalton was weeping bitterly by the bedside.

"My poor daughter! It's all because of my incompetence; if only I had done better, you wouldn't have been searching for cheap housing late at night in Kingsford and encountered such misfortune. If this leaves lasting damage, how could you marry in the future?"

After lamenting her daughter, seeing Elias Langley had arrived, she moved aside so he could see her daughter, still in her rain-soaked... attire.

"Mrs. Dalton," Raine Kane couldn't help but speak, "Why haven't you put a coat on your daughter? Do you want everyone to notice how well-endowed she is?"

"You... you're making accusations."

Mrs. Dalton was choked by her words.

She had deliberately left her daughter in her drenched clothes until Elias Langley arrived, wanting him to notice her daughter's figure.

Little did she expect such a small scheme to be seen through by a bodyguard.

Mrs. Dalton glanced at her, then suddenly turned around and kneeled before Elias Langley with a thud.

Juliana Jacobs remained seated, her gaze elsewhere.

Tears and snot smeared across Mrs. Dalton's face.

"Sir, please help us! We don't deny Madam's car hit my daughter; we wouldn't dare hold a grudge. But she's my only daughter. She's all alone in Kingsford, hurt so severely, where can she possibly go? If anything else were to happen again, I... I wouldn't go on living!"

This heart-wrenching plea laid all the blame on Juliana Jacobs, closing off any possibility of simply paying to resolve the issue.

"Mrs. Dalton, please keep it down," Steward Fay advised.

"It's not your daughter who is injured, so of course, you don't care!"

Mrs. Dalton raised her voice even higher.

"You want me to be quiet? Why didn't you ask Madam to show a little kindness? This morning I begged her so much, asking if she could kindly allow my daughter to stay for a couple of days and she rejected me without even a blink! If she had shown a bit of compassion, would my daughter have wandered in the rain and had this accident? Now she's been hit, and you want me to be silent? Is there no justice in this world?"

"Enough!"

From the moment he entered, Elias Langley hadn't glanced at the woman on the bed, now his gaze settled on the steward, "How bad is the injury?"

Not even willing to address the other party formally.

Steward Fay took a stack of test results from the hands of the honest Gregory Dalton.

"It's merely superficial abrasions, her ankle is sprained, requiring some days of rest, but nothing major. The traffic police have yet to conclude liability. Mrs. Dalton hopes for her daughter to recover in the manor."

"The police were informed?"

Elias Langley raised an eyebrow, showing a hint of surprise.

"Is it not allowed to inform them?" Juliana Jacobs turned to look at him.

Elias Langley met her gaze, a subtle smirk fleeting across his lips, his voice gentle yet delegating the decision-making authority.

"Whether people join or leave the household, whether to stay or not, should ultimately be your decision. You decide."

Chapter 262: Suspecting She Regained Her Memories

He kept silent, waiting for the traffic police's conclusion, only discussing "staying or leaving" and "making decisions."

Juliana understood the deeper meaning behind his words.

Someone like Mrs. Dalton, if unsatisfied, would certainly make things escalate.

Given the current situation, since she had gone to great lengths to get her daughter to live here, let her stay. After all... selecting a burial site in their countryside should be quick, right?

She lowered her eyes and slowly stood up.

"Out of humanitarian reasons, I can agree to let her recuperate in the manor."

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Dalton flashed a victorious smile.

"But..." Juliana's tone shifted, "once the traffic police's verdict on the accident's responsibility is out, we will act accordingly. Gregory Dalton and April Wallace, do you have any objections?"

Mrs. Dalton glanced at her husband. Though she found Juliana's words a bit strange, her daughter's injuries weren't severe, and even if the responsibility were shared, including costs for nutrients and such, the compensation would be limited. Mr. Langley would certainly afford it.

So she nodded, "We accept the responsibility verdict."

Juliana put away her phone, her lips slightly curved into a smile.

"Alright, I recorded what you said—don't try to deny it in the future."

After speaking, Juliana headed out, even leaving Elias Langley behind.

Outside, the rain had stopped.

"Juliana, I'm sorry, it was my carelessness that let that vixen succeed," Raine Kane caught up with her and said.

Juliana walked briskly towards the parking lot, with a light smile on her face.

"It's okay, just go get my car fixed."

Her car, modified, had a rear-view mirror worth five figures, even a slight scratch...

Raine Kane immediately understood her intent, eyes widening in realization, "Juliana, I've learned from you."

Reaching the parking lot, Juliana had just stopped when Elias Langley appeared from behind her, stepping in front to open the rear passenger door of the Red Flag car.

"Take my car back."

He feared she would get upset and distance herself.

However, Juliana surprisingly didn't hesitate and was about to get in when April Wallace caught up to them.

"Sir, sir..."

Elias Langley frowned almost imperceptibly, turning his gaze to her, "What is it?"

"Thank you, sir, for standing up for my daughter."

April Wallace wore a fawning smile, but her tone intentionally conveyed a bit of difficulty.

"My daughter can be discharged today, but the doctor said her injury requires rest and recuperation. The conditions in the servant's quarters aren't great; I'm worried it will affect her recovery. The room where Bodyguard Kane stays is quite good. Could you, perhaps, let Bodyguard Kane understand my daughter is an injured person?"

Elias Langley understood the meaning behind her words, his expression was indifferent and aloof.

"This will be the last time I say this: all domestic affairs in the manor are decided by my wife. If Mrs. Dalton can't remember even this much, then she shouldn't be working here."

After speaking, he went to the other side of the car and got in.

April Wallace was left to face Juliana, feeling very awkward, "Ma-... Ma'am..."

Juliana wore a faint smile, "Is Mrs. Dalton dissatisfied with the renovations in the servant's quarters not keeping up with the mansion, thinking I'm being harsh on you?"

"No, no." April Wallace quickly shook her head.

In fact, the conditions of the courtyard's servant rooms far exceed the usual standards in Kingsford. After purchasing it, Elias Langley had specifically upgraded the living facilities, with each room equipped with separate wet and dry bathrooms, and the interior decoration and quality of facilities were in no way inferior to those of ordinary family homes.

What April Wallace was doing was essentially about suppressing others and elevating her daughter's status in Langley Manor.

"Juliana, I can live anywhere, it's fine."

Raine Kane didn't want Juliana to be troubled and volunteered to stay in the servant's room.

Juliana raised an eyebrow, "Is Mrs. Dalton planning to enjoy all the blessings she hasn't experienced in her lifetime?"

April Wallace only heard her willingness to compromise and happily said, "How can that be, it's for the convenience of my daughter's recovery."

Juliana nodded, "Alright, you asked for this."

After speaking, she ignored the gleeful expression of satisfaction on April Wallace's face, turned around, and got into the car.

Once seated inside, Elias Langley hugged her from behind.

"I didn't even look at that woman, and you're still unhappy?"

He brushed his lips gently over her sensitive earlobe, speaking with a hint of cautious flattery.

Juliana leaned into his embrace, but her voice was muffled.

"You've now seen clearly what sort of people they are, right?"

"I see them clearly." Elias Langley tightened his embrace, "Dealing with such petty people shouldn't be rushed. Once this matter subsides, I'll find an excuse to send them away."

Juliana chuckled softly in his arms but said nothing more.

Elias Langley naturally understood her unspoken words.

She thought he was too lenient, letting a tiger wreak havoc. But he had his own calculations: such little monstrosities were perfect to let his dear Juliana practice and amuse herself.

Elias lowered his head, his nose brushing her ear auricles flirtatiously, whispering, "My wife can handle it however she likes, I won't interfere."

Juliana was somewhat satisfied with his attitude, recalled his earlier phone call, and casually asked, "Did you finish everything today?"

Elias Langley chuckled deeply, responding smoothly, "Yes, it's all done."

"And tomorrow... you won't continue?"

She chose her words carefully, as if merely concerned about his schedule.

Looking at her profile, Elias Langley's gaze grew more profound.

After less than two seconds, he smiled again.

"There's never a time when everything is finished, is there? What, are you worried I won't have time for you, or is there something else you want to know?"

Juliana didn't get an answer, but it wasn't convenient to ask directly, so she just smiled, "As if I care about you keeping company."

"Oh, you don't care?"

The man pinched the soft flesh at her waist, and Juliana, ticklish, started to squirm in his arms.

With laughter, the man suddenly asked, "Were you this ticklish as a child?"

A "Hmm" nearly slipped out, but Juliana forcibly held it back in her nose.

This seemingly intimate joke was another test.

Juliana realized, with vigilance, that he was beginning to doubt if she had regained her memories.

She steadied her breathing, her voice still laced with laughter, skillfully deflecting.

"Ticklish spots change with age? Were you not afraid of tickles as a child?"

