

Panicking 61

Chapter 61: Mrs. Grant, It's Time to Fulfill Your Promise

At this moment, a few more cars appeared in the distance.

The three of them turned their gaze, and Evan Grant's cold and handsome face instantly froze over.

Because these were cars from the old mansion.

Old Mrs. Grant got out of the car first, followed by the second person from the back seat, who turned out to be...

"Grandpa!"

Juliana ran over in surprise.

The effect of the acupuncture and medicine was good, and Old Man Linton could walk by himself without assistance.

He patted Juliana's hand, "I couldn't contact you for days, and I was extremely anxious. I was going to report it to the police this afternoon, but then..."

He looked at Peter Dawson behind Old Mrs. Grant.

"...Butler Dawson said he knew where you were and would bring you back, but I was not at ease, so I came along with Old Mrs. Grant to find you."

Old Man Linton spoke tactfully.

The truth was, Old Man Linton also saw the online posts "Searching for Mrs. Grant." At the police station's entrance, Peter Dawson stopped him and said they'd bring her back.

But Old Man Linton no longer trusted the Grants, insisting he accompany them to find Juliana; if they disagreed, he would continue with the police report.

The Grant Family was already in the spotlight, so they had to agree to his request.

"Grandpa, I'm okay." Juliana said.

Old Mrs. Grant noticed the girl was not as warm as before; she didn't even acknowledge her presence anymore.

"Since you're fine, get in the car, and I'll take you back to the city."

"Grandma, I haven't finished talking with her." Evan Grant said.

Old Man Linton said unhappily, "You've been married for four years, and for four years, you've made Juliana wear a green hat. She hasn't wronged you, nor owes the Grant Family a thing! If you're not getting a divorce, how long do you plan on stalling her?"

"Sir, things are not as you think." Evan Grant replied.

Old Man Linton snorted.

"Whose name was signed on the critical illness consent form? Your wife was in critical condition in the ICU, yet you had the leisure to attend a party with a mistress!"

"Such a big matter and you didn't inform me, letting her struggle at death's door all alone. Evan Grant, do you think that because she's without parents, no one would care if she died?!"

"If you want to do those filthy things with your sister, don't involve her. If the Grants want to cut off my medication, so be it. I'm not afraid of dying, just hurry up and divorce her!"

The old man was speaking in agitation, his whole body trembling.

"Grandpa, we will divorce, please don't be upset."

Juliana quickly soothed him.

Stella Windsor couldn't bear to see Evan Grant being scolded and spoke up, "The old man is already old and still slanders others, you better be careful, if he dies from anger on the spot, my sister-in-law would get a reputation for angering an elder to death."

As soon as the words were said, with a resounding slap, Juliana's palm once again landed on her face.

"Do you brush your teeth with wastewater? Do you have the right to speak here?"

Stella's eyes turned red, "Brother, it's not that I don't respect the elderly, I do respect the old lady, but what this old man said is too unpleasant."

"I know, this matter has nothing to do with you, don't speak."

Evan Grant looked at Juliana, his eyes filled with determination.

"My conditions will not change, you have no other choice but to agree."

Juliana raised a stubborn smile at the corner of her lips, "What you say doesn't count."

After saying that, she supported her grandpa and walked towards the car.

"Juliana!" Evan Grant's voice was icy, "Have you thought about the consequences of leaving just like this?"

Juliana paused for a moment, not turning back, and helped her grandpa into the old mansion's car.

The dark undertone in his eyes seemed as if it would destroy her.

Old Mrs. Grant looked at her grandson, "Indecision leads to trouble. If you behave like a lovesick young man, how can you restore the Grant family's face, how can you restore your own reputation?"

Old Mrs. Grant's words were undoubtedly pushing him to make a decision.

"Grandma, I know what to do!"

Juliana's indifferent departure was more brutal than publicly exposing his scandal at the banquet.

Old Mrs. Grant no longer questioned, giving a cold glance at Stella standing beside him.

"You've disappointed me enough. Don't forget what you said, or I'll take action myself."

These words were both a threat and a reminder.

After sending Juliana and Old Man Linton back to the city, Old Mrs. Grant dropped them off at the city center square.

Avoiding Old Man Linton, Old Mrs. Grant said to Juliana, "No matter how many mistakes Evan made, your action is to destroy the Grant family's foundation and his years of effort; it's really undeserving. Was it I who misjudged people in the past, or have you changed?"

Juliana understood the implication in Old Mrs. Grant's words.

"I'm sorry, Grandma, I haven't thought things through thoroughly. The Grants helped me when I was at my most difficult time, I have no intention of hurting the Grants, and will not assist others against the Grant Family."

Old Mrs. Grant nodded, "I won't interfere with your matters anymore, take care of yourself."

Juliana nodded, helping her grandpa get a taxi and leaving.

Peter Dawson stepped forward, "Sir is still reluctant."

Old Mrs. Grant shook her head, a hint of pity crossing her face, "This time, I'm afraid Juliana won't meet a good end."

Peter Dawson hesitated for a moment, then asked, "Are you really allowing the young master to keep that Miss Windsor by his side?"

"That woman is now eager for me to take action against her. If I really did, she could take the opportunity to feign pity to Evan, effectively bringing them closer, it's better to turn a blind eye for now..."

Old Mrs. Grant's smile was deep.

"...wait for an opportune moment, stir the pot a little, and let her reveal her true colors in front of Evan, wouldn't that be better?"

...

Juliana escorted Old Man Linton back to Celestial Vista.

Rosalind Linton was relieved to see she was safe and insisted on keeping her for dinner before letting her leave.

"Jason Wyatt was sentenced to three years and nine months, now that's settled, no one in the Wyatt family will have a chance in office in the future, all thanks to..."

"And you want to defend him?" Old Man Linton interrupted her.

"I don't intend to defend him, things have come to this, it's better they divorce, but I mean with Evan Grant's capabilities, he probably doesn't even need to lift a finger to make Juliana suffer. She'll have to be cautious in the future."

Juliana did not react to her words, instead, she looked at Old Man Linton and asked a very strategic question.

"Grandpa, it's been four years since Aidan Linton left, should we ask the police if they've found his body?"

"Are you silly," Rosalind Linton interjected, "if they found it, the police would have informed us to identify it long ago. Besides, it's been washed away by the river for four years..."

At this point, she choked up.

Her pain of losing her son had not lessened over the four years.

Juliana sighed, "His image in my heart is starting to blur."

Rosalind Linton wiped her tears, "Not for me, I even clearly remember what he looked like when he was born, he had a birthmark on his buttock, shaped like a ginkgo leaf, very unique."

"Oh, is there anything else you can't forget?" Juliana asked.

Rosalind Linton thought for a moment, "My son was very handsome, if he were still alive, the girls chasing after him would line up all the way to Kingsford."

Juliana was dumbfounded.

To verify whether Adrian Langley is Aidan Linton, does that mean she has to check his pants?

After dinner, Juliana left.

Walking through the courtyard garden, she unexpectedly ran into Lily Windsor.

George Grant wasn't accompanying her.

Lily Windsor had just completed a round of chemotherapy, lost quite a bit of hair, and her face was pale, but she seemed to be in good spirits.

Both parties were surprised to meet there.

Lily Windsor, frightened by Old Mrs. Grant taking back the Grant family property, immediately said, "I'm telling you, this house was personally bought by Evan for my daughter and I to recuperate in, it's not part of the Grant Family estate, you witch, don't even think about taking over my house."

Juliana smiled, "It's considerate of you to tell me that Evan Grant has a separate property here for his mistress. Since he and I are not yet divorced, this house is still marital property, I have the right to kick you out, so you'd better be polite to me."

"You... dare!"

Lily Windsor trembled with rage.

Juliana did not tangle with her, lifted her foot, and left.

Exiting the gate, she was about to call Summer Shaw.

Instead, her phone rang first.

It was Jared Langley's number.

Juliana was very surprised he managed to get her number.

"Is Mrs. Grant safe?" Jared asked.

"Yes."

"I was the one who spread news of your disappearance, guided your grandpa to report it, and allowed Old Mrs. Grant to intercept and find you, ensuring your safety. Mrs. Grant, the time has come to fulfill your promise."

Chapter 62: The Grant Family's Secret

Although Juliana promised the old lady not to help outsiders deal with the Grant family, she wouldn't break her promise.

Having agreed on the time and place to meet with Jared, she hung up the phone and called Summer.

As soon as the call connected, Summer exclaimed on the other end.

"Oh my goodness, you've finally returned to the world of the living. The day after I couldn't reach you, I went to the police, only to be told they would only handle it if Evan Grant filed a report. So, I had no choice but to buy a trending search for you."

"Did he do anything to you?" she asked.

Juliana replied, "I'm fine. How's the company doing?"

Summer was silent for a moment, "It's Evan Grant. He said whoever cooperates with us will have their company targeted."

Juliana suspected as much, "It's okay. Get in touch with a few companies outside the area. We'll visit them together another day."

They then agreed to meet at the apartment.

Summer not only brought her some soup made by her mother but also brought information on Adrian Langley.

