

## **Panicking 321**

Chapter 321: Cultivating Both Inside and Out

Elias Langley sent Juliana Jacobs to Aetherflame and then went to work himself.

Caleb Donovan called him, "Old Mr. Paxton is showing interest in Mrs. Sinclair's identity again, and he's sent people to Kenton and Zarith."

"I know."

Elias hung up and pressed his lips tightly together.

The phone rang again.

This time, it was Sean Paxton.

He invited him to a welcome dinner in the evening, with the location being Athenor.

After hanging up, Elias dialed a number.

After barely two rings, the call was answered.

The voice on the other end was gentle and carried a hint of surprise.

"Mr. Langley, I haven't seen you for a long time."

In other words, I miss you.

There was no discernible emotion in Elias's voice, "I'll come tonight, make proper preparations."

"Alright, alright."

The other end hung up excitedly.

As he was about to finish work, Elias received a call from Juliana.

"I made some sweet steamed custard, will you come to eat?" Juliana asked.

Elias closed his files and chuckled, "Not working overtime today?"

Juliana pursed her lips. She attempted to synthesize a new material that afternoon, but failed due to vision problems, feeling quite frustrated. She returned early to Darroway Street to make two servings of custard.

"I was a bit tired today, so I came back early," she replied simply.

"Then rest early, Sean Paxton invited me for dinner tonight, I might be back late."

"Alright then, don't drink too much."

After hanging up, Juliana felt a bit down.

Athenor is located on the top floor of Titan Tower, in the financial district of Kingsford.

This cloud-top secret venue is not somewhere ordinary wealth or prestige can reach.

It's an absolute barrier between wealth and authority, only real dignitaries possessing both can open that door.

Here at Athenor, there's no public lobby, with each private room being a fully functional independent ecosystem. Members arrive directly at the designated floor via a private elevator and are led to their exclusive domain by a butler, ensuring that from the moment they step inside, their whereabouts and conversations remain absolutely confidential.

When Elias arrived, Clara Fairchild was waiting by the elevator.

Upon seeing him, Clara took his coat.

"You haven't been here for a while."

She wore a slight look of disappointment on her face.

"Has the boss given you a new KPI?"

Elias asked as he walked inside.

Clara bowed her head, seeming to admit it while looking as though she wanted to say something else.

Nearing the private room's door, she suddenly reminded gently, "Mr. Paxton is already here, but he brought a slender young man, said to be someone you know, and also Mr. Hughes from the Hughes Family."

Elias did not respond to her words.

The gilded door opened, and Sean Paxton stood up from behind a wide purple sandalwood tea table, smiling at him, "Elias, you're not honest, only today did I find out why Violetstar Pavilion's performance consistently leads for months, turns out you're 'supporting it directly' here."

Elias smiled indifferently, "The tea here is good, the environment is elegant, and it's a great place for conversation; don't you love it here too?"

Sean Paxton had a knowing smile.

At their level, having a couple of perceptive "Whisperers" around is common. Rather than calling it promiscuity, it's a necessary social configuration, essential for maintaining relationships and facilitating cooperation.

He unabashedly scrutinized Clara in front of Elias, then turned to Auden Hughes, "Mr. Hughes, doesn't she resemble your fiancée a bit?"

Auden noticed it when he first walked in.

Clara's eyes and brows somewhat resembled Florence Sinclair, but who did Florence look like?

A few years ago, she underwent some cosmetic adjustments, increasingly resembling Mrs. Sinclair.

But Auden simply smiled, "Really? I didn't notice."

"I think you're afraid to admit it."

Sean Paxton joked as he nudged Elias's shoulder, "Elias, your taste has been consistently singular for ten years."

Elias's expression remained unchanged, but his tone was calm and slightly aloof, "Sean, you always hear stories in the wind, even if they aren't there, you could narrate them vividly."

Sean didn't delve deeper when Elias didn't admit, instead he turned sideways and pointed to Nathan Carter, saying: "Let me introduce a promising young man to you. This is Nathan Carter, the heir of The Zenthian Sea Kenshida Biotech, who's here to inspect the Harlan market recently."

Before Elias could respond, Nathan stepped forward and smiled respectfully, "I have met Mr. Langley once, but we hardly spoke, so we don't know each other well."

"Oh?" Sean raised his eyebrows, apparently surprised, and then laughed loudly, "That's perfect, looks like you'll have much to discuss tonight."

Elias didn't greet Nathan; someone like him wouldn't have the qualification to talk to Elias in any other context.

"Since everyone is here, let's sit down." He said.

They moved to the dining area to take their places.

Sean looked at Clara, "I only just learned about your relationship with Elias. I'll help you achieve your KPI this month, no matter what it takes."

Clara didn't respond immediately, instead glancing at Elias.

Elias looked at the empty wine glass in front of him and lightly smiled, "Mr. Paxton is rare to be so generous; accept his offer."

"Yes."

Clara hurriedly went to adjust the menu.

Sean patted Elias's shoulder, laughing, "Elias, you've trained them well."

Elias smiled without replying.

Auden snorted lightly, put down the teacup, and his tone carried undisguised sarcasm.

"Mr. Langley truly is surrounded by talent, even the ones serving tea stand out. However, not everyone can accept such flamboyant ways."

Sean sitting in the main seat laughed heartily.

"Auden, you haven't married Miss Sinclair, you can't understand the subtlety. Men, especially once with a family, having a 'confidante' outside helps share the burden; it's a common understanding, this is called... maintaining harmony both inside and out!"

Auden didn't agree with him but didn't refute.

Soon, the waiter started serving dishes.

The feast Clara arranged was expensive, but even more valuable was the effort she put in.

She assigned dishes based on seating, guests' age, and status, mastering the balance perfectly, and all of her clever arrangements subtly focused the attention and respect on Elias.

Though Sean was the one paying, he felt content with the expenses, even praising Elias, "How did you train them? Teach me."

Elias smiled softly without speaking.

Auden's face showed a layer of obvious disgust and contempt.

After several rounds of drinks, the atmosphere grew slightly tipsy.

Auden secretly picked up his phone, seemingly casually adjusting the angle, but in fact, taking a perfectly clear "selfie."

In the photo, his face occupied only a corner, with Elias and Clara taking up the majority.

Clara stood next to Elias, bending slightly as if awaiting instructions.

Yet the space between her and Elias was much less than a server should keep, but Elias appeared relaxed, seemingly unbothered.

The photo also captured Clara's eyes focused on Elias with striking clarity, revealing a gaze beyond respect, hinting at a slightly uncontrolled fascination and admiration.

Auden tagged Juliana when he posted on social media.

Juliana had just showered and was about to check up on new publications, then someone mentioned her on the phone.

She clicked in, and a photo suddenly appeared before her eyes.

Chapter 322: No Matter How Important, Safety Comes First

"Madam, it's so late, where are you going?"

Steward Fay saw Juliana Jacobs looking like she was going out and quickly asked.

Juliana said nothing, just kept walking outside.

Steward Fay immediately jogged a few steps to block her path, simultaneously signaling nearby bodyguards to quickly find Raine Kane.

"Madam, it's chilly at night. You're dressed so lightly, if you catch a cold, the gentleman will be worried."

"Don't stop me."

Juliana's voice revealed no emotion, but the literal meaning carried displeasure.

Steward Fay smiled, "I'm not stopping you, just put on another piece of clothing before you go."

Juliana added a trench coat; Raine Kane also arrived and brought the car.

Juliana, however, opened the driver's door, "I'll drive."

Raine Kane was momentarily stunned and instinctively let go of the steering wheel.

She understood Juliana's temper; any persuasion at this moment would be futile, so she silently moved to the passenger seat and quickly fastened her seatbelt.

In the darkness, the car sped off like an arrow leaving the bowstring.

Raine Kane glanced at the address on the GPS and immediately understood.

Could it be that Mr. Langley is having an affair at Athenor?

