

## **Panicking 301**

Chapter 301: Even Elias Langley Can Only Fight Him to a Draw

"Watch out!"

Seeing the hot water about to splash on Juliana Jacobs, Raine Kane quickly pulled her in front of him.

Then, he stood by the door.

Inside, a man in his forties or fifties had just put down his cup.

Raine Kane walked straight in and kicked over his water dispenser.

In an instant, water spilled all over the floor.

"What are you doing!" The man's neck veins bulged.

Raine Kane raised an eyebrow, "I'm removing safety hazards for my lady."

"Do you think that with the Langley family backing you, you can do whatever you want?"

Juliana Jacobs walked in from the doorway and said with a faint smile, "Deputy Director Zane, you're too sensitive. I haven't even said anything, and you spilled it all yourself."

"Get out!" Quentin Zane's eyes were stern, "I'm conducting a handwriting analysis on Isabelle Sinclair's will. According to the rules, I can't see you!"

"So according to the rules, you can see people from the Paxton Family?"

Quentin Zane gave her a look and turned away.

He didn't speak, and neither did Juliana Jacobs.

Raine Kane closed the door for them, and the staff who were arranging to clean up the half-flooded room were also stopped.

A full seven or eight minutes passed before Juliana Jacobs spoke softly, "I'm here to see you, regardless of whether it follows the rules, as I didn't arrange to meet you privately. However, it's unfortunate that Deputy Director Zane can't keep things to himself."

"I don't understand what you're saying!"

Quentin Zane clearly didn't want to converse with her, even moving to the window.

"Are you afraid someone is watching you?" Juliana Jacobs asked.

He didn't respond, and she wasn't annoyed. She walked over to his desk, glanced over it, and said, "Since you know who I am, let me tell you this—if you have something you can't say, speak up early, so it doesn't affect the handwriting analysis results."

Quentin Zane's eyelid twitched involuntarily.

His heart went through a brief yet intense struggle, which he forcibly suppressed.

"Mrs. Langley, regarding the handwriting analysis of Isabelle Sinclair, I will definitely conduct it strictly to ensure the conclusion is accurate. There's no need to say more, please leave."

He firmly avoided using the word "certify," and Juliana Jacobs smiled.

"Very well, I'm quite reassured."

After finishing, she slowly left his office.

Back in the car, Raine Kane was puzzled.

"Juliana, you tried to intimidate him; will he really handle things fairly?"

Given the Paxton Family's influence, she believed Quentin Zane wouldn't easily double-cross them.

Juliana Jacobs pursed her lips without speaking, and at that moment, her phone rang.

It was Sean Paxton calling.

He wanted to discuss cooperation further and invited her for a face-to-face meeting, at the same private tea room.

Juliana Jacobs set down the phone and chuckled, "News travels fast."

At that tea room, she went to the private room he specified.

When she opened the door, Sean Paxton was elegantly brewing tea.

"President Jacobs seems to have more affairs lately; it's really not easy to arrange a meeting with you."

Juliana Jacobs smiled faintly, "Isn't that thanks to Mr. Paxton?"

Sean Paxton poured her a cup of delicate tea with a suitably apologetic tone.

"Ah, I really feel guilty about this. You merely asked me to teach Isabelle Sinclair a lesson in prison, who would've thought she'd be so tough, choosing to end it and leaving behind a will; that was really unexpected."

Juliana Jacobs raised an eyebrow, "I don't understand what Mr. Paxton is talking about."

Sean Paxton looked at her with a puzzled expression.

Juliana Jacobs said lightly, "Isabelle Sinclair was given special care in prison, enjoying a single room with meals different from everyone else, not like someone incarcerated, more like someone on a retreat. In this respect, I indeed feel some unease. But I'm just an ordinary person; what can I do about my grievances?"

"But just now you..."

"I was saying that Old Mr. Paxton and Mr. Paxton hold our 'Genesis' technology in such high regard, we are truly moved and must expedite our pace to seek partners, fearing any delay might disappoint you both."

Though she expressed her reluctance to cooperate in a polished yet mocking manner, Sean Paxton's lips twitched.

"However," Juliana Jacobs changed the subject, "regarding Isabelle Sinclair's will accusing me of persecuting her, there's no need for Mr. Paxton to worry."

Sean Paxton's grip on the teacup subtly tightened.

Juliana Jacobs pretended not to notice.

"There must be something wrong with Isabelle Sinclair's will, so I went to find the expert conducting the handwriting analysis and implored Deputy Director Zane to handle it impartially. However, he implied a reward of ten million wasn't enough to buy the 'truth'; fortunately, I have some savings, and we had a pleasant chat."

She deliberately stayed in Quentin Zane's office for about ten minutes, just to keep others guessing what they'd discussed.

Sure enough, Sean Paxton fell for it.

He steadied himself, coldly suggesting, "If that person is dishonest, you should request to change the expert to avoid being misled."

"No worries," Juliana Jacobs set down her teacup, "the environment is like this, and I can't destroy the rules. Besides, if I were short of money, my husband would provide it, so it's no big deal."

With that, she smiled.

But after smiling, she suddenly covered her mouth, cautiously asking, "Mr. Paxton, you don't have a recording device or anything on you, right?"

Sean Paxton's expression froze, and he immediately waved his hand, "Why would I carry such a thing? Impossible, absolutely impossible."

Upon hearing this, Juliana Jacobs's brow relaxed, as if relieved.

Then she blinked and asked light-heartedly, "So, is there anything else you need?"

Sean Paxton was momentarily speechless, "Ah?"

Juliana Jacobs stood up, "If there's nothing else, I'll take my leave. Thank you for the tea; it's just that the quality of the leaves doesn't match your skill, not very drinkable."

Sean Paxton, "..."

Juliana Jacobs left the private room with a gentle smile.

As the door closed, Sean Paxton threw the recording pen from under the table onto it, his chest heaving with anger.

He'd hoped to catch her on tape but ended up recording nothing.

Moreover, he hadn't had the chance to discuss the real business.

Juliana Jacobs had stayed in Quentin Zane's room for ten minutes, enough to finalize any deal.

The Zane Family's ungrateful pup, living off the Paxton Family for years and getting fat, now thinks it's found a new master?

Sean Paxton recalled Quentin Zane's opportunistic face. He couldn't gamble, and he didn't need to.

The truth didn't matter; potential traitors must be eliminated!

Ha, Juliana Jacobs wanted to contend with him?

Even Elias Langley could only come to a draw with him; did she think she could win?

Sean Paxton picked up his phone, dialed a number, his voice icy cold.

"Quentin Zane is no longer useful, take care of it, leave no traces."

...

Meanwhile, Juliana Jacobs left the evaluation center with Raine Kane.

"Do you think by meeting them separately, Sean Paxton will really believe Quentin Zane betrays him?"

Raine Kane was perplexed about Juliana Jacobs's mysterious actions today.

Juliana Jacobs sat in the front passenger seat, buckled her seatbelt, and exhaled deeply.

"I never expected to reach any result with Quentin Zane. Meeting him and staying for about ten minutes was just for this 'process.' Sean Paxton is naturally suspicious; once this thorn is planted, let's see how calm he can remain."

Raine Kane gripped the steering wheel tightly, sighing, "In this world... they can pin crimes on you with a flick of their fingers, but we have to risk everything and strategize carefully just to shed that label. Why is it so hard for ordinary people to prove their innocence?"

Juliana Jacobs gazed at the swiftly passing scenery outside the car window, her profile sharp and composed.

"Let's go, we're not going back to the office today. Whether this move works or not will be clear within twenty-four hours. There's another tough battle ahead, so let's prepare."

Chapter 302: Elias Langley Grips Her Arm Tightly

Nightfall had just begun.

Quentin Zane was driving home.

Just as he turned into the last secluded corner leading to the neighborhood parking lot, a black car that had been tailing him suddenly accelerated and viciously slammed into the rear of his car.

Zane's head hit the steering wheel, causing him to feel dizzy.

Before he could react, a man jumped out of the black car and approached his window.

"Deputy Director Zane, come with us."

The assailant was clearly after his life, intending to take him somewhere and finish him off.

Zane's mind was alarmed. Just as the man attempted to forcibly yank open his car door, he was kicked away by a flying figure.

Raine Kane opened the car door and urgently said, "If you want to live, come with me!"

Having met her that morning, he knew she was with Elias Langley.

Elias was well-regarded in their circles, and without much hesitation, Zane jumped out of the car and followed Raine to another car parked ahead.

Seeing them get into the back seat, Juliana Jacobs immediately hit the gas, and her Lynx LX7 shot forward like an arrow.

However, the black car chased them relentlessly, clinging to them tightly.

A deadly chase ensued on the brightly lit streets.

Juliana gripped the steering wheel tightly, maneuvering through traffic thanks to her car's excellent performance, while their pursuers used their superior driving skills to try to force her car to a stop.

Juliana's goal was to get the car to the police station.

As they reached a wide intersection, their pursuers seemed to sense her intention and recklessly floored the gas to ram her from the rear side.

But at this critical moment, a massive black shadow roared invisibly from the side of the road.

With a loud "Boom," the adversarial car was easily lifted and flipped like a toy, skidding and sparking on the ground.