"This world is truly fantastical; there are actually two people who look so alike."

Summer had met Aidan Linton in college.

Although Aidan studied energy economics and wasn't at the same school as Juliana, he would visit her weekly.

He knew Juliana was frugal, so he often took her out to eat on the weekends.

Occasionally, Summer would join them for a meal, so she was familiar with him.

Juliana sipped the soup while reviewing Adrian Langley's information.

He's the illegitimate son of the Langley family, returned from Aridia two months ago, and is currently the Deputy General Manager at Blackstar Technologies, overshadowed by Jared Langley.

"It's said that the Chairman of Blackstar Technologies, Victor Langley, originally didn't intend for this illegitimate son to be involved in the family affairs. But after the accidental death of his second son half a year ago, rumored to be linked to the eldest son, he brought this illegitimate son back to keep the eldest in check."

Juliana chuckled, "With such internal strife, how could Blackstar stand a chance against Evan Grant?"

Summer sat beside her and whispered, "I'll tell you a secret of the Grant family, but you mustn't spread it."

Juliana nodded.

"Evan Grant also has a brother, and his mother died of postpartum hemorrhage after giving birth to this brother, so this brother is not favored by Old Mr. Grant. All family resources are tilted towards Evan. Later, five years ago, Evan's brother suddenly stormed Old Mr. Grant's study with a gun, demanding the group's shares."

"In the end, it was Evan who brought people to quell this power struggle. That brother was exiled overseas, never to return, and not long after, Old Mr. Grant died from his injuries. And it was because of this upheaval that the Grant family surged forward, overshadowing the Langley family everywhere. So as long as there are profits, internal strife in affluent families is unavoidable."

Juliana, married to Evan Grant for four years, never knew about this past in the Grant family.

This showed that Evan had never truly cared for her, nor intended to be with her long term.

Seeing her deep in thought, Summer added, "Not many people know about this history of the Grant family. It's because my brother grew up with Evan and was there when he stormed his grandfather's study, so he's aware. You mustn't tell anyone."

Juliana snapped back to reality at her words, "I won't say a word. I'm just thinking, at the bakery and the photo studio, was it his brother trying to blow me up? If it was, why come after me? He should be going after his brother to gain inheritance rights."

"I've heard from my brother that Old Mr. Grant's will states that if Evan Grant dies before age 35, and without offspring, all of the Grant family's assets will become a charity fund."

So, the plan was to first eliminate anyone who could bear offspring for Evan, and then concentrate on eliminating him after 35, making her a shield for Stella Windsor?

"Have they traced the source of the batteries at the explosion site?" Juliana asked.

Summer shook her head, "Even with everything that's happened between you and Evan, his brother should no longer target you, should he?"

"No, you're oversimplifying it. As long as I'm still Evan's legal wife, he'll continue targeting me. Right now, Evan won't spare me either, so I have to guard against both sides."

Summer sighed, acknowledging that Juliana was fighting a lonely battle.

Juliana finished the soup and set the bowl down.

Recalling her meeting with Jared Langley the next day, she asked, "So, was it Jared who killed the second son of the Langley family?"

"If there were any evidence, Victor Langley would've dealt with him already. But if it had nothing to do with him, Victor wouldn't have pulled in the illegitimate son to balance him. Who can clearly say what's true within a family like this?"

"In that case..." Juliana hesitated for a few seconds, "do you know how to get a man who isn't close to you to take off his pants?"

Summer was shocked, "Girl, you haven't divorced yet. Aren't you afraid Evan will chop you up?"

The next day, Juliana arrived at The Jade Leaf ten minutes early.

Due to her forehead injury last time, The Jade Leaf gave her a lifetime membership. Juliana didn't care much for it but appreciated the ease of access it provided.

It was the same private room, with the secretary already standing at the door.

Juliana was surprised, "Is my phone's time off?"

The secretary, experienced, smiled slightly, "President Langley said you have a surprise for him, so he's willing to wait."

Juliana felt the pressure exerted by the other party and lowered her eyes as she entered the room.

Jared was still sitting in the usual spot, drinking tea.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, President Langley."

She sat across from him.

Jared glanced at her, noticing she looked a bit thinner than a few days ago, and smiled, "Does President Grant not know how to take care of women, or just not take care of the ones he doesn't like?"

Juliana pursed her lips, "In our last meeting, I thought there would be no second meeting with President Langley, so I didn't correct you. Please call me Miss Jacobs."

Jared's eyes turned icy.

So initially, she didn't consider cooperating with him.

Today's meeting was purely out of necessity.

But he liked this kind of adaptable and pragmatic woman.

"We can do the deals one by one. I'm still willing to take Miss Grant's real estate and jewelry, just as making friends."

"No need, I've already sold them at a discount."

She preferred selling them for much less than the price he offered, unwilling to become allies with him due to her loyalty to the Grant family.

Jared's smile faded slightly, "Then let's complete this transaction. I hope the information Miss Jacobs provides is of equal value to the assistance I offer."

Juliana beckoned him closer with a finger.

Jared leaned in to listen.

Juliana whispered, "Evan Grant can't last more than three minutes at night."

Jared was taken aback, confirming that she indeed said that, frowning his brows, "That's it?"

"Isn't this a secret you can use to attack him?" Juliana countered.

The man, adept at negotiations, found himself momentarily speechless.

After a pause, he laughed but with cold eyes.

"I hold grudges, Miss Jacobs. It's not good to play tricks on me like this."

Juliana earnestly replied, "I'm just a housewife, unfamiliar with what valuable aggressive information President Langley seeks. But I know that this sort of personal attack can harm him the most."

In the business world, such underhanded tactics are often acceptable. Still, wouldn't gossip like a housewife only make one a laughingstock?

Jared felt her jibe stick in his chest, unable to vent it out.

Unwilling to prolong the entanglement, Juliana stood up.

"After this transaction, we're even. Goodbye... no, we'll never see each other again. Take care."

With that, she left the private room.

As she stepped out of The Jade Leaf's doors, she nearly bumped into Adrian Langley.

Adrian nudged her aside, frowning, "Why are you walking so recklessly?"

Juliana was stunned.

Adrian seamlessly covered up, "Has your forehead healed and now forgotten?"

Juliana was slightly disappointed, scanning his pants, recalling Rosalind Linton's words: Aidan Linton has a birthmark on his buttocks.

But, she couldn't check here.

"Thanks for last time. I got you something."

Saying that, she reached into her bag.

Before heading out that morning, she specifically stopped by a bakery near the university to buy a box of thumb cookies Aidan used to buy her.

She planned to use this to test him, not expecting to use it so soon.

However, as soon as she took out the cookies, she spotted Evan Grant getting out of a Maybach nearby.

"That was just a small gesture; no need to thank me."

Adrian stood with his back to the street, unaware that Evan was approaching The Jade Leaf.

Juliana's heart tightened. If Evan saw her with Adrian...

Chapter 63: Sensitive Men Have No Friends

Just at this moment, Jared Langley came out of the tea house with his secretary.

Probably filled with anger, he didn't look at them and headed straight to the Phantom parked by the roadside.

Juliana Jacobs had a flash of inspiration and withdrew the biscuit.

"Alright, then, don't be polite. I'll call you someday, make sure you pick up."

After speaking, she ran towards Jared Langley.

Adrian Langley's hand, poised to accept the biscuit, hung awkwardly in mid-air, unsure whether to proceed.

Jared Langley had just sat in the car when a shadow swiftly flew in, seating itself beside him.

Facing his cold gaze, Juliana felt a lump in her throat.

"Sorry, President Langley, borrowing your car."

Jared Langley showed no expression, yet Juliana saw questioning on his face.

Who was the one who said we'd never meet again?

So what's the meaning of sitting in my car now?

Juliana clutched her bag, a bit nervous, fearing he'd ask her to get out.

"I'll give you another secret about Evan Grant."

"Does Miss Jacobs still have any credibility with me?" Jared Langley's voice was emotionless.

Juliana whispered, "There should still be some, though maybe not much."

The secretary held the car door open, waiting for Jared Langley's command.

She had never seen Miss Jacobs like this, just giving her boss a fit, and now running back to sell out her husband.

Lucky she was a woman; if she were a man, her boss might have twisted her neck by now.

"Drive!"

Upon hearing the boss's instruction, the secretary, although surprised, immediately closed the car door and went to the driver's seat.

The car slowly blended into the traffic.

At the entrance of The Jade Leaf.

"Could it be that the person who helped Mrs. Grant stir up online opinion is Jared Langley? How do they know each other?"

Ethan Carter found it unbelievable.

Evan Grant withdrew his gaze, his voice betraying no emotion.

"She really knows how to dig her own grave. Jared Langley's ghost ships never let anyone off halfway. Rather than fall into my hands, when I torment her, I might get slightly 'sentimental.'

Ethan shivered.

He's never seen a woman as miserable as Juliana Jacobs.

"Within a month, I want Aetherflame Dynamics bankrupt."

After saying this, Evan Grant entered The Jade Leaf.

