

Substitute B 309

Chapter 309: Serena's Nighttime Intrusion into the Crawford Family

He thought it was a great opportunity to marry her. She was 18, already grown up. All these years, he wasn't exactly waiting, but always anticipating her coming of age.

If he didn't pick this flower, sooner or later someone else would.

He, Jude Crawford, didn't need some glamorous family marriage; he needed a girl he liked, to walk hand in hand for a lifetime, growing old together.

The year he married her, he was 27, and she was 19. They were at the most beautiful age in life. He built her an elaborate boudoir, as the tale of a hidden beauty spread through Aethelgard.

But he knew she didn't want to marry him.

The night of their wedding, he still vividly remembered what happened, everything felt as if it occurred just yesterday.

She was sent into the bridal chamber while he entertained guests outside. His room suddenly had a girl, this girl who stirred his heart, becoming his wife, waiting for him in the bridal chamber; he entertained guests absent-mindedly.

Julian Rathborne joked, "Jude, are you thinking about your little bride? Tonight will be spicy, exciting, right?"

He glanced at Julian Rathborne, "I'll leave this to you, I'm off."

Amid Julian Rathborne's jokes, he went straight back to the bridal chamber.

Pushing open the door and walking in, what he saw was Zelda Willow who had swapped places.

Zelda Willow had appeared in his bridal chamber.

The sisters Isabelle Willow and Zelda Willow looked like twins, with identical faces, but he recognized immediately, this wasn't Isabelle Willow!

In his fury, Zelda Willow tearfully told him, Isabelle Willow didn't want to marry him because she already had someone she loved and had eloped with her first love.

He immediately took his trusted aides and rushed to the docks. He caught Isabelle Willow at the docks, in a man's arms, the two of them embracing.

His eyes instantly turned red, and a fist landed on the man's body. He forcibly took her back.

That night, she resisted, and he bound her, taking her directly.

Later, he clipped her wings and imprisoned her in the boudoir.

In those years, whenever she was disobedient, he had ways to make her comply. Gradually, she became afraid of his methods.

But she always cried on his bed, her clear and delicate face sprinkled with tears, making him angry and displeased.

Jude Crawford collected his charming eyes, retracting all the memories. Then, a sudden knocking on the door came, and the study door was urgently pushed open, "Sir, Madam..."

The maid at the door froze, taken aback by the scene. A man in his fifties stood by the floor-to-ceiling window in a black shirt, handsomely dignified, as a well-preserved Zelda Willow embraced him tightly from behind like a water snake. The dim light infused the scene with an ambiguous element, especially for a man of this age, causing one to blush and the heart to race.

The maid quickly lowered her head, not daring to look further.

Interrupted, Zelda Willow unwillingly released Jude Crawford, glaring unkindly at the maid, "What is so urgent? Don't you have any manners?"

Just then, a clear and sweet voice came from outside, "Mrs. Crawford, it's me. Don't make it difficult for them, I insisted on barging in!"

The study door was thoroughly pushed open, and Serena Sterling's exquisitely beautiful figure came into view.

Serena Sterling had arrived!

Why was she here?

Zelda Willow's eyes flickered.

A few maids were blocking Serena, "Sir, Madam, we're sorry. We tried to stop her, but we couldn't..."

Jude Crawford looked at Serena, a deep gaze without much ripple. He parted his thin lips, "It's fine, leave us."

"Yes, sir."

The maids all retreated.

Zelda Willow coldly looked at Serena at the door, "Miss Sterling, you have some nerve, barging into the Crawford family like this at night?"

Serena indeed had courage. After leaving a private cocktail party, she boldly marched straight into the Crawford estate, something no one in the City of Aethelgard dared to do.

Serena's bright eyes shimmered with stars, wise and composed. She stepped in lightly, gave Zelda Willow a glance, and then let her gaze fall on Jude Crawford, "I apologize for disturbing so late. I'm not here for you; I'm here to see Mr. Crawford."

Zelda Willow hesitated for a moment, then looked at Jude Crawford, "Jude, you know this Serena Sterling?"

Jude Crawford did not answer that question, his demeanor calm, appearing stable and authoritative. He gestured to the couch and spoke, "Miss Sterling, please sit."

"No need, I came to see Mr. Crawford today because I visited a private vineyard and saw a rare piece of artwork. I made a special trip to let Mr. Crawford take a look."

Zelda Willow's heart skipped a beat as Serena casually mentioned the "private vineyard."

Sure enough, Jude Crawford's handsome brows raised slightly, grasping the key point, "Miss Sterling, how did you get to a private vineyard?"

"I don't know either. Maybe Mr. Crawford should ask your wife!" Serena's words were sweetly laced with a sharp gleam in her eyes.

Zelda Willow froze completely, never expecting Serena to strike back so quickly. Her retaliation was fast, precise, and harsh, coming straight at Jude Crawford!

At that moment, Zelda felt a gaze land on her face. She looked up and met Jude Crawford's eyes, as deep as a cold, dark pool.

Jude Crawford slowly narrowed his eyes, a subtle, silent look that made Zelda's scalp tingle.

Zelda Willow's face turned pale, her hands and feet icy cold.

"Mr. Crawford, we've always had a pleasant collaboration. I have kept my word, never overstepping. I hope you do the same—control your wife and keep her from causing trouble for me, or else... Mr. Crawford, you should know me well. If anyone dares to harm my family or friends, I will fight to the end!" Serena stated firmly and powerfully.

Zelda Willow was dumbfounded. She had no idea what Serena was talking about, and yet, a 20-year-old girl dared to speak to Jude Crawford like this.

Jude Crawford's reaction was very subtle. He wasn't angry at all, only nodding slightly, "Miss Sterling, there won't be a next time."

"That's good. Oh, and I would still like to present this painting to Mr. Crawford for your appreciation."
Serena handed the painting scroll in her hand to Jude Crawford.

Jude Crawford reached out to open it, his fingers pausing slightly.

Zelda Willow naturally saw it, her eyes widened in shock, staring at Serena. Not only did she barge into the Crawford estate at night, but she also brought this painting of Isabelle Willow. This girl truly had immense audacity!

"Years ago, Mr. Crawford built an elaborate boudoir, hiding a beauty in a golden house. Who knew I'd be fortunate enough to see this masterpiece of Aethelgard's first beauty from two decades ago. This painting has always been privately treasured by the vineyard's owner, surely a passionate admirer of this first beauty."