The Knight XV SUV only experienced a violent jolt before it firmly stopped in front of Juliana's car.

Elias Langley stepped out of the vehicle.

He wore only a dark gray shirt on his upper body, with no tie. The night breeze tousled his hair, slightly messy, but it didn't weaken his imposing aura.

The car that had flipped and skidded to a halt laid still for a moment before two men managed to crawl out.

Even confronted with Elias alone, they dared not approach and ran for their lives.

Raine Kane got out of the Lynx LX7 and asked, "Are we not pursuing them?"

Elias glanced away, "They failed their task; they'll face consequences when they return. Why should I dirty my hands?"

Knowing who their master was, there was no need to chase them.

Raine found his reasoning sound.

Elias walked over to Juliana's car window, his voice neutral.

"Are you coming with me?"

Juliana unfastened her seatbelt and nodded.

Elias turned his head to Raine, "You drive."

In the back seat, Quentin Zane became anxious, "Mr. Langley, I... I need to go too."

"There will be a place for you," Elias said coldly.

Zane's spirits deflated at his words.

Juliana exited the driver's seat, and as Elias took her hand, he felt her icy palms.

As he led her to the Knight XV, he instinctively brought her hands to his mouth to warm them with his breath.

"Why so cold despite wearing so much?"

Juliana rolled her eyes at him, "Definitely not like you. Wearing so little and still a furnace. You must have thick skin, not just against the cold but impacts too."

Amused, Elias chuckled softly, then opened the car door to let her into the passenger seat.

Juliana was curious where he intended to interrogate Quentin Zane.

Half an hour later, the car unexpectedly pulled into Grymside.

Several uniformed officers were already waiting in the courtyard.

After Zane exited the car, he was taken inside.

Juliana looked at Elias, asking with her eyes.

Elias explained, "Currently, there's no direct evidence; formal interrogation isn't appropriate. But we can place him in a questioning room for now. Considering the unknown attack he just suffered, we're entitled to offer protection and gain insight into the incident."

This way, taking Quentin Zane to the detention center was justified.

Elias touched her hands, noting they no longer felt as cold, which eased his concern.

"According to procedure, they need some time to prepare for questioning. As you witnessed the car crash incident, you might be questioned too. Join Zane in the questioning room and wait."

He deliberately paused before adding, "You'll probably wait 15 minutes."

Juliana immediately grasped the subtle brilliance of this.

He had seamlessly woven her needs into the compliance of the process, leaving nothing to chance.

Behind this seemingly natural arrangement lay unspoken efforts of thoughtful balancing.

Without further words, Juliana nodded and was led by a staff member to a questioning room.

The fluorescent lights made Quentin Zane's face, already colorless, even paler.

His legs, under the table, trembled slightly, almost uncontrollably.

Juliana took in his fear as she sat opposite him, speaking calmly, "He's already sent someone to kill you, and you still won't speak?"

A staff member brought in two glasses of water, setting them before them, then stepped out.

Zane's throat bobbed as if extremely thirsty, grabbing the glass and gulping down two large mouthfuls, taking a few deep breaths to calm his nerves, then said, "I don't know what Miss Jacobs wants me to say. Handwriting analysis... it's a scientific conclusion; it can't be wrong."

Juliana was about to drink water, but upon hearing this, she paused, setting the glass back down.

"I haven't mentioned specifics, yet you know I'm asking about handwriting analysis. Doesn't that prove you have a guilty conscience?"

Zane's pupils contracted immediately.

Juliana didn't give him a chance to breathe, continuing, "Even if you cling to that conclusion, I can request higher authorities to initiate a review. Do you think the Paxton Family's reach extends everywhere?"

Her psychological pressure drew closer step by step.

"Not speaking now, are you going to wait until the conclusion is officially overturned, and everyone investigates why Quentin Zane issued a false report, benefiting from it before saying a word?"

Zane began to cough violently at her words.

"I... I..."

"I'm trying to save you," Juliana urged.

Just as Zane took a deep breath, about to say something, he suddenly coughed up blood.

His face rapidly changed from ashen to a horrifying purplish-blue, slumping sideways from the chair.

Startled, Juliana rushed to support him.

Elias was the first to rush in.

"The water is poisoned!" he alerted.

The staff following quickly donned gloves, sealing the water glasses per procedure for toxicology tests and fingerprint identification.

Juliana supported Zane's head, preventing him from choking on the blood rising from his esophagus.

Elias gripped her arm tightly, his voice tense, "Did you drink any?"

From the monitoring room, he saw everything in the interrogation room, witnessing her lifting the glass to her lips.

But Juliana shook her head, "Didn't have time."

Elias immediately breathed a sigh of relief.

At this moment, Quentin Zane suddenly opened his eyes, grasping Juliana's arm.

"Paperweight... paperweight..."

Juliana frowned, "What paperweight?"

But Zane's grip on her arm gradually loosened until it fell to the ground.

A staff inspecting nearby checked his carotid artery, then looked up, speaking gravely, "No breath, no pulse."

Elias pulled Juliana up, holding her tightly, shielding her from the disturbing sight.

"Paperweight..." Juliana suddenly remembered the morning when she visited his office, having particularly noted his desk, "I remembered, it's the Yellow Jade Paperweight on his desk."

Elias's eyes sharpened with determination, without hesitation:

"No one here tonight is allowed to leave; cut off all signals connecting here to the outside."

"Raine, head to Quentin Zane's office."

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Half an hour later, the secretary opened the door to Sean Paxton's study.

"Sir, Quentin Zane is dead, and Juliana was present."

Sean Paxton stood up from his chair, filled with visible delight.

"Good! Good! Good! Now it's enough to send her to prison, and then all of Aetherflame will be mine."

However, the secretary bowed her head even lower, saying, "Sir, it's you who's in trouble."

Sean Paxton froze...

Chapter 303: Husband and Wife Join Forces to Set the Trap

"The people sent to deal with Quentin Zane failed, and Elias Langley appeared and took him to Grymside. So, I immediately arranged for our insider there, in your name, to make sure Quentin Zane was eliminated."

Sean Paxton picked up the pen holder and threw it at the secretary. "Acting in the detention center, have you got shit for brains?"

"But Quentin Zane is a major threat to you; leaving him alive is even more dangerous."

Sean Paxton fell silent.

At this moment, the butler hurried in.

"Sir, there's someone outside claiming to be the head of an investigation team, and they've brought a group wanting to see you."

The secretary asked, "Which team leader, doesn't he know our Mr. Paxton?"

According to usual practice, even if there was something to investigate, the other party should give a call to inform first, and then when they arrived at Sean Paxton's place, it was just a formality.

But coming directly to the door was a first.

With a sense of foreboding, Sean Paxton jumped up from his chair.

"Keep them stalled, I'll go find Uncle."

Before long, he reached the top floor of The Cardinal Art Club.

Dylan Paxton had already gone to bed, but the sudden turn of events had alarmed him in a way he hadn't been for years.

Before Sean Paxton could explain his purpose, Dylan Paxton slapped him across the face.

"What did I tell you before? That woman says a few words, and you fall for it. Elias Langley took the person to the detention center, betting you'll make a move. Now look at you, you stuck your neck out for them to chop. Delighted?"

"Uncle, Quentin Zane couldn't have predicted his death; he wouldn't disregard the entire Zane Family, surely he revealed nothing to Juliana Jacobs. Besides, even if there were surveillance cameras in the interrogation room, they wouldn't constitute direct evidence."

Dylan Paxton truly wanted to crack open his head to see what's inside.

"Even circumstantial evidence is enough to give you a hard time! You've walked step by step into the trap laid by those two, yet you're still oblivious. The head of the investigation team is also arranged by Elias Langley—a tough nut who won't be swayed by reason or force, waiting for you to fall into the trap. Quentin Zane is dead, why did it take you half an hour to get the news? They definitely already have something against you!"

Sean Paxton suddenly realized that all of this was a meticulously laid game by that couple.

"Uncle, save me, over the years I've done quite a bit for the Paxton Family too."

"Shut up!" Dylan Paxton rarely lost his usual composure, his voice filled with suppressed anger. "I'll handle this personally, you just stay out of it."

Sean Paxton barely had time to show joy before Dylan Paxton changed his tone.

"But now that things have blown up this big, the higher-ups can't ignore it. You should first go and lie low, say it's for rest and recuperation. As for the company, don't worry about it, let your uncle come back and temporarily take your place."

Sean Paxton was shocked, "You want to let that half-brained bastard back into the Paxton Family?"

Dylan Paxton said coldly, "Let him work for you for free, clean up your mess, understood?"

Sean Paxton lowered his head in despair, letting out a deep sigh.

Was he really out of the game like this?

It was really hard to accept.

At this time, Dylan Paxton's secretary walked out from the elevator, hurriedly coming to the desk.

"Old Mr. Paxton, Sebastian Sinclair has returned to the Sinclair Family from the sanatorium."

Dylan Paxton's expression darkened, "When did this happen?"

"It's been two or three days, although he's traveling in a wheelchair, but it seems he doesn't plan to return to the sanatorium."

Dylan Paxton turned to Sean Paxton, his gaze as piercing as a hawk's. "You lost without disgrace."

