

Substitute B 182

Chapter 182: But I Also Really Like Her

Hayden Crawford remained silent, he simply pressed his thin lips together, then walked out of Orchid Court with silent steps. His tall, upright figure quickly merged into the cool, dark night outside until he disappeared.

Iris Crawford withdrew her gaze and looked at Mrs. Crawford, "Mom, there's something I've never understood—how did Serena end up marrying Hayden? I investigated, Serena was a stand-in bride, right? At that time, the entire Bayside knew Serena Sterling was a bumpkin from the countryside. Mom, I know you well, you've been overseeing the Crawford family for so many years and always favored Hayden. You would definitely handle his marriage with care. How could you allow a country bumpkin to marry Hayden as a stand-in? Mom, is there something you're hiding from me?"

Iris Crawford is Mrs. Crawford's biological daughter, how could she not understand her mother's meticulous mind and decisive means? She had someone look into Hayden Crawford and Serena Sterling's marriage. This marriage was full of doubts and couldn't withstand scrutiny. She had come to ask the old lady today.

Mrs. Crawford elegantly cut the steak on her plate without looking at Iris Crawford, "Iris, since you've already had people investigate, why are you still asking me?"

Iris stiffened, "Mom, are you upset that I went behind your back? It's just that you are so biased, always plotting for Hayden, even this stand-in marriage was orchestrated by you. Even if I don't investigate, when brother and sister-in-law come, they will. Now you know Serena is the girl Zane fell in love with at first sight. They're the ones who are meant to be, and we're both aware of Hayden's condition—his psychological illness is incurable!"

"Have you said enough?" The old lady quietly listened to Iris before asking unemotionally.

"Mom, I..."

"Hayden has never competed with you for anything. Ever since he left the Crawford family, he hasn't wanted anything to do with it. Serena is his wife, his Mrs. Crawford. What logic do you have, coming to Bayside to snatch someone in such a high-spirited manner?"

Iris fell silent under the old lady's displeased and stern gaze and dare not refute, though Hayden had left Aethelgard's Crawford family seven years ago, wanting nothing of the family's possessions. Over these years, brother Jude Crawford hasn't cared about this ailing son, and the two seem to have cut off their father-son relationship.

But, if sister-in-law Zelda Willow hadn't unintentionally seen the will brother had left behind, who would know that Jude Crawford's will had passed on the massive business empire of The Crawford Group to Hayden? Even between his two sons, Hayden and Zane, brother still chose Hayden as his successor.

Iris knew, even ten or twenty years later, that Yara, that unparalleled woman, still lived in everyone's memory—her brother, her ex-husband... all of them!

Three decades ago, City of Aethelgard was exceptionally prosperous. People of that era knew there were two young girls at the time, one lively and innocent, leveling up through battles to become a legend, the other cold and stunning, founding Fly Jewelry as a classic, becoming a fashion doyenne of the time. Aristocratic scions were drawn to them, including the Aethelgard's four great families, Li, Crawford, Xu, and Ye.

Whenever thinking of these, Iris felt a surge of resentment blazing in her chest, "Mom, I'm almost certain this stand-in marriage was all part of your plan. You knew about Serena before anyone else. As a grandmother, the best and most comprehensive love you could give Hayden was a good wife, a good Mrs. Crawford, right?"

Confronted by Iris's questioning, Mrs. Crawford put down the knife and fork in her hands, "Since you already guessed this, Iris, you should also know my gamble. It's not on you nor Hayden, I'm staking everything on Serena. Go ahead and try to take her away—if you can, then I've lost!"

After speaking, Mrs. Crawford stood and left.

Iris sat stiffly in her seat alone, the dinner ended unhappily after all. Though they were family, their paths were different, and they couldn't conspire together.

Iris took her bag and also left Orchid Court.

In the car, she called Zane Crawford. Tonight it had just been revealed that Serena Sterling was that mysterious girl from Aethelgard, and she had just learned that the girl Zane had been looking for was indeed Serena Sterling.

The pleasant ringtone played once before it was answered, and Zane Crawford's cool, deep voice slowly came over, "Aunt."

"Zane, why didn't you tell me from the start that the girl you liked was Serena? I didn't expect Serena to be so remarkably amazing, and it seems both of us, aunt and nephew, ended up attracted to her one after the other."

Though Iris spoke with reproach, she couldn't contain her fondness for Zane and an even deeper liking for Serena. She should have realized long ago that the girl from Aethelgard was indeed Serena Sterling!

Zane was silent for two seconds before changing the subject, "Aunt, weren't you eating at grandma's?"

Iris tugged her phone angrily, "The dinner ended unhappily, your grandmother is too biased!"

Even saying so, after all, it was her own mother, so Iris refrained from saying too much. She didn't want the divide between the grandmother and grandson to widen.

"Your grandmother means, you all can try to take Serena back, but you definitely won't succeed!" Iris said with a bit of disdain, "How could we not succeed? Serena still doesn't know about Hayden's sordid past. If she knew what kind of person Hayden is, how terrifying he is, she would definitely leave him!"

"Aunt," Zane interjected softly, "Serena really likes my brother right now."

Iris stiffened, "Zane, what do you mean? Are you planning to give up?"

Zane didn't answer immediately. After a long while, his voice gradually came through, "But, I like her very much too. Clearly... I met her first."

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The Crawford Group.

Hayden Crawford was in the VIP conference room holding a senior meeting. The sales director was presenting this quarter's sales figures. The senior executives wearing blue badges were listening intently, the room so quiet you could hear a pin drop.

Everyone was so focused, but there was an exception—Hayden Crawford in the main seat.

Hayden was looking at his phone.

He opened Weibo on his phone. Previously someone who never used such apps, he now started browsing Weibo. It was currently in a frenzy; two years ago, the street surgery performed jointly by Zane Crawford and Serena Sterling on Aethelgard's streets had been exposed, and a photo of prodigy Zane Crawford and the genius girl Serena Sterling had been released.