The powerful thrust pushed her to grab the car's overhead handle involuntarily; looking at Juliana's stern face, she tried to ease the tension with a relaxed tone.

"Juliana, take it easy; no matter how big the issue, safety comes first."

Juliana seemingly didn't hear, with no sign of easing off the gas pedal.

A dozen minutes later, the car swiftly swung and parked in the spot before the "Athenor" entrance.

Raine Kane breathed a sigh of relief, "Juliana, your driving skills have improved."

Juliana didn't respond, nimbly got out of the car, and headed straight for the building.

Raine Kane followed closely behind.

The two walked through the revolving door, heading directly to the VIP elevator that required a special key to operate.

At this moment, a manager in a tailored suit, with a crisp temperament, confidently and proudly approached them and stopped them in front of the elevator.

"Good evening, ladies."

His face bore an impeccable professional smile, with keen eyes and a humble posture.

"This is a members-only elevator. May I ask if you have a reservation or could show your membership card?"

Juliana looked at him without speaking.

The manager swiftly ran through the list and appearances of all the members in his mind. He was quite certain that the extraordinary lady before him was not a member of Athenor.

"We're just going up to find someone. Isn't that allowed?" Raine Kane asked.

The manager slightly bowed, "Ladies, we very much understand your feelings. However, Athenor implements a strict member invitation system to ensure all members' privacy and tranquility. If you aren't members, you must be personally accompanied by a current member to go upstairs."

He paused, then added, "Of course, if either of you would like to visit regularly in the future and meet our membership standards, we'd welcome you to appoint a sponsor and formally submit a membership application. Then we will have a dedicated staff member to assist you."

This statement seemingly offered a way, but actually it haughtily told them that becoming a member of Athenor requires assets and background.

They're not worthy!

"Is it that you're looking down on people?" Raine Kane said.

Not only did Juliana Jacobs have control over Elias Langley's salary card, but she also held "Aetherflame," and with the two billion US Dollar trust her ex-husband Evan Grant set up for her during their divorce, which generates substantial annual income, calling her the invisible richest person in Harlan would not be overstating.

Raine Kane wanted to step up and reason, but was pulled back by Juliana.

Juliana said nothing, pulled Raine Kane, and turned to leave.

But upon returning to the car, she didn't immediately start the engine, instead leaned against the driver's seat, her gaze tightly fixed on the cold revolving door through the car window.

The air inside the car was oppressively suffocating.

Raine Kane looked at her chilling profile, the advice to "let's go back" rolled in her throat but ultimately dared not say.

Yet Juliana seemed to sense she wanted to say something, coldly asked, "Do you know something?"

Raine Kane tensed up, immediately raised her hand in a vow.

"Juliana! I swear, I have no idea if Mr. Langley has any issues outside. He seems so upright, who would think he could have lifestyle problems?"

The doors of the revolving door turned on the other side.

Elias Langley's entourage came out laughing from inside.

Clara Fairchild stuck closely to Elias Langley's side, seeming reluctant to part from this brief meeting.

She braved the deep autumn chill, wearing only the knee-length skirt uniform of the club; the night wind caressed her, rendering her slender figure even more pitifully charming.

"It's cold outside, just drop me off here."

Elias Langley intentionally stopped for her.

Having been teased multiple times by Sean Paxton during the evening, Clara no longer deliberately avoided her relationship with Elias Langley.

She stood there, neither speaking nor returning.

Elias Langley was amused by her actions, gently said, "I'll come see you tomorrow."

With this promise, Clara then broke into a satisfied smile and turned to disappear into the building.

Inside the car, Juliana took in this scene fully.

That woman looked at her husband with eyes nearly overflowing with admiration and joy.

Seeing a photo is one feeling, witnessing in person is another.

A mix of emotions like surging tides crashed against the defenses of her heart.

As Raine Kane pondered what she would do when her sister Juliana stormed up to fight Elias Langley, she saw Juliana come to and then started the car.

No horn sounded, no ear-piercing engine roar, just quietly drove the car into the bustling street, seamlessly melding into the cold night.

Raine Kane was puzzled: she came in a huff but decided to swallow her anger?

At the moment, at the entrance of Athenor.

Seeing Clara's reluctant demeanor towards Elias Langley, Sean Paxton sported a smile of mutual understanding on his face.

"Elias, I know Juliana's temper well, very fierce. Don't blame me, an old friend, for not warning you that your 'indiscretions' need to be cleaner."

Auden Hughes immediately snickered, echoing with double-meaning, "Mr. Langley is always thorough in his dealings, both at home and outside, surely can manage everything evenly. Sean, you're worrying too much."

Leo Langley curled his lips into a faint smile, "It seems the two of you are more concerned about my wife's temperament than I am. I appreciate the care on her behalf."

Sean Paxton and Auden Hughes momentarily fell silent, unable to reply.

Elias Langley turned and sat in the car, windows closed, the mild warmth in his eyes vanished quickly replaced by icy coldness.

He then received a notification on his phone, Clara knew he hadn't reached home, and messaged him, reminding him to eat some fruit after drinking.

Elias Langley did not open the chat, just chose to delete it directly.

Sean Paxton watched Elias Langley's car taillights fade away, the smile slowly withdrawing from his face, glancing around the parking lot with displeased furrows before getting into the car.

Nathan Carter saw through his thoughts, hurried to the car window, and bent over to say, "Mr. Paxton, not being present doesn't necessarily mean the eyes aren't present. The 'effect' you wish for may already be on its way."

Sean Paxton's brow lightly raised, glancing at Auden Hughes, indiscernible emotions, "Even though you were recommended by Great Uncle, only with real talent and learning can you stay."

Nathan Carter nodded, "Understood."

Sean Paxton no longer looked at him, instructed the driver to drive.

Nathan Carter watched the distant taillights, a glimpse of icy hatred in his eyes.

He turned to see Auden Hughes in a bad mood about to get into the car, immediately went over, patted his shoulder.

"Since Mr. Langley is too busy to spare time, you surely have more time and space to comfort old friends?"

Auden Hughes paused, his hand that was about to open the car door halted...

Elias Langley returned to the courtyard late at night.

The surroundings were silent.

He was about to cross the hall to the bedroom when the lights in the room suddenly turned on.

## Chapter 323: She Actually Hoped Today Would Be a Fruitless Wait

Steward Fay stood in the corridor leading to the master bedroom, bowing slightly to him.

"Sir, the madam has gone to sleep. She mentioned that if you come back late, you should avoid waking her."

Elias Langley's eyebrows furrowed, "Did she have any other instructions?"

Steward Fay lowered his voice even more, "The madam made some sugar-steamed custard when she came back in the afternoon. She ate half and instructed me to throw away the remaining half at night."

"Did you throw it away?" Elias Langley's brows completely knitted together.

"Not... not yet," Steward Fay answered cautiously, "It's still in the fridge for now, and I'm planning to throw it away tomorrow morning."

"Bring it to the study."

After mentioning this, Elias Langley turned and walked toward the study.

That night, he didn't sleep well in the study.

As soon as daylight broke, he got up and went back to the bedroom to wash up.

Upon opening the door, he discovered that the room was empty.

"Old Fay!"

Steward Fay came running, slightly out of breath.

"Where is the madam?" Elias Langley asked.

"She left before dawn, saying there was an urgent matter at the company that required overtime. She told you not to wait for her to have breakfast."

Left for overtime before dawn?

Looking at the faint light outside the window, Elias Langley understood instantly.

"Did the madam go out last night?"

Steward Fay nodded, "The madam said she didn't leave."

Elias Langley did not pursue the question further, letting all the tumult settle at the bottom of his eyes.

...

In the morning, Juliana Jacobs was in the office, taking a short nap.

Raine Kane delivered some snacks to her.

"Mr. Langley said you left early and might be hungry, so he had the kitchen prepare these pastries for you. Also, I bought the coffee."