A flicker of an indescribable light passed through Elias's deep eyes; he stopped teasing her and simply held her quietly.

The car stopped steadily at the courtyard gate.

Exhausted from the day, Juliana leisurely walked towards the master bedroom, as if the earlier conversation full of underlying currents had never occurred.

Raine Kane swiftly moved to another equally nice servant's room, letting Lena Dalton use the room with better lighting.

Mother and daughter entered their room, unable to hide their joy.

"The conditions here are indeed much better than the servant's quarters, but the main bedroom and guest rooms are even nicer. My daughter won't settle for staying here long," April Wallace happily said.

Gregory Dalton set down their luggage, sighing, "Keep a low profile. Mr. Langley treats us well, can't you stop acting like this?"

"Isn't our daughter doing this for the family's sake? Who asked you to not make big money?"

Gregory was stifled by April Wallace's words.

"Stop dampening our spirits. Get out!"

Gregory sighed and left the room.

Lena Dalton, who had been silent, grabbed April Wallace's hand, her face full of worry.

"Mom, earlier at the hospital, Mr. Langley didn't even look at me. How can he notice my good figure?"

"Patience!"

Mrs. Dalton pinched her daughter's slender waist, a sharp and ruthless gleam flashing in her murky eyes.

"With your physique, you could've been an Oiran in the past! Plus, you're still a virgin, a pure body, aren't you more worthy than that Juliana? She's just a twice-married woman, yet she can enchant him. As long as you're willing to go all the way, I refuse to believe we can't win his heart!"

Under her mother's blunt instigation, Lena's timid look faded, replaced by a spark of eagerness.

Meanwhile, in the master bedroom.

Juliana had taken a shower and came out of the bathroom just as Elias Langley had ended a phone call, his expression displeased.

"Are you planning to set up Aetherflame's Innovation Hub in Kingsford?"

"Yes."

Juliana walked to the dressing table, picked up some face cream, and spoke calmly.

"Why did I learn about it through a company report and not directly from you?"

His voice was laced with displeasure.

Juliana met his eyes through the mirror, her hand continuing to apply the cream.

"Does it matter how you find out?"

Elias Langley walked by her side, turned her around, and gently held her chin between two fingers.

"Are you guarding against me?"

Chapter 263: He Likes You

Juliana Jacobs put down the face cream, stood up calmly, and took the initiative to hook her arms around Elias Langley's neck, her fingertips lightly brushing the back of his neck.

"What's there to say about those procedural matters at the company?"

Then, she tilted her head slightly, with a touch of playful arrogance in her tone.

"Besides, I'm your wife, not your subordinate, and certainly not your kept lover. President Langley, you better get accustomed to my 'acting first and reporting later' in the future."

Elias Langley gazed at her. She used to always be on the defensive, but now she was boldly showing her strength.

A hidden pang of loss surged in his heart, as the shadow of someone gentle and dependent on him seemed to fade away; yet a stronger admiration followed, for this was the way she was meant to bloom.

His fingers tightened, gripping her waist firmly, his voice low, "Do you want me to be henpecked?"

"Do you? Honey."

Elias Langley had no resistance to her sweetly calling him "honey."

"It's not impossible, but a man needs to be well-fed to behave."

Juliana Jacobs smiled charmingly, "Isn't it that the more a man gives, the more a woman likes it?"

Elias Langley felt as if she had him completely under her control, and he turned his head, wanting to bite her neck.

However, Juliana pushed him away, "Could you take care of the site selection for The Innovation Hub?"

Elias Langley was amused by her move, "Alright."

"Then let's rest early."

Juliana pushed him away and walked towards the bed.

Feeding him, wishful thinking!

When has it been that whenever he was starving, she wasn't the one who passed out first?

Elias Langley watched her graceful silhouette, his eyes deepening, suddenly saying, "Tomorrow there's still the matter with Mr. Sinclair to continue."

Juliana's steps towards the bed paused imperceptibly, just a fraction of a second, then she sat down as usual, her actions of tidying the quilt smooth and natural, as if untouched by any hesitation.

"Mhm, interacting with the Sinclair Family, you should handle it appropriately. Even though you owe them, over the years, it should have been paid back."

As she spoke, she climbed into bed, her actions seeming casual, yet she instinctively avoided his gaze when she turned around.

"You're mine now, don't let them treat you any way they want."

After speaking, she turned to her side, pulling the quilt over her head.

Elias Langley stood by the dressing table, deep whirlpools swirling in his eyes.

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The next morning, the two of them finished freshening up and went to have breakfast together.

As soon as they entered the room, they saw Lena Dalton propping herself up with a cane in one hand, adjusting a chair by the table with the other.

She was wearing a light blue dress that had been washed so much it was slightly faded, with not a speck of adornment on her, appearing frail and pitiable in the morning light.

Upon hearing footsteps, she turned around startled, and upon seeing the two of them, she immediately moved aside, lowering her head slightly.

"Mr. Langley, Mrs. Langley, good morning. I'm here to help with some chores."

Elias Langley didn't even glance at her, merely stating indifferently, "If the house is short of hands, Steward Fay will arrange it. Since you're here as a guest to recuperate, just stay in your room quietly and rest; there's no need for you to worry about anything."

The implication was for her to recognize her place and not overstep.

However, Lena Dalton took his words as care and concern from Elias Langley.

As soon as he finished speaking, her cheeks flushed slightly, she quickly glanced at the figure pulling out a chair for his wife, then lowered her head again, replying softly, "Yes, thank you, Mr. Langley, I'll get better soon."

Juliana Jacobs didn't spare her a glance, automatically tuning out her voice.

There were several breakfast items on the table, the most eye-catching being the translucent pink shrimp dumplings, along with a bowl of plump, small osmanthus rice dumplings, with a faint aroma of brown sugar when you got close.

Juliana Jacobs touched nothing else, only filled a bowl with rice dumplings and placed two shrimp dumplings on a plate.

Elias Langley spoke gently, "Not having anything else?"

Juliana Jacobs continued stirring the rice dumplings gently with her spoon, recalling Lena Dalton's coquettish manner when speaking to him, and replied coldly, "None of your business."

For these two items were what she loved eating since she was a child.

Standing nearby, Steward Fay observed their interaction with a smile, ready to mediate.

"Sir is hoping Mrs. Langley eats more to nourish herself deeply, but Mrs. Langley values her figure. If you ask me, Sir's intentions are perfect, but the method doesn't quite grasp the little concerns about appearances women have before a mirror."

"Steward Fay, from now on, you should drink a jar of honey every morning, it pleases my eyes."

Juliana Jacobs was in a better mood, and the originally tense atmosphere in the dining hall eased up considerably.

Elias Langley chuckled softly, his eyes inscrutable.

After barely taking a few bites of breakfast, he remembered the main business and said, "The establishment of The Innovation Hub is a complex matter right now, you won't manage without a competent assistant, do you have someone suitable in mind?"

Juliana Jacobs nodded, "I'm considering, with an annual salary in the seven figures, I should be able to attract suitable candidates."

Before Elias Langley could speak, April Wallace, who had been cleaning at the doorway, put down her cloth and rushed in.

"Mr. Langley, Mrs. Langley," her face begged with sincerity, "My daughter Lena is a university graduate, has good looks and demeanor, surely adds honor in business, why not give her a chance?"

"Mrs. Dalton," Juliana Jacobs didn't even look at her, "I'm looking for someone efficient at work, not a concubine."

April Wallace, "..."

Juliana Jacobs ignored her embarrassed face, and turned to Elias Langley, "How about Raine Kane?"

Standing at the dining hall door waiting for her, Raine Kane was momentarily stunned, thinking she misheard.

"Juliana, this is too professional for me, I'm not skilled."

"The tasks are mostly administrative, not much professional content. As a girl, do you really want to always live by the sword? Enroll in night classes starting today; you can learn while working, it won't be hard for you."

Juliana Jacobs' tone was indifferent but carried undeniable decisiveness.

Elias Langley naturally agreed, "Alright then, from now on, Raine Kane will fully follow you."

"Fine," Juliana Jacobs said casually, "Since Raine Kane is my assistant, she shouldn't stay in the servant's quarters, she should move to the guest room, that's befitting her status."

April Wallace became anxious at this and blurted, "What culture does a bodyguard have? But my daughter graduated in dance, can't she read just as well?"

This ignorance met with silence. The people under Elias Langley were well-educated and skilled.

Juliana Jacobs furrowed her brows, patiently scooping up a rice dumpling.

April Wallace persisted, "Mrs. Langley, my daughter can do everything, she set the table this morning, everything's perfectly arranged..."

"Clang!"