...

In the car, the silence was so profound a pin drop could be heard.

"I'm going to the industrial park, thank you," said Juliana Jacobs.

The driving secretary didn't respond.

"Miss Jacobs..."

Jared Langley's voice actually sounded pleasant, but his presence didn't give Juliana a good vibe, hence the low impression score.

"...Have you known my third brother for a long time?"

Juliana blinked, "Why do you ask?"

"Your husband happened to see you flirting with a man, and you ran to me. How afraid are you of him dealing with my third brother?"

Juliana's little thoughts were dismantled without any embarrassment.

"Your brother is too weak, unlike you; it's more interesting when strong players face off."

With those words, Jared Langley suddenly gripped her wrist, his force almost crushing her bones.

The air suddenly thickened with a sense of danger.

"If seeking a protector, best to act like a delicate flower; with Miss Jacobs' face, you just might move me."

Juliana met his dissecting gaze, her eyelashes trembled not a bit.

"President Langley misunderstood. I only use this face for myself in a mirror, not to please others."

"Oh?"

Jared Langley narrowed his eyes slightly.

Juliana's lips curled slightly, her eyes twinkling like cold stars.

"Only those who catch Evan Grant's eye are worthy of his attention. Do you want your father to think it's your brother who has this capability?"

Turbulence surged in Jared Langley's eyes.

"Does Miss Jacobs know since getting in the car, you should've died several times?"

Her gravest mistake was letting him know she'd purposely inquired about the Langley family's internal affairs.

Yet Juliana showed no fear, her gaze remained calm.

"In business, shouldn't you inquire about the other party's situation? Knowing is knowing, not knowing is not, should I then dodge and deceive to prove I harbor no ill intent towards you?"

A faint scent wafted around her, like plum blossoms steeped in moonlight on a snowy night, or the cooling tea fragrance in a porcelain cup.

Jared Langley's gaze was so deep it momentarily dazed him, unnoticed by others.

Moments later, he released her hand, adjusting his sleeve.

"Miss Jacobs is the first to tell me lies I enjoy hearing."

"Is that a compliment?" Juliana asked.

Jared Langley closed his eyes slightly, "Thick-skinned women aren't appealing."

"I'm not here to romance you, don't need your liking."

Speaking, she took out the small cookies from her bag.

With a three-day fast, her body was nutrient-deficient, hunger was hard to resist.

She ate one, asked out of politeness, "Want one?"

Jared Langley's calm mask began to crack, eyes frosty.

"You bought something for Adrian Langley, didn't give it to him, and now offer it to me?"

Juliana: "..."

Sensitive men have no friends.

"Just being polite, don't take it seriously."

Jared Langley: "..."

Thus, Juliana munched on cookies all the way to Aetherflame Dynamics' doorstep.

"Thanks, President Langley, take care."

As she didn't want to see him again, she didn't say goodbye.

The sound of the closing car door briefly amused Jared Langley's discontent face.

Softly, the secretary said, "President Langley, you're quite tolerant towards Miss Jacobs."

Jared Langley regained his usual look, "Evan Grant's vulnerabilities are few. Fortunately, he has a woman close to his heart."

The secretary didn't understand, "Isn't he most concerned about his stepsister?"

Jared Langley looked at Aetherflame Dynamics' logo, coldly ordered, "Investigate the third young master's connections in the country."

The secretary was momentarily stunned, "Four years ago?"

Jared Langley did not answer, and that was enough.

Secretary said, "Four years ago, the third young master collided with Chairman Langley's car, severely injured and amnesiac, sent to Aridia. But hadn't the chairman already investigated his past here? The records at the orphanage in neighboring Arlan City were incomplete, after all."

"Do you truly believe those incomplete records were burned in a fire?" Jared Langley asked.

The secretary, having been with him for some time, quickly lowered her head, "I'll find out by other means."

Jared Langley's face showed a calculating gleam, "Be smart, as soon as we find out he deceived my father, I can turn him from a true son into a fake one, make him wish he were dead."

...

Just as Juliana entered Aetherflame Dynamics, Summer Shaw approached, looking dejected.

"Just now, six partners called me to immediately cease cooperation."

Juliana's gaze darkened briefly, "It's because of me."

Summer Shaw was prepared, "The moment I sent you the photo, I thought about sharing the hardship with you. Ceasing cooperation means breach fees; even without income, breach fees can sustain us for two months."

"But will the breach fees be transferred to you immediately?" Juliana asked.

She knew Evan Grant too well.

The man is accustomed to boiling frogs, stifling hope, then slicing her piece by piece.

Aetherflame Dynamics was his first target.

Summer Shaw was stumped by her question but remained optimistic.

"I've contacted some out-of-town clients, one large enterprise shows interest in our technology. If it works out, maintaining Aetherflame isn't a problem. I'll keep searching for clients later."

Juliana thought for a moment: "I'll accompany you for the talks, but before that, I need to verify one thing."

Summer Shaw was curious, "What is it?"

Juliana picked up the phone and dialed.

There was a quick answer.

Adrian Langley's voice on the phone sounded much like Aidan Linton.

"Vice President Langley, today's situation is urgent, why don't I thank you in another way?"

But Adrian Langley's attitude was quite cold, "Mrs. Grant, this small matter can be set aside."

He was about to hang up, but Juliana quickly said, "Actually, it's a legal divorce inquiry."

On the other end, there was no hang-up, but no response either.

Juliana sniffed, "My husband only accepts a widow. I...have no way out."

"Address?" Adrian Langley asked.

Chapter 64: Inviting Her to Bathe Together

Juliana Jacobs thought he was Aidan Linton.

With just a single sentence, "She's at the end of her rope," he didn't hesitate to agree to meet.

This almost instinctual sense of urgency was something she was all too familiar with.

Even though she proposed a meeting location that defied common sense, he had no objections.

Summer Shaw asked after Juliana hung up the phone, "Are you looking for evidence that he's Aidan Linton?"

Juliana nodded.

Summer said, "A big family like the Langley Family would never mistake their own blood. Adrian Langley must be Victor Langley's son. But it's good for you to connect with the Langley Family; their background is strong. If it weren't for their internal strife these past few years, they might not have lost to Evan Grant."

Juliana had never told Summer about the Linton Family; the less she knew, the safer she would be.

The next day, Juliana drove alone to Golden Ripple Springs.

After booking a room, it wasn't long before Adrian Langley called.

Juliana went to the location he had given her.

This area of VIP suites had a small hot spring in each room, and the lavish decor was several times more expensive than the regular rooms she stayed in.

Juliana found the room number, entered the code, and the door opened.

At the end of the living room, there was a bay connected to a hot spring, and to her surprise, he was already soaking in it.

She had thought she would have to go through some effort to see him in swim trunks.

Adrian Langley heard footsteps stop nearby but didn't move. He slowly opened his eyes, turning to find her standing there in casual clothes, staring at his back in a daze.

"Mrs. Grant, meeting at a hot spring hotel isn't for soaking in hot springs, is it?"

His words had an oily undertone, and Juliana was certain that Aidan Linton from four years ago couldn't have said such a thing.

"Please call me Miss Jacobs. Sorry, I didn't expect you'd arrive first."

Adrian turned around. Though not muscular, his skin was smooth, and droplets of water trailed down his skin, glistening in the steamy air.

Juliana had seen Aidan shirtless before. To help his family, he had worked as a porter at the station.

In the height of summer, drenched in sweat, Juliana handed him a towel. He shyly turned his back to her as he wiped, asking how she knew he was working there.

But Adrian Langley looked at her confidently and even invited her to bathe with him.

"Are you planning to talk to me dressed like this in the hot spring?" Adrian asked.

"I'll go back to change into a swimsuit."

Adrian pointed to the travel bag on a chair and said, "No need, I prepared one for you."

Uncertain about the style he'd chosen, Juliana didn't move forward.

"Thanks, but I'd rather wear my own; it fits better."

Having said that, she turned and left.

"Miss Jacobs..."

Behind her came the sound of water, and Juliana turned to see Adrian had already stood up from the hot spring.

And he had wrapped a towel around his waist.

In her life, Juliana had only seen Evan Grant wrap a towel around himself as he approached her.

Regardless of whether the man before her was Aidan, she was a bit frightened, and what started as a fast walk turned into a run.

But Adrian's speed was faster. As she neared the door, he pushed her against it with a jolt.

A loud thud echoed down the hallway...

In the president's office of Blackstar Technologies, the secretary rushed in.

"President Langley, the Third Young Master didn't come to the company today."

Jared Langley looked at her in silence.

The secretary, in high heels, walked over and leaned down to whisper in his ear, "Half an hour ago, he and Miss Jacobs entered Golden Ripple Springs one after the other."

Jared's eyes turned cold, "They've only met twice, and now they're soaking in the hot spring together?"

The secretary mused, "I'm worried the Third Young Master plans to win over Miss Jacobs to use her against Evan Grant. If successful, it would change his standing in Chairman Langley's eyes."

