

## SUBSTITUTE BRIDE: UTTERLY PAMPERED BY HER BILLIONAIRE HUSBAND

### Chapter 15: Chapter 15: New Flames, Old Loves

Bella Sterling was hit hard, rejected by the pretty boy she liked, and humiliated by Serena. She angrily left the bar.

At this moment, a few thugs walked up ahead and surrounded Bella, looking at her lecherously, "Little girl, you're all alone. Want us to keep you company?"

Bella was a cherished daughter of the Sterling family, well-protected since childhood and had never encountered this kind of danger. Her face turned pale with fright, "Who are you? I don't want you to accompany me, go away, help!"

Bella had her own driver, who quickly ran over upon seeing her in danger, "Let go of the young lady!"

But the two thugs soon knocked the driver down and kicked him several times.

Bella's breathing stopped, "Help! He...mm!"

A thug covered her mouth and dragged her to a dimly lit corner, then reached out to touch her face, "Your skin is quite smooth, must be even smoother elsewhere. We'll keep you company and take some photos for keepsake. Call you when we miss you, hahaha."

The thugs laughed dirtily.

With her mouth covered, Bella couldn't make a sound. She usually despised men of low status and was set to marry one of the elite families in Bayside, but now these filthy men dared to touch her.

As they touched her face, she felt icy cold inside, shivering with terror, whimpering for mercy.

"Little girl, that skirt is pretty short. Came to this bar to hook up with men, huh? Why don't we take it off for you?"

Bella had indeed dressed up meticulously for Hayden Crawford, but now she felt someone pulling at her dress, desperately struggling, tears streaming down.

No!

No!

Then a pleasant voice echoed beside her, "Let her go."

The thugs released their grip, and Bella collapsed to the ground.

Through tear-filled eyes, Bella looked up, shocked to see a handsome figure ahead—it was Seth Hawthorne!

Bella's pupils shrank; she knew Seth, the Crown Prince of the Hawthorne family, Bayside's tyrant, known by all.

Seth, smoking, came before Bella, looking down at her, "Miss Sterling, this is just a small warning. Don't think about things you shouldn't, lest you invite annoyance."

After speaking, Seth flicked the cigarette end to the ground and snuffed it out with his shoe, "Let's go."

Everyone left.

Bella sat on the ground, breathless, feeling as if new life had been breathed into her; she didn't know how she offended the tyrant Seth.

Just then a luxury car sped by the street, Bella lifted her eyes, seeing a godlike handsome face in the slowly lowering driver's window—it was Hayden Crawford.

It was actually him!

...

Back at Orchid Court, Serena entered the room, took out her phone and sent a voice message to Leah, thanking her for everything this time.

Lillian Sterling was a veteran actress, with vast connections and a strong PR team; usually if there was any dirt yet to be exposed, it'd be handled. But this

time, her affair with Cox quickly hit the trending topics on Weibo, thanks to only one person.

That person was Serena's best friend, Leah Thorne.

Serena and Leah had played together since kindergarten, sharing everything; later when grandpa Sterling was in trouble, only Leah continued to believe her.

When Serena was nine, she was sent back to the countryside, Leah tearfully bid farewell, and every holiday since, Leah would stay and freeload at her place.

Soon, a reply came; Serena opened it, Leah's soft voice quickly emanated. "Serena, we don't need to be polite between us. Rest assured, this matter was personally handled by my top manager. Gregory Sterling won't find out anything."

Leah's voice was exceptionally pleasant, making men's bones tingle.

Certainly Leah's looks matched her voice; as the city's most beautiful woman of recent years, Leah entered the entertainment industry two years ago and has become one of the hottest actresses.

This time Leah's actions left Gregory Sterling clueless, even though Lillian might suspect something, Gregory would never believe his daughter, returned from the countryside, could navigate the entertainment circles.

Serena was touched, "Leah, when are you returning to Bayside?"

Leah, raising her brow on the other end, her voice turning coquettish, "Why? Miss me? I heard you have a new flame. How can you still think of this old love?"

New flame?

Serena replied instantly, "I don't."

Leah teased, "You're flustered, you're flustered, you are flustered."

Serena didn't know how to respond.

Leah's voice quickly followed, "Quickly confess and tell me about that pretty boy you're keeping."

Sure enough, Leah referred to Hayden Crawford...

Leah, Bayside's most beautiful woman; though she exuded goddess vibes on the red carpet, she truly loved gossip, apparently soon enough someone delivered it right to her ear.

Just then the room door suddenly opened, a tall, handsome body walked in; Hayden Crawford returned from the study.

Perhaps feeling guilty, Serena, who was lying on the bed, immediately sat up.

Hayden walked into the room, raised his slender fingers, unbuttoned two buttons of his black shirt, revealing his exquisite collarbones. As he turned to look at the girl by the bed, Serena was caught off guard, her gaze collided with his narrowed eyes.

Eye to eye, Hayden smirked, "Something up?"

"No...nothing." Serena dodged.

Just then "ding ding," her phone rang.

Hayden's gaze landed on her phone, "Why not check your messages?"

"I'll check."

Serena opened Leah's voice message, "Serena, I trust your taste. Is that pretty boy you're keeping good-looking, well-shaped, and of noble demeanor, with a crucial 'golden retriever waist'?"

Listening to Leah utter the last three words with utmost ambiguity, Serena's face flushed, nearly dropping the phone she held.

In haste, the next voice message played consecutively, "Serena, 'golden retriever waist,' you know, we agreed while secretly watching kung fu films, must find a man with such a waist, strong stamina~~"

The room was silent.

Serena stuffed the phone into the bedding, wishing she could disappear into a hole.

Discussing something like this between friends was fine, but to be overheard by the person involved, was so embarrassing.

"Um...Mr. Crawford, I'll go...take a bath..."

Serena darted into the bathroom.

She stood at the sink to grab a towel; her fingertips felt warm, and in the gleaming mirror she saw Hayden Crawford. He walked with steady strides, his hands in his pockets, half-leaning against the doorframe.