

## Substitute B 527

### Chapter 527: A Family of Three in the Painting

Hayden Crawford stood tall and striking at the doorway, his white shirt pulled out from his trousers, shedding the usual aloof restraint for an air of rebellious charm. The dazzling crystal lights cast a distinguished aura over him, making him irresistibly handsome.

The 32-year-old man, three years of time had tempered all the sharp edges within him. His status, wealth, and identity added indescribable masculine allure, turning Hayden Crawford into the embodiment of every woman's fantasy.

In the past three years, countless women had flocked to him like moths to a flame.

The young maids blushed secretly, thinking how the master's way of kicking the door was so manly, making them feel both scared and a flutter of hearts.

With a bang, on Hayden Crawford's second kick, the door swung open.

With a defined hand pushing against the door, he stepped inside. On the bed lay a small lump under the covers, not even a little head visible.

"Caden Crawford, itching for trouble?"

Hayden kneeled by the bed, and with a swift motion, pulled off the blanket, grabbing the little boy by the back of his shirt collar and lifting him up.

He was at the end of his patience. Raising this son alone for three years had been filled with challenges at every turn.

But the last time he saw Serena Sterling at The Emperor's Club, her delicate face more radiant and vibrant than rose petals, flaunting herself, living as freely as she chose.

He had once contemplated that her allure would fade over time, once so fierce and intense, but now she seemed completely healed.

However, she returned to Alani, to her mother Seraphina Linden's side, presumably saved by Seraphina.

Hayden carelessly tossed Caden onto the bed and spanked his little behind with his broad palm.

Just then, the drawing in Caden's hand fluttered onto the sheets.

The hand poised to strike suddenly froze mid-air, as Hayden's deep, narrow eyes caught sight of the drawing. "What is this?"

Caden locked himself in his room as soon as he got home, letting no one disturb him. So he'd been under the covers drawing.

Hayden looked at the drawing—backs of a slender, graceful woman with flowing hair, holding hands with a little figure strolling in the sunshine, a scene of utmost warmth.

An observant person could easily tell the little figure was Caden himself, and this woman was the mom Caden imagined.

However, the woman resembled... Serena!

The drawing is an exact likeness of Serena Sterling!

Hayden quickly frowned, "Caden Crawford, what did you draw?"

Caden quickly raised his big, grape-like eyes to look at his dad. He knew that his dad disliked any mention of his mom. Every time anyone mentioned her, his dad would lose control and throw a huge fit.

Caden picked up the drawing and hid it beneath his pillow.

Seeing his son's cautious little action, Hayden's heart suddenly ached sharply. He still remembered when he first threw a fit back at Westerley Estate because his grandmother mentioned Serena. At that time, Caden was only a few months old, and the child was so frightened, he hid in the corner of a room. When Hayden found him, Caden was freezing, his small body trembling uncontrollably.

Over the past two years, though Caden grew older, Hayden searched his memories but could not recall Caden ever asking about his mom. Caden never brought her up in front of him.

In truth, Caden deeply yearned for his mother. He needed maternal love more than the average child.

But for his father's sake, Caden lived every day cautiously, having hidden his feelings early on, learning repression from a young age.

Everyone knew Caden's reclusive tendencies and reluctance to speak were directly related to his dad.

Hayden's hard heart suddenly softened. How could he bear to sever Caden's connection to Serena and drive her out of Aethelgard?

Even though he originally planned to do just that.

Hayden sat on the bed, reached for the painting, and took it out, frowning as he asked, "Caden Crawford, what did you draw here? Here's you with your mom, so where am I?"

Caden's previously dim eyes suddenly brightened. He looked incredulously at his father. He drew his mom, and Dad wasn't angry?

Caden quickly took out a crayon and added his father to the drawing.

Hayden's handsome brow furrowed even deeper as he examined the drawing of himself—placed at the back, hands in his pockets, tailing the mother and child.

Outrageous!

Hayden no longer wanted to talk to him, rising to his feet with a bad temper, "Get up, now go shower!"

With a gulp, Caden quickly scrambled off the bed and ran to the shower room to bathe.

"Let Auntie McCoy bathe you," Hayden said, watching the little figure go.

Caden turned back to protest. He was a boy, Auntie McCoy was a girl; boys and girls shouldn't bathe together!

"..." Hayden sighed, exasperated, before striding after him, "Fine, I'll bathe you then!"

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In the shower room.

Caden swiftly undressed, stepping under the spray.

Hayden lifted his elegant fingers to remove his white shirt and joined him.

A large and small figure, two little men, stood under the shower.

Caden tried hard to look up at his father. His dad was so tall, at 6'3", like a giant towering tree.

The warm yellow light illuminated his father's handsome face; the contours looked as if sculpted, exquisite and perfect. So handsome, why was dad so handsome?

Though in his heart Caden longed for his mom, he also loved his dad deeply.

Hayden knelt down on one knee, applying shower gel to the little boy's body. Father and son rarely had such harmonious and loving times, especially since Dad seemed no longer angry about Mom, so Caden wanted to take his paper and pen.

Hayden, seeing through his son's little scheme, thought this boy really knew how to push his luck!

"What do you want to ask? Don't use paper and pen, use your mouth and talk to me," Hayden said.

Caden gazed at his father. He had never spoken, didn't know how.

Looking at his child's delicate face, Hayden soberly said, "You have only one chance, I'm giving it to you now; if you don't speak, it'll be gone."

Hayden had never forced Caden to speak, as he knew pushing would be futile; Caden would speak only when he wanted to.

But now, knowing Caden wanted to ask about his mom, Hayden was urging him to speak.