

Substitute B 240

Chapter 240: Do You Love Him?

Serena Sterling pushed open the office door and looked inside. There were several foreign medical professors, all top figures in neurology, holding Hayden Crawford's medical records and debating intensely, arguing until their faces turned red, and eventually shaking their heads in disapproval.

Serena's gaze fell upon the window. The window was open, and a tall, stable figure stood there, smoking.

Their arguments didn't affect him. With a cigarette between his fingers, he turned at the sound of the door opening, his deep, ink-black eyes landing on her.

Two seconds later, he walked to the edge of the desk, one hand in his pocket, slightly bending over to extinguish the half-smoked cigarette into the ashtray. As he bent, the tassel on his business vest's brooch swung in the air, creating a dazzling arc.

Serena had seen Jude Crawford in financial magazines, but seeing him in person still made her heart race. This legendary man of the business world was even more elegant and noble than she had imagined. She had also seen several young gentlemen in Aethelgard—Hayden Crawford, Zane Crawford, Shaun Spencer—all influential figures, but compared to Jude Crawford, the elder, they lacked something.

Serena realized what they lacked was Jude Crawford's pure noble aura and the regal presence of a man who had immersed himself in business for decades and held a high position.

The glance he had cast was plain and devoid of emotion, yet Serena felt he seemed to see deep into her soul, already seeing through her.

At this moment, there was a "knock knock" at the door. Riley Sutton stood at the door and exchanged a few fluent words of English with the foreign professors, after which they left.

Riley Sutton shot another respectful glance at Jude Crawford inside before closing the door.

Serena had dealt with Riley Sutton only a little, and her first impression of him was shrewd and aloof, very capable. However, the way Riley looked at Jude Crawford was very respectful, filled with unparalleled loyalty and admiration for the boss. Surely, it was Jude Crawford's charm as a superior that made his subordinates so devoted.

Now only the two of them were left in the office. Jude Crawford sat in the office chair, gestured to the opposite chair, and then spoke, "Miss Sterling, please have a seat."

His deep voice was like a vintage bottle of Gallian red wine, incredibly magnetic and pleasant.

Though his tone was casual, it carried an inexplicable depth and authority, commanding submission.

Serena walked over and sat opposite.

Jude Crawford looked over, his expression always calm, without revealing any emotion, "I apologize for the abrupt invitation, Miss Sterling, but we need to talk about Hayden."

Serena's bright eyes looked at him, showing no signs of intimidation, "What would you like to discuss, Mr. Crawford?"

Jude Crawford took out an envelope and pushed it to her.

Serena opened the envelope, and it was filled with photos.

She picked up one. This photo captured her after leaving the hospital, blind, standing on the street, calling him, hoping he would come to pick her up.

He spoke coldly on the phone, saying he wouldn't come. As she crossed the street, she felt his presence, reaching out to him and asking, "Mr. Crawford, is that you?"

Looking at this photo, Bayside's neon lights were dazzling. She and he stood in the middle of the road, she reaching out to him while he looked at her painfully yet lingeringly, this moment frozen in the photo, a city growing silent because of them.

Serena's eyes reddened again, her delicate fingers slowly caressing his handsome face. So it wasn't her imagination; he had always been there.

She picked up another photo from that night when she agreed to the divorce, immediately leaving Orchid Court, taking a taxi, and he chased her car all the way.

The next photo shows him lying in a pool of blood, the lower part of his trousers soaked with blood, always looking in the direction she left, then slowly closing his eyes.

The following photo is of him parking his car outside the Drunk Ruby apartment building, silently smoking with the window rolled down.

And then there's a photo from yesterday, as she wandered Bayside, he followed her all the way, shelling shrimp for her, buying her taro bubble tea, and lastly, handing her a splendid firework into her palm, these moments locked in photographs.

Serena meticulously touched his handsome face, and when her tears fell, she realized she had been crying all along. Turns out, it wasn't her good fortune, but meeting him was her greatest luck.

Hayden, you big fool.

At this moment, Jude Crawford's deep voice reached her ears, "Hayden's illness was at its worst during those three years in the psychiatric hospital, when he couldn't control himself. At the end, he somehow got sleeping pills and took them. Later, I brought him out, and he came to Bayside alone. As he grew older, he slowly learned to control himself. Seeing him improve, I began to let him go, freeing him from Aethelgard and the Crawford family. But I didn't expect his condition to worsen again to this extent; the nightmare from three years ago has returned. As you have seen, everyone is helpless."

Serena wiped away her tears and looked at Jude Crawford, "So, what's your purpose?"

Jude Crawford gave the girl in front of him another look, her intelligence and clarity like ice and snow. "I heard you were just one equation short of testing poison on Hayden a second time."

Indeed, he was prepared.

This king of commerce may not be in Bayside, but his influence stretches across every corner, well aware of everything between her and Hayden.

Serena nodded, "Yes."

"Miss Sterling, I want you to save Hayden. I believe you're the only one who can save him," Jude Crawford affirmed.

Serena lowered her eyes to the photos. "If I save him, what about me? If I choose to save him, I will certainly die."

"I will prepare the best doctors and make every effort to save you. Of course, I know that might be meaningless, since saving Hayden this time is bound to be a trade-off of life for life. I have thought about negotiations, but I don't think Miss Sterling would care for these things, so I can only gamble. Gamble on your love for Hayden, gamble on your willingness to sacrifice your life for his rebirth."

Serena curved her red lips, her bright eyes even more brilliant after the baptism of tears. "After he's reborn, will you take him back?"

Jude Crawford nodded, "I will."

"Do you love him?" Serena suddenly asked.

Love...

This word was so distant and unfamiliar. Jude Crawford paused, "Hayden is my son. After taking him back, I will have him inherit the Crawford Empire. I also for him..."

Serena interrupted his words, "I'm asking if you love him. If you do, I'll hand him over to you. If not, please go back to where you came from."