Juliana Jacobs tossed her spoon into the bowl, the porcelain spoon hitting the bowl wall with a crisp sound, interrupting her.

"Mrs. Langley, you've got quite a temper, did you bump into my daughter on purpose last night?"

April Wallace patted her chest, showing a frightened expression.

Lena Dalton quickly shrank back.

Juliana Jacobs got up calmly, showing no sign of anger on her face, but the way she disregarded Elias Langley already told everyone she was mad.

"Raine Kane, let's go eat out."

After speaking, she directly left the dining hall.

Elias Langley's gaze swept over the untouched rice dumplings in Juliana Jacobs' bowl, his expression sinking.

However, he didn't gaze at April Wallace and her daughter; instead, he coldly told Steward Fay, "When did it become okay for outsiders to handle the inner courtyard's crockery? Are the rules here just for show?"

Steward Fay turned pale, bowing, "Please calm down, sir, it's my oversight, I didn't manage well enough..."

Elias Langley lost his appetite as well, tossing the napkin he was using aside and left.

Lena Dalton held onto April Wallace's arm, a bit aggrieved, "Mom, Mr. Langley he..."

"It's alright, it's alright," April Wallace reassured her, patting her hand, "Mr. Langley is just concerned about your housework, you see, he has feelings for you."

Chapter 264: She Knows the Taste of Being Drenched in Rain, So She Doesn't Want Him to Be Drenched

"Juliana, actually, Mr. Langley probably doesn't know what kind of people Gregory Dalton's family is. Why should you be angry with him?"

In the car, Raine Kane didn't forget to say something nice for her former boss.

"Didn't he bring those people here? After so many years and still being unable to see a person's true nature, how did he get to where he is now?"

Raine Kane paused for a moment and said, "Gregory Dalton and his wife originally lived in a remote mountain village where life was quite tough. Five years ago, Mr. Langley led a team there on a mission and got injured. Unfortunately, the roads were blocked, and he had run out of antibiotics. It was Gregory Dalton and his wife who used local remedies to help control the inflammation until the medical team arrived. Coincidentally, they were planning to work abroad, so Mr. Langley invited them to work here."

"When they first arrived, the couple was quite simple, but perhaps after experiencing the city's allure, their thoughts became more active and they changed." She added.

Juliana Jacobs turned to look at her, "How do you know all this in such detail? You weren't even of age back then and were already working with him?"

Raine Kane smiled, "Not then. I learned all this later from Steward Fay."

"You're really concerned for me."

Juliana Jacobs softened, her attitude relaxing.

"Actually, I'm even more blind than he is... I'm just afraid of him getting hurt."

She knew what it was like to get drenched and didn't want him to experience it.

Raine Kane laughed and said, "You should let Mr. Langley know about your feelings."

"Don't you dare tell."

Just as Juliana Jacobs finished speaking, she received a call from Zachary York.

He said he had found a perfect location in Astra Science City, ideal for The Innovation Hub, but told Juliana not to rush and to have breakfast before heading over.

Just after hanging up, Raine Kane couldn't help but exclaim, "Astra Science City is the 'brain' of Kingsford. Some big companies have tried for over a decade to move their headquarters there without success. It's not just about financial resources there; it's about real 'potential.' Mr. Langley is very kind to you."

Upon hearing this, Juliana Jacobs just pressed her lips together. His kindness left her emotions unsettled.

His cherish made her uneasy. She was scared that after becoming deeply involved again, it would lead to even greater disappointment.

By the time they arrived at Astra Science City, Zachary York had already reached there.

Raine Kane followed the GPS and parked in front of a streamlined glass building.

This small building, located in the core area of Science City, is five stories high with a total area of about 6,000 square meters.

The first floor serves as the reception and exhibition area. The second and third floors are the core research and development areas. The fourth floor is used for data analysis and office activities. The

basement level and the accompanying independent workshop together create a fully functional pilot production line and safety testing center.

Its scale and configuration are enough to make a strong impression on any visitor.

Zachary York stood at the entrance, opening Juliana's car door.

Seeing Juliana standing at the entrance and not entering for a while, Zachary handed her a document.

"Madam, the rental procedures for this building have all been completed, so there should be no issues with subsequent approvals for the center."

Raine Kane took over the lease contract.

Zachary York said kindly to her, "Assistant Kane, if you have any procedural questions later, feel free to ask me anytime."

"Thanks, Secretary York."

Juliana Jacobs looked up at the glass curtain wall in front of her. She didn't want her career to be tinged with the overtone of Elias Langley's privilege.

With his status, he should be cautious in every situation.

Hence, she asked with subtle caution, "The rent here... must not be cheap, right?"

"Please rest assured, Madam. Science City offers preferential support policies for highly promising innovation enterprises in this field. Your company entirely meets the criteria for preferential support. Mr. Langley merely coordinated within his authority to expedite the review process for the company and ensure optimal costs."

These words touched Juliana's heart. While he hadn't come personally, his meticulous care permeated every detail, making it impossible for her not to be moved.

Juliana handed the food container she was holding to Zachary York, "He might not have eaten much for breakfast too this morning. This is a low-sugar sweet potato cake; please take it to him for me."

Zachary York accepted it, "Yes, Madam."

As they were speaking, a group of people came out of a nearby building.

Upon seeing people over here, that group approached them.

Zachary York was the first to recognize the person leading and immediately bowed respectfully, "Mr. Paxton."

Sean Paxton nodded coldly, without much expression, but carried an unspoken authority.

"This building had been vacant for so long; I was just planning to negotiate it for an enterprise I favored, only to find that Elias had quietly completed all the procedures."

His gaze shifted to Juliana Jacobs, his smile enigmatic.

"Really curious about what kind of enterprise could make Elias, who usually doesn't get involved in specific affairs, make such an exception?"

Out of politeness, Zachary York introduced, "It's a technology company called Aetherflame Dynamics. This is their Vice President in charge of technology, Ms. Juliana Jacobs."

Then Zachary turned to Juliana and said, "This is Mr. Paxton..."

Considering his and Elias Langley's dual identities.

She shifted her tone, "And a colleague of Mr. Langley."

Like this, Juliana Jacobs understood.

"Aetherflame..." Sean Paxton pretended to recall and then suddenly realized, "Isn't that the company that recently released the 'Genesis' energy storage technology? Remarkable!"

He extended his hand toward Juliana.

Juliana's gaze met Sean Paxton's, and suddenly she felt a stabbing headache.

Fragments of memory flooded into her mind from all directions.

years ago, under the pressure of surrounding vehicles, the car she was in was hit hard for the first time by the car behind. The inertia made her slam hard into the front seat.

Terrified, she looked back, through the shattered rear windshield, locking eyes with the face behind the windshield of the pursuing car.

The face was so close, and the driver's chilly gaze, as if from hell, etched deeply into her memory.

At this moment, that face and Sean Paxton's features in front of her overlapped perfectly.

The subsequent second collision was even more violent.

The massive impact sent the car flipping mid-air, crashing over the guardrail, rolling down the slope until finally plummeting into the icy river with a deafening crash.

For just a twelve-year-old child's frail body, did it really warrant such a brutal force to ensure her death?

Juliana Jacobs felt a wave of intense nausea and dizziness, almost losing her balance, and Raine Kane quickly stepped forward to support her.

"What's wrong with President Jacobs?" Sean Paxton tactfully withdrew his hand, showing concern, "You look quite pale, is everything alright?"

His tone was gentle, but those examining eyes locked onto her every subtle expression, like spotlights.

Could it be... she recognized him, she was...

Leaning on Raine Kane's shoulder for a brief second while catching her breath, Juliana Jacobs forced her turbulent emotions down.

Looking up again, some color returned to her face.

She pulled up a decent but slightly weak smile at the corner of her lips.

"Sorry, I've caught a cold and haven't slept well, lost my composure."

The inquisitiveness in Sean Paxton's eyes slightly eased, his tone becoming even gentler.

"I see. Elias is too inconsiderate at times. Next time we meet, I must have a word with him."

(p>"It's not his fault.

Juliana Jacobs withdrew from Raine Kane's support, standing upright.

Sean Paxton laughed lightly, "No need to be formal with me, President Jacobs. Elias and I are old classmates with an extraordinary bond. If there's anything inconvenient for you to tell him, I can convey it."

"Mr. Paxton is indeed very considerate. But as a married couple, I suppose there's no need to trouble a third party." Raine Kane retorted with calm indifference.

"Oh right, you're right. I was so focused on caring about President Jacobs that I forgot about that." Sean Paxton laughed.

Juliana discerned that he was probing if there was a hidden secret she couldn't say, while also subtly warning her about his deep ties with Elias Langley.