Juliana Jacobs didn't touch the pastries, but picked up the coffee for a sip, nearly spitting it out.

"Why does it taste like herbal medicine?"

Raine Kane laughed, "This is a new product from a nearby café, herbal coffee. This cup is astragalus, which can... help with nerve recovery."

Currently, Juliana Jacobs' left eye vision is her greatest concern.

The vision cannot be corrected by glasses, threatening the progress of the experiments and posing a risk to the project's continuation.

She called Elias Langley yesterday, hoping he would come home early and spend some time with her. She wanted to lean on a man's shoulder for once, but fate played a little joke on her once more.

Remembering the main issue, Juliana Jacobs returned to the subject, "What about that woman's data?"

Raine Kane promptly sent the documents from her phone.

"Her name is Clara Fairchild, she's from Kenton. After graduating from the nursing school, she leveraged connections to enter Mercy Hospital as a nurse. During the time you were hospitalized, Mr. Langley often came to visit you, and she was the one eagerly bustling about, later..."

Saying this, Raine Kane's voice grew quieter.

"...just before you moved to Kingsford, Mr. Langley had her resign from the hospital, secretly relocating her to Kingsford. Officially, she's employed at Athenor, but all her performance and expenses at the club are under Mr. Langley's support, which looks more like... risk-avoiding sustenance."

Juliana Jacobs took a sip of coffee, seemingly finding the herbal taste more palatable now.

"What else?"

Raine Kane softly added, "I overheard her friends say that she's going to pick out jewelry at the Myriad Treasures counter at Omnivus Plaza this afternoon."

Juliana Jacobs nodded, "I'll go meet her."

"Juliana," Raine Kane expressed concern, "Shouldn't you talk to Mr. Langley first in case there's a misunderstanding?"

Juliana Jacobs didn't respond but instead got up and walked out of the office.

...

In the afternoon, at the Myriad Treasures counter at Omnivus Plaza.

Clara Fairchild was selecting jewelry with a close friend.

"Clara, Mr. Langley is truly unmatched in his favor for you! Not only does he help you meet your performance goals every month, but he also doesn't hesitate to buy you jewelry from Myriad Treasures! Look at this little bracelet, when I asked about it previously, it easily costs as much as a down payment on someone's apartment. He's certainly spending lavishly to pamper you!"

Clara Fairchild shyly smiled, but her gaze was subconsciously drawn to a flower ring showcased in the center of the counter.

The attendant girl, perceiving her interest, quickly stepped forward with a smile to introduce it, "You truly have great taste. This flower ring features an 11-carat untreated pigeon-blood ruby as its centerpiece, crafted by Master Fabio Fini. Strictly speaking, it's not just a piece of jewelry, but rather a collectible. However..."

The attendant's speech took a turn, "This flower ring has already been reserved."

Clara Fairchild's friend immediately reacted, raising her chin high like a cat whose tail had been stepped on.

"Reserved or not, my friend likes it and that's that! I don't care who reserved it. Do you know whose woman my friend is? She's Mr. Langley's woman!"

Clara Fairchild lightly tugged on her sleeve, signaling not to be so blatant.

But the friend was fired up and wouldn't listen, growing even more proud as she issued threats to the attendant.

"Let me tell you, if my friend is upset today, believe it or not, we'll make sure this store can't operate in Kingsford!"

At this moment, the manager approached them.

"Ladies, we've just received notice that a valuable brooch is missing from the display case. Based on surveillance, the area you've been in is a key area of suspicion. We need to check the personal belongings of you and your companion."

The inquisitive, disdainful gazes from surrounding customers felt like needles pricking Clara Fairchild, and her face turned pale.

"Nonsense! She could never steal!" Clara's friend protested in shame and anger.

Yet the manager remained calm.

"This flower ring was reserved by a distinguished guest this morning, and it's of considerable value. Given your consumption tier, I doubt you could afford even a single accent diamond, yet you boast so loudly here. You're either daydreaming or have sticky fingers."

The manager's words held some weight, prompting everyone in the area to look at Clara Fairchild with even more disdain.

"I... I didn't steal anything," Clara quietly said.

"Then let security search you to prove your innocence," the manager replied.

Feeling utterly humiliated, in the glare of all the eyes present, her only thought of support was Elias Langley. She promptly took out her phone and called him with a tearful voice.

The manager didn't forcibly stop her, and even after she finished the call, he remarked with considerable courtesy, "Since you've contacted someone, we'll wait for them to arrive before proceeding."

After speaking, he instructed security to keep watch on them while he retreated to the back VIP room.

Inside the VIP room.

Juliana Jacobs sipped her coffee and said to Raine Kane, "The instant ones are better than the one you bought this morning."

Raine Kane, "..."

The manager slightly bowed and couldn't hide his worry, "President Jacobs, doing so won't cause trouble for my store, right?"

Juliana Jacobs set down the coffee cup, her expression indifferent.

"Continue as I instructed; you won't have any issues."

Raine Kane couldn't resist but saying, "Juliana, to my knowledge, Mr. Langley is currently attending a very important meeting, and he may not rush here for such a minor matter."

Lowering her gaze, Juliana Jacobs indeed hoped she'd be waiting in vain today.

Nevertheless, twenty minutes after Raine Kane's comment, Elias Langley's figure appeared before the counter, rushing in with urgency in his steps.

Upon seeing him, all of Clara Fairchild's grievances overflowed at once. She rushed to cling to his arm, tears streaming down.

Elias Langley gently patted her hand for comfort before signaling to his secretary, Zachary York, behind him.

Zachary York stepped forward to negotiate with the manager.

"Baseless accusations, public humiliation, illegal restriction of personal freedom—all these suffice for a criminal libel and illegal detention charge. Provide me a reasonable explanation within five minutes, or be prepared to explain yourself at the police station. Myriad Treasures could shutter its doors too."

The manager broke out in a cold sweat, unable to withstand the pressure, hastily calling for an attendant to bring the flower ring in a velvet box.

"We meant no offense. This ring was reserved by Mrs. Langley. She specifically instructed us that if 'your people' arrive, to kindly help deliver the ring back to her."

Zachary York's prepared words of reproach were caught in her throat, unable to be spoken.

Her face blanched, as she turned to look at Elias Langley...

Chapter 324: Allies

Elias Langley frowned, brushed off Clara Fairchild's hand, and quickly walked to the VIP room next door.

However, there was no one inside anymore.

Juliana Jacobs had already left through another door.

"Mr. Langley..."

Seeing that Elias didn't manage to catch anyone, Clara Fairchild timidly tried to lean on him again, but Elias Langley turned to head toward the elevator.

Chasing downstairs, he only saw Raine Kane standing by the street, staring off into the distance.

"Where is madam?" he asked.

Raine Kane snapped out of it, shrugged, "She said she wanted to be alone for a while and took a cab."

Elias Langley picked up the phone to dial, but Raine Kane handed him Juliana's phone.

"Don't call, she just doesn't want to see you."

"You don't understand anything, don't make it worse!"

Elias snatched the phone and turned to make a call to arrange for people to find her.

Clara Fairchild chased downstairs, but Elias Langley was already out of sight.

She anxiously asked Zachary York, "Secretary York, is Mr. Langley angry with me?"

Zachary York, holding that velvet box, glanced unhappily at her companions, his tone indifferent.

"Miss Fairchild, how can you forget Mr. Langley's instructions in just three months?"

Clara Fairchild's breath caught, and she wanted to explain, but Zachary York had already turned and got into the car, leaving in a cloud of dust.

Her companion pulled her hand, still stubbornly persistent.

"Why are you being polite to a dog? I say, you should immediately find a way to get pregnant with Mr. Langley's child. By that time, those who judge people by appearances, who would dare not to respect you?"

"Will that... work?" Clara Fairchild's voice was insubstantial, without a bit of certainty.

"You, which woman who suddenly appeared out of nowhere didn't use this trick to rise up? Don't be too honest."

