

## Substitute B 364

Chapter 364: The Rathborne Family Banquet

Serena Sterling is just a wild bird, no matter how hard it struggles, it can never become a phoenix. Whereas, Anabelle Rathborne is the real phoenix!

Serena looked at Annette's eager expression and knew she was up to something bad again. Serena curved her red lips slightly, "Yes, I will be there for Old Mrs. Rathborne's birthday."

At this moment, a handsome and tall figure approached—it was Zane Crawford.

Zane Crawford arrived.

Zane walked over, placing his large hand on Serena's delicate shoulder. His cold black eyes gave Anabelle a cursory glance, "On Old Mrs. Rathborne's birthday, I will accompany Serena to pay her respects. Serena is my date."

Every time Annette saw Zane treating Serena like a treasure, she felt angry. But whenever she thought about wearing that stunning starry gown to outshine Serena at the birthday party, her mood brightened.

"Second Young Master Crawford, you are welcome to join us," Annette felt saying more was pointless, and she hadn't mentioned the starry gown to Serena. Maintaining the mystery was key to crushing Serena ruthlessly, "Let's go."

Anabelle left with a group of girls.

They all left, leaving Zane to gaze down at Serena's bright eyes, "Serena, you don't mind being my date on the birthday, right?"

Serena smiled gently, "Of course, I don't mind."

"Alright, I'll drive over to pick you up then," Zane laughed.

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Anabelle returned to Station A, wanting to call Hayden Crawford on her phone.

Since their last parting at the men's clinic, she hadn't contacted him. Much to her surprise, Hayden also ignored her—no phone calls, not even a single text, leaving her completely sidelined.

Annette felt incredibly wronged. Now, the issue lay with his condition, which was the most fatal flaw for a man. Did he even comprehend the situation? Wasn't he afraid she'd cancel the engagement?

Obviously, Hayden wasn't afraid; otherwise, he wouldn't have left her on her own for a while.

Although Annette felt angry, wronged, and conflicted, she was attracted to Hayden's aloof, indifferent, and arrogant charm. Such a man was incredibly captivating, making her want to conquer him. Successfully doing so would feel like a significant achievement.

Anabelle dialed Hayden's number.

Soon, the phone on the other end rang, ringing once before it was unhurriedly answered. Hayden's deep, magnetic voice was transmitted to her ear, "Hello."

Hearing his pleasant voice made Annette's ears tingle as if they might get pregnant. "Hayden, it's me. In a few days, it's my grandmother's 80th birthday. Do you have time that day?"

"No time," Hayden coldly refused without hesitation, "If you have nothing else, I'll hang up."

Hearing his intention to hang up, Annette's beautiful face turned pale, all her accumulated dissatisfaction and grievances poured out, "Hayden, don't you even have the patience to brush me off now? What did I do wrong for you to treat me this way? You're my fiancé, after all. If you don't come to my grandmother's 80th birthday, what will people think? They'll suspect we're falling out. Look, your younger brother Zane has already arranged for Serena to attend and be his date. They are also an engaged couple, and Zane treats Serena like a princess. But you treat me like this, it's just embarrassing for me!"

"I'll go." Hayden suddenly interrupted her, giving a positive response.

What?

Annette was stunned; he actually agreed?

It seemed that her coyness worked wonders, Annette quickly beamed with joy, intending to press further with her efforts, "Hayden, I knew you cared about me. I..."

Before Annette could finish, Hayden had already hung up, leaving just the busy tone on the line.

Annette's enthusiastic smile froze on her face, she, "..."

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The Rathborne family.

Today was Old Mrs. Rathborne's 80th birthday, and the entire Rathborne house was festively decorated. All of Aethelgard's high society came to celebrate.

Anabelle wore the deep blue starry strapless gown. The moment she appeared, she was surrounded by a group of debutantes who envied her gown, unable to resist reaching out to touch it,

"Oh my, Annette, your starry gown is simply stunning!"

"The stars on it look like mermaid scales!"

"It's no surprise that it's from Old Mrs. Rathborne. Her generosity is utterly astonishing, Annette, your grandmother truly spoils you, the little princess of the Rathborne family!"

Surrounded by all the admiration and attention, Annabelle smiled sweetly. She had grown up in the spotlight, and this was the feeling she was accustomed to experiencing, "My grandmother does spoil me a lot. I'm the only daughter of our family, and she's showered all her love on me."

In fact, the whole of Aethelgard sighed at the news that Julian Rathborne only had Anabelle as a daughter. It was not to mention that Julian was the world's wealthiest man, often, families like these would have many children, especially sons, who could later inherit the family fortune.

For instance, the Crawford family—Jude Crawford's children were few, yet he was strong enough to have two sons, both exceptional young talents.

In comparison, the Rathborne family seemed lonely, and Julian only had Anabelle as his daughter. This was mainly because Julian and Yvonne Knight had a troubled marriage. They were separated shortly after their wedding, and there were rumors throughout Aethelgard that Julian married because Yvonne was pregnant before their wedding.

For Yvonne to manage to get pregnant by Julian and secure her place was no small feat.

But Yvonne couldn't keep Julian's heart; they stayed separated as long as they'd been married. Because of Annette, they never actually got a divorce.

Men like Julian surely don't lack companions, but whether he has a son depends on his desire. Everyone bet on when Julian might acknowledge an illegitimate son, sparking a drama, yet over the years, Julian never had any scandal.

While envying Yvonne's fortune, everyone noted that was the difference between a wealthy family and the pinnacle of high society. Julian Rathborne was indeed a true son of Aethelgard.

Now, people were increasingly envious of and eager to please Anabelle. They could easily discern that Annette was intentionally mocking someone—Serena Sterling.