Juliana returned a barely discernible curve of a smile, then distantly and politely said, "The newly established branch has a lot of trivial matters. I shouldn't take more of Mr. Paxton's valuable time, excuse us."

Having said this, she left with Raine Kane.

Sean Paxton watched her slender but upright back, his gaze growing deeper.

As Raine Kane opened the car door for Juliana, he suddenly lifted his chin and called out, "President Jacobs, please wait."

Chapter 265: As You Command, Madam

Juliana Jacobs slightly furrowed her brow, but the next second she wore a proper smile and looked back at him.

"Mr. Paxton, is there something else?"

Sean Paxton casually extended an invitation, "Tonight, my wife is hosting a charity gala for children with cognitive disabilities. Many renowned figures from Kingsford will be attending. I wonder if President Jacobs would grace us with your presence?"

Juliana lifted the corners of her lips, her tone gentle yet carrying a hint of appropriate doubt, "For such an important event, did my husband receive an invitation?"

Sean Paxton's smile faltered momentarily before he nonchalantly explained, "He's too busy, even if I mentioned it to him, he probably wouldn't remember."

"I see," Juliana's smile deepened, and her gaze shifted to Zachary York beside her, "In the future, you can contact Secretary York directly for invitations like this. No matter how busy, she will remember to remind him, right?"

Zachary York nodded with understanding, "Yes, ma'am."

Sean Paxton was smilingly given a rebuke but had to pretend not to notice, maintaining his composure with a stiff smile, "Of course."

Juliana nodded slightly at him and turned to get into the car.

As the car drove away, the smile on Sean Paxton's face vanished instantly.

Noticing his displeasure, several people who had followed him quickly approached to change the subject...

In the car, Juliana leaned back in the seat, gently rubbing her throbbing temples.

Sean Paxton's face behind the windshield lingered in her mind.

So he was a good friend of Elias Langley.

A shiver mixed with hatred and nausea ran down her spine.

Sean Paxton doubted her and kept testing her.

Evidently, after all these years, those who chased her father down and drove her into the river still hadn't stopped looking for her.

This was why Elias Langley didn't want her to return to Kingsford.

But if it was just to silence her, the accident back then would have been enough.

Now, their persistence could only mean there might be something about her that they desperately wanted.

But without fully recovered memory, she really couldn't remember what that thing was.

Raine Kane saw her patting her head and asked urgently, "Not feeling well? Do you want to go back and rest?"

Juliana closed her eyes and said, "Wouldn't going back be even more annoying?"

Raine understood she was referring to April Wallace and her daughter.

"After a while, we can just send them away," he said.

Juliana shook her head, "It's too long, I can't wait."

Raine raised his eyebrows.

Juliana rubbed her forehead and suddenly remembered someone.

"Has Isabelle Sinclair been unusually quiet lately?"

Raine chuckled, "She's been confined at home by Mrs. Sinclair to recuperate. She isn't married yet, and there's a big scar on her behind. How will she get married in the future?"

Juliana smiled, "I suppose she's afraid Elias Langley will despise her."

Just then, as if mentioned, Elias Langley called.

Juliana answered the call.

"Are you feeling unwell?" Elias Langley asked on the phone.

Clearly, Zachary York had informed him of what had happened earlier at Science City.

"It's okay. Do you have any plans for the evening?"

Elias Langley hesitated for two seconds, "Mrs. Sinclair called this morning, asking me to accompany her to a charity gala."

Juliana smiled, "Alright, you go ahead."

She hung up the phone and stared ahead for a long time.

Raine thought she was upset and quickly advised, "If it's something you promised before, it's really not polite to postpone."

Juliana came back to her senses because of his words, chuckling softly, "I'll go tonight too."

Raine was a bit surprised.

Juliana said leisurely, "Mrs. Sinclair just wants to create opportunities for her daughter and Elias Langley. Why should I help them? Besides, to deal with the vicious dogs at home, you need to find an even fiercer one. Tonight is a good opportunity."

After notifying Caleb Shaw's side to get the team ready to enter The Innovation Hub in Science City, Juliana was busy until the afternoon before she went to the best image design center in Kingsford to rent a custom evening gown.

The charity gala was set in Amber Hall at The Chevalier Hotel.

When Juliana arrived, the hall was already filled with elegance and grandeur.

Though she was alone, her simple evening dress and outstanding, cool demeanor made her exceptionally dazzling amidst the glamorous socialites.

Many guests noticed this unfamiliar face and began whispering speculations about her identity.

After all, those who could appear at Sean Paxton's gala were not ordinary people.

Moreover, she was unaccompanied by any male guest.

At this moment, Sean Paxton approached her with his wife.

Three meters away, Sean Paxton extended his hand to her.

"I didn't expect President Jacobs to actually come, it's such an honor for us, welcome, welcome."

"Mr. Paxton, you're too kind."

Juliana extended her hand to shake his.

Sean Paxton then introduced his gentle wife beside him.

"This is my wife. Her health isn't very good, so she usually rests at home and doesn't attend social gatherings much. This time, she personally organized this gala to raise funds for children with intellectual disabilities. She has few friends, so please look after her, President Jacobs."

Juliana smiled, "You're too kind, Mr. Paxton. The fact that Mrs. Paxton can organize such a meaningful charity event already shows her ability and influence. We should be thanking her for providing this opportunity to contribute our love."

"President Jacobs, you're too generous."

Mrs. Paxton nodded in acknowledgment, though her gaze lingered on Juliana slightly, a flicker of wonder in her eyes quickly dissipated.

Juliana, attending such a gala alone for the first time, managed effortlessly, making everyone more curious about her identity.

While Sean Paxton and Juliana were engaging in pleasantries, a commotion arose at the entrance.

It turned out someone from the Sinclair Family had arrived.

Mrs. Sinclair was dressed in a dark green qipao, beside her was the meticulously groomed Isabelle Sinclair, while Elias Langley walked on the other side of Mrs. Sinclair.

This scene immediately sparked more whispers of speculation.

"Mr. Langley came with them. Does this confirm the alliance between the Langley and Sinclair families?"

"Seems like it, especially since the original one can't be found. Marrying the younger sister makes sense..."

The murmurs were faintly audible, and Isabelle Sinclair couldn't help but lift a smug curve on her lips upon hearing them.

Sean Paxton cast a meaningful glance at Juliana and then proceeded to greet Mrs. Sinclair and her group with his wife.

"Mrs. Sinclair, you're looking radiant tonight. No wonder Elias would drop everything to personally accompany you and Miss Isabelle."

With his words, he instantly confirmed everyone's suspicions.

However, before Mrs. Sinclair could respond, Elias Langley had already left them and walked toward Juliana.

Amidst the questioning gazes of the crowd, he unhesitatingly went up to her, touched her hand placed within his palm, and spoke in a tone mixed with gentle reproach.

"Your hand is so cold. Are you choosing style over warmth?"

Juliana let him hold her hand naturally, then lightly turned around, and Elias seamlessly shifted his step, allowing her to link her arm with his.

She raised her face with a sweet smile, "Then why don't you help me keep warm?"

A rare smile appeared on Elias Langley's face, "As you command, my lady."

This scene left everyone present utterly astonished.

Chapter 266: The Birthday Gift She Received at Ten Was Around Isabelle's Neck

It turns out that Mr. Langley had long remarried, making the Third Miss Sinclair's earlier triumph appear utterly ridiculous at this moment.

The smile on Isabelle Sinclair's face completely froze, as if she had been slapped in the face in public, her eyes filled with embarrassment and resentment.

After exchanging a few pleasantries with Mrs. Sinclair, Sean Paxton smoothly invited Elias Langley to the backstage to appreciate some precious donation items that had arrived early.

As soon as they walked away, Isabelle Sinclair couldn't wait to turn her attention to Juliana Jacobs.

She raised her voice to ensure everyone around could hear.

"Juliana, your dress is indeed unique, but it looks somewhat familiar..."

She pretended to recall, then showed an expression of surprise.

"Could it be that you don't even have a dedicated designer and had to rent your dress?"

As soon as she said this, everyone's eyes immediately focused on Juliana's dress.

In such a setting, wearing a rented dress was already inappropriate, even somewhat disrespectful.

Reaching her goal, Isabelle Sinclair stroked the necklace on her neck, her tone boasting.

"To show my respect for this charity gala, I specifically wore this necklace my mother gave me. It's a one-of-a-kind piece from a renowned designer. Attending occasions like this ultimately requires some real substance, so as not to embarrass Elias."

Juliana's eyes landed on the necklace around Isabelle Sinclair's neck, and her breath hitched.

She recognized this necklace.

The center is a moonstone emitting a gentle blue glow, adorned with some diamond chips.