Clara Fairchild tightly clutched her bag strap, her knuckles turning white.

She hadn't dreamed of marrying Elias Langley, becoming the woman he could present.

But although Elias Langley pampered her in front of outsiders, he never touched her in private; is this road viable?

...

The taxi stopped at the edge of a desolate area waiting for demolition.

Juliana Jacobs arrived at the entrance of an abandoned school, where cartoon designs still faintly adorned the walls.

Many years ago, Sebastian Sinclair worked nearby, and as a result, she was sent to this kindergarten.

Those days were bright. There were slides, swings, sweet snacks after naps, caring teachers, and playmates.

At that time, she didn't care that her mother's focus was entirely on her work and father's career.

Until later, her father was transferred, and she had to return to the city to attend primary school.

After leaving here, she truly felt loneliness.

Elias Langley boarded at middle school, only coming home on weekends. When she couldn't bear the loneliness, she would sneak back alone to stay for a while.

At that time, though the kindergarten had relocated, it wasn't as dilapidated as now.

It seemed that as long as she stood in this place filled with childhood joy, the unspeakable loneliness could be somewhat dispelled.

Over time, this place became her secret refuge deep within her heart.

And at this moment, she escaped back here once more because of her second marriage.

Juliana Jacobs' mind was in chaos.

She liked Elias Langley, and she couldn't deceive herself about that.

But she wasn't the type of woman who would cling and demand attention with noise.

She was infertile, which made her feel inferior in front of Elias Langley.

Sometimes, an absurd thought uncontrollably emerged: if he really wanted a child, should she grant him that?

It wasn't the first time experiencing parting, yet the pain in her heart was still dense.

Just when this inner turmoil nearly engulfed her, a gentle yet clear female voice came from behind:  
"Helena?"

Juliana quickly snapped out of her tangled thoughts, turned to see Mrs. Paxton, and the turbulent emotions were forcibly suppressed, her eyes only had an almost distant calm.

"You've mistaken me for someone else," she said coldly.

But Mrs. Paxton still came over with suppressed excitement.

"Yes, yes, I was just so happy that I forgot myself. In elementary school, I was timid and always bullied, and she stood up for me. However, I discovered that she also had unhappy times and followed her once secretly to this place, which later became our secret base. Even now, when I feel bothered, I can't help but come here."

Juliana, although she knew who she was talking about, remained calm and deflected the topic blandly after listening.

"Mrs. Paxton married so well, how can there be anything troubling you?"

"Why not?"

Mrs. Paxton sighed, looking towards the ruins with Juliana.

"Just speaking about married couples in our circle, they seem glorious on the outside, but who knows what it's like inside? A man having a mistress outside, or occasionally cheating, is almost an unspoken agreement. Out of ten couples, having one that truly stays loyal and doesn't betray is already an enviable fate."

Juliana instantly understood that Mrs. Paxton came here specifically to find her.

Her disappearance must have stirred quite a few people, perhaps even causing a significant ripple.

Otherwise, Mrs. Paxton wouldn't so rashly "coincidentally" run into her at such an inappropriate place and reminisce.

"Mrs. Paxton now holds a prominent status, thanks to her husband basking in Old Mr. Paxton's favor. It's wise not to wade into certain muddy waters."

Her voice revealed no emotion, but Mrs. Paxton knew she was cautioning her and understood she was now on guard against her.

So, she stood closer to her, whispering, "I've always had underlying worries, so when not feeling happy, I come here without telling Sean Paxton. Though I can't think of an answer, recalling childhood memories makes me happy. Like Nathan Carter suddenly cozying up to my husband, I find it suspicious, but Sean doesn't mind, so I can't say much."

So, her insinuation is that the incident of Elias Langley and Clara Fairchild being discovered by her was orchestrated by Nathan Carter?

Juliana's gaze shifted slightly but didn't pick up on Nathan Carter's cue, just calmly said, "It seems Mrs. Paxton is well-informed."

"It's not being informed, it's worrying that causes confusion." Mrs. Paxton's tone was earnest, "In the future, you can just call me Felicity."

Felicity looked at the sky, seeing Juliana still standing in the dusk without any intention to leave, so she suggested, "I know a nice private restaurant three or four kilometers from here, would you like to have dinner together?"

"I drove myself, don't worry," she added.

Juliana was silent for a moment, then slightly nodded.

Before getting into the car, she looked back once more at the abandoned kindergarten.

As her gaze fell on the swings in the distance, a sharp pain struck her mind.

She... seemed to have left something here?

Chapter 325: Everyone Looks Like Elias Langley, It's So Annoying

Felicity followed her gaze, assuming she was reminded of the past by the swing set, and sighed: "You should take a good look while you can. I heard this land has already been sold for a logistics park. Next time, who knows if any of this will still be here."

Juliana heard this and instantly furrowed her brows.

The fleeting thought left her mind blank, but there was an urgent feeling of needing to retrieve something...

Felicity's highly recommended "private kitchen" turned out to be a roadside country style restaurant, but the food was indeed authentic. Compared to the extravagant feasts in Kingsford that often cost tens of thousands per table, the flavors here were more to Juliana's liking.

Yet, her mind was preoccupied, and no matter how delicious the food was, it ultimately felt tasteless.

Seeing her low spirits, Felicity suggested, "I suppose you're not in a hurry to go home. Why don't we drop by a bar? Do you have a favorite spot?"

A bar?

Juliana had lived in Kenton for over a decade, and could count on one hand the times she'd visited a bar.

Even in Kingsford, she had only been to a bar once for a class reunion, and stayed in a private room the entire time.

She had no idea what a real bar was like, let alone a "favorite spot."

Felicity, seeing her looking like a good student unable to answer a teacher's question, laughed and said, "Never mind, when in Rome, let's go to the one I love."

...

Felicity took her to a bar called Ember Night.

The place was extraordinarily expensive, yet this high price filtered out many undesirables. For people like them, where every word and action affected their husbands' reputations, coming to such a place meant that even if seen, it wouldn't harm their husbands' names.

Juliana curiously watched the dance floor from the booth, marveling at how well everyone moved and jumped.

"Want to go let loose?" Felicity asked, seeing her interest.

Juliana smiled and shook her head.

Felicity ordered her a low-alcohol cocktail, but after just half a glass, Juliana's cheeks flushed, and her eyes slightly glazed over.

"Are you drunk?" Felicity asked in surprise.

Juliana, cheeks slightly red and eyes puzzled, replied, "Hmm? Is my alcohol tolerance that bad?"

Felicity was momentarily speechless.

She glanced at the slightly drunk Juliana across from her, then noticed the occasional glances from around the room, aware that it would be best to have a man present.

After some thought, she took out her phone and quickly sent a message.

About twenty minutes later, Auden Hughes arrived in a hurry.

The cocktail in front of Juliana was almost empty.

Seeing her rosy cheeks, dewy eyes, and delicate lips, a pang of emotion hit Auden, and he picked up someone's leftover half-glass of lemonade and drank it.

"Auden, your brother Sean is busy, and I didn't want to bother him with this minor issue, so I called you," Felicity explained.

Auden put down the glass and readily replied, "No need to be formal, Sis. Juliana and I were high school classmates and we're on good terms. It's better to let off some steam like this than to keep things bottled up."

He didn't tell Felicity how bad Juliana's alcohol tolerance was.

Instead, he naturally sat next to Juliana and gently encouraged her, "We're out to have fun, so don't think about unhappy things. Look how lively the dance floor is. Let's go dance and relax a bit."

Juliana's mind was dizzy, but she knew she couldn't embarrass herself.

She shook her head, "I can't dance."

Auden, however, took her hand and led her up.

"Don't be afraid, if you can't dance, I'll teach you."

Juliana, her steps unsteady, was almost half-supported by Auden as they made it to the dance floor.

Just then, a slow song started playing.

"Juliana, it's a simple couple's dance. Just follow my rhythm."