In the next second, he instructed the secretary, "Arrange for me to have tea with Felix Sinclair at ten tomorrow morning."

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The inkstone Raine Kane retrieved was actually a hidden USB drive.

To protect the Zane Family, Quentin Zane didn't store records of past power and money transactions between the Zane Family and the Paxton Family, but preserved another set of results regarding Isabelle Sinclair's handwriting.

This authentication result was completely different from the conclusion he had provided to the officials.

It was precisely because of this hidden authentication report that the higher-ups questioned the original conclusion of the handwriting authentication of the so-called "Isabelle Sinclair's suicide note."

Upon re-examination by an expert panel, it was confirmed that the "Isabelle Sinclair's suicide note" was a forgery.

This twist completely changed the course of the case.

The previous accusation against Juliana Jacobs of "forcing Isabelle Sinclair to suicide" lost its basis. Isabelle Sinclair's death in prison suddenly became suspicious, and it was inevitable that the investigation would be reopened.

In addition to Quentin Zane's death in Grymside, the successive occurrences of two homicide cases forced Dylan Paxton to use significant power to manage and suppress the direct impact of this storm to a minimum.

But the initiation of the investigation itself was a public challenge to his authority.

More crucially, although he barely kept Sean Paxton from direct implication, he had to keep others idle, which was equivalent to cutting off one of his own arms, causing cracks in his power structure.

Upon verification, it was found that both cups of water sent to the interrogation room had been poisoned. Because Juliana Jacobs' lips had touched the rim of the cup, Elias Langley, feeling uneasy, insisted on sending her to the hospital for a full check-up the next day.

Only after confirming that her blood was free from toxic reactions did he finally feel relieved.

But Sebastian Sinclair still couldn't rest assured, yet since he had openly returned to the Sinclair Family, it was inconvenient for him to meet with Juliana Jacobs in private.

So, he booked a private room at Aethelgard under the guise of a family reunion dinner and personally called Elias Langley.

Elias Langley, being astute, naturally understood the deeper meaning of this meal and immediately agreed to bring Juliana Jacobs along.

After hanging up the phone, before Sebastian Sinclair could speak, Mrs. Sinclair, sitting beside him, already furrowed her brow.

"Florence doesn't like Juliana Jacobs at all. If she comes, Florence won't feel like eating. How do we have a reunion dinner then?"

It was as if Sebastian Sinclair was reminded by her and suddenly realized.

"Florence isn't hungry, just let her watch us eat."

Mrs. Sinclair frowned, "Hubby, are you muddled again?"

Sebastian Sinclair held her hand, his gaze tender enough to make water drip, yet his tone was firm.

"My dear, Elias Langley practically grew up in front of us, we're like family. Florence needs to bring Auden, how can Elias not bring his wife? If we only allow him to come, aren't we deliberately sowing discord in someone else's marriage? It's not something we can do."

Mrs. Sinclair couldn't refute his words and could only let out a gentle sigh.

Just then, Old Mr. Sinclair, leaning on a cane, came in from outside. As soon as he entered, he spoke in a booming voice.

"I've changed my mind, I'm not going back to the second son's place."

Upon hearing this, Sebastian Sinclair didn't even bother to lift his brows, just a flicker of contempt crossing his eyes from the corners.

"Isn't it nice being the Grand Sovereign at the second son's house? Why aren't you going?"

Old Mr. Sinclair's eyes twitched, "That Juliana Jacobs is not easy to deal with, she will definitely stir up Elias Langley to scheme something against our Sinclair Family. I must stay to keep an eye on this family!"

Chapter 304: Tonight, Juliana Jacobs Is Absolutely Not Allowed to Hit Her Again!

"Staying at the second son's place will benefit your health, prolong life," Sebastian Sinclair said flatly, "At my place, I fear not."

Old Mr. Sinclair's lips trembled.

"I don't care! Just now you said you're going to Aethelgard for dinner tonight? I'm the eldest here, so I must go. I want to see what tricks that woman will pull right under my nose!"

He looked almost justified, as if "being the oldest" was a universal pass.

Sebastian Sinclair looked at his act coldly, too lazy to even maintain pleasantries, turned his wheelchair, and went to his study.

In the evening, Sebastian Sinclair and Mrs. Sinclair, accompanied by tag-along Old Mr. Sinclair, arrived at Aethelgard.

Florence Sinclair was at the door adjusting Auden Hughes' tie.

Seeing them arrive, Florence immediately came forward to help Old Mr. Sinclair, while Auden Hughes quickly walked over to Sebastian Sinclair.

Once the driver pushed the wheelchair in, Auden Hughes carefully helped Sebastian into it, saying, "Uncle Sinclair, with your frail health, if conventional treatment yields little results, you could try the gene therapy we're developing."

Sebastian Sinclair chuckled, "No worries, your aunt is treating me, I trust her."

Florence on the other side held onto the old man as they went inside, considerately saying, "Grandpa, the wind is strong tonight, are you cold? If you are, I'll accompany you inside to wait for Elias and the others."

The old man exaggeratedly raised his voice, "Florence is thoughtful, arriving early and respecting her elders. Unlike some people, acting all high and mighty, making the whole family wait."

The implication was crystal clear.

Just then, Elias Langley's car arrived.

They got out one after the other.

Florence's eyes flashed a hint of smugness, yet her tone was gentle, "Grandpa, don't say that, Elias and them were probably delayed by traffic."

But Juliana Jacobs interjected blandly, "There was no traffic, we timed it and arrived on time, what are we making you wait for?"

Florence was momentarily stumped by her words, faced with Juliana's cool gaze, the phrase "hit every time upon meeting" echoed in her ear, and she shivered imperceptibly.

Tonight, Juliana mustn't hit her again!

"Since everyone's here, let's go in."

Sebastian Sinclair spoke, and the group began heading towards the private room.

Florence was scheming to ensure Juliana couldn't eat the meal and leave early, so she would have time alone with Elias.

Just then a waiter came from the side with soup, her eyes sparkled as she instantly thought of a plan.

This waitress holding the soup appeared inexperienced, even walking with her head down.

In fact, this was someone Sebastian Sinclair had arranged on purpose.

He didn't want the old geezer to affect his daughter's appetite, so the original plan was to have this student-kid bought for five hundred bucks to "accidentally" spill soup on the old man's sleeves, creating a small incident to have him leave.

However, Florence saw the waitress about to pass the gap beside Old Mr. Sinclair, realizing this was a rare opportunity.

She immediately pretended to stumble slightly, softly uttering "Oh," her body slightly leaned toward Juliana.

She calculated precisely; this move would make Juliana instinctively retreat, thus bump into the waitress behind her, and the bowl of hot soup would spill toward the nearest person, Old Mr. Sinclair.

By then, the old man would be angry and have Juliana leave, and no one present would speak for her.

But Juliana not only didn't retreat, but instead, as Florence approached, she lightly stepped sideways half a step, and her wrist discreetly lifted, gently using the edge of her handbag to push against Florence's elbow where she exerted force.

The move was subtle enough that apart from Elias Langley beside her, almost no one noticed.

Yet Florence thus changed direction, involuntarily lunging forward and crashing right into the waitress's arm!

The clear-eyed student almost thought the task wouldn't be completed, yet suddenly, just like a breeze of spring arrived.

Since there was a scapegoat, he decisively exclaimed "Oh" heavily, simply spilling the entire bowl of soup onto Old Mr. Sinclair.

Florence saw her plan going awry, immediately tried to salvage.

"Grandpa!"

She was about to shove the waitress aside, when Juliana tripped her.

Thus Florence lunged at the old man, resulting in both simultaneously tumbling to the ground.

Elias Langley instantly pulled Juliana into his arms.

"My heavens..."

Old Mr. Sinclair's plump body landed hard on his rear, instantly clutching his lower back, grimacing in pain.

"Dad, are you okay!"

Mrs. Sinclair hurriedly rushed forward to check.

Florence was pulled up by Auden Hughes, her clothes stained with soup, looking a bit disheveled.

She gazed resentfully at Juliana, "You, you made me trip, and also caused grandpa to fall."

Before Juliana could speak, Elias Langley raised his brows at her, "From the door to here, she deliberately kept her distance from you. You bumped into the waitress yourself due to carelessness, but you want to blame her, what is your intention?"

Florence didn't expect Elias Langley to so openly side with Juliana right in front of her father.

"Dad..."

She wanted to tell Sebastian that since getting married, Elias had lost his sense.

But Sebastian Sinclair gravely interrupted her, "Call 120 to send the old man to the hospital, everyone else keeps eating."

Old Mr. Sinclair in pain, "?"

Is it just over like this?

Sebastian Sinclair met his puzzled gaze, explained, "Deposit's paid, no refund without eating. You go to the hospital for medicine, we eat, no problem."

Old Mr. Sinclair was so furious he almost coughed blood.

Mrs. Sinclair quickly comforted him, "He isn't always clear-minded, don't mind him."

Eventually Old Mr. Sinclair was taken away by 120, and the restaurant promised them a fifty percent discount for the meal.

Florence, having her clothes dirtied, called someone to bring clean clothes; Auden accompanied her to change in the dressing room.

Thus, only Sebastian and Mrs. Sinclair, along with Elias and Juliana, were left in the private room.

