

Substitute B 581

Chapter 581: Report Her!

Julian Rathborne's eyes swiftly caught a few clusters of dark red flames, and he reached out his large hand to grab her slender ankle.

Seraphina Linden's gaze fell on the belt around his lean waist, then slowly moved down as she smirked, her alluring eyes watching him, "Serena's dad, your body is far more honest than your mouth."

Julian Rathborne looked at her seductive demeanor, his large hand caressed her pale skin, heading upwards...

Yet Seraphina Linden quickly evaded him, getting out of bed, "Serena's dad, if you want to relive old dreams with me, I'm afraid you'll have to be disappointed. I'm not interested in you at all right now."

Saying this, Seraphina picked up her clothes, ready to change.

Julian Rathborne stiffened; he finally realized that Seraphina was teasing him deliberately, leading him on without taking responsibility.

Excellent; even after over twenty years, she hasn't changed a bit.

Julian Rathborne walked out with an impassive, handsome face.

Outside, his personal secretary respectfully asked, "Sir, what shall we do now?"

Julian Rathborne curved his thin lips into a sarcastic line, "Now call the tip-off line and say there's illicit activities here at The Zephyr Gardens."

Julian Rathborne said, glancing back into the room, and handed the stack of cash Seraphina Linden had given him to the secretary, "Especially this room; someone is suspected of solicitation; this is the payment. Have her taken away and properly interrogated!"

The personal secretary stared at the stack of money in his hand, utterly shocked — in such a short while, the sir made this much money?

Ugh, what am I thinking? Who on earth dared take... money to insult the sir?

This person is truly despicable!

The secretary immediately pulled out his phone at the fastest speed and made the call.

...

Seraphina Linden's mood remained unaffected, still bright; she dressed and walked out, glad the man Julian Rathborne had left.

She was someone out to achieve big things, and men were best kept as mere entertainment.

If Julian Rathborne stuck to her, wanting her to take responsibility, it would be troublesome.

After all, over twenty years ago, she, the flower thief, had taken the virtue of Julian Rathborne, Aethelgard's son.

This time, Seraphina had come back to focus on her career; she had already accomplished a lot — establishing academies, now The St. Lyra Academy was a top-tier institution; founding hospitals, Bayside Central Hospital was the largest in the country; empowering martial arts, with the Sterling family reigning as

respected leaders; and as for the Military Bureau, it was the hub of gossip, gathering everyone's secrets with Seth Sullivan managing it as her trusted disciple.

Seraphina Linden always felt she was missing something, and only recently realized it was launching a... Red Pavilion!

Today, she visited The Zephyr Gardens to inspect and, she thought, if she established herself as a madam here, it would surely be an interesting experience.

Serena has returned now, and Seraphina feels assured knowing her daughter is more accomplished than herself, handing over Alani to Serena fills her with confidence.

Now she just wants to do what she loves and head towards her goals.

Seraphina Linden walked out happily, but then saw the chaos outside as a group of uniformed officers arrived, "Nobody move; raise your hands and squat against the wall!"

Seraphina paused, completely caught off guard by the officers' arrival; The Zephyr Gardens' owner, the male and female massage therapists, were all squatted against the corner with their heads in their hands.

"You! Yes, you!"

Seraphina looked up to see two officers approaching and pointing at her.

"Me?" Seraphina was stunned.

"Yes, you; are you a guest in this room? You've been reported for suspected solicitation."

Solicitation what?

Solicitation whom?

Seraphina was shocked; she indeed had many identities but had never been a client of solicitation — this was a first for her.

Seraphina immediately denied it, "I didn't."

"Then is this payment from you?" An officer held out a stack of cash.

Seraphina's mind was blown, yes... yes, it was a tip she gave... Julian Rathborne!

"You've been reported for solicitation, and with concrete evidence, it's required that you come with us." The two officers took Seraphina Linden away.

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Seraphina Linden was taken out of XX Tower, where a dedicated vehicle awaited to take her directly to the station.

At that moment, when Seraphina looked up, she quickly saw a stretched luxury business car parked quietly under the streetlights across the road, the sleek and opulent black top-tier vehicle emitted an imperial aura, impossible to ignore.

Then, the rear window slowly lowered, revealing a handsome and elegant face — it was... Julian Rathborne!

Seeing Julian Rathborne now, Seraphina felt immensely vexed; how could she have known this man would employ such underhanded tactics to accuse her of solicitation?

Seraphina was in a bit of a mess now, her beautiful eyes glaring fiercely at Julian Rathborne across the street.

But, unfortunately, Julian Rathborne didn't glance back at her, not even once; he sat royally within the luxurious car, its dazzling city neon lights casting shadows on his handsome face, resembling an unassailable and noble British royal duke.

Soon, the top-tier business car sped off, leaving only a grand and arrogant tail in its wake for Seraphina.

Seraphina, who had spent years as a prominent figure, had now been played for the first time, so infuriated that she nearly coughed up blood.

...

Serena Sterling received a call and hurried to the station with lawyers to bail Seraphina out.

Seraphina was released.

"Mommy, what's up with you? Is the outside world not fascinating enough for you, so you needed this tour?" Serena was shocked; no one could understand her emotional rollercoaster when she got the call, saying her mother was jailed for solicitation and she needed to bail her out.

Seraphina was equally upset, "Serena, this is all your father's doing; he's the one who sent me in!"

Serena Sterling's eyelash flickered, "