Saying this, Auden gestured for her to place her hands on his shoulders.

Dazed, Juliana complied, awkwardly moving her feet.

But just as Auden was guiding her through a simple spin, a tall figure suddenly appeared behind her.

Her clumsy move caused her to almost twist her foot, and she fell straight into the arms of the person behind her.

A familiar, crisp scent engulfed her in an instant.

Juliana raised her dazed eyes and met the cold gaze of the man opposite her. Far from being guilty, she rubbed her eyes and sighed.

"Auden, I can't learn this dance, because I must really be drunk. Everyone looks like Elias Langley to me, it's... just annoying."

Recognized wrongly and "thrown into his arms," Elias Langley felt a surge of bubbling heat like volcanic magma inside him.

But he was a man of stable emotions, especially in front of his wife.

At this moment, he decided not to bother with a small drunkard, instead securing her slender waist to prevent her from collapsing, his gaze like icy daggers targeting Auden Hughes across from him.

"Mr. Hughes," his voice, though not loud, carried extreme pressure, "you and my wife are old classmates, but even nostalgia has its limits. Crossing certain boundaries will lead to consequences you may not desire."

Auden responded, with awkwardness, "Don't pretend to be a gentleman! The one who's really crossed the line is you. Juliana won't tolerate the slightest offense; she's this drunk all because of you. You have no right to criticize me!"

Elias, however, let out a cold snort, "Mr. Hughes, you have a fiancée. Since you know she won't tolerate any offense, don't bring trouble to her."

After warning him, Elias picked Juliana up and left.

Auden was left standing in the dance floor, not only burdened but also unwilling to accept it.

An unfaithful man shouldn't be given another chance!

In the booth, seeing Elias take Juliana away, Felicity breathed a slight sigh of relief.

Sean Paxton sat across from her, looking displeased.

"Why didn't you inform me the moment you saw her?"

Felicity furrowed her brows, looking even less happy than he was.

"I was shopping and saw her standing by a counter for ages, wanting to buy something but not buying it, looking lost. So I accompanied her to the seaside to relax, then we ate and came here for fun. During this entire time, did you ever tell me you were looking for her?"

Sean was at a loss for words.

That afternoon, the commotion caused by Elias Langley's frantic search for her in Kingsford caused quite a stir, even their granduncle knew about Juliana's disappearance.

The granduncle believed this was a sign of discord between the couple, a great chance to extract some information from Juliana, so he instructed Sean to find her before Elias did. Who would've thought... his wife was quicker, and he was a step slower.

"So why did you two come to the bar without calling me, but found someone else?"

Felicity nearly rolled her eyes at him, "Weren't you the one who asked me to gain her trust? If you stood here, what trust would there be?"

Sean was at a loss for words again, his attitude gradually softening.

"I'm not blaming you. It's just that the granduncle's side has started doubting Juliana's identity again and is secretly investigating her. Of course, right now Clara Fairchild is the most suspicious person. Since you've gotten closer to Juliana, it's a good opportunity to discreetly probe her for more information, see if she's indeed Sebastian Sinclair's daughter. If I can find that lost flash drive from back in the day, then the position of granduncle would fall to your husband, me."

Felicity didn't care about any flash drive; she just wanted Juliana to be safe. Not exposing her identity was the best for now.

So she put on a look of impatience and said, "Alright, alright, I get it. Investigations, probing all day long, it's so annoying."

Meanwhile, Elias Langley, after placing Juliana in the back seat, held her in his arms.

Juliana, her body softened by intoxication, squirmed restlessly in his embrace. Her tresses brushed against his jaw, carrying a faintly tipsy sweetness, instantly stirring the taut nerves he'd been holding in check.

## Chapter 326: Her Life Has Always Been Marked by Abandonment

Elias Langley took a deep breath, struggling to suppress the turmoil within him, and wrapped his arm forcefully around her waist, pressing her tighter against his embrace, while his voice, restrained, sounded deep and hoarse.

"Behave yourself, I'll deal with you later."

Juliana Jacobs seemed shocked by the overly intimate confinement and threat, raising her hazy eyes to look at him.

"Elias Langley, after divorcing Evan, he gave me a trust fund of two billion US dollars as alimony. If I divorce you, how much are you planning to give me?"

Her words were clear, seemingly unaffected by intoxication.

Elias Langley's hand resting on his leg suddenly clenched, the veins on the back of his hand subtly visible.

He stared ahead and ironically laughed.

"Unfortunately, I have no money. I can't spare you any family assets, so this divorce isn't happening."

He waited for her reaction, whether she would refute or continue with nonsensical words.

However, the person in his arms remained motionless for a long time.

Elias Langley looked down to see that the woman who had spoken astonishingly prior was now breathing evenly and deeply, her long eyelashes like butterfly wings quietly resting on her eyelids, fast asleep.

It seemed like her previous question about divorce and the astronomical alimony was merely drunken rambling in a dream.

Elias Langley's prepared explanations and overwhelming emotions could only turn into a barely noticeable sigh.

Due to the effects of alcohol, Juliana Jacobs slept soundly, unaware of Elias Langley bathing her and tucking her into bed.

The next day upon waking, her head slightly ached.

As she raised her hand to rub it, Elias Langley sat by the bedside, holding a teacup.

"Got a headache? Drink this first; it's good for sobering up and nourishing the stomach."

Though his voice was gentle, the thought that he might have used this tone with other women made Juliana somewhat repulsed.

But she wasn't going to let her body suffer, so she took the teacup from Elias Langley's hand, drank it all, and returned the empty cup before getting out of bed to freshen up.

The toothpaste was already squeezed out on the sink, and the face towel placed alongside.

All these were prepared personally by him.

Previously, receiving such care from him warmed her heart, yet now she felt no ripples within.

After freshening up, they went downstairs one after another.

Juliana Jacobs held a tablet to deal with work accumulated the previous day.

Elias Langley pulled out a chair for her, and she sat down with the tablet in her arms, not giving him a glance.

The man took the tablet from her hand and placed a bowl of prepared porridge in front of her.

"Don't work during meals; it's bad for the stomach."

Juliana didn't respond to him, just bowed her head and drank the porridge.

Noticing her coldness, Elias Langley used his chopsticks to pick a piece of law-made pickled ginger and placed it on the dish in front of her.

"The kitchen made this especially for you, try it."

In front of her, the small dish still held unfinished bean sprouts, and seeing the small addition to the dish, she put down her chopsticks and turned to Steward Fay who was standing by.

"Replace my dish, please."

Steward Fay froze briefly but went to the kitchen nonetheless.

She continued drinking her porridge, Elias Langley's gaze lingered on her face for two seconds before asking, "You haven't spoken to me since you woke up until now. Are you really that angry?"

This time, Juliana responded but still didn't look at him.

"I appreciate your goodwill, Mr. Langley, but save your drool for other women. I have a cleanliness obsession and can't accept dirty things."

Elias Langley set down his chopsticks, his face deep.

"Why won't you trust me even now?"

Juliana's face outlined a mocking smile, "Not only do I not trust you, I don't trust anyone."

Throughout her life, she has always been abandoned.

By her parents, family, and even those relationships once thought unbreakable.

Every time she thought she had grasped a bit of sincerity, it turned out she was deluded.

She barely managed to muster courage again, giving her trust to Elias Langley, but what this man was doing, he never actively told her.

No matter the motivation, she felt heartbroken and deeply distressed.

Seeing her reluctance to talk to him, Elias Langley didn't erupt like other women, but each thorn on her body was aiming at him.

So he stood and walked to her side, gently placing his palm on her shoulder, immediately sensing her tense rejection.

He didn't insist, just spoke to her gently, "Everything has its purpose in appearing. You're the only woman I have, Clara Fairchild doesn't threaten you."

After saying that, he withdrew his hand and left the dining room.

He understood her well; at this moment, any excessive explanation would have backfired, pushing them further apart. Leaving those words for her to ponder over was the only way to break down her defenses.