Jared's dark eyes deepened, "It's not good for the Third Brother to seduce a married woman; he can't ruin the Langley family's reputation. Inform Evan Grant indirectly, but don't let him find out the tip came from me."

...

Golden Ripple Springs.

Juliana's left cheek hit the door, causing a bit of pain.

The next second, she angrily turned to glare at the man who had pressed against her from behind.

"What does Vice President Langley mean by this?"

Adrian smiled lightly, "We've hardly met a few times and you're already inviting me to such a place? Miss Jacobs, the hint is so obvious, and I just happen to be willing...ah!"

He hadn't finished speaking when a sharp pain suddenly exploded from his waist.

It felt as if countless needles shot up to his spine, instantly draining all his energy.

His knees buckled, and he went down.

After regaining his vision, he noticed Juliana now held a stun baton.

He should have been angry, but instead, he chuckled lowly, "So fierce, no wonder Evan Grant had an affair."

Juliana was truly angry, "I sincerely wanted to be friends with Vice President Langley, but I didn't expect you to be like this. Since that's the case, we have no reason to talk. Goodbye!"

With that, she moved to leave.

"Friends or ulterior motives? Miss Jacobs tends to mirror those she spends time with."

Juliana paused, "So, Vice President Langley is deliberately humiliating me, forcing me out? What secret are you hiding, afraid I'll uncover?"

"I am the Langley Family's third son, confirmed by NDA; what could you possibly uncover?"

The first time they met, she began to doubt him, so during their second meeting, he offered his business card to clarify his identity, yet she remained skeptical.

She was too smart, difficult to deceive.

Adrian recovered from the shock and stood up.

The next second, the towel around his waist slipped off.

Juliana, shocked, turned away, but curiosity tugged at her, wondering if she could glimpse the birthmark on his butt.

Her eyes wandered briefly, then fixed on his lower half.

But as her gaze landed, she was stunned.

A dark blue, knee-length swim trunk hugged his hips and thighs securely, even embroidered with the Langley Group's logo on the side.

The imposing Langley Family's third son, wearing a company-branded promotional gift to a hot spring?

"Have you seen enough?" Adrian calmly picked up the towel and wrapped it around his swim trunks again, "Does your old acquaintance have a better physique than mine?"

With no chance to see the birthmark, Juliana's emotions were turbulent, unable to speak.

Adrian moved to the table, sat down unhurriedly, and said plainly, "Miss Jacobs, I sympathize with you for meeting the wrong person in four years of marriage, which is why I agreed to meet."

Juliana walked over and sat opposite him.

"I had a friend, as penny-pinching as you. Back when his family was struggling, he took up delivery jobs and would bring home freebies like aprons and arm sleeves. I haven't seen him in many years, and I wonder if he's still like that."

Adrian paused while handling the documents.

After a few seconds, he chuckled.

"I was in a hurry today and didn't have time to buy swim trunks, so I grabbed a pair from the company."

But Juliana seemed not to hear his explanation, continuing, "My grandfather developed severe heart disease from his passing, and was critical several times, almost not making it. Though a medicine now maintains his heart's function, the loss of his grandson will always be a hurdle he can't overcome in this life."

Juliana closely watched Adrian's face, seeking any slight change in expression to expose his identity.

However, after a two-second pause, Adrian replied, "Was your acquaintance also in law?"

Juliana shook her head.

Adrian took out a document.

"I've checked; no law firm in Kenton is willing to take your divorce case. My license is under the Langley Group's law firm, and I'm not afraid of him. If it would assuage your suspicions about my identity, I'm willing to be your lawyer and even fight for more compensation."

He opened the document, presenting a drafted divorce agreement.

"Take a look; it's a framework and can be amended according to your wishes."

Juliana was about to speak when the doorbell rang.

Both of them paused.

Adrian, unfazed, got up to open the door.

Outside, Evan Grant was about to press the bell for a second time. When their eyes met, the air suddenly froze.

Chapter 65: You Seduce Men Everywhere—Isn't This All You're Fit to Wear?

Juliana reflexively jumped up from her chair.

Evan's icy gaze relaxed slightly after confirming she was properly dressed.

But when his eyes returned to Adrian Langley, the loose towel and exposed torso, every inch of his casual posture seemed to challenge him.

Evan's jawline tightened again.

"Vice President Langley, what's your intention in meeting my wife here?"

He spoke while stepping inside from the door.

Adrian, having dealt with him before, remained utterly calm.

"This is a hot spring hotel; discussing business while soaking in the hot springs—is there a problem with that?"

Evan scoffed lightly, "Strange, I wasn't aware my wife had business dealings with you."

He moved towards the table with the documents.

Juliana immediately blocked his way.

"Whom I see and what I do is none of your business, President Grant. Leave!"

Evan's eyes twinkled with amusement, but beneath lay a frosty chill as he grabbed her elbow, pulling her close.

"We haven't divorced yet, legally, you're still my Mrs. Grant. And I hate when what's mine gets touched by someone else."

"Don't worry, President Grant, even if I'm not Mrs. Grant, I'll keep myself pure, after all..."

Juliana deliberately stretched her words.

"...not everyone has the talent to dress up an affair with their stepsister as 'family love'."

Adrian chuckled at her words.

Evan's face darkened as he flung Juliana away.

"Watch out!"

Adrian lunged forward, catching Juliana before she hit the ground.

Evan's gaze landed on the divorce papers on the table, instantly turning cold and menacing.

"The Langley Family's company is about to go under. Does Vice President Langley need to rely on private gigs to make ends meet?"

With Adrian's help, Juliana steadied herself and quickly stepped away from him, picking up the conversation.

"I downloaded this agreement online and asked him to take a look. Vice President Langley is more professional in legal matters than I am. I sought him out to save consultation fees. If President Grant is dissatisfied, he should direct it at me, no need to involve the innocent."

"Juliana," Evan's smile lacked warmth, "he's the first man you've defended like this."

Juliana calmly shifted her gaze aside, "The reasons are none of your concern."

Evan's gaze lingered on her face for two seconds.

"Then I'll take this agreement with me to 'consider' it further, and see how capable the third young master of the Langley Family is to do what his brother wouldn't dare dream of. Now, Mrs. Grant, come with me."

He finished speaking, wrapped an arm around Juliana's waist, and attempted to take her away.

Adrian stepped forward to stop him, "President Grant, she is an independent individual, not your property. Whether she goes or stays, please respect her wishes."

"Oh, then ask my wife if she'd like to come with me?"

Juliana truly did not want Evan to target Adrian.

Whether or not he was Aidan Linton, she didn't want him getting involved in her mess.

So she softly said, "Vice President Langley, thank you for your trouble with my matters. Please pass on my thanks to your brother for introducing you to me..."

Upon hearing this, Evan narrowed his eyes.

"...his kindness touched me deeply, and I will not forget what he has done for me."

Evan's focus shifted to Jared Langley, thus sparing Adrian.

Adrian was deeply shocked, nodding mechanically.

Evan wrapped his arm around Juliana and walked to the door, then turned back to say, "Vice President Langley, you've just returned to the country, you might not know that 'The Starlight Pools' is the main attraction here at The Springs Resort. Tonight at eight, my wife and I will host here, and we invite you and President Langley; please do us the honor."

With that said, he didn't wait for Adrian to react, and forcefully pinched Juliana's waist, taking her away.

The room he arranged was in another area.

Juliana had a psychological shadow from being confined by him.

"Evan, if you lock me up again, I'll ruin your reputation."

Ignoring her struggle, Evan opened the door and pushed her inside without expression.

The force made Juliana stumble, her knee hitting the floor hard.

Looking up, her eyes met Stella Windsor's toes painted with bright red nail polish.

Stella cross-legged, wearing a skimpy swimsuit, sat on the sofa, looking down at her.

"Sister-in-law, be careful. If you hurt yourself, my brother will feel distressed."

"She no longer has that privilege."

Evan walked to the sofa and sat down.

Stella cuddled up to his arm like a clingy cat, provocatively smiling at Juliana.

Juliana stood up by herself, looked at the two coldly, with a mocking smile on her lips.

"So, President Grant, are you inviting me to a free viewing of your duo's 'paid program'?"

Evan's gaze deepened, while Stella went to the wine rack to select a bottle of red wine.

"Brother, this is fruit-flavored, low in alcohol, suitable for drinking in the hot spring."

She poured two glasses, handing one to Evan and offered another to Juliana.

Juliana turned her head to avoid it, eyes filled with disdain.

"Oh my, sister-in-law, do you despise me that much?"

Stella feigned grievance, but the next second, she pinched Juliana's chin forcefully.

"But I insist you drink it."

Juliana's eyes sharpened, she countered by gripping Stella's wrist and forcefully pushing it away.

Stella subtly twisted her wrist, spilling the entire glass of red wine onto Juliana's clothes, contrasting starkly.

Stella showed no regret, instead, mocked, "Sister-in-law, your clothes are dirty; better change them."

On the sofa lay a garment made of strips of cloth.

Even in a bedroom, wearing it would be considered indecent.

Juliana knew this was their premeditated method to humiliate her.