What made this necklace unique was not the gemstones, but that the chain used an exceptionally rare memory metal, giving it extraordinary resilience and a unique texture beyond ordinary jewelry.

The moonstone was given to her by Elias Langley when she was a child. Mrs. Sinclair, seeing how she couldn't bear to part with it, had her husband find special metal materials and hired an expert to carefully design and craft it into a necklace, giving it to her as her 10th birthday present.

At this moment, her unique birthday gift was being worn by Isabelle Sinclair around her neck.

A mixed feeling of coldness and bitterness gripped Juliana's heart.

This relic carrying the past was so easily transferred to Isabelle Sinclair by her mother.

So, the motherly love she once cherished could also be given away lightly to anyone.

Truly... Motherly love knows no bounds.

A sarcastic smile appeared on Juliana's face, just as Mrs. Paxton walked over, stood beside Juliana, and looked at Isabelle Sinclair.

"Third Miss Sinclair, your words are mistaken. The charity gala is about goodwill, not competing for wealth. If you treat this as a stage for flaunting jewelry, you're missing the point. I believe Mr. Langley's perspective isn't that small."

Her words drew nods of agreement from the surrounding guests.

Isabelle Sinclair's face turned red and then white, finally unable to hold it, she turned to Mrs. Paxton and said lowly, "A woman who's supported by her husband, if not for your husband's sake, who would attend your lousy banquet?"

With that, she left in irritation.

Juliana, though disdainful of Mrs. Paxton's defense, still gave her a thankful smile.

"Thank you, Mrs. Sinclair. It's best to ignore people like Isabelle Sinclair."

However, Mrs. Paxton stared at her blankly and softly called out, "Are you... Helena?"

Juliana's heart skipped a beat, yet her face showed no surprise, and instead, she asked with fitting puzzlement, "Who is Helena? Sorry, I don't know this person."

The light of expectation in Mrs. Paxton's eyes dimmed instantly, and she said, disappointed, "Sorry, I was being presumptuous. You just look so much like a friend from my childhood. She disappeared when she was twelve and was later declared dead. Recently, I heard she might still be alive, and I thought..."

She didn't continue, merely shaking her head bitterly.

Only then did Juliana vaguely remember having a close childhood playmate.

She suppressed her emotions and gently comforted, "I hope for a miracle, that she can... return soon."

"Thank you, you're truly a kind person."

Mrs. Paxton quickly composed herself.

At this time, the charity donation ceremony was about to begin, and she hurriedly headed toward the stage.

Watching her back, Juliana's eyes were filled with a black whirlpool.

The kind Helena Sinclair was already dead; she would not return.

She then picked up a glass of champagne, expressionlessly waved over a waiter.

"Excuse me, I can't drink cold, could you please heat it up for me?"

A few minutes later.

On stage, Mrs. Sinclair was introducing the Sinclair Family's donation, a precious bracelet.

In the audience, Isabelle Sinclair was surrounded by a few socialites, boasting in a low voice, "My necklace may not be gold, but it's more expensive than gold, made of materials ordinary people can't get."

Just as she finished, a glass of champagne was splashed over her through the crowd, landing precisely on her neck.

More specifically, it was poured on that necklace.

"So hot."

Isabelle Sinclair exclaimed, her eyes locking onto Juliana, immediately accusing, "Juliana, what are you doing!"

"Sorry, the carpet's uneven, I almost tripped, I didn't mean it."

Juliana feigned 'panic,' hastily grabbing a slushy white towel from the waiter's tray.

"Let me help you clean it!"

"Don't touch it with your dirty hands..."

Isabelle Sinclair was too late to stop as the icy, bone-chilling towel was pressed firmly onto the hot, wine-soaked metal necklace.

Instantly, she was frozen to her teeth.

Juliana knew this metal material too well.

By using intense thermal expansion and contraction to create destructive stress within the necklace, making the most precise clasps and adhesives break apart instantly.

The huge moonstone burst from its base, with some diamond chips falling to the ground, shattered beyond recovery.

Isabelle Sinclair was stunned.

Mrs. Sinclair rushed forward, seeing the broken necklace on the ground, she turned her eyes to Juliana.

At the same time, Elias Langley also came over, stepping in front of Juliana, blocking that sharp gaze.

"The gemstone isn't damaged, it can be made into another one."

"Elias," Mrs. Sinclair struggled to suppress her rising anger, "do you know the significance of this necklace? It's not an ordinary piece of jewelry!"

Juliana stepped out from behind Elias Langley, her gaze calmly meeting Mrs. Sinclair's.

"Since it's so valuable, it shouldn't be worn out to show off. Besides, if it can be casually given away, then your so-called 'significance'... probably doesn't hold much true sentiment, it's quite cheap."

Mrs. Sinclair looked at Juliana, a surge of indescribable emotion arose.

If it were anyone else, she would have slapped them already.

But facing Juliana, she couldn't bring herself to do it.

Slap!

That slap meant to vent emotion finally landed on Isabelle Sinclair's face.

"Mom!" Isabelle Sinclair, holding her face, screamed in disbelief, "The necklace was ruined by her, why did you hit me?"

Mrs. Sinclair, breathing heavily, didn't immediately respond to her words.

Juliana lightly took over the conversation, her words venomous.

"You're just not hit enough usually, that's why you can't recognize your place, bringing disgrace to the Sinclair Family, flaunting your intelligence in front of outsiders. Before you desire something, think first if you deserve it. Coveting what isn't yours—wishful thinking, self-inflicted ridicule!"

Perhaps it was her overwhelming presence; Isabelle Sinclair was trembling with anger, but couldn't curse back.

But Juliana didn't plan to let her off just yet.

She turned to face the entire audience, her voice clear and pleasant.

"Earlier, Third Miss Sinclair had quite a few criticisms about my rented dress. She's right, tonight is Mrs. Paxton's charity gala, and indeed I shouldn't have worn a rented dress, but it's because..."

Chapter 267: Are You Helena?

She smiled slightly, her demeanor composed.

"I intend to donate the full original price of this dress, 3.2 million, to tonight's charity event as a mere token of my goodwill."

As soon as the words fell, it drew a low murmur of admiration.

An elderly and prudent guest couldn't help but loudly praise Elias Langley: "Your wife is truly both beautiful and kind-hearted!"

Elias Langley hooked Juliana's arm around his, and calmly said to the other party, "Thank you. Allow me to formally introduce another identity of my wife. Juliana Jacobs, the technical director at Aetherflame Dynamics."

"Aetherflame Dynamics? The company that released the 'Genesis' energy storage technology?"

"Military industries worldwide want to connect with Aetherflame, and I didn't realize their technical director is Mrs. Langley."

Exclamations of surprise echoed in succession, as everyone's focus shifted from scrutinizing the identity of "Mrs. Langley" to admiring "President Jacobs."

In this moment, it was no longer Juliana who needed Elias Langley's halo, but rather Elias who was proud to have such a wife.

A gentle, proud smile appeared on Elias Langley's handsome face.

He gently patted his wife's hand and led her away from the banquet scene.

Sean Paxton watched the two leave, a playful smile on his lips, his gaze growing more profound and unfathomable.

Isabelle Sinclair was distraught, recklessly chasing after them...

At the hotel entrance, Zachary York slowly drove the car over.

Juliana stepped out of the door, shivering slightly as the cold night wind blew on her neck.

Elias Langley immediately took off his coat to drape it over her shoulders.

Just then, Isabelle Sinclair lifted the hem of her dress, running over with a voice laden with tears: "Brother-in-law, Juliana humiliated me in front of everyone; she's trying to destroy me."

However, Elias Langley said nothing. Juliana took a few steps closer and took over the conversation.

"I'm here. Whether your brother-in-law accepts your complaint is up to me."

Isabelle Sinclair ground her teeth in hatred, "Juliana, don't get too arrogant."

Juliana smiled faintly and whispered in a voice only the two of them could hear, "So what if you're not convinced? Do you have the courage to come to Number 17 Dorian Street to find me?"

Isabelle's pupils contracted at her words, and before she could react, Mrs. Sinclair had hurriedly chased after them.

Seeing her daughter's ineptitude, she shook her head and instructed the attendants behind her, "Take Miss to the car!"

Isabelle was then half-invited, half-dragged away.

Juliana chuckled, turning to walk back to Elias Langley's side.

"Juliana!"

Mrs. Sinclair took a deep breath and called out to her.

Juliana paused her steps.

"You... Can you honestly tell me, are you Helena?"

Juliana slowly turned back to look at her, the night making her eyes even more unfathomable.

"Is Helena Mrs. Sinclair's daughter?" she laughed, "Having 'walked' for so long, do you truly not let go, or are you just used to playing the role of a 'grieving mother' for others to see?"