Sebastian looked at Elias and said, "I specifically had them make Golden Osmanthus Chrysanthemum wine-braised bird's nest milk, wonder if you'd like it?"

Elias Langley knew Juliana loved sweet wine-braised dishes since young, thus replied, "What you arranged, we'll surely like."

Sebastian nodded, "Then serve the dishes."

Mrs. Sinclair hurriedly said, "Florence and Auden haven't returned from changing clothes, let's wait for them."

"Madam, I have low blood sugar, after all this trouble, I have to eat or I'll collapse."

Mrs. Sinclair hearing he couldn't bear it, promptly messaged Florence to hurry.

Over at the dressing room.

Florence took the clothes Auden handed her, her eyes flashed a sharp gleam.

The miscalculations in the hallway suggested tonight Juliana still had chances to pick at her.

She must conjure a bigger ruckus, ideally making Elias drive Juliana away, or cause them to quarrel, thoroughly ruining this reunion meal, so she could escape unscathed.

So upon seeing the man handing her clothes, she steeled herself...

"Auden, my earring seems to have fallen in the hallway, could you find it for me?"

"How careless! Uncle and Aunt are waiting, be quick."

Auden reproached verbally, but still went to find her earring.

Florence promptly took his phone left on the table.

Couples' phones usually have intimate photos documenting love.

She swiftly picked a solo passionate photo of Auden from her phone, sent it to Auden's phone, then used his phone to send the photo to Juliana, finally deleting it.

This way, no one would know.

Juliana was eating bird's nest when her phone buzzed.

Seeing it's from Auden, she openly opened the message.

The result was a shocking, earth-shattering "primal scream" photo before her.

She felt a piercing in her eyes, immediately exiting.

Is Auden insane?

"What's wrong?"

Elias Langley's gaze fell on the phone, asking.

Chapter 305: I Won't Tolerate Anyone Speaking Up for Her Here

Juliana looked up at him, her face still slightly red.

"No, the bird's nest... was a bit hot."

Though Elias Langley didn't believe it was the bird's nest causing the issue, he still said, "Then leave it for a bit, eat it later."

"Is it? I found it just right," Mrs. Sinclair said.

Juliana didn't respond to her, instead she lowered her eyes and remained silent for a moment before gracefully standing up.

"Excuse me, I need to go to the restroom."

Though the private room had an attached restroom, she headed straight for the door instead.

Mrs. Sinclair watched her departing back, frowned and muttered softly, "What's gotten into her? Her behavior is odd, could she be up to something again?"

"Madam," Sebastian Sinclair calmly put down his chopsticks and explained gently, "In such settings, leaving the table midway is usually to deal with personal matters. In social situations, everyone understands these tacit rules, aren't you the one most aware of these?"

Mrs. Sinclair was momentarily speechless, then with a bit of grievance she complained, "Look, since she came in, she hasn't even looked at me once."

Sebastian chuckled lightly, his voice carrying just the right amount of indulgence, "Isn't it better she doesn't bicker with you? Would you rather eat with a stomach full of anger and end up with a stomachache?"

Hearing him taking her side, Mrs. Sinclair felt a warmth in her heart and chose not to dwell on it further.

Juliana left the private room, not heading to the restroom, but to the lounge.

As she approached the door, she encountered Auden Hughes who had returned without finding the earrings.

Seeing her, Auden was a bit surprised, "Are you here to hurry us for dinner?"

Juliana looked him up and down, "What are you doing here?"

Auden shrugged, "She asked me to find earrings, but there's nothing in the corridor."

"Where's your phone?" Juliana asked.

Auden patted several pockets on himself before remembering that he had likely left his phone on the table in the lounge.

Just as he was about to speak, Juliana snorted, took out her phone and pulled up the photo Auden Hughes had sent her.

"Next time you take a picture, tuck in your ribs, make sure what's supposed to be prominent is prominent, otherwise it looks so tiny you might think you don't even have one."

Auden's pupils contracted violently in extreme shock and shame, his face turning pale then flushing red from uncontrollable anger and embarrassment.

Juliana ignored him, directly pushing open the lounge door and walking in.

"I forgot, the earrings are..."

Florence Sinclair turned around to see Juliana, and was utterly shocked.

Auden Hughes stood by the door, leaning against the frame, looking every bit like a spectator, making no move to enter further.

"You... why are you here, I'm changing clothes, get out!"

Juliana approached her with a smile, "Didn't you drop an earring?"

Before Florence could react, Juliana yanked off the earring from her ear and slapped her hard several times.

"Ah! Ah!"

Florence cried out in pain, not only was her earlobe bleeding, but blood trickled from the corner of her mouth as well.

She hurriedly sought help from the man standing at the door, "Auden, help me! She's gone mad, she's gone mad!"

However, Auden remained leaning at the door, unmoved.

Juliana grabbed Florence's collar, forcing her to look up, her eyes showing a fierce determination.

"Trying to use underhanded tricks to drive a wedge between my marriage? Florence Sinclair, weigh how much you are worth. With your level, you can't even dodge my hits, yet you want to be a mistress?"

She let go, as if discarding something filthy, and brushed her hands contemptuously.

"I suggest you to start over, remember to bring your brain in your next life."

With that, she turned and left decisively.

At this moment, Florence's face was a mix of blood and tears, a mess.

And just when she needed comfort, Auden casually walked over, looked down at her coldly, not even bothering to bend down for her.

"Florence Sinclair, do you think because my grandfather likes you, I can't call off this engagement?"

He sneered.

"Wearing the title of my fiancée while scheming for your brother-in-law, who the hell do you think I am? I'm warning you, as long as you are my fiancée, you better keep your dirty thoughts to yourself. If you dare to make a fool of me..."

He picked up her phone and thoroughly deleted all his photos from it.

"I don't mind exposing your dirty deeds to the world, then let's see after Miss Sinclair's reputation is ruined, will the Sinclair Family still acknowledge you as their adopted daughter? Will you still have the face to stay in Kingsford!"

Having said that, he too left, leaving Florence alone on the floor.

The humiliation of complete defeat was sharper than the pain at her ear and cheeks, her fingernails dug deeply into her palms, but she felt nothing.

Juliana returned to the private room, casually sitting back in her seat.

Elias Langley noticed she had been gone a bit long and asked, "Are you okay?"

Juliana shook her head, and focused on her meal.

Soon after, Auden Hughes returned as well.

Mrs. Sinclair, not seeing her adopted daughter, asked, "Where's Florence?"

"She'll be here soon."

He answered calmly and continued dining on his own.

Mrs. Sinclair was perplexed.

Meanwhile, Sebastian acted as if Florence didn't exist, asking Juliana, "The chef here inherits the royal tradition, is there any other dish you particularly want to try?"

Juliana smiled, "It's already very sumptuous, any more would be wasteful."

Sebastian nodded, turning to Elias Langley, "You're wise to have married such a thrifty wife."

"Indeed," Elias Langley replied, bowing his head.

It wasn't until the meal was almost over that Florence finally arrived.

Mrs. Sinclair, seeing her red and swollen cheeks and bleeding earlobes, asked in shock, "What happened? Who hit you?"

Florence picked up the chopsticks and said quietly, "No one hit me, I just accidentally fell while coming out."

Mrs. Sinclair didn't buy it, "How could you fall and get hurt like this? Don't be afraid, tell mom the truth."

Juliana, feeling disgusted by the scene, put down her chopsticks and stood up.

"I'm done eating, I'll be taking my leave first, enjoy the rest of your meal."

Saying that, she left, not wanting to stay and listen to Mrs. Sinclair and Elias Langley's scolding.

Mrs. Sinclair, not being naive, asked her adopted daughter with more concern, "Wasn't it her..."

"Madam," Sebastian slowly interrupted her, "Florence is an adult, if she really suffered any grievance, wouldn't she tell someone? Since she claims she fell, why must you insist on imagining a persecutor to satisfy you? Let the doctor take a look at her when you're back."

Unable to find fault in Sebastian's words, Mrs. Sinclair gave her adopted daughter a sympathetic glance and added two more dishes to her bowl.

Florence ate silently, but there was a flash of coldness in her eyes.

She vaguely sensed Sebastian seemed to be defending Juliana.

Feeling something was amiss, she discreetly took out her phone to message Sean Paxton.

...

Juliana sat directly into the car, with Elias Langley following closely behind.

The two remained silent, a tense atmosphere filling the car.

Just as Elias was about to speak, Juliana suddenly turned her head and spoke first.

"I'm the one who hit Florence Sinclair. If you feel sorry for her, you can get out and find her right now. I have no room here for someone who speaks up for her."

Chapter 306: A Minor Episode

"Juliana, I've never liked her."

Elias's eyes were calm, revealing no emotion, but Juliana knew he was unhappy.

But she didn't want to comfort him.

"That's the 'affection' of a brother for a sister, not the attraction between a man and a woman. I understand. Evan gave me many lessons; I don't need you to deepen my understanding."

Elias suddenly pressed his lips together and said nothing.

Zachary glanced at the rearview mirror, the hairs on his back standing up, and Raine Kane raised the partition for her.

A small scene, nothing serious.

Seeing Elias's deep eyes, Juliana once again shifted her gaze out the window.