"Sister-in-law, go change into it."

Stella took those strips and handed them to Juliana.

Juliana grabbed them and tossed them at her face.

"This is your costume for receiving guests; don't disgust me with it."

Evan couldn't help but laugh.

Embarrassment flickered across Stella's face, "You seduce men all around, aren't you only fit to wear this?"

Breathing heavily, Juliana raised her hand and slapped her across the face.

"Show you a bit of respect, and you think you're worth something?"

Stella was slapped into Evan's arms. Just as she was about to look up and cry, Evan squeezed her throat first.

"I told you to teach her a lesson, not to dirty her clothes. No matter how low she goes, she's still my wife. Making her dress like that, do you intend to disgrace me?"

Since Juliana moved out of Platinum Bay, Evan had frequent mood swings.

Stella struggled to breathe, her eyes filled with fear.

"Brother...I was wrong..."

Evan coldly released her.

"Take your stuff and go wear it outside."

Stella coughed violently; hearing this, she fearfully clung to his feet.

"No, brother! Please don't do this..."

Juliana frowned at the scene, overwhelmed by a complex emotion.

Does loving someone mean lowering yourself to the point of losing yourself?

Lost in thought, she didn't notice Evan approaching.

Chapter 66: His Warning, Bare and Cold

The man suddenly pulled her into his arms forcefully, pointing to Stella Windsor and said, "Do you see? This is the difference between love and not loving. As long as I like her, she can do whatever she wants, but if I don't, she is nothing."

"Women are not objects to be manipulated at will. Truly caring for someone means respecting her independence and dignity. Evan Grant, the only person you've ever loved is yourself."

Juliana Jacobs tried to push him away as she spoke, but Evan Grant's arm was tightly wrapped around her, and she couldn't push him away; instead, he grabbed the back of her head.

Juliana was forced to tilt her head back, their noses touching.

"I want you to atone. You can run, you can hide, but legally you are still my wife, so don't think about seducing other men as a backup, or I won't mind letting the world know what happens to a woman who betrays me."

Juliana's nails dug into the muscles of his arm.

"I did nothing wrong, what sin do I atone for? Put away your perverse need for control; my social life, my freedom, you have no right to interfere!"

Evan Grant laughed, his eyes glinting with cold light.

"Do you want me to send your grandfather the images of you with Adrian Langley in the hot spring suite, to let him see your other side?"

Juliana became stunned.

If her grandfather saw Adrian Langley's appearance, he might question whether Aidan Linton was truly dead and rekindle hope.

But if Adrian Langley was indeed not Aidan Linton, it would undoubtedly strike a blow to the old man again.

At that point, even medication costing 1.2 million per injection wouldn't save him.

Evan Grant watched as her shoulders gradually slumped, his smile deepening.

"Tonight, hosting the Langley brothers, be a good girl, hmm?"

"You're despicable!"

Juliana raised her hand to slap him, but Evan Grant seized her wrist.

Meanwhile, Stella was like an unnecessary ornament, kneeling on the ground unnoticed for a long time.

She lowered her eyes to conceal the darkness within, knowing that tonight someone would have to pay the price...

In the evening, at the private venue at the summit of 'The Starlight Pools'.

Soaking in the hot springs at this location, one could enjoy the fireworks of half the city.

Jared Langley arrived as promised.

The three men leaned in three different directions.

Under the swirling white mist, undercurrents surged.

Seeing no one speaking, Evan Grant smiled lightly and said, "At 'The Starlight Pools', we appreciate the night view and savor fine wine. Since the Langley brothers are courteous enough to join us, my fine things naturally should not be hidden."

Being familiar with the Golden Ripple Springs, Jared Langley was a regular guest, and he had visited "The Starlight Pools" countless times.

For people like them, a seven-figure wine was only a daily pastime, so whatever Evan Grant referred to as "fine wine" surely hinted at something else.

"President Grant, you're too kind," Jared said flatly.

Evan Grant spoke with deep meaning, "President Langley will undoubtedly like it very much."

A bad feeling surged within Jared Langley.

At this moment, Evan Grant snapped his fingers, and Juliana Jacobs stepped out in a white silk dress, holding a bottle of red wine.

Evan Grant nodded, and Juliana walked over to Jared Langley, intending to pour him some wine.

Turning his wife into a server shocked Jared Langley greatly.

"Mrs. Grant, there's no need."

He took away the wine glass.

"I don't need any either."

Knowing Evan Grant was humiliating her, Adrian Langley turned his head away, unwilling to witness this scene.

Since they all refused, Juliana could only kneel at the edge of the pool, waiting for Evan Grant to speak.

However, he deliberately held back.

Juliana's knees hurt from the sharp pain, but she remained silent.

Adrian began to lose patience and was about to speak, but Juliana intercepted him, questioning Evan Grant, "What more do you want from me?"

Adrian's almost explosive restraint was abruptly calmed by Juliana's action of stepping in front of him once more.

The intense emotions were forcibly suppressed, leaving only fists clenched tightly in the water.

"Did I tell you to speak?"

Evan Grant looked at Juliana with half-closed eyes and smiled.

Juliana bit her teeth silently.

Jared knew that ending the invitation earlier was the best strategy.

So he said, "Thank you, President Grant and Mrs. Grant, for your generous hospitality. It's getting late..."

"Is President Langley eager to leave? Are you worried about something?" Evan Grant interrupted.

Jared Langley let out a cold laugh, "President Grant, you must be joking."

Evan Grant's eyes glimmered with dark brilliance.

"The wine poured by my wife is not for everyone to drink. If President Langley misses this opportunity, it won't come again."

Jared Langley raised an eyebrow, smiling without warmth, "Mrs. Grant is a beauty like jade; indeed, President Grant is fortunate. How could we dare to overstep?"

Evan Grant nodded contentedly, "I thought President Langley was so busy with Blackstar Technologies' business that you'd forgotten the boundaries. I originally planned to talk to your father about the Langley family's conduct, but with what you said today, I'm reassured."

His warning was stark and cold.

A cold frost gathered on Jared Langley's face.

"That's enough, Evan Grant!"

Juliana picked up the red wine in her hand, flipped her wrist, and poured the entire bottle into the hot spring pool.

"I straightforwardly communicate with President Langley, what right do you have to warn them? I've given you enough compromise. Push any further... let's see who really can't afford to lose!"

She attempted to stand up, but having knelt too long on the pebbles, her knees hurt too much to stand.

She fell back, her hands massaging her knees repeatedly, hoping the stabbing pain would fade quickly.

Evan Grant's face was icy, about to speak when Ethan Carter sprinted over.

He squatted by the pool, whispering in Evan Grant's ear, "President Grant, your image has suffered damage causing the company to lose two Grade A strategic investment projects. Some shareholders are beginning to lobby the board to file a motion of no confidence against you."

Evan Grant narrowed his eyes, standing up and exiting the hot spring pool.

Ethan Carter quickly brought a robe to drape over him.

Evan Grant, clad in the robe, turned to look at Juliana.

He intended to take her with him, but Juliana deliberately avoided his gaze.

Knowing her stubborn nature, having suffered such humiliation, she certainly wouldn't come with him.

Thus, his gaze lingered on her for a moment, leaving behind weight-laden words, "The boundary is here, may you all cherish your fortune."

He lifted his foot and left.

The car Ethan Carter drove was parked right by the roadside.

Evan Grant decisively got in the car and left.

By this time, Jared Langley and Adrian Langley had also donned their robes.

Juliana slowly got up, moving her feet.

Jared Langley, with cold eyes, looked at Adrian Langley, "If you dare to stir up trouble, you should learn to clean up after yourself, and not always rely on others to cover for you."

As soon as he finished speaking, a dark figure leaped from the bushes by the hot spring pool, lunging straight at Juliana.

But Jared Langley happened to be between the two of them.

The dark figure couldn't stop in time and slammed hard into his side waist.

Jared, caught off guard, was thrown by the immense force.

The direction he was flung toward was exactly toward Juliana's location.

And behind Juliana was a steep slope, with the situation below unknown.

In that split second, she realized if she dodged, Jared Langley might be flung over the slope and fall off a cliff.

So, as she reached out to catch Jared, both of them, driven by inertia, broke through the railing and slid down the slope together.

"Someone, help!"

Adrian Langley grabbed a chair beside him and, while the shadowy figure was still caught off guard, smashed it towards the figure with all his might.

Evan Grant had already gotten into the car, and just as Ethan Carter was closing the door, he heard a slight disturbance, but when he looked back, the hot spring pool was obscured by a plant wall, making it impossible to see the situation.

So he asked, "President Grant, there seems to be some noise, do you want to go down to take a look?"

Chapter 67: My Sincerity Is More Tempting Than Evan's Chains

Evan Grant was about to speak when Ethan Carter's phone rang.

"Assistant Carter, Director Lowe has already met with Director Woodward. Have you informed President Grant?"

Ethan glanced at Evan and received a signal from his eyes.

"Keep an eye on them; we'll arrive in forty minutes."

After saying this, Ethan put down the phone and started the car.

"Juliana!"