Before Mrs. Sinclair could respond, Elias Langley interjected, "Juliana, you don't know the details of what happened back then, don't say such things to Mrs. Sinclair."

Details?

The detail was that her father was valuable and alive, while she deserved death.

Juliana raised an unhappy eyebrow but did not argue with Elias Langley.

She turned her gaze to Mrs. Sinclair, her tone softening, but her eyes cold.

"Sorry for breaking Mrs. Sinclair's necklace."

With that, she left, without a hint of guilt, got in the car, and left alone.

Watching her resolute figure, Mrs. Sinclair stood frozen in place.

Perhaps her intuition was wrong; her Helena wouldn't be this hostile to her.

Elias Langley saw someone taking care of Mrs. Sinclair and then turned to get in the car.

Soon, the car was driving on the elevated road.

"Why did you have to destroy the necklace, which was so important to Mrs. Sinclair?"

Elias Langley asked calmly, but his eyes quietly locked onto every subtle reaction from Juliana.

Juliana looked sideways at the passing nightscape outside the window, her lips curling into a cold smile.

"Given to the foster daughter, can it still be the most important?"

Then she shifted her tone, her face showing a hint of mockery.

"Is President Langley heartbroken over the person wearing the necklace?"

"Juliana, you know that's not what I meant."

"But that's what I mean!"

Juliana suddenly turned her head back, her gaze at Elias Langley equally cold.

"What's wrong with destroying a necklace? They're always coveting things they shouldn't. If I can't show some attitude, why did I marry you?"

Elias Langley just pressed his lips together as he looked at her, choosing not to continue the argument.

However, in the ensuing time, the car remained suffocatingly quiet, so much so that Zachary York didn't dare to breathe loudly,

Eventually, the car stopped in front of the quadrangle courtyard.

Juliana didn't get out of the car but instructed Zachary York in the driver's seat, "Take me to the hotel."

Elias Langley furrowed his brows, "Stop it, this is your home."

Juliana ignored him.

Elias Langley looked at her stubborn profile with helplessness, having to resort to a compromising strategy.

"If you don't want to see me, I can sleep in the study."

His original intention was to retreat for the sake of advancing, hoping she would see his willingness to reconcile and abandon the idea of going to a hotel, leading them both back to the shared bedroom.

Unexpectedly, Juliana immediately and neatly agreed, "Alright."

Elias Langley's Adam's apple bobbed, wishing he could rewind a few seconds earlier and swallow back his own suggestion.

Juliana got out of the car, leaving without looking back.

Elias Langley sighed, quietly following her.

The two entered the courtyard, one after the other.

Juliana, draped in his coat, returned to the bedroom, while Elias resignedly diverted to the study.

This scene was just caught by April Wallace.

She hid behind a corridor pillar, a flash of light in her eyes as she quickly rushed to her daughter's room.

"Lena, they've quarreled and are sleeping in separate rooms, your chance has come!"

"Really?"

Lena Dalton's eyes lit up.

"I saw it with my own eyes, quickly change into a thin and translucent dress and wait for Mr. Langley's summons."

Lena's heart leapt with joy as she immediately rummaged through her wardrobe, not only pulling out a dress thin enough to show her fingerprints, but also finding a set of ambient lingerie.

However, as the night wore on and light etched its way across the sky, no summons came from Elias Langley's study.

All night plans fell through, and the mother-daughter duo ended up with panda eyes.

The next day, Juliana intentionally went ten minutes late to the dining hall to find out that Elias Langley had already left early.

Raine Kane quietly informed her that it was said to be due to the Sinclair family matters again.

Juliana pondered momentarily, "Did he mention when he'd be back today?"

Raine thought for a bit, smiling, "Doesn't Mr. Langley's return time depend on you? If you set a curfew for seven o'clock, he definitely wouldn't dare come a minute past seven."

Juliana said no more. With The Innovation Hub just established, she was busy and had no time to think about men.

By afternoon, Steward Fay called her, saying Isabelle Sinclair had arrived.

Juliana instructed him to let her in, without mentioning when she'd be back, making Isabelle wait.

By evening, just as Juliana stepped into the main hall, the bored and restless Isabelle shot up to her, pointing angrily at her nose.

"Juliana, you venomous woman! You ruined my necklace, causing them to cut my living expenses, and you dare make me wait here for so long? If you feared me coming to confront you, why didn't you think about the consequences yesterday!"

Just then, the sound of a car door closing came from outside the courtyard.

Juliana smiled secretly; the timing was just right.

She calmly moved Isabelle's finger away from her nose and gestured toward the courtyard with her chin.

"Do you think I made you wait out of fear? Haven't you discerned anything sitting here for so long?"

"See what? What have you done now?" Isabelle was puzzled.

Juliana was speechless at her lack of insight, rolling her eyes as she said, "I didn't summon you to quarrel with me. You have a rival now, Third Miss Sinclair."

Isabelle followed her pointing direction.

At some point, under the rose bushes in the courtyard stood a woman in a thin, plain dress.

Chapter 268: A Vicious Dog Needs Another to Tame It

That fragile body, that swaying posture with a cane, Isabelle knew at a glance what kind of person she was.

"Who is she?"

"Mrs. Dalton's daughter, she's being prepared to be a concubine for my husband."

Isabelle looked at her mockingly, "Juliana, look, even a servant's daughter can climb above you, and all you do is be fierce towards me. Give me Mrs. Langley's position; at least with me around, those vixens won't get close to Elias."

Juliana looked out the window and smiled faintly.

"With a man like Elias Langley, it would be strange if no woman wants to approach. I'm his wife, naturally, I have the grace to allow others. But you, you can't even compete with a servant's daughter. If that's spread around, where will the face of Third Miss Sinclair be placed?"

"Bah! Who said I can't compete?"

Juliana didn't argue, she said flatly, "My husband is back."

Then, Elias Langley could be seen putting away his phone as he walked into the courtyard.

As he passed Lena, he didn't even glance at her.

Unexpectedly, while tending the flowers, Lena "accidentally" fell to the ground.

Elias Langley turned and walked to the roses, but didn't help her up immediately and instead asked, "Are you planning to injure yourself further to extort me?"

Lena raised her face, pitifully defending herself, "No, Mr. Langley... it's Madam who blames me for staying at the manor to recover, venting anger at my mother, giving her a hard time. I just wanted to do more to lessen her burdens..."

Elias Langley raised an eyebrow, "Is she that petty?"

Tears glistened at the corners of Lena's eyes, "During the day, when you're not home, Madam thinks of all sorts of ways to humiliate me. Only when you're back at night does it feel slightly better for me."

A shadow flickered in Elias Langley's eyes; he suddenly asked, "Do you want me to help you up?"

That's precisely what Lena hoped for.

"Thank you, Mr. Langley."

Tears rolled down as Elias Langley hadn't even touched her, yet her body had already turned soft and delicate.

"Shameless slut!"

Isabelle couldn't hold back, she rushed out from the main hall.

Elias Langley paused his action of helping Lena.

"Flirting with my brother-in-law in broad daylight, believe it or not, I will strip you naked and throw you out!"

As Isabelle cursed, she quickly dashed to them.

Not even caring about Elias Langley being present, she grabbed Lena's hair.

"I've seen many sluts like you; those in clubs are even more uninhibited than you. Let me see your worth, then think about where to send you."

Saying that, she began tearing at Lena's clothes.

Lena cried and begged, yet Isabelle didn't plan on letting her go.

Elias Langley meanwhile stood off to the side, like a spectator.

April Wallace, who was watching not far away, saw her daughter suffering and hastily ran out.

Knowing Isabelle's status, she didn't dare lay hands on her, only kneeling on the ground, hugging her daughter, and pleading.

"Miss Sinclair, my daughter is pitiful enough, please spare us poor folks."

Isabelle smiled viciously, "If your family's way out of poverty is to send your daughter to sleep with someone, I'll help send her to the clubs. Still a virgin? Easily earn six figures the first night."

With a ripping sound, Lena's clothes at the back were torn open by Isabelle.

"No..." April Wallace cried even more miserably.

Juliana slowly walked to the roadside, feeling it was enough, she said flatly, "This is Langley Manor, where your chaos cannot be tolerated. Third Miss Sinclair, perhaps move to the gate for your tearing?"

Upon hearing this, Isabelle immediately stopped her hand.

"You want me to make a scene in public and ruin my image? Dream on!"

Having said that, she realized Elias Langley was also watching her.

She quickly retracted her aggression, ran to Elias's side, and whispered softly, "Brother-in-law, I'm not usually like this. I just fear this vixen will harm your reputation and lost control of my temper."

Elias Langley nodded indifferently, "I understand."

