

Substitute B 33

Chapter 33: Serena Plays Cards

Serena Sterling looked up and met Hayden Crawford's narrow eyes.

Hayden Crawford sat at the head of the poker table, dressed in a fine black shirt and trousers. He was smoking, with a scarlet flame between his long fingers, exhaling clouds of smoke.

As Seth Hawthorne called out, Hayden Crawford had just taken a puff of his cigarette. Then he looked up at Serena, smoke swirling around his handsome face, though his heroic brows were faintly furrowed. A few seconds later, he slowly exhaled a mouthful of smoke.

Serena, having been forcefully pushed inside, felt a tad awkward, and now bumping into Hayden Crawford added to her embarrassment.

"Young Master Hawthorne, where did this little beauty come from? Isn't the most beautiful girl in your 1949 place? You're too stingy, hiding her," joked one of the bosses.

Clearly, these men mistook Serena for an escort from here. At this, Seth Hawthorne glanced at Hayden Crawford across the table.

Hayden had already withdrawn his gaze, tossing out a card in his hand, his expression deep and indifferent.

What does this mean?

Have they argued?

A cold war?

Pretending not to know each other?

Seth Hawthorne snickered quietly, thinking it was great; he could watch some drama. Not content with just watching, he called out to Serena, "Hey, come over here and pour us some drinks, don't you know any manners?"

A greasy boss reached out to grab Serena's delicate arm, "Little beauty, why are you wearing a veil? With a figure like that, your face must not be bad either. Take off the veil and let us have a look."

The greasy boss directly tried to remove the veil from Serena's face.

Serena skillfully dodged the grab, her elegant brows lightly knitted, "I think you've got it wrong, I'm not one of the escorts here, let go of me!"

"Little beauty, do you know who these people are? Whether or not you're an escort is not up to you; we make the call!"

Serena recalled the repeated reminders from the manager earlier who said that these were all big shots from Bayside, people she couldn't afford to offend.

Serena didn't want to get into trouble, but luck was too bad today, and she was pushed into this situation.

"How about we make a bet? Let's bet whether this little beauty, after taking off her veil, will turn out to be a hideous creature or a 'Celestial Beauty'."

"Sure, that's interesting. I'll bet on her being hideous. If she were a 'Celestial Beauty', she would have removed the veil already; after all, beauty is a woman's greatest weapon."

"I'll bet 'Celestial Beauty' because the little beauty's figure is... irresistible, hahaha."

In such situations, men's conversations often had no taboos, and Serena was trapped in them, becoming a topic of their discussions.

Today, Serena wore a quaint little Chanel-style dress, with a tassel hem below her knees. Despite her delicate frame, not an exaggerated S-curve, she had a youthful grace with a touch of untouchable elegance.

Even without revealing anything, she outshone the scantily clad beauties in the luxurious private room.

Serena glanced at Hayden Crawford at the main seat; he was smoking with downcast eyes and surrounded by beauties, without sparing her another look.

Now, he was high above, cold and indifferent.

Even if she was trapped, he wouldn't step in to help.

He treated her as a stranger.

Although that's what she wanted, to draw clear boundaries, Serena still felt a sharp pain in her heart.

At this moment, the greasy boss tugging at her tried to remove her veil again, "Little beauty, the bets are placed; come show us your true face."

"Hold on," Serena quickly spoke up.

The greasy boss paused, "Little beauty, what do you want to say?"

"I've already said I'm not an escort here. However, if you want me to accompany you with drinks, let me play a round with you. If I win, let me go. If I lose, do as you please."

She wanted to play cards.

These bosses were surrounded by women of all types, nothing they hadn't seen before, but a cool-headed and intelligent woman like Serena who could come up with this was indeed rare.

This immediately piqued these men's curiosity.

"Anyway, you can't escape our grasp, why not play a hand, it makes it more interesting."

Serena sat down at the poker table, right next to Hayden Crawford.

Hayden Crawford had stayed silent the entire time, only casually and elegantly smoking his cigarette, yet he remained the king of the scene.

Seth Hawthorne arched his brow at Serena, kindly reminding, "No one can beat my second brother at cards. Why don't you ask him to go easy on you later?"

Serena said nothing.

She didn't want to ask him for anything.

Hayden Crawford didn't show much emotion, but his aura grew a few degrees colder, the ash from his cigarette falling into the ashtray with a hint of menace.

"Mr. Crawford, let's start, deal the cards."

Serena picked up the cards and calmly played one, instantly knocking the accompanying boss out of the game.

As she played the second card, Seth Hawthorne angrily threw his cards onto the table, looking unconvinced at the remaining Hayden Crawford, "Second brother, this woman's memory and ability to analyze cards is quite good. I'm out, second brother, you have to avenge me!"

Serena had knocked out two people right at the start, drawing curiosity from the bosses in the luxurious private room who gathered around to watch.

Little beauty, didn't realize you had this in you.

Now it's just you and Mr. Crawford, but Mr. Crawford has never lost, unless he wants to.

Serena looked up at Hayden Crawford. She rarely played cards but had seen Leah Thorne play. Leah's skills were terrible and always lost, so she dragged Serena along to win money.

Serena was quick-witted. There were techniques to playing cards, and she learned fast, but against a big shot like Hayden Crawford, she stood no chance of winning.

If she were to win, it would be because Hayden let her.

But she didn't want to plead with him.

Since it's over, it should be completely over; otherwise, she wouldn't even respect herself.

Serena played her card.

In the smoky haze, Hayden Crawford slowly squinted his deep, narrow eyes. He knew she was stubborn and refused to beg, determined to break cleanly from him. With half a cigarette clasped in his thin lips, he played his card.

Seth Hawthorne's eyes widened as he slapped the table, "Second brother, you're impressive, mighty!"

Serena's long lashes quivered; she had lost.

"Little beauty, you were given a chance, but you lost. With this loss, you've saddled yourself with a thirty million debt."

Thirty million?

Serena didn't know what the stakes were; thirty million was enough to earn over a lifetime.

Playing a hand of cards, she had surprisingly ended up with a debt of thirty million.

"Don't panic, little beauty, you can find someone to pay the thirty million, but we want to see your stakes first, take off your veil."

The greasy boss once again tried to remove Serena's veil.