Juliana stirred the porridge in her bowl, releasing a faint, cold hum through her nose.

After breakfast, Raine Kane came to take her to work.

"Juliana, are we heading to the company first today?" Raine asked while starting the car.

Juliana cast her clear eyes towards the window, "To Athenor!"

Raine's hand on the steering wheel paused slightly, a hint of surprise flashing beneath his eyes.

"Since you're aware... Mr. Langley doesn't harbor real desire for that woman, keeping her around for other purposes, why do you bother going to her?"

Juliana's lips curved into a faint smile that didn't reveal any emotion, "Projects need someone to push them forward; I'm the rightful Mrs. Langley, so why shouldn't I go?"

Raine understood her intentions and turned the direction, driving towards Athenor.

They passed through the revolving door and approached the elevator where the previous night's manager reappeared.

He was about to hand over his shift, but upon seeing Juliana, his face bore the customary respectful smile.

"Miss, this is a strict membership-only establishment, and we've closed for the day, so we're unable to let you in."

Juliana was about to speak when Felicity's voice came from the revolving door.

"Manager Lowell, since when did this place have such high standards that even my sister is left outside?"

The manager's insincere smile stiffened.

Felicity approached, looking at him as if he were mere dust.

"You have poor vision; let me introduce you—a twenty-billion US dollar trust holder and the actual head of Aetherflame Dynamics, this is Miss Jacobs. What, is the standing of the Felicity Family combined with her own status not enough for this shabby place of yours?"

The manager's face instantly paled, and the bow he offered changed from courtesy to one of servility.

"I dare not! My apologies to President Jacobs for offending. Madam Paxton, whom might President Jacobs be seeking? Allow me to show the way."

"No need," Juliana's voice was indifferent, "I'm looking for Clara Fairchild. Tell me where he is, and I'll make my way."

The manager told her Clara Fairchild's resting room number, and Juliana, Felicity, and Raine entered the elevator.

"Madam Paxton comes at quite the right time," Juliana remarked.

Felicity watched the ascending elevator numbers, speaking solemnly, "This place is frequented by influential figures. The boss cannot afford offense, thus there's no surveillance or recording. My husband sent me here."

Juliana instantly understood Sean Paxton was monitoring her.

She glanced at Raine, who nodded in acknowledgment, implying she'd handle it later.

Felicity continued, "Old Mr. Paxton insisted my husband obtain Clara Fairchild's biological materials. Does that interest you?"

Juliana's gaze deepened as she smiled, without answering directly, asking instead, "So Madam Paxton plans to join me in dealing with the mistress?"

Felicity recognized her answer and looked at her with newfound propriety.

"My husband directed me to earn Mrs. Langley's trust, helping deal with the mistress is the least I can do."

Juliana nodded, "Considering how kind you are, I naturally reciprocate. Since Mr. Paxton is so eager to obtain Clara Fairchild's biological samples, then I shall gift him with the 'present' he's been dreaming of."

Felicity was baffled, "If Clara Fairchild's identity were to be checked, wouldn't it..."

As the elevator door opened, Juliana did not respond, promptly walking out.

Chapter 327: She Is His Lawful and Presentable Wife

Clara was in the lounge, having changed into her clothes, ready to leave work with her girlfriends.

Raine Kane pushed the door open and walked in, followed by Juliana Jacobs and Felicity.

"What are you..."

Her girlfriends were about to angrily rebuke them, but upon seeing Felicity, their voices immediately softened.

The first rule at Athenor is: Those who work here must remember the appearance of all members.

"Sorry, we are already off duty." Her girlfriends changed their tone.

Juliana didn't look at her but stared at Clara.

Her appearance wasn't like her own but bore some resemblance to Mrs. Sinclair.

This is why Elias Langley hid her in Kingsford.

"She is indeed striking, no wonder Elias Langley couldn't move when he saw you. Raine, hit her for me."

From a woman's sixth sense, Clara had already guessed Juliana's identity, but didn't expect that the set of arguments she had prepared would be of no use, as the other party started directly.

Her girlfriends immediately stood in front of her, glaring at Juliana.

"Our Clara is Mr. Langley's person, dare to hit her, what are you?"

Felicity disliked this woman's attitude the most.

"She is Elias Langley's legitimately married wife, and what are you? Cozying up to this bitch just to earn some benefits. Fine, then I'll make you disappear."

Her girlfriends' mouths twitched and backed away, looking at Clara.

"Clara, quickly ask Mr. Langley to save me."

Juliana looked away in disgust and said, "Hit!"

Raine stepped forward, just raising her arm, when the door of the lounge was pushed open again.

A man in a black suit walked in.

"Madam," he nodded to Juliana, "Mr. Langley said Clara must not be harmed."

"You are..."

Juliana had seen him once, that was when she visited her father at the sanatorium.

"Caleb Donovan," the man replied.

"He is Mr. Langley's trusted aide, he never appears at ordinary occasions." Raine whispered in Juliana's ear to add.

Caleb has excellent hearing, after hearing Raine introduce him like that, he immediately closed his eyes.

The instigating woman, so irritating.

Sure enough, after hearing Raine's words, Juliana's smile became colder.

"Raine," her voice was calm yet carried undeniable authority, "hit harder."

Caleb took a deep breath, had to take Clara's girlfriends out, citing offending the lady as the reason, ordered them to be driven out of Kingsford.

Moments later, in the lounge, Clara's makeup was a mess, her voice hoarse, long gone was the charming presence she had when she arrived.

She grabbed Raine's pant leg and begged for mercy, begged her to stop hitting.

Although she was from an ordinary family, her parents pampered her since she was young, she hadn't suffered much.

Originally, she had a good doctor boyfriend, could marry after two years of dating and live a moderately satisfying life.

Until one time working overtime, she met Elias Langley, she suddenly had delusions.

Since then, as long as Elias Langley came to the hospital, she would put on a smaller nurse's uniform and entice him in every way.

Hence Elias Langley quickly noticed her and knew her thoughts towards him.

Elias Langley offered to support her but demanded she quit working at the hospital, give up everything in Kenton, go to Kingsford Clubhouse to work as a server to disguise their relationship, she agreed without hesitation.

Because if she could marry into a wealthy family, this bit of cost was nothing.

She just didn't expect that the road to pry away from the original match would be so perilous.

She kind of regretted it.

Juliana let Raine stop, looked down at her, that gaze like looking at a dead skunk.

"Today's beating is to let you know your weight, a chicken doesn't deserve to covet the owner's stuff. From now on wherever I am, stay far away, don't let your landfill smell pollute my air."

Clara hearing her humiliate herself like this, immediately bit her lip.

"What, unconvinced?" Juliana raised her eyebrows and smiled lightly, "If you have the ability, go cry to Elias Langley now, let me see how important you are to him."

After speaking, Juliana took Felicity and Raine and left Athenor.

"For such a woman, hitting her once is too cheap." Felicity said.

Juliana looked at her, "Go back and tell your husband, let him have a laugh."

Felicity couldn't believe it, "You mean it?"

Juliana seriously and firmly, "Yes. My husband always keeps a clean reputation, there aren't many jokes that he can enjoy without harm."

Felicity seemed to understand her intention, "Sure, I'll definitely tell it vividly."

The two separated at Athenor's door, Juliana went to The Innovation Hub to work.

At noon, just after lunch, Zachary York arrived, saying he was taking her to Elias Langley's office.

Juliana's fingers paused slightly: Is this to confront for that woman?

She didn't show on her face, just said calmly, "Okay."

Twenty minutes later, she walked into Elias Langley's office.

A meeting had just ended here.

Several steady middle-aged gentlemen were coming out from inside, seeing her, they all stopped, bowed respectfully, and called out, "Mrs. Langley."

Juliana was a bit embarrassed by the neat addresses, just nodded slightly in response.