Juliana turned to face the running steward, saying calmly, "Sir is back, quickly clean up, don't let the garbage in the yard dirty sir's eyes."

Steward Fay paused for a moment, before nodding quickly.

It takes a vicious dog to deal with a vicious dog.

The effect was good.

After this small trial, Juliana felt she should continue like this.

As she pondered how to hit two birds with one stone, her phone rang.

It was Auden Hughes calling.

She waited for about ten seconds, opened the bedroom door, and then answered the call.

"Don't you want to hear your friend's application result?"

"I found her an appropriate heart; it's not like you're her only hope. If it's too hard, just forget it."

Auden Hughes was about to ask her to meet but was blocked by her words.

"Juliana, I've been busy these past couple of days, so..."

"What is your Florence busy with?"

Juliana interrupted him.

Auden Hughes paused for a few seconds before saying, "She...is at the company every day."

In fact, the Sinclair and Hughes families disagree with them canceling the engagement and have ordered them to increase their alone time to develop feelings.

Which is precisely the real reason Isabelle has been quiet for two days.

Without her strategist, the dog didn't know what chaos to cause.

"You're meeting day and night, that's great."

As Juliana finished speaking, Elias Langley walked in.

"That..." Juliana quickly said, "I'm also quite busy, if there's nothing, let's hang up."

Without waiting for Auden Hughes's response, she ended the call.

After the man entered the room, he took off his jacket and went directly to the dressing room.

Juliana thought he was just going to get a change of clothes and would normally go to the study afterward, so she didn't care and instead dialed Caleb Shaw.

"How's Summer doing?"

"No signs of waking yet, but life signs are relatively stable."

"I'll find a way regarding the heart source soon, but let's remain patient, don't go running to those with the Hughes surname."

From the phone, Caleb Shaw's voice carried gratitude: "Thank you."

After hanging up, Juliana was preparing to text Raine Kane, arranging for her to buy trending topics about Vivacore Bio being investigated by the regulatory bureau, as a way to apply pressure on Auden Hughes.

While she was typing this, Elias Langley suddenly hugged her from behind.

"Just now, I cooperated with Madam like that; how many points does Madam give me?"

He couldn't ignore Lena attempting to seduce him, but Juliana wasn't home, which naturally meant she had dug a pit for Lena.

Thus, Elias Langley had almost helped Lena, successfully drawing out Isabelle.

With him holding her in his arms, Juliana didn't push him away but looked up to think seriously, "7 points, perhaps."

Elias Langley raised an eyebrow, "Why just so few?"

Juliana curled her lips, "Who knows if you were pretending to cooperate when truly you wanted to help her."

Elias Langley laughed lowly, the vibrations from his chest transmitting through her spine. Not only did he not let go, but he held her tighter, his warm lips on her ear.

"If I really wanted to help her, I should be in her room applying her medicine right now..."

Upon hearing this, Juliana bit her lip, about to push him away, when unexpectedly the man changed his tone.

"Not here, letting some heartless little vixen grade me."

He suddenly turned her around, his deep eyes glimmering.

"Seven points it is, the remaining three, I'll claim them now."

Not giving Juliana time to react, the man's slightly cool kiss landed.

"Elias Langley..."

Juliana, her breath unsteady, tried to turn her head, managing to earn a little gap for speaking in-between lips and teeth.

"Ask Mrs. Sinclair to come, I want her here."

The ambiguous atmosphere around Elias Langley stalled, as he slowly lifted his head.

The emotions in his eyes hadn't faded entirely; his scrutinizing gaze had already fallen.

His voice carried a hint of caution, "What do you plan to do to her?"

Chapter 269: Never Once Thought of Giving Up on Her

Juliana could see Elias's protectiveness toward Mrs. Sinclair.

A faint, cool smile appeared on her face.

"All these years, you've been tirelessly searching for the Sinclair's daughter, not because you really care for her. You've done all this to repay Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair for raising you, to soothe their pain of losing their daughter."

Juliana looked away, forcing down the bitterness welling up inside her.

"I really feel sorry for that girl. Her parents never truly loved her, and even those she cherished and relied on had hidden motives. Thankfully, she only lived for a mere 12 years; otherwise, how cruel it would be for her to see all this?"

"Juliana..."

Elias felt a weight on his heart, his jawline taut.

He paused for about ten seconds before controlling his emotions and saying, "You have no idea of the situation back then, nor do you understand... how deeply Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair have mourned their daughter over these years.

His arm still wrapped around her waist, the two were so close that his warm breath brushed against the strands of hair on her forehead.

"Florence Sinclair, Isabelle Sinclair, they were just solace found in reflections of her differing facets. Florence was smart and studious, resembling her focused and serious manner at her desk; Isabelle's lively and spirited nature mirrored her playful and charming side in private."

Elias turned his head to look at her, his gaze calm, as if seeking a flicker of emotion on her face.

"Over the years, whenever Mrs. Sinclair discovered an orphan with the slightest hint of resemblance to her daughter, she'd try her best to help. She's always been trapped in her longing for her daughter, and even with Isabelle and Florence, she couldn't move on. So you understand now, what that necklace you destroyed last night meant to her, don't you?"

However, Juliana merely chuckled and tried to push him away.

"Why should I understand Mrs. Sinclair? You're attached to the commendable, memorable qualities you see in the girl. But what about her simplicity? The cost of her naivety in trusting others too easily; her ignorance? The innocence and naivety she should have had at that age. She lived simply, just yearning for someone to care for her... Do you remember these less 'brilliant' parts?"

Juliana took a deep breath at this point.

"Elias, if the love you speak of is ultimately letting her go, then I cannot understand such emotions."

"It's not like that..."

Disregarding her struggles, Elias held her tighter.

His heart ached too much, and only being close to her, feeling her real heartbeat, could bring him a moment of peace.

"The engagement was the order of our elders, and she was still young at the time. I indeed hadn't developed romantic feelings for her then... But in my heart, she was always a little sister I needed to protect. I cared about her, from start to finish, and never thought of giving up on her."

Though his answer left Juliana unsure if she should feel disappointment or relief, at least he didn't try to cover it up with lies.

Juliana relaxed completely.

"Go ahead and bring Mrs. Sinclair in. I won't do anything to her, but if you're worried about Isabelle, then forget it."

After speaking, she gently pushed him away and went into the bathroom.

No one mentioned whether they would still sleep in separate rooms.

At night, just as Juliana was feeling sleepy, the mattress shifted.

The man lay down behind her, gently wrapping an arm around her.

Juliana didn't pull away. After his breathing evened, she turned over and nestled her head against his chest, falling asleep.

The next afternoon, Elias called Juliana, saying Mrs. Sinclair was coming to dinner that night and asking if she had anything to prepare in advance.

Of course, she did.

Juliana understood his hint but didn't say much; she hung up the phone and hurried back to the quadrangle.

The mansion was already bustling.

Even April Wallace had been permitted to help in the kitchen.

Of course, the only thing she could handle was the kitchen waste.

"Ma'am," Steward Fay saw her and quickly stepped aside to clear the way into the kitchen, "four dishes at the dinner are Mrs. Sinclair's favorites, and the rest are made according to your preferences. Please see if there's anything amiss."

Juliana stepped into the kitchen, glancing around as three or four chefs busied themselves.

Her gaze seemed to pass unintentionally over April Wallace, then settled on the countertop.

"Are you planning to make Hua Diao Braised Meat?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am."

"This dish really emphasizes the quality of Hua Diao wine; which brand are you using?"

Steward Fay quickly presented a small wine jar: "It's a ten-year-aged 'Jia Jiao Yu Xiang'."

Juliana opened the lid, sniffed, and lightly tapped her pinky against the jar's edge.

Some powder accidentally fell into it and then disappeared with her slight shake.

"Not bad, it's good wine, go ahead," she said.

"Rest assured, ma'am, we will not skimp on the ingredients,"

Steward Fay said as he carefully returned the expensive Hua Diao wine to its place.

Juliana gave her usual gentle smile, "To Mr. Sinclair, Mrs. Sinclair is like a half-mother, and he always listens to her. Tonight's family dinner must not be negligent in the slightest."

Steward Fay nodded repeatedly.

Juliana glanced at April Wallace, working busily in the corner.

Her words entered her ears word for word, and if she had any sense, she'd be pondering how to cause trouble now.

Juliana smiled faintly and left the kitchen.

In the evening, Mrs. Sinclair arrived as expected.

Of course, Isabelle was with her.

Elias and Juliana welcomed Mrs. Sinclair at the door.

Isabelle tried to maintain her image as an obedient, well-bred daughter, though her eyes occasionally darted around the courtyard.

She was looking for that vixen.

But tonight, Lena didn't show up.