Adrian Langley's shout did not bring back Evan Grant, who had left first.

Additionally, since Evan had dismissed the waitstaff, there was no one around to help now.

Adrian took out his phone instinctively finding his father's number, but hesitated before dialing...

Jared Langley and Juliana Jacobs rolled down the slope together, with gravel and broken branches continually striking their bodies during the fall.

Thus, after falling for several minutes, neither of them reacted to Adrian's shouting.

Luckily, there was an abandoned path at the bottom of the slope, and two rows of trees lined the side close to the cliff, stopping them in their descent.

When Juliana awoke, she found herself lying on Jared's chest and quickly moved away from him.

But as soon as she moved, she felt pain all over her body.

Jared wasn't much better off.

At this moment, his bathrobe was open, with countless bleeding scratches from branches and rocks on his body.

As soon as Juliana moved away, he came to his senses.

There was no lighting, but fortunately, the moonlight was good tonight.

"How are you?" Juliana asked.

Jared sat up and moved his neck a little, "Not dead."

"I'm sorry," Juliana said.

Jared was taken aback.

Juliana explained, "The person might have been coming after me."

"Do you have many enemies?" Jared asked.

The light in Juliana's eyes dimmed significantly, "The position of Mrs. Grant always has a knife at the throat. He married me just to use my life in exchange for someone else's safety."

That is why she really wanted to divorce Evan Grant.

Jared sneered, mocking, "You are able to incite Evan Grant to turn the gun on me, yet you can't escape his grasp. You're better at protecting my third brother than you are at protecting yourself."

"Does President Langley wish for your brother to be the one playing the lead role in the opposition against Evan Grant?"

Jared suddenly fell silent.

Juliana bit her lip, grasped a tree trunk, and slowly stood up.

"I don't have any special skills, except for this unwavering will to live."

A gust of wind blew, making her skirt, tattered by rocks and branches, flutter wildly. Her silhouette was so delicate and solitary.

Something stirred for a moment in Jared's heart.

In his youth, during family feuds, his mother was powerless to protect him, and he had to face one "manmade accident" after another with immense strength.

Every time he got hurt, he could only lick his wounds alone and then build even stronger walls around his heart.

He slowly stood up and wrapped his bathrobe tightly again.

"This path has probably been closed for a long time. Let's hope the hotel knows about this place and sends someone to find us. Now, let's choose a direction and meet the rescuers."

"Won't your brother send someone to rescue you?" Juliana asked.

Jared reacted as if he'd heard a joke, "That loser?"

"Miss Jacobs," he changed to a teasing tone, "don't say I didn't warn you. Although he has a lawyer's license, he's never taken a case. If you want him to represent you in a divorce case, be careful you don't end up losing yourself in the process."

Juliana understood the meaning behind his words, "So President Langley hasn't given up betting on me yet?"

Jared took a deep breath, suppressing the pain on his body.

"My sincerity is more enticing than Evan Grant's chains, isn't it?"

But Juliana turned away.

"I will melt his chains into molten iron myself."

Seeing her insist on not cooperating with him, Jared chose a direction and walked away alone.

Juliana didn't pretend to be strong and followed closely behind.

Neither of them wore shoes; their bare feet struggled on the path littered with branches and rocks.

After walking seven or eight meters, two people ran towards them.

Jared instinctively blocked Juliana.

The other two stopped when they saw them.

These two people were not rescuers.

"Are you sure you won't cooperate?" Jared asked.

Juliana understood that he meant if she shook her head, he wouldn't interfere today.

After thinking for two seconds, she bit her lip and turned to run.

She hadn't gone far when she heard two cries behind her.

When she turned back, she saw the two chasers had already fallen, and Jared was catching his breath.

"You..."

Juliana was about to speak when lights appeared ahead on the path.

A group of well-trained people were running toward them.

The person running up front was Jared's secretary.

"President Langley, the doctor is up there, we'll escort you up now."

Jared regulated his breathing, "Miss Jacobs owes me a favor, take her first."

The secretary didn't ask questions and immediately arranged for Juliana to be carried up on a stretcher.

Once Juliana's figure disappeared, Jared's face darkened.

The secretary quickly approached and whispered, "It was the third young master who called me; I only learned something happened to you here. The people above have been subdued without alerting anyone."

A few scratches accentuated Jared's cold and stern expression.

"Ask if it was him. If so, I want him to account for it!"

The secretary nodded, "Understood."

...

Jared's men transported Juliana to Hospital 547 and left.

Summer Shaw hurried over, pulling the doctor and asking questions. Upon learning that Juliana only suffered superficial and fall injuries and could be discharged after being observed for one night, she returned to the ward relieved.

"You just went to meet a man. How did you end up like this?"

Summer, heart aching, said.

"It was Evan Grant," Juliana replied.

Summer frowned, "Did he hit you?"

Juliana shook her head, "There was some accident... Luckily Jared was there, otherwise..."

Summer immediately flared up with anger, "Evan Grant was there? Watching you get into trouble, was he dead?"

Juliana's nose tingled, "He... just happened to leave again."

"Every time! Every single time you're in danger, he's never there! This scumbag..."

Summer, eyes red with anger, seemed ready to bite someone.

"Just wait, when he knows the truth one day, he'll definitely regret it!"

But to Juliana, it no longer mattered whether he knew the truth or not since this marriage would inevitably come to an end.

Seeing the light fade from Juliana's eyes, Summer held her hand and said, "Juliana, find a way to locate your family. Aetherflame might not last much longer. You need someone to protect you."

Juliana furrowed her brows, "What's happened?"

"The bank said they won't give us loans anymore. Tax authorities came today, environmental inspectors are coming tomorrow, and the day after that..."

Summer paused.

"Although we're operating legally and compliantly, with these daily inspections, normal work can't be done. The bank's withdrawal of loans right now cuts our company's cash flow directly, not to mention clients backing out... Juliana, I'm not afraid of losing Aetherflame, but I'm afraid you'll lose your bargaining chip for a counterattack. Without family support, it's too hard alone."

Thus, Evan Grant doesn't just humiliate her in terms of humanity; he also wants to sever all her possible support, ensuring she can't escape his control, subject to his manipulation.

Juliana suppressed the emotions surging within, "Aetherflame won't go bankrupt, and I won't be subjected to him for too long..."

She looked out the window, and in her eyes lurked a whirlpool capable of tearing apart a giant ship.

"... Time to prepare a second grand gift."

"What kind of grand gift?" Summer's eyes lit up.

Chapter 68: Mr. Langley, Are You Looking for Your Missing Niece?

But Juliana did not answer.

She and Summer Shaw planned the arrangements for the upcoming days.

An upcoming new energy forum was to be held in Arlan City, and Summer Shaw had already scheduled a meeting with an important prospective client.

The two decided to head to Arlan City first, leaving the matter of the bank loan drawdown for after their return.

Juliana recuperated for three days until the bruises on her face were no longer noticeable, then she and Summer Shaw drove to Arlan City.

Little did they know that upon arrival, they received a call from the client's secretary, changing the meeting time to the evening.

This gave them half a day of free time.

Juliana turned the steering wheel and drove to another place.

Summer Shaw, after hanging up the phone, curiously asked, "Where are we going?"

As Juliana waited at the traffic light, she set the GPS and said, "Didn't you hope I would find my family? Back then, after I was rescued from the channel, I was sent to an orphanage in Arlan City."

With some unbearable memories surfacing in her mind, her gaze wavered for a moment.

"Though I wasn't there for long, I might as well ask, there might be some clues."

...

Soon enough, the car arrived at the "Arlan Children's Home."

However, there seemed to be some important reception work happening today. The guard saw their car, tightened his face, and gestured repeatedly for them to turn back.

Juliana stopped the car.

"I'm looking for... for Mom Daisy Wallace, can... can we go in?"

Summer Shaw watched her curiously, not saying a word.

The guard impatiently said, "There's an event today, entertaining important guests, Director Wallace is unavailable."

Seeing Juliana's face didn't look right, Summer Shaw took a pack of cigarettes from her bag and handed it to the guard.

"Uncle, we are children who came out of here. We're back to inquire about something but only have half a day. Could you cut us some slack?"

The guard stuffed the cigarettes into his pocket, "I can't let your car inside, park outside and walk in. But remember, don't disturb the big shots."

Summer Shaw: "Thank you, Uncle."

Juliana turned the car around and parked it on an open space not far from the Arlan Children's Home.

Her fingers unconsciously tightened and loosened,

"Summer, could you please help me ask? I'm afraid I won't be able to speak calmly when the time comes."

From the moment they talked to the guard, Summer Shaw already noticed something was off about her.

Even though she had never spoken about her experiences, Summer Shaw guessed it must be related to psychological shadows from her youth.

So Summer Shaw nodded, "Okay, tell me what you need to know, and I'll go ask."

Arlan Children's Home was very lively today.

Over a hundred children were performing under the scorching sun on the playground.

Only the central position was left vacant. Summer Shaw didn't see the so-called big shot and continued to walk inside.

"Who are you looking for?"