Elias Langley never concealed her identity in front of these people: She is his legitimate, presentable wife. She is now, and always will be.

Once everyone left, the heavy office door closed.

Juliana turned to look, Elias Langley had already circled around the wide desk, sitting in the leather chair behind the table, his gaze fell on her, his voice devoid of emotion.

"Come here."

However, Juliana didn't move.

Elias Langley, helpless, got up and walked over, reached out and wrapped around her waist and pulled her into his arms.

"Didn't you already vent your anger, why are you still like a little blowfish?"

Juliana struggled to no avail, turned her head aside, avoiding his breath hitting her face.

"I'm not angry, isn't this your plan? I wasn't cooperative enough, did hitting her pain your heart?"

Elias Langley was amused by her words, raised his hand to gently tap her nose.

"She and your biological samples leaking, that'll be a problem."

So what he cared about wasn't whether Clara was wronged, but whether this stand-in could play the role well.

But Juliana still wouldn't let it go, "Why is a capable assistant like Caleb put by her side, can't handle even this small matter, is he just a wine sack and food bag?"

Elias Langley heard the strong jealousy in her words, let a low indulgent laugh escape his throat.

The arm around her waist tightened a bit, the hot breath brushing past her ear.

"Juliana, you clearly know everything but are unreasonable."

"I can't be reasonable with you for life."

The tiny stars of helplessness in Elias Langley's eyes were completely stirred by her words and turned into a deep warm sea.

All explanations seemed redundant, he simply lowered his head, sealing her unsaid, even more unreasonable words with his warm lips.

This kiss was too dominant, it even robbed her breath.

Juliana couldn't bear it, she pushed against him hard.

Then, Elias Langley's phone rang, it was Zachary York calling.

Elias Langley answered the call.

Zachary York's voice was tinged with a hint of hesitation, "Sir, Miss Fairchild on the other side... wants to see you."

Chapter 328: Better to Turn Pretend into Reality, and Everyone Wins

Before Elias Langley could respond, Juliana Jacobs suddenly pushed him away even harder.

"Go ahead, meet her. Go make it real, and let everyone be happy!"

Elias didn't look at his phone and directly ended the call with a wave of his hand.

Zachary York, on the other end of the line, was holding his phone, feeling frustrated.

What was I thinking? How could Mr. Langley leave at this time?

Elias Langley pulled Juliana back into his arms, letting her wriggle and resist as much as she wanted. His arm was like an iron clasp, not budging an inch, but he still knew he had to comfort her.

"The last time I left a meeting to visit the jewelry counter, it was all for show. My intelligent and discerning wife surely understands the necessity of it all?"

"Stop flattering me. She has ulterior motives for you, can't you see that?"

Elias furrowed his brows, "If she has ideas, what's it got to do with me? Are any feelings other women have for me my fault?"

Juliana was utterly unreasonable at this moment, "I don't care. It's all your fault for being flirtatious, all your fault, all your fault!"

Seeing that words were useless, Elias simply captured the back of her head and kissed her again.

He delved deep this time.

Within moments, their breathing was a little erratic.

Juliana's lips were tempting, an indescribable allure.

Elias tried to calm his breath, his voice husky, "Lack of sleep makes one irritable. I have a resting room here, take a nap."

"No way..."

As soon as Juliana spoke, the hand resting on her clothing hem applied more pressure.

It felt like all strength was drawn out from her body, and she melted into his arms.

This time, she had no choice.

Elias decisively picked her up and walked towards the rest room...

Juliana, who hadn't rested well after getting drunk the previous night, slept until the end of the workday.

During the nap, she dreamt of turning back into her teenage self, running alone into an abandoned kindergarten holding something very important...

Upon waking, a piercing headache struck her.

After composing herself, she got out of bed and walked out of the rest room.

In the outer room, Raine Kane had arrived at some point and was standing in front of Elias Langley's broad desk, frowning deeply.

Elias Langley's facial expression mirrored the somber atmosphere.

Juliana instinctively thought Elias was finally angry over the matter concerning Clara Fairchild and didn't want to blame her, instead attempting to seek out the person responsible and pursue accountability.

So she quickly stepped forward, standing in front of Elias and looking directly at him.

"Raine Kane is my person; it was my idea for her to take action. Whatever happens, I'll take the responsibility. It has nothing to do with her."

Elias Langley was taken aback by her words, but once he understood, he stood up and pulled her into his embrace, his tone filled with helpless tender affection.

"My wife is too protective of her people. I hadn't said anything, and you're already jumping out in a hurry. Do you think I'm a tyrant who harshly criticizes subordinates?"

Raine Kane quickly explained as well, "Madam, Mr. Langley wasn't reprimanding me. We were discussing important matters."

Realizing her misunderstanding, Juliana became a bit embarrassed, her cheeks slightly flushed.

Elias Langley, noticing her subtle awkwardness, gently wrapped his arms around her, having understood internally.

Even though she rationally accepted the staged act between him and Clara Fairchild, emotionally, for someone who truly likes their partner, how can anyone be indifferent?

The more one cares, the more one minds, even if it's not real.

"Well..." Juliana stepped out of his embrace, "you get busy. I'll head out first."

As she turned, Elias Langley caught her hand.

"Head out? I'm not working late tonight."

Seeing his posture of wanting to accompany her, Juliana hesitated slightly, then inquisitively asked, "I'm no longer angry. Aren't you going to play up to her and comfort her?"

A trace of a smile appeared on Elias Langley's face, yet he furrowed his brows.

"Is your husband central air conditioning? Asking me to comfort her... not in this life, nor in the next would she be so fortunate."

Elias's fingers slightly tightened around hers, enclosing her hand fully in his palm, leading her out.

"Right now, having dinner at home with my wife is more important."

...

In the days that followed, Juliana heard nothing further regarding Clara Fairchild.

Elias Langley canceled all unnecessary social engagements, almost always returning home on time to accompany her each evening.

With Florence Sinclair still hospitalized and unable to stir up trouble, Juliana enjoyed a rare few days of calm.

However, Sebastian Sinclair had heard some rumors and dialed in to inquire.

Elias Langley offered no explanation, leading Sebastian, in his role as father-in-law, to give him a stern talking-to.

That afternoon, Juliana had just picked up a document in her office when her phone rang.

It was Felicity.

"Juliana, tonight's charity gala, all the elite families from Kingsford will be there. You must come. I want to introduce you, as these will be your connections here in Kingsford."

"Charity gala?"

Juliana's tone clearly indicating she hadn't heard of it.

Felicity was surprised, "I sent the invitation to Elias Langley three days ago."

Juliana immediately understood that Elias hadn't planned to bring her, intending instead to seize this chance to publicly appear with Clara Fairchild, continuing his 'act'.

But she had plans of her own.

If she didn't carry them out, then the beating Clara took would be in vain.

"Send me another invitation personally."

After hanging up, Juliana's face was lit by a meaningful smile.

A smart woman would never allow her husband to 'act' with another woman for too long.

Clara, it was time to put you to good use.

Around 4 or 5 in the afternoon, Elias Langley sent her a message, saying he had social events in the evening and would be home late.

Juliana simply replied, "Okay."

Felicity's charity gala was in the usual place.

Juliana wore a simple yet extremely elegant gown and entered Amber Hall just as the event commenced.

Elias Langley was already there, chatting with colleagues.

Clara Fairchild, who instantly noticed Juliana, felt a moment of panic and instinctively moved closer to Elias, seeking protection.

Juliana's arrival, like a shining pearl, caused quite a stir at the entrance.

Of course, Elias noticed it too.

He patted Clara's hand softly, comforting her in a low voice, "Don't be afraid; she's here for the gala, not to hit you."

But with such comfort, Clara felt even more anxious.

"I'm... going to the bathroom."

With that, head lowered, she hurried away.

Felicity met Juliana at the entrance, pulling her towards Elias Langley.