When she said those words just now, there wasn't a trace of anger, as if she were merely stating what dishes would be prepared for lunch tomorrow, as if she had already accepted the fact that she had married another "Evan."

Elias suppressed all his turbulent emotions for a while.

After a moment, he held her hand, his fingertips brushing across her flushed palm.

"You've become a little smarter this time, knowing how to deal with the opposition, even making them not dare to utter a sound. That's a superior technique, though not yet brilliant. If next time you can hit her using someone else's hand, my wife would be even more formidable."

Juliana didn't expect him to say such words, but she remained calm.

"Elias," her voice involuntarily carried a hint of tenderness, "if you have a better choice, I really won't mind..."

Before she finished speaking, Elias's fingertip was already pressed against her lips,

"My divorce observation period isn't over yet; you can't just make a judgment like that. It's unfair to me."

A hint of fatigue swept through Juliana's eyes as she moved his hand away from her lips.

She was tired, unable to love anymore, and didn't want to.

Elias pulled her into his arms, "If you're tired, lean on me. For things you don't want to do, I'll do them, as long as you tell me."

The person in his embrace did not react, and a trace of worry floated between the man's brows.

Returning to Number 17 Darroway Street.

Juliana pushed the door open and got out of the car, the evening breeze carrying the chill of late autumn rushing towards her.

She stood in the night, taking a deep breath of the cold air, trying to leave all the disturbances behind her.

But when she closed her eyes, the unsightly "naked ape photo" of Auden Hughes always flashed inappropriately in her mind...

Elias thought she might not be interested in sleeping in the same bed with him tonight.

He always knew how to maintain distance at the right time, so he said: "Rest early. I'll have the kitchen make wild matsutake porridge for you in the morning, so you can have it when you wake up."

After saying that, he patted her face and walked alone towards the study.

Juliana watched his tall back, which carried a hint of loneliness, and suddenly felt that perhaps the best way to erase the nauseating image in her mind was...

"Elias!"

She suddenly called out to him, causing the man's footsteps to falter.

He turned to look at her, his gaze calm, carrying inquiry.

Only to see Juliana ask shamelessly, without a skip of her heartbeat, "Isn't showering alone boring for you?"

Elias was stunned for a second, then immediately turned around, picked her up horizontally, and strode towards the master bedroom.

On the other side, the dinner party concluded.

Auden Hughes left alone.

Florence Sinclair claimed she wanted to spend time with her parents and returned to the Sinclair Family.

Mrs. Sinclair felt there was something strange about Florence's interaction with Auden Hughes today, so she asked, "Is everything okay with you and Auden lately?"

Upon hearing this, Florence's eyes clearly flickered, "It's fine, he's... very outstanding, easily endearing women..."

Sebastian Sinclair, hearing this, knew she was trying to pin the blame on his daughter.

So before Mrs. Sinclair could react, he leisurely said, "In that case, you really should keep a close eye on him. If he's fooling around outside, at most, it's him not controlling himself; but if he's deliberately meddling in someone else's family..."

He intentionally paused.

"... the Hughes Family will only think that you can't even keep a man."

His words carried no overt derogation, yet each sentence landed on Florence's face like a slap.

She turned pale.

Mrs. Sinclair was about to say something when Sebastian turned his wheelchair, showing them his back.

"The things Isabelle did before her passing brought shame to our Sinclair Family. Please, madam, advice everyone in our family to be more restrained when going out. After all, I don't have enough face for you to squander!"

After finishing, he rolled his wheelchair to the study.

Mrs. Sinclair thought for a moment, patted Florence's hand, and said, "Your father is right. Recently, the Sinclair Family's reputation hasn't been great. You must get along well with Auden and don't provoke Juliana, understood?"

Florence obediently nodded.

"Go back to your room to rest. The doctor will be here soon," Mrs. Sinclair said.

"No need, Mom. I can take care of it myself; it's not serious."

After saying that, she turned and returned to her room.

It wasn't that she appreciated Mrs. Sinclair's concern for her; she had more important matters to attend to.

Not long after returning to her room, her phone rang.

Florence locked her room and went to the bathroom to answer.

It was a virtual number, and the voice on the other end was Sean Paxton's.

As soon as the call connected, he started cursing.

"I told you, don't use regular tools to contact me. Why didn't you listen? You're increasing my risk of exposure. Are you afraid people won't know we're in contact?"

Florence quickly said, "There's something wrong with Juliana."

Sean angrily said, "Of course I know she's got something up her sleeve. If she didn't, how could she make a mess of me like this? So you sent me messages wanting to talk just for this?"

Florence quickly replied, "No, it's because tonight my father was too abnormal. Although it didn't show on the surface, I felt he was biased towards Juliana."

Sean was silent on the other end for a while before saying, "Is there any use to what you are feeling? Where's the evidence?"

Florence tightened her grip on the phone, "Can't you take her blood for a test? If she's the Sinclair Family's missing heiress, have your granduncle bring her back and torment her."

Sean snorted, "If I had that ability, would I be in the situation I'm in now?"

Florence said nothing, and after thinking for a while, Sean said, "Regarding whether Juliana is your adoptive father's biological daughter, you must confirm it yourself. If you want assistance, go find the new CEO of the Rhyvion Group, Samuel Paxton. He has an obsession with a certain type of woman. If you can make him your weapon, you can achieve twice the result with half the effort."

Florence caught the key term in his words, "What do you mean by 'a certain type of woman'?"

Sean chuckled, "If you can get close to him, won't you find out?"

Saying that, he hung up.

She had indirectly learned about the newly appointed CEO of the Rhyvion Group.

His background wasn't clean, and his reputation wasn't good either.

Dylan Paxton's appointment of him is also testing another route.

And Sean asking her to find him is clearly intending to use her.

She's not foolish enough to become someone else's pawn.

Just as Florence was furrowing her brow, pondering her next steps, there was a knock at the door outside.

Thinking it was Mrs. Sinclair concerned about her, bringing her medicine, she quickly returned to the bedroom to open the door.

However, the person standing at the doorway was the butler.

"Miss Florence," the butler said with a smile, his tone respectful yet irrefutable, "The old man needs to be observed in the hospital tonight. Mr. Sinclair ordered that you go to the hospital to accompany him for the night to fulfill your filial duties."

Florence's heart sank, knowing full well that Sebastian, aware she was injured tonight, still wanted her to go to the hospital for the night.

This wasn't fulfilling any filial duty; it was clearly meant to unsettle her.

She didn't reveal any hint of emotion, merely nodding obediently, "Okay, I'll pack up and go."

The butler nodded, about to return to report back, when Florence stopped him.

"Uncle Rhodes, please wait."

The butler paused, turned back, and asked, "Is there anything Miss Florence needs?"

"My sister's birthday is approaching, and my mother has been reminiscing a lot lately. I thought... if I could know what special habits or marks my sister had as a child, I could imitate them a bit to comfort Mother. You watched my sister grow up; you must know her well, right?"

Chapter 307: That Best Friend Is Helena Sinclair

Butler Rhodes kept his polite smile, his tone respectful yet leaving no room for deeper inquiry.

"Second Miss has been considerate. Over the years, Sir and Madam have harbored guilt over Miss's disappearance. Sir is bedridden most of the time, and Madam's personality has drastically changed. Intentionally evoking past events might only bring sadness, which is detrimental to their well-being. I believe what they need is not a triggering memory but rather to let go."

Florence Sinclair's face immediately showed a perfectly timed realization.

"Uncle Rhodes, you're right. I overlooked this aspect, only thinking about making Mother happy and forgetting this concern."

Butler Rhodes nodded, "Knowing Second Miss is so filial, Madam would certainly be pleased."

After finishing his words, he continued on his way.

Watching his figure disappear down the corridor, the warmth in Florence Sinclair's eyes suddenly faded, leaving only a cold and sinister glint.

The old man surely is tight-lipped.

Either confirm Juliana Jacobs' relationship with Sebastian Sinclair, using Dylan Paxton's hand to remove Juliana, or there's another path for her...

Florence Sinclair closed the door, picked up her phone, and sent a message. It wasn't long before she received a reply.

"As far as I know, Samuel Paxton has sadistic tendencies towards a certain type of woman. This is your chance to use Samuel as your tool, do I need to teach you anything else?"

Florence Sinclair held her phone, her eyes darkening for a moment.

Still need to find Samuel Paxton?

...

On the other side, Sean Paxton hung up the phone and turned to look at his wife.

"Madam, whether I can make a comeback depends on you."

Mrs. Paxton was busy packing his luggage, her back aching from the effort.

"You're letting Florence Sinclair go find your illegitimate uncle. Even if you manage to get your hands on what your granduncle has been pining for, it will be your uncle's doing, and won't have anything to do with you. Why bother looking at me?"

Sean Paxton chuckled.

"Madam, that's quite the assumption. Although Samuel Paxton acts unruly and without regard for rules, Juliana Jacobs has Elias Langley backing her. Samuel is no match for Elias. Right now is a perfect time to leverage this power. Once Samuel, who is a major threat, is removed, Granduncle will naturally realize his past decisions were flawed, and I will be reinstated."

Mrs. Paxton rubbed her aching back.