A teacher-like person stopped her at the office building.

Summer Shaw's eyes deepened slightly, "Hello, I'm a child who came out of here, I'm looking for Director Wallace to understand some details about when I was sent here, to find my family."

"Not today, Director Wallace is receiving important guests, come another day," the teacher coldly said.

"It's just a coincidence, I don't have time another day. Just delay the director for ten minutes, if she refuses..."

Summer Shaw looked up toward the building upstairs with arms akimbo.

"Then I'll shout for her right here and ask here."

"No!" The teacher was worried she would disturb the important guests, "Wait in the director's office, I'll let her know."

"Thank you."

Summer Shaw turned around with a smile and muttered "worthless."

Document room.

The man leaned against the file rack, his long fingers brushed across the spine of the dossier, a coldly gleaming steel watch peeking from his cuff.

The deliberately controlled breathing suggested he was attempting to capture some subtle truths in the words.

"Mr. Langley, all documents of our Children's Home, including incomplete parts destroyed by fire, are here. Are you looking for your lost... niece?" Director Wallace asked.

Upon hearing this, the man's brows furrowed momentarily.

The secretary stepped forward and quietly said to the director, "Mr. Langley doesn't like to be interrupted when reviewing documents."

Director Wallace quickly nodded, slightly embarrassed.

At this moment, a teacher came to her side and whispered a few words to her.

Director Wallace's expression changed, she requested permission from the stern-faced secretary, "I have something to handle, can I step out for a few minutes?"

The secretary didn't want her there anyway and said, "Please go ahead."

The director returned to the office, looked Summer Shaw up and down, noting her age similar to the one mentioned in the file, then cautiously asked, "You came from our Children's Home? What's your name?"

Summer Shaw smiled, "My adoptive parents changed my name, I don't remember what I was called back then. In recent years, have any parents come here looking for their children? Especially children lost 13 years ago."

The one looking was for a child sent here 14 years ago.

A year off, definitely not the same.

The director's expression suddenly became perfunctory.

"No one is looking for you, please leave."

The director was anxious to return to the archives to accompany the guest.

Summer Shaw slapped the table angrily, "What do you mean 'no one is looking for you'? You refused me outright without even checking. At least tell me what I was like when I was brought here?"

The director impatiently said, "Ten years ago, there was a fire here, and many children's records were lost. We receive many children every year, without the files, I can't remember. Today, technology is advanced, go get a DNA test, maybe your parents will find you through DNA."

If parents could be found through DNA, why come here?

"If you can't even keep children's records properly, you're fit to be a director?" Her sharp gaze lingered on the director's face, "Try being a superintendent, of a restroom."

Having said that, she turned and walked out of the office.

Document room.

The secretary noticed the frost forming on the man's brows, and suggested, "Residents near the channel back then said, madam might have been sent here last. But if she was saved by the hospital and wasn't sent here, maybe you should go check the hospital that originally treated her."

The man said nothing, turning the last page of the file and then turning to leave.

He coincidentally encountered Director Wallace, who was both criticizing the teacher and approaching this way.

"Next time someone inquires, just say the archives from 14 years ago are gone, let them do a DNA... Mr. Langley, are you leaving?"

"Who came by just now?" The man asked sharply.

The director immediately put on a fawning smile, "It was a girl, but she was sent here 13 years ago, she is..."

The man didn't wait for the director to finish and swiftly chased after her.

Chapter 69: Unable to Resist Compromise

But by the time he reached the door, the car had already sped away.

Director Wallace took the initiative to say, "Mr. Langley, she came to my office. I have surveillance there."

The man showed no expression, but gave his secretary a look.

The secretary stepped forward and said, "Director Wallace, Mr. Langley's visit is purely personal. It is inappropriate to host such a grand reception. Making the children dance in the sun on a hot day—why don't you go dance yourself?"

Director: "..."

"Mr. Langley will donate 300,000 in his own name for the children, and this money must be entirely used for the children."

Director quickly nodded, "Don't worry, Mr. Langley, I will handle it promptly."

The man showed no expression, told the secretary, "Go check the surveillance here," and then looked at the director.

"If this happens again, you won't be the director anymore. You'll be cleaning toilets."

Director: "....."

Juliana wasn't particularly disappointed at not getting useful information.

"The teachers at this orphanage never really cared about the children. It's normal not to gain anything."

Otherwise, she wouldn't have been handed over to a pervert back then.

"Our main task in Arlan City is to meet President Holt. Let's first find a hotel to rest, then go see him."

...

By evening, President Holt had another unavoidable engagement—dining with guests at a garden restaurant.

"Is he messing with us on purpose?" Summer grumbled.

Yet, Juliana wasn't discouraged and asked for the secretary's address, then took Summer along.

They waited at the restaurant's entrance, knowing they could meet him after the engagement.

President Holt's private room faced the street, with the shadows of three people cast against the bright windows.

"Juliana..." Summer tugged at her sleeve, "You haven't even left yet, and that little bitch is haunting your husband. Does she have no shame?"

Juliana followed her gaze. Evan Grant and Stella Windsor were seated in the private room, chatting and laughing with a middle-aged man.

Evan Grant and the middle-aged man seemed neither close nor distant, while Stella, sitting between the two men, occasionally poured wine, served dishes, and said things to liven up the atmosphere, her actions filled with Evan's indulgence.

Juliana withdrew her gaze, her clear eyes calm and steady.

"She even followed to The Springs Resort."

Summer was surprised. "Is she like a sticky plaster?"

Juliana pulled up the Titan Heavy Industries webpage on her phone for Summer to see.

"Isn't the man beside them the President Holt we are supposed to meet?"

Summer was even more surprised.

"This... Cortexa's project involves heavy trucks, and Titan Heavy Industries specializes in them too. Aren't they competitors? How can they be sitting together?"

"In business, there are no eternal enemies or friends. Even competitors can drink together as long as there's no immediate conflict of interest. That is their social code."

Summer looked at the sky filled with dark clouds.

"It's going to rain. Do you have an umbrella in the car?" Summer asked.

Juliana shook her head. She hadn't found time to prepare such things after buying the car.

"This meal won't end anytime soon. I'll go buy an umbrella so that we're prepared to wait them out."

Summer left for the nearby mall after speaking.

This private room was deliberately chosen by Stella, clearly wanting Juliana to see she was becoming a companion to her husband.

"It's about to rain. How about we wait for it to stop before leaving?" Stella suggested.

President Holt's gaze shifted to the woman standing outside the window, presumably waiting for him.

He mumbled to himself, "Young people today are quite persistent."

Stella smiled without responding and ordered two more dishes on her phone.

The summer weather changed quickly, and within a few minutes, heavy rain poured down.

With Summer not back yet with the umbrella, Juliana had to stand under the restaurant eaves.

But the rain was too heavy, and the eaves too narrow to shield her properly. By the time Summer returned with the umbrella, Juliana was already soaked.

President Holt looked at Evan Grant. "What did the young lady from Aetherflame do to wrong you, making things difficult for them like this?"

Evan Grant's eyes fell on Juliana's drenched yet stubborn little face, his gaze dark and deep.

President Holt glanced at Juliana, then at Stella intentionally delaying their meal, thinking: Is this a lover's spat, with Evan Grant backing his wife?

He had never seen Mrs. Grant before, and Evan Grant hadn't introduced the woman by his side tonight. But seeing her so bold, and Evan so indulgent, it was likely she was Mrs. Grant.

Given that, President Holt didn't ask further.

The meal lasted over two hours.

The rain outside finally stopped.

Juliana's clothes had gone from thoroughly wet to almost dry by now.

"That woman did it on purpose! Let's go, I'm not doing this business anymore."

Summer Shaw couldn't bear this grievance and pulled Juliana Jacobs to leave.

Juliana held her hand, "Do you think just because President Holt is meeting us tonight, the deal is definitely going to go through?"

Summer was puzzled.

Juliana said, "The more important the collaboration, the more it requires repeated communication and negotiation to reach an agreement. Think about our current situation, let's endure it."

Could these words have come from a housewife disconnected from society for four years?

Summer looked at her, as if meeting her for the first time.

The dinner finally ended, and President Holt, Evan Grant, and Stella Windsor walked out of the private room.

As they walked to the lobby, Stella suddenly said, "Their pastries are pretty good, I'd like to take a box to go for a late night snack."

Evan remained silent, while President Holt laughed, "Sure, as long as Mrs. Grant likes it."

Hearing this, Stella didn't deny it; instead, she blushed.

Evan's eyes were as dark as ink.

The wind after the rain was chilly, making Juliana's hands and feet cold.

"Shall we go back?" Summer asked, seeing her pale face.

Juliana shook her head, unwilling to give up when there was just a little time left.

Finally, Stella got her hot pastries, and President Holt's group left the restaurant.

Titan Heavy Industries' driver had already brought the car around.

Seeing that President Holt was about to get in the car, Juliana walked over quickly, "President Holt!"

Stanley Holt paused.

Should he continue to ignore her?

She had already called out, it would be rude not to respond.