"You look stunning today! Look at how everyone is staring at you; tonight, you've outshone all the socialites," Felicity remarked.

Juliana replied with a light laugh, "Relax, in your husband's eyes, you are always the most beautiful."

As they spoke, Juliana's eyes caught Sean Paxton at a distance.

He had come, thankfully.

The two exchanged slight nods, acknowledging each other.

When Elias saw her approaching, his expression was unreadable, but he said calmly, "So, Mrs. Langley wanted to come. Why didn't you let me know in advance?"

Juliana stood in front of him, her red lips curving up in a slight smile, voice clear yet distant.

"Mr. Langley, you misinterpret. I'm here tonight in my own capacity, representing no one else."

As she spoke, she deliberately revealed the Flower Ring on her index finger.

That gesture was undoubtedly announcing to everyone around her independence and self-sovereignty in her marriage.

Elias's gaze lingered on the ring on her finger for a moment before he allowed a slight smile of helpless indulgence.

Meanwhile, in the bathroom.

After retouching her makeup, Clara Fairchild took out her perfume and sprayed herself several times.

This perfume contained a potent new aphrodisiac. Given enough exposure, it ignited a blazing desire in the subject.

On their way earlier, Elias had been put off by the strong scent emanating from her perfume, triggering the car's ventilation system.

Having lost such a great opportunity, Clara resolved not to let Elias out of her sight, ensuring he inhaled her scent extensively.

Clara made up her mind; she had to win over Elias Langley tonight and become pregnant with his child to secure her status and drive Juliana away, rewriting her destiny.

However, as she arranged her expression and exited the bathroom to find Elias, someone stopped her by the colonnade.

Juliana stood there leisurely, as if she had been waiting for quite some time.

Chapter 329: In a Fit of Rage, He Lost His Temper

Clara of course knew Juliana was here to confront her.

Feeling guilty, she glanced around the hall but couldn't find Elias, so she toughened her resolve:

With her own frail image, she would cement Juliana's reputation as a "tigress."

With her mind set, tears instantly welled up in the corners of her eyes.

"Mrs. Langley, what do you want to do?"

Juliana leaned against the pillar and smiled lightly.

"Wearing counterfeit dresses, using cheap perfume to attend a celebrity-filled banquet with my husband—are you trying to play the victim here to attract more men, or to tell everyone I'm petty and can't tolerate the low-class women my husband keeps outside?"

"No, I'm not..."

Clara felt guilty, unable to articulate anything, but she deliberately raised her voice.

The aim was to draw everyone's attention to this spot.

She planned to stage a perfect "accident" in front of everyone: to make everyone believe that Juliana pushed her down.

Sure enough, her raised voice was effective.

Clara immediately had tears in her eyes, humbly stepped forward, and tried to grab Juliana's hand to explain.

But her foot "just happened" to be caught by the hem of her dress, causing her to fall toward Juliana with a startled cry.

She had already thought about what to do next:

In the moment of contact with Juliana, she would lean back, using the angle of visual distortion, to make everyone believe Juliana pushed her, causing her to fall.

"Ah, Mrs. Langley, don't push me..."

Just as she touched Juliana's hand, Juliana seemed to have realized her intent, and suddenly, as if losing her balance, leaned in the same direction.

Clara miscalculated the terrain; beside the pillar are three to four steps leading to the hall.

Seeing that both were about to fall down the steps.

The next second, a hand steadily caught Juliana's waist, pulling her back.

While Clara, completely off-balance, rolled down the steps awkwardly.

"Rip—"

The clear sound of fabric tearing rang out.

Her imitation dress couldn't bear the strain, and the seams burst open dramatically.

In front of the public eye, she ended up with her clothes in tatters—that is, except for two adhesive coverings still in place, her upper body was exposed completely.

Clara was extremely embarrassed, but what broke her heart further was that the person who helped Juliana was none other than Elias.

And now that she was almost exposed, this man remained indifferent, his gaze resting solely on his wife.

"Were you frightened?"

Elias gently adjusted Juliana's dress with care.

Juliana pushed him away, and in front of everyone, pointed at him and said: "You gave this woman the courage to harm me in public, now you're pretending to be a good husband to maintain your image?"

Elias's face hardened at her words, the expression was... a sudden burst of anger.

Clara quickly clutched the shredded fabric to her chest, crying while trying to defend herself: "Mrs. Langley, you pushed me down without asking for any explanation, I and you..."

"She pushed you?"

Felicity stepped out, indignantly cutting her off.

"From my angle, it was clear—you deliberately tripped yourself, trying to drag Mrs. Langley down the stairs. But Elias appeared and saved his wife without a second thought. You tried to harm someone and ended up hurting yourself—that's reaping what you sow! How dare you turn the tables?"

Felicity finished with a heavy "hmm."

"Intentionally wearing a low-quality counterfeit dress to play weak and pitiful, even heaven couldn't stand it, making your dress tear apart in public—serves you right!"

As her voice dropped, everyone's gaze toward Clara was filled with scorn.

Clara didn't know, in the elite social circle, identity, status, and social stratum are the unwritten rules for judging right from wrong. Truth was secondary to maintaining dignity and shared interests within the circle.

As the organizer of the banquet, and being Sean Paxton's wife, Felicity naturally held the power of speech. In such a setting, no one would speak up for a mistress eyeing someone's husband.

In an instant, various harsh remarks almost drowned Clara.

At this moment, Juliana stepped forward, her voice cold and clear, spreading around:

"Miss Fairchild, I don't care about your customs, but for me, the foundation of a marriage is loyalty, and there's absolutely no room for a third person in a relationship, so... respect yourself!"

Her words not only made her stance clear, she also scorned Clara, and subtly held Elias accountable.

But Elias was not angry, instead, he calmly took her hand and smiled slightly at the crowd.

This gesture undeniably declared: In this two-choice situation, he not only sided with his wife but also declared himself her support.

Clara clutched the torn fabric tightly and crouched on the ground, so ashamed she wished she could faint.

Just then, a waiter emerged from the crowd and draped a tablecloth over Clara, covering her exposed self.

Then, with a half-support and half-lift, took her hastily to the rest area under the gaze of others.

Seeing this, Elias made a call to Caleb Donovan, "Go to the rest area, send her back."

Juliana, upon hearing him still concerned about that woman, immediately threw off his hand and left alone.

Elias quickly chased after her.

Sean Paxton smiled and put his arm around Felicity's waist, his gaze toward Elias and Juliana leaving, with a hint of jest.

"Elias really is a straightforward man. Many men secretly cheat after marriage, only he hides poorly and lets it unfold before his wife. Juliana is also... too serious. Living with such a woman is exhausting."

Felicity allowed him to hold her, still maintaining a graceful smile, but with words full of sarcasm.

"Mr. Paxton seems to be enjoying others' misfortunes, thinking of some good things related to yourself?"

Of course!

That waiter was his person, and he took advantage of sending Clara to the rest area to get her hair, soon he would verify her identity.

Seeing the USB drive lost years ago was soon to be retrieved, he couldn't be happier?

Sean laughed lightly, tapping her nose, "My wife is naturally different from others, you have always been so understanding."

Felicity gave a sneering laugh, her tone calm but carrying a hint of detachment.

"Juliana can of course 'be strict.' Her marriage with Elias isn't a business alliance, nor bound by interests. She also owns a career comparable to a man, which is the source of her strength. Hence, she doesn't need to 'maintain harmony.' Whereas my poise and understanding merely maintain the honor for you and the Felicity Family."

With that, she lowered her eyes.

"There are still guests tonight, Mr. Paxton, feel free."

Saying so, she gracefully withdrew from Sean's embrace and went to socialize.

Sean only felt the emptiness in his arm, the sudden loss of warmth brought him a faint annoyance.

Juliana reached the hotel entrance, where Raine Kane approached her.

"The waiter who appeared out of nowhere belongs to Sean Paxton. He indeed took the chance to pull several strands of Clara's hair."