Before the meal, Elias brought out a black lacquered wood box containing a piece of rare memory metal.

"Juliana accidentally broke your necklace earlier. She's been uneasy about it, and today she finally found the same metal, hoping it could make up for this regret."

Mrs. Sinclair could hear the politeness in his words.

Juliana had no intention of apologizing, but Elias was giving her face.

She glanced indifferently and had someone put the box away.

During the meal, the steward served Hua Diao chicken.

Isabelle frowned, "Mom needs to watch her cholesterol, why such a greasy dish?"

Steward Fay quickly explained with a smile, "Our lady likes this dish, made with a rare 'Jia Jiao Yu Xiang' ten-year vintage, the timing and ingredients are meticulous..."

"Steward Fay," Juliana interjected mildly, "why explain so much to her? The essence of this dish is in its collagen, nurturing and beautifying. Only those who can't appreciate it consider it greasy."

With that, she used public chopsticks to pick up a piece for herself, but just as she raised her chopsticks, Elias naturally put his bowl out to catch it.

As a result, that slick, shiny Hua Diao meat ended up in his bowl.

He set the bowl down, his gaze lightly passing over her fair neck before chuckling softly, "No wonder it seems so tender and smooth. I should have a few more, see if it can't nurture my coarse, rough skin back to life."

His words made Juliana laugh.

Mrs. Sinclair lowered her eyelids, suddenly reminded of years ago when the same dish was made at home, and little Helena would gaze longingly at it while clinging to the edge of the table.

Back then, they worried that the child shouldn't have alcohol, so they didn't let her taste even a piece.

Now she could finally eat it, but who knows where she was.

Thinking of this, Mrs. Sinclair was overcome with a mix of feelings, leaving her food tasteless.

Isabelle watched Elias and Juliana's intimate interaction, feeling unbearably bitter, resentfully gorging herself on several pieces when no one was watching, her face slightly flushed.

This was because the powder Juliana had added to the wine had a stimulant effect.

As the evening wound down, just when Juliana thought the family dinner would end peacefully, April Wallace suddenly barged in with a face full of smiles, ignoring Steward Fay's attempts to stop her.

Chapter 270: If Your Adopted Daughter Is Your Beloved, Then What About Your Biological Daughter?

"Mrs. Sinclair, having you over for dinner truly brings splendor to our humble abode. It happens that my daughter is recovering here, and upon hearing of your visit, she is eager to perform a dance to entertain you."

April Wallace had heard that Mrs. Sinclair was fond of elegance, and it so happened her daughter was a dance enthusiast.

If Mrs. Sinclair were to take a liking to her daughter, then having her daughter stay by Elias Langley's side would be just around the corner.

Thus, she risked being dismissed to seize the opportunity as the evening was nearing its end to barge in.

"Mrs. Dalton," Juliana Jacobs feigned displeasure, "why are you so out of line? Besides, your daughter's foot injury hasn't healed; how can she dance for Mrs. Sinclair?"

April Wallace assumed she was deliberately obstructing her daughter from showcasing in front of influential people and hastily defended her.

"Madam, you may not know, but Lena is very dutiful. Upon hearing of Mrs. Sinclair's grand visit, she specially took a pain relief injection and meticulously bandaged her ankle. It won't hinder her performance at all!"

Juliana was "taken aback" by her words, and turned to look at Mrs. Sinclair, her expression somewhat troubled.

"The household staff is out of order, I apologize for the spectacle. But she really wants her daughter to dance for you, and this is..."

"If she loves to dance so much, why not go to a club?" Isabelle Sinclair lost her temper and interjected scornfully, "A strip dance there brings in thousands, and jumping into a guest's bed fetches even more."

"Isabelle!"

How could the Sinclair family heiress utter such things?

Mrs. Sinclair immediately cut her off sternly and then turned to April Wallace, her tone much gentler.

"Since she has the heart, let her dance then."

"Great, I'll go call her right away."

April Wallace joyfully exited the dining hall.

Within two minutes, Lena Dalton appeared in flowing dance attire in the courtyard entrance to the dining hall, accompanied by classical music.

With a supple form and graceful movements, her gaze constantly drifted towards Elias.

Isabelle's mood was turbulent, suppressing the urge to tear apart her clothes several times.

Her mother was present; she absolutely could not lose composure or let her see her true nature.

However, as the dance reached its climax, Lena executed a light spin and slowly, perfectly performed a grand gesture akin to a concubine greeting the lady of the house and the master before Elias and Mrs. Sinclair!

Isabelle could no longer sit still.

Snatching her man right in front of her mother would stretch the patience of even a saint.

Isabelle stood up abruptly and flung the almost untouched bowl of soup on the table towards Lena.

"You lowly thing! How dare you lust after Elias? Still dreaming of being a concubine? You're not even fit to help him with his shoes, better off working the street corner!"

Though the soup was no longer hot, it was greasy and full of residue, pouring down over Lena's head, drenching her face and clothes.

She stood frozen in place, shocked and ashamed, shivering all over like a soaked quail.

"The dance was going so well, what happened?"

April Wallace hurried over to embrace her daughter.

Isabelle, still unsatisfied after berating Lena, turned her sharp tongue towards Juliana Jacobs, her words becoming increasingly acrid.

"And you! You can't even stop a servant's daughter from flaunting herself under Elias's nose. What a wife you are! Can't keep your man, so you might as well give way and stop embarrassing yourself!"

"Isabelle!" Mrs. Sinclair stood up, her voice exceedingly stern, "Is that something you should be saying?"

Isabelle's chest heaved violently, her excitement uncontrollable, and even her mother's anger couldn't restrain her.

"Why can't I say it? Elias is supposed to be mine. She took my man and couldn't keep him. Better she divorce him soon and let me marry Elias. I'll show her how he cherishes me, so much he won't want to leave the bed."

Slap!

Outraged, Mrs. Sinclair's slap landed heavily on her face.

Isabelle clutched her cheek, staring in disbelief, still sputtering in her excitement.

"Mom! You're hitting me for them? What did I say wrong? Elias marrying a dead woman's memorial is worse than marrying me..."

"Silence!" Mrs. Sinclair interrupted loudly, her face ashen, "Look at yourself, speaking such filth, where is the dignity of a Sinclair heiress?"

Unwilling to let her daughter continue embarrassing herself, she immediately instructed Susan who had accompanied them.

"Take Miss Isabelle home at once. Without my permission, she is not allowed to leave her room!"

Isabelle wanted to argue her case, but Susan forcibly dragged her away.

Seeing Mrs. Sinclair decisively disciplining Isabelle, April Wallace felt hopeful for her daughter and was just about to speak emotionally when Mrs. Sinclair spoke first.

"As a mother, if you can't lead by example and always think about pushing your children down the wrong path, such a person is unworthy of being a mother, better off not having been born."

April Wallace, struck speechless by this, quickly helped her messy daughter retreat.

The living room immediately fell silent.

Mrs. Sinclair took a deep breath and looked at Elias. "Why keep such people around the house? If you find it inconvenient to deal with, I'll send Susan over tomorrow to get rid of them for you."

Elias did not respond immediately but turned his gaze to Juliana Jacobs.

Mrs. Sinclair, ever perceptive, quickly sensed there was more to tonight's incident than met the eye.

Thinking of Isabelle's earlier outburst, her heart churned, her hand by her side trembling slightly.

She looked towards Elias, her eyes filled with pain and disappointment: "Elias, I have always trusted you the most. But how could you tonight, for the sake of others, lose your sense of right and wrong and let Isabelle end up like this?"

Before Elias could speak, Juliana stepped in front of him, blocking Mrs. Sinclair's questioning gaze.

"What, you can't accept that your adopted daughter is such trash, so you take it out on my husband?"

Mrs. Sinclair's eyes clouded for a moment.

However, she did not lose her temper but instead examined Juliana from head to toe with an icy and sharp gaze.

"Miss Jacobs," her voice was not loud, but icy and cutting, "Elias's journey to this point has not been easy. With his status, he needs a partner who can assess the situation and take the big picture into account, not someone who causes him to lose judgment and not discern right from wrong."

"So," Juliana raised an eyebrow, "you believe I'm unsuitable, then which of your daughters is worthy of marrying him?"

Mrs. Sinclair cast a sharp glance at Juliana, speaking with a chill: "Isabelle is dear to me. If you dare scheme against her, I won't spare you!"

With that, she headed towards the door without looking back.

Juliana watched the direction Mrs. Sinclair left, muttering softly to herself, words only she could hear.

"If your adopted daughter is dear to you, then what is your missing biological daughter? A scapegoat for your husband?"

She blinked away the sting in her eyes, fighting back tears.

As soon as she turned around, she found Elias looking at her.