He glanced at Juliana, feigning ignorance, and asked, "And you are...?"

Juliana initially intended to formally state her company and position, but a thought crossed her mind.

"I'm Evan Grant's wife."

As soon as the words were spoken, Stanley Holt's face showed an undisguised astonishment.

"And also the technical director of Aetherflame Dynamics. I came specifically to visit you this time, hoping for a chance to talk."

"So it's Mrs. Grant, sorry for the lack of hospitality tonight, let's arrange a meeting another day."

After speaking, Stanley Holt nodded coldly to Evan and got into the car, without giving Stella even a glance.

Stella pouted, her fingernails piercing through the pastry box.

After seeing off President Holt, Juliana pulled Summer away.

Evan called after her, "Weren't you insisting that we have nothing to do with each other? Why use the identity of 'Mrs. Grant' to negotiate with President Holt?"

There was amusement in his voice.

Juliana retorted coldly, "President Grant, your means are despicable, I couldn't resist compromising, you should be pleased."

After saying this, she gave him a cold look and drove off with Summer.

Ethan Carter pulled the car up in front of Evan.

But Evan didn't get in, instead giving a detached order, "Take her to the train station."

Stella suddenly panicked, "Brother, I want to stay with you a little longer."

"Know your place!"

Evan's voice grew colder.

"Your unauthorized decision to follow me to Arlan City displeases me greatly. This is the last time. If you act on your own again, I wouldn't mind sending you overseas permanently like Isaac."

Stella wanted to act coy, but upon seeing Evan's warning gaze, she instinctively closed her mouth.

He didn't love her, so she had no leverage to act willfully in front of him, while Juliana did.

In the end, with tears streaming, she got into the car.

Seeing Evan get into a cab from the rearview mirror, she asked, "Is brother going to find Juliana?"

Ethan looked straight ahead, "They're still married, staying together isn't unusual, right?"

Stella felt a suffocating frustration in her chest.

Juliana came back to the hotel and soon developed a high fever.

The antipyretics provided by the hotel were harmful to the body, so Summer suggested she try physical cooling first while she went out to get medicine.

Soon after Summer had left, Juliana's phone rang.

In a daze, she picked it up, hearing Adrian Langley's voice, "I've revised the divorce agreement according to your requests from that day. Is there a time for us to discuss it?"

Juliana pulled herself together and replied, "Not now, I'm on a business trip in Arlan City."

Adrian chuckled, "I'm in the café on the second floor of your hotel, you won't come?"

Chapter 70: Mrs. Grant, You Can Only Drink Mine

Juliana Jacobs took a warm shower, changed her clothes, and barely managed to get herself downstairs.

In a corner of the coffee shop, Adrian Langley waved at her.

Juliana walked over.

"What would you like to drink?" Adrian asked.

After thinking for a moment, he added, "No coffee."

Juliana had a bitter taste in her mouth and had only consumed half a bowl of porridge upon returning to her room, so she ordered an orange juice and a cheesecake.

Adrian's gaze lingered on her as she ate her cake for two seconds before returning to his documents.

"This agreement not only requires the division of your joint marital assets but also includes splitting all the profits Evan Grant has earned from Cortexa Group over the past four years. I believe this is what you deserve."

Juliana swallowed the tasteless cake in silence.

Adrian handed her a tissue, smiling, "You're a grown woman now, how did you get cake all over your face?"

Juliana suddenly looked up at him.

She always ended up with cream around her mouth unknowingly when eating cake, and even on her face when she accidentally flicked her finger.

Aidan Linton used to say the exact same thing to her countless times, but every time he did, he would gently wipe it clean for her with a tissue.

Faced with Juliana's scrutinizing gaze, Adrian paused, then set the tissue aside and said, "Finish eating first, and then we'll talk."

Juliana wasn't hungry in the first place and was only eating the cake to supplement her energy so her fever would subside more quickly.

After taking a sip of the sour orange juice, her mouth finally had some taste.

She left the remaining cake.

"Vice President Langley," she said coldly, "even if no lawyer takes my case, I am determined to divorce Evan Grant. My affairs are not for you to worry about."

Adrian frowned, "He's dead set on dragging this out with the marriage. Without going through legal channels, can you really get a divorce?"

Juliana pressed her lips together, "You're a Langley. Think carefully if you want to wade into this mess with me."

Her words left Adrian in contemplation.

Outside the coffee shop, Evan Grant stood at the floor-to-ceiling window, watching the man and woman sitting inside with a cold gaze.

When he saw Adrian stand up dejectedly, the cold medicine box in his hand was already crushed out of shape.

"Sir, do you need any help?" a waiter at the coffee shop entrance asked.

With a stern face, Evan threw the medicine into the nearby trash can and turned to walk out of the hotel.

Adrian's face was full of bitterness and reluctance.

"Without help, you can't even budge Evan Grant's little finger. Are you just going to let him chew you up until there's nothing left of you?"

Juliana leaned back in her chair, responding softly to his words.

"No need to worry, Vice President Langley. I have to stay alive so my grandfather has someone to rely on. Since you're not involved with us, there's no need to work up such concern. Be the Langley family's third son, as if you've never met me. It's better for both of us."

Adrian several times opened his mouth to speak, but his words were suppressed each time by hesitation.

Watching him choose to leave in despair, Juliana bit her lip tightly and sighed in disappointment.

In this world, there are no two people who look and speak exactly alike. Why won't he admit he is Aidan?

Has he abandoned even his mother and grandfather?

Juliana stood up, momentarily dizzy.

Fortunately, Summer Shaw caught her in time.

"I told you to rest in your room. Why are you running around?"

As she spoke, she noticed the half cup of unfinished coffee on the table and frowned.

"Did Evan Grant come looking for you?"

Juliana smiled faintly, "I refuse to be used by him, so do you think he still cares about whether I live or die?"

Summer fell silent.

After taking her medicine, Juliana didn't have a fever the next morning, so she prepared to visit Titan Heavy Industries again, determined to see President Holt.

"Can your body handle it?" Summer asked.

Juliana gazed at the bright sun outside the window, "I'll be fine."

Just as they were about to leave, Summer received a call from Stanley Holt's secretary, saying that President Holt had gone to the golf course and might have a word with them there.

Just a few words!

But Juliana and Summer weren't discouraged. They quickly bought some appropriate attire and headed to the golf course.

This time, no one stopped them.

After they mentioned Stanley Holt's name, the caddie led them to course number 3.

But Stanley Holt was nowhere to be seen.

"Is that old man playing us for fools?" Summer glanced around.

Even though it was morning, one could already feel the heat wafting through the air.

Juliana sat in the rest area, opened a bottle of purified water, and swallowed two cold medicine pills.

"Someone like President Holt wouldn't have us come here without a reason. Let's wait a bit longer."

Just as she finished her sentence, a few figures appeared in the distance along the corridor.

Stanley Holt and Evan Grant were at the front of the group, discussing matters concerning heavy truck energy storage batteries.

They walked along, engrossed in conversation.

"It's over. No hope of talking now. Is he determined to destroy us?" Summer muttered through gritted teeth, keeping her voice low.

Juliana didn't respond to her, setting down her water and standing up.

Upon reaching the rest area, this time Stanley Holt greeted Juliana first.

"Mrs. Grant, my apologies for the neglect last night, please forgive me."

Juliana nodded graciously at him, "You must be joking, President Holt. It's my honor to meet you and I look forward to Aetherflame cooperating with your esteemed company."

Stanley Holt's smile was cryptic as he turned to Evan Grant, "President Grant, should we play a full 18 holes, or just hit a few strokes first?"

Evan smiled slightly, "President Holt, given you're an amateur competition champion, how could I dare show off? But my wife is eager to try. How about giving her some pointers?"

Pretending not to notice the tension between the couple, Stanley Holt agreed without refusal.

Juliana's golf skills, taught by Evan Grant, were pretty basic.

Compared to President Holt's professional approach, there was no comparison, but President Holt was patient, occasionally teaching her some techniques.

However, standing under the blazing sun, it wasn't long before Juliana's clothes were soaked through.

Her fever, which had subsided before dawn, began to rise again, and her throat felt like it was on fire.

Seeing her physical condition was deteriorating, Stanley Holt suggested they rest at the edge of the course due to the heat.

"Mrs. Grant, your swing is very standard, clearly you've been instructed by a professional," Stanley Holt praised with a smile.

Evan took a sip of cold lemon water, glanced coldly at Juliana's flushed cheeks, and possessively said, "I don't know how many times I had to teach her just to get her to the beginner level. President Holt, don't praise her too much, she'll get arrogant."

After speaking, he handed her the lemon water he had been drinking.

But Juliana didn't take it, "I just opened a bottle of water; I haven't finished it yet."

Summer was about to pass her the bottle when she was halted by Evan's sharp gaze.

Evan personally picked up the bottle she had been drinking from and handed it to her, but suddenly let go during the handover.

Bang!

The bottle of purified water hit the ground, spilling its contents everywhere.

Evan sneered, "Mrs. Grant, after all this, you still can only drink what's mine."