"What makes you think you'll end up bested by Elias Langley again? Wasn't it Juliana Jacobs who caused you trouble?"

Sean Paxton wore a dismissive expression, "What capabilities does that woman have? Currently, the only use for her is to incite a conflict between Samuel and Elias. Now that Sebastian Sinclair is recovered, I not only want to use Elias's hand to remove Samuel but also use him to find what Granduncle has longed for all these years. This merit will solidify my rightful place as the heir to the Paxton Family."

Mrs. Paxton lowered her head in thought, not responding to him.

Sean Paxton's voice turned more piercing, "You should quickly get close to Juliana, win her trust. Florence Sinclair is a useless tool meant only for dealing with Samuel, while your task is to uncover the true relationship between Juliana and Sebastian Sinclair. Only then can I be summoned back swiftly."

...

The next day, Juliana Jacobs woke up later than usual.

When she woke, the side next to her was already empty.

As she sat at the dining table, the butler served her wild matsutake porridge.

Juliana took a few bites, but the more she ate, the more nauseous she felt. So she said nothing, and didn't finish the meal. Instead, she brought Raine Kane to the office.

But after working only half a day, she was exhausted.

Caleb Shaw noticed her poor complexion and said, "You should rest. I've got this under control."

Yet Juliana rubbed her weary temples, "The Innovation Hub was just established, with so many things pressing, and I feel uneasy letting you handle it all alone."

Caleb Shaw smiled, "I'm staying until Summer Shaw completes her heart transplant surgery. Managing the company is part of my responsibility, and the progress of R&D hasn't been affected. You have nothing to feel awkward about. As a shareholder, you should pay more attention to your health. If you're fatigued and experiencing loss of appetite, go get a check-up at the hospital."

Juliana thought she wasn't someone who's fragile, and didn't see the necessity for a hospital check-up, but she still decided to take Caleb's advice and rest for half the day in the afternoon.

However, if she went back to Darroway Street now, the butler would definitely find it odd, and it might unnecessarily alert Elias Langley.

So she decided to have lunch at a nearby mall instead.

It was peak lunch hour, but fortunately, Raine Kane had reserved a table for her.

Just as she was about to enter the elevator to the third floor, there came a commotion from the lobby behind her.

She turned back to look and saw a woman fainted on the floor.

Catching a glimpse of the woman's face, she was momentarily surprised, then turned and walked toward her.

Mrs. Paxton was being helped up by security. Upon seeing her, a pale but smiling face greeted her.

"Mrs. Langley, what a coincidence meeting you here."

Juliana Jacobs didn't immediately go to assist her but said flatly, "Fainting right behind me, what a coincidence indeed?"

Mrs. Paxton was momentarily embarrassed, lowering her voice, "I saw you at the entrance and wanted to catch up to greet you, but didn't expect my hypoglycemia to act up."

She had actually followed her all the way from Science City.

"Oh, is that so."

Juliana didn't care much about the truth, and signaled Raine Kane with a look.

Raine Kane stepped up to help support her.

The security, seeing they knew each other, left the two to it.

"I was heading to lunch. If Mrs. Paxton is free, you're welcome to join me."

"Yes... Yes, please."

Mrs. Paxton's face lit up with joy.

At the restaurant, Juliana had the kitchen prepare a rush order of osmanthus rice cakes.

After a few bites, Mrs. Paxton's color improved significantly, and the two ordered some other dishes separately.

"Thank you for your care, Mrs. Langley. Let me cover the bill today."

"No need," Juliana's tone remained aloof, "we're not that acquainted, but since your husband and mine are colleagues, I couldn't just ignore you. I already planned to eat here, so please don't feel obliged."

Juliana was implying she should get to the point, but Mrs. Paxton replied, "You can call me Felicity, because my name is Felicity."

Juliana looked at her for two seconds, then withdrew her gaze, "Our relationship isn't quite there yet to justify such familiarity."

Realizing her concern, Mrs. Paxton sighed, "I just sent Sean off this morning. He used to be so full of life, but now he's utterly despondent. I'm dreading going home now, because... it's so cold and empty."

Juliana smiled faintly, "It was Dylan Paxton who transferred him. Perhaps the elders wish to give him more experience; there's no need for you to worry excessively."

Mrs. Paxton detected her continued stern attitude toward Sean and shifted the conversation.

"You're probably right. It's just that I've never had many friends since I was young. With my husband gone, I don't know who to confide in. Back then, I had a close friend who I shared everything with. I used to love making ornaments from mango pits, but my body betrayed me as I was allergic to mango. She would always eat the fruit flesh clean, leaving her face covered in juice—it was both adorable and heart-wrenching."

While sharing these, Mrs. Paxton never took her eyes off Juliana's face.

Because that dear friend was Helena Sinclair.

Chapter 308: A Loud Crash Lands on Florence Sinclair's Face

Just as Juliana's gaze turned slightly dazed, seemingly stirred by some memories, a waiter brought over a dish of boiled lake shrimp.

Mrs. Paxton hurriedly introduced, "The lake shrimp from Crestwater in Kingsford is the best, you should try it."

As the words fell, Juliana's already somewhat distant eyes instantly gained a touch of sharpness.

Because Helena Sinclair is allergic to lake shrimp, aside from family, Juliana is the only outsider who knows.

Just as Juliana was about to speak, Florence Sinclair's voice came from behind.

"Miss Jacobs, what a coincidence."

Mrs. Paxton's face subtly changed when she saw her arrive.

Juliana slowly turned back to look at her.

Just last night, she had taken a beating; the wound on her ear was still fresh, her face still swollen, yet today she had applied concealer to meet her.

What made her so desperate?

"What's the matter?" she asked lightly.

Florence wore a gentle smile like a spring breeze, walked slowly to the table, and politely said, "I arranged to have a meal here with friends, didn't expect to meet you, and I happen to have something to discuss with you."

Juliana raised an eyebrow, glanced at Raine Kane standing at the door, then looked back at the table where the boiled shrimp laid wasted, and snorted lightly, "Today's coincidence is quite the pile."

Mrs. Paxton knew she was mocking them and embarrassedly lowered her head.

However, she really didn't know Florence would also come to "bump into" Juliana here.

Florence pulled an empty chair from a nearby table and sat down next to Juliana.

"Miss Jacobs, Mr. Paxton entrusted me to discuss 'Genesis' given the history between us..."

"What history do I have with a dog?" Juliana interrupted her.

Florence paused, trying hard to maintain a natural expression.

"Elias married my sister's plaque, I'm a daughter of the Sinclair Family, he's my brother-in-law, that's a fact you can't deny."

Juliana's gaze casually swept around the surroundings.

The next second, she picked up the plate of boiled shrimp and slammed it onto Florence's face with a "clang."

The broth and shrimp shells smeared Florence's face and clothes, making her startled and wanting to rise. But Juliana grabbed her hair and slammed her from the chair onto the ground.

Without waiting for her to struggle, she kicked her hard twice in the waist and abdomen.

Florence screamed in pain and hurriedly shouted, "Stop kicking, stop kicking!"

Juliana wiped her hands with a wet wipe, looking down coldly at her curled up on the floor.

"My husband said hitting you with my hands hurts, I should use my feet from now on."

Beside them, Mrs. Paxton's face had turned pale from fright, her chopsticks falling to the ground.

Florence was in pain and rage, trembling while pointing at Juliana, "You... this is a restaurant, you actually did this in public..."

Halfway through the sentence, she stopped herself.

Only now did she realize with horror that the entire restaurant had somehow become empty, not even the waitstaff were in sight.

Only Raine stood quietly at the door, expressionless, guarding the entrance.

Gazing at her, Juliana's eyes were teasing.

"Didn't I say once I'd beat you every time I see you? Forgotten already? I don't mind helping refresh your memory."

Florence trembled all over, unable to say a word.

Juliana turned her gaze to Mrs. Paxton.

Mrs. Paxton jolted.

Juliana smiled faintly, "What a pity for the shrimp you specially ordered for me, next time please treat me again."

Mrs. Paxton had never seen such a scene, her hands trembling, she quickly gestured, "It's alright, it's alright."

"So," Juliana's gaze deepened, "Mrs. Paxton's friend should be much gentler than me."

About to be polite, Juliana continued coldly, "In view of your persistence following me, let me offer you some advice, dwelling on past dreams is pointless, one should discern right from wrong, rather than find memories in the muck."

With that, she left with Raine.

Mrs. Sinclair finally understood that Juliana had seen through her intentions from the beginning.

Her performance just now was nothing but that of a jumping clown.

She felt immense shame.

Seeing Florence still sitting on the ground, she shakily approached, her face pallid, "Shall... shall I call an ambulance for you?"

"You useless thing!"

Florence shook off her reaching hand, gritting her teeth through the pain, struggled to stand.

"Besides putting on a pitiful act and shivering, what else can you do? Sean Paxton marrying a woman like you brings him no assistance, nor would you go out of your way to fight for him, he's truly luckless!"

After cursing her, Florence limped out of the restaurant, crossed the circular hallway to the opposite side.

This was a western restaurant, and it had been reserved.

She intentionally provoked Juliana, staged this suffering act, the real audience was here.

The slightly rotund middle-aged man sitting by the floor-to-ceiling window had witnessed everything just now.

As she approached, his facial muscles squeezed out a semblance of a smile, "Did Miss Sinclair invite me here just to watch you get beaten?"

Florence rested both hands on the table, deliberately sounding aggrieved.

"Sean Paxton promised me that as long as I facilitate the collaboration between Rhyvion and Aetherflame, he'd offer me a considerable commission. But Juliana totally looks down on the Paxton name, doesn't even give him the chance to negotiate. It's not my incompetence, but your Paxton's ineptitude."

Samuel Paxton's eyes flickered with a hint of malice, then quickly snorted.

"That 'Genesis' technology, I have my means to get it. Sean Paxton's own incompetence means whoever he finds is just as worthless as you."

Florence was momentarily speechless to counter his words.

Samuel's gaze roved over her, "But your face... it does appeal to me. Spend a night with me, the money won't be less for you."

Florence had inquired about his proclivities.

A night of torment would leave those women either dead or disabled. Yet he was generous, using coercion paired with bribery afterward, suppressing scandal after scandal, preventing any backfire.

Hearing this ugly creature plotting against her made her furious.

Florence pointed at him, swearing, "No wonder Dylan Paxton would rather use an erring legitimate grandson than hand over the family business to a degrading bastard like you! Besides filling your head with shit, you can't store a bit of useful stuff, you're nothing but an idiot."

"You're courting death!"

Samuel roared up, seized her neck, then punched her hard in the abdomen.

Florence's face twisted in pain.

Samuel released her, she sunk to the floor, unable to rise.

Samuel glared at her viciously, "Are you seeing clear now? This is my power, dreaming of having me as your tool, you're dreaming! If it wasn't for your Sinclair name, I'd have long played you to death, no more second chances."

With that, he left the restaurant.

Samuel's punch was extremely heavy, even harsher than Juliana's.

The staff sent outside returned to the restaurant, seeing her still sitting on the ground, hurriedly came to help her.

Just as they approached, seeing the pool of blood on the floor, they immediately shrieked.

"Quick, call an ambulance, she's bleeding."

Florence clutched her abdomen, her face pale with pain.

Failing to move Samuel, this injury couldn't be for nothing.

With trembling hands, she took out her phone.

Isn't Juliana arrogant?

This time, I'll leave you speechless!

In the afternoon, Juliana returned to the courtyard.

Initially intending just to nap for a while, unexpectedly woke up to find it was already past six in the evening.

Steward Fay was anxiously pacing around, having already called Elias Langley.

Knowing he was on the way back, Juliana hurriedly messaged him saying she was fine, no need to turn around.

However, no sooner had she put down her phone than the gatekeeper hurriedly reported that Marcus Sinclair had come to visit, wanted a word with Madam.

Marcus Sinclair was well-acquainted with the Langley Family, so Steward Fay invited him in.

Upon entering the living room, Marcus Sinclair unexpectedly took out a bundle of hemp rope.

"Miss Jacobs, Madam instructed me to take you to the hospital. Sorry for the offense."

Chapter 309: Could It Be That You're Pregnant?

Of course, Juliana Jacobs did not want to be taken away in such a humiliating manner.

At this time, Raine Kane was absent as she had just finished work.

Juliana shouted "Get out," and immediately stepped back.

Marcus Sinclair moved swiftly, knowing she was unwilling, he quickly lunged forward to seize her.

Juliana dodged sideways, but her face was grazed by the rope loop he swung out, leaving an instant bloody streak.

"Someone come quickly, someone is threatening madam!"

Steward Fay stood at the door, shouting urgently.

Hearing the cries, the bodyguards rushed in, but Marcus had already tightened the rope around Juliana's neck, firmly pressing the bleeding loop against her throat.

"Don't move! Otherwise, I can't guarantee Miss Jacobs' safety!"

He held Juliana hostage, retreating step by step towards the door.

The bodyguards, wary of causing harm, could only watch helplessly as he dragged her out the door and shoved her into the car waiting outside, speeding away into the distance.

Steward Fay shouted furiously, "Where are the snipers? Are you really men, letting him take her away like this?"

The lead bodyguard stepped forward, nodding to him, "According to the rules, we can deal with unidentified intruders on the spot. But it's someone from the Sinclairs... sir always regards the Sinclair family as close kin. If we had fired, I'm afraid it would be hard to justify afterward. Besides, here in Kingsford, if a life were taken at the master's estate, it might push him into the spotlight."

Unable to refute his words, Steward Fay immediately called Elias Langley.

Juliana was dragged into the hospital by Marcus in an extremely humiliating manner, and finally, she was harshly thrown onto the cold, hard tiles at the entrance of the ward.

Her hands were bound, her hair a mess, and the wound on her cheek was starkly visible against her pale skin.

"Who told you to treat her like this? Let her go!"

Sebastian Sinclair came out of the ward in a wheelchair and turned pale at the sight of his biological daughter in such a state, his gaze as if he wanted to strangle Marcus.

"I told Marcus to bring her here!"

Mrs. Sinclair followed closely behind from the ward, standing firm.

"She beat Florence to the point of uterine bleeding, she's still unconscious. I invited her here to ask a question, what's wrong with that?"

Sebastian was also angry.

"Florence cries on the phone saying Juliana hit her, and you just believe it? If she says she can give you a grandchild on the spot, are you going to prepare a shrine now to announce it to the ancestors?"

Her husband had never spoken to her in such a tone, and Mrs. Sinclair was also angry.

Just as she was about to question him about favoring Juliana, Elias Langley walked in with decisive strides.

Juliana saw the man's serious face and thought he was there to reprimand her too, so she immediately looked away.

Seeing an ally, Mrs. Sinclair's eyes lit up instantly.

"Elias, you came just in time, she..."

But as Elias approached, he didn't spare her a glance, instead grabbing Marcus by the collar, pulling him over, and landing a few punches.

Each punch hit with a bang!

Marcus's jaw was immediately dislocated, leaving him unable to speak.

Elias, still unsatisfied, clutched Marcus's throat, pressing him against the railing.

Half of Marcus's body was already hanging in the air.

Mrs. Sinclair had never seen such a violent Elias, and she was instantly stunned.

It wasn't until she saw he was about to throw Marcus off the building that she snapped back to reality and hurriedly stepped forward to grab his arm.

"Elias, why trouble a servant? Let him go!"

During the brutal beating of Marcus by Elias, Raine quietly stepped forward, untied the ropes on Juliana, and helped her to a chair.

Sebastian, looking at her face, was heartbroken beyond measure.

Elias looked at Mrs. Sinclair with a cold gaze.

"Give me a reason to let him live."

"Juliana beat Florence to the point of uterine bleeding. If she doesn't recover properly, she might not be able to have children in the future! She suffered such a huge grievance, and I just gave Juliana a little reprimand, what's wrong with that!"

"A little reprimand?" Elias sneered, "Where's the evidence?"

At this moment, a weak cry from Florence came from the ward, "Mom... I'm in so much pain..."

Mrs. Sinclair rushed back into the ward, "Florence, you're finally awake!"

Mother and daughter held each other, crying bitterly.

"Mom, I told you, it has nothing to do with Miss Jacobs, don't make things difficult for her... It will make things hard for Elias." Florence, with tear-filled eyes, pleaded.

Mrs. Sinclair, feeling distressed, wiped her tears, "But I can't stand by and watch you suffer this grievance! If you do something wrong, you should be punished. I haven't called the police because of Elias, but she must apologize to you!"

"No, Mom... I just want peace and harmony in the Sinclair family. Don't stir up trouble because of me. After all... I'm just an adopted daughter...", she said, bursting into tears.

This scene, anyone who saw it would be moved.

However, Elias roughly threw Marcus back onto the corridor, speaking expressionlessly to the inside, "Since you're awake, produce evidence of who hit you."

Florence didn't expect that her sincere performance would still have him pressing step by step for evidence.

"I was called away unguarded; where would I have the chance to gather evidence? Isn't there surveillance in the mall?"

Hearing this, Elias's face turned stern.

Mrs. Sinclair immediately sneered, "Are you afraid I'll check the surveillance? Someone deleted the entire mall's surveillance during that period. But if you don't want others to know, you shouldn't do it."

Florence grabbed Mrs. Sinclair's arm, "Mrs. Paxton was also present at the time, but please don't ask her, just let this matter go, I beg you."

Reminded by her, Mrs. Sinclair immediately took out her phone.

"Is it Sean Paxton's wife? I have her contact info."

Juliana sat on the corridor chair, chuckling softly, speaking to Raine, "I want some hot water, and also get a doctor to see if my face can be saved."

Mrs. Sinclair thought she was finding an excuse to escape and quickly ran out to block her, saying, "You'll have the evidence soon, don't find excuses to escape."

As she spoke, the phone connected.

Inside came Mrs. Paxton's voice, "Who is it?"

"Hello, Mrs. Paxton, I'm Sebastian Sinclair's wife."

Mrs. Paxton paused for two seconds on the phone, then said, "Mrs. Sinclair, do you need something from me?"

"Yes, this noon my daughter was beaten to the point of uterine bleeding. She said you were present at the time, and I'd like you to be my eyewitness."

"Mrs. Sinclair," Mrs. Paxton's voice was somewhat deep, "I have no idea what tricks your daughter is up to. But today, I was dining with Elias's wife at Quillmere, and I didn't see your daughter."

Having said that, she hung up the phone.

Mrs. Sinclair had the phone on speaker, so Mrs. Paxton's voice not only echoed clearly through the corridor but was also clearly heard in the ward.

Florence never expected Mrs. Paxton to flatly deny it.

Didn't that woman know she and Sean Paxton were on the same side?

Juliana's hand holding the cup subtly tightened.

Raine spoke indifferently, "This is strange. We were dining at Quillmere at noon, and the ambulance records show that Second Miss Sinclair was picked up from the western restaurant across. With the two places separated by the central courtyard, Miss Sinclair was able to purposefully and accurately hurl this basin of dirty water over; one wonders what her true intent was?"

Mrs. Sinclair found it hard to believe that Florence would deceive her, yet she couldn't immediately refute Raine's words.

Sebastian immediately rebuked, "Florence Sinclair, is this what the Sinclair family teaches, to lie? Is our family lacking in food or clothing that you resort to such base means to plot against good people!"

"No, no," Florence hurriedly explained from the sickbed, "Dad, I... I might have been confused when I was beaten, maybe I remembered wrong, maybe... I fell myself..."

After speaking, she covered her head with the blanket.

"Remembered wrong?" Elias's voice was frighteningly cold, "Just a light 'remembered wrong,' and your mother sends someone to my house, disfigures my wife; today this matter must have an explanation that satisfies my wife."

In all these years, Elias hadn't spoken so harshly to the Sinclairs.

Mrs. Sinclair was pondering how to mediate when Juliana, after taking a sip of water, unexpectedly felt like throwing up and gagged.

"You..." Mrs. Sinclair looked at her face full of fatigue, "Could it be that you're pregnant?"

Chapter 310: Slapping Mrs. Sinclair in the Face

Sebastian Sinclair was aware of Juliana Jacobs's physical condition, and he immediately clicked his tongue.

"Am I mistaken?" Mrs. Sinclair looked puzzled, "Though Elias has difficulty in having children, Juliana's symptoms really seem like pregnancy."

Elias Langley, without a word, picked Juliana up.

After taking a few steps, he remembered he had unfinished business here and called out sternly, "Raine Kane."

Raine Kane instantly understood, deftly drew a dagger, grabbed Marcus Sinclair's hair, and responded, "Here!"

"Give it back tenfold."

"Understood!"

Mrs. Sinclair was thrown into a panic and hastily said, "How can this be! He was just following my orders, you can't..."

Yet Elias Langley ignored her, holding Juliana without looking back as they left.

"Madam," Sebastian Sinclair's voice was icy, "Isn't Elias's stance clear enough? Marcus is taking the fall for you! If it were anyone else hearing what you just said, they would surely suspect their wife of infidelity. Florence's issue isn't over yet; you need to reflect on this."

Mrs. Sinclair stood frozen in place, her well-maintained face drained of color...

As Juliana was carried away by Elias, she wrapped her arms around his neck and whispered, "I can't conceive, and you may not be able to either, so I can't be pregnant."

Elias maintained his stern expression without a hint of change, "I've arranged for a plastic surgeon for your facial restoration surgery. First, we'll do a check-up to rule out the possibility of pregnancy."

"Don't you suspect me of infidelity?" Juliana asked.

Elias smiled subtly, "With me around, do you still have the energy for extracurricular activities?"

Juliana's face flushed instantly, and she promptly shut her mouth, avoiding his gaze.

After a thorough examination, it was confirmed that Juliana was indeed not pregnant.

She wondered if it was her imagination, but she seemed to see a hint of disappointment on Elias's face.

An hour later, the facial restoration surgery was successfully completed.

The doctor stated that the surgery went very well, with no scars left, but due to receiving a tetanus shot, she would need to stay for observation for half an hour.

This half-hour was a perfect time to settle scores.

Marcus was considered ruined, while Florence was brought before Juliana.

In reality, her uterine bleeding wasn't severe, and it had stopped after arriving at the hospital; the act she put on earlier in the ward was purely for sympathy, but no one was buying it.

With Sebastian Sinclair present, Mrs. Sinclair could only wait outside the observation room.

Even though she was very anxious, she didn't say much.

Florence's face was pale, her eyes full of defiance.

"Miss Jacobs," she maintained her dignified heiress persona before her foster parents, "even with Mrs. Paxton's support, don't be too proud. Are you denying that you've hit me?"

With her face bandaged, Juliana couldn't show expression, but her tone was very cold.

"I don't have time to play word games with you here. Your good mother taught me 'a small punishment often precludes a bigger one,' I'll just try it on you."

Florence had no idea what she was planning, but it had to be more terrifying than being hit, as she gasped, "This is a society governed by the rule of law..."

If not for just having surgery, Juliana would have laughed at that statement.

"My husband can't just stand by and watch me be wronged like this. For your wrongdoings, you should be punished. I've spared not reporting you for defamation out of respect for Elias, but you must give me an explanation!"

This was essentially Mrs. Sinclair's words in the ward, slightly altered and thrown back at Florence.

Juliana appeared to be settling accounts with Florence but was actually slapping Mrs. Sinclair in the face.

Mrs. Sinclair wanted to enter and say a few words for her daughter, but was stopped by a look from Sebastian Sinclair.

Juliana's voice then came with undeniable pressure, "I won't hit you this time. Slap yourself until I'm satisfied."

Slapping herself, how painful would that be?

Florence looked pitifully at Elias Langley.

However, the man just stood by the window, saying nothing.

She then looked pleadingly to Mrs. Sinclair outside the observation room.

In the end, Mrs. Sinclair gritted her teeth and left.

Juliana spoke slowly, "If you can't bring yourself to do it, I'll have Raine Kane do it, but you'll have to pay her labor fee afterward."

Florence bit her lip and slapped herself across the face.

"Did you even eat?" Juliana's tone was indifferent, "I can't hear it."

Slap! Slap!

"You're too weak, I can't feel the sincerity, let's have Raine do it instead."

...

In the next half-hour, the quiet observation room only echoed with increasingly loud slaps.

Juliana would sometimes criticize the force, sometimes find fault with the rhythm. Florence's face, already beaten a few days earlier, quickly swelled and turned red again.

Even the corners of her mouth bled, and her eyes transitioned from hatred to numbness.

Until the doctor entered to inform the end of observation time, did Juliana feel somewhat tired and called it off.

By this time, Florence was already dizzy, and Mrs. Sinclair, who had returned, rushed in to hold her.

Elias Langley raised an eyebrow and immediately picked up Juliana, taking her away.

As they passed Florence, who lay limp in Mrs. Sinclair's arms, he paused slightly.

"If this doesn't serve as a lesson, the self-inflicted consequences next time will undoubtedly be worse. Self-awareness is precious, and turning back is the shore."

He didn't give Florence a single glance, and after speaking, he carried Juliana away without turning back.

Florence rolled her eyes, becoming limp as if she were lifeless.

"Doctor, come quickly, my daughter has fainted, what are you all waiting for?"

Mrs. Sinclair shouted anxiously.

The doctors waiting outside the observation room brought in a gurney, placed Florence on it, and quickly pushed it towards the emergency room.

Mrs. Sinclair wanted to follow but was held back by Sebastian Sinclair grabbing her wrist.

Mrs. Sinclair lowered her head and said, "Sebastian, what's gotten into you? Florence is our daughter, we brought her from the orphanage ourselves. She's so hurt, how can you not be the least bit pained?"

Sebastian Sinclair held her wrist, showing no intention to let go.

"In Florence, I see the shadow of Isabelle Sinclair. Isabelle's death was her own doing, and now Florence becoming the way she is, isn't it due to her own actions as well?"

Mrs. Sinclair looked at her husband in disbelief.

"Are you accusing me of failing to raise our daughter well, of not being fit as a mother?"

Sebastian let go of her hand, his eyes softened.

"I'm reminding you that when a mother's love clouds her judgment, even the most basic distinction between right and wrong will be blurred, and tragedy often ensues at such times."

These words pierced like a knife into the deepest, most painful part of Mrs. Sinclair's heart.

The years of accumulated grievances, sacrifices, and pain from being misunderstood overwhelmed her reason.

"I can't tell right from wrong? How can you say that to me! For so many years, I've fully supported your research, complied with all arrangements from above, and even placed our biological daughter in a secondary position..."

Mrs. Sinclair choked up at this point.

"There is no mother in this world who can bear the pain of losing a child! Losing Helena was like dying once, and the guilt over Helena tormented me day and night until Isabelle and Florence appeared and redeemed me. I regret not fighting for even a little for our daughter back then; I try to make up for it with Isabelle and Florence. What wrong have I done?"

Sebastian looked at her devastated face, closed his eyes, and suppressed the complex emotions surging within.

"Vera," he said calmly, "Because we've both borne the cost of loss, we should never condone mistakes. And you are heading for an irrevocable error."

Mrs. Sinclair was struck by the deeper meaning in his words, and even her sorrow was abruptly halted.

She grabbed Sebastian's arm.

"You... you know where Helena is, don't you? Our daughter, she isn't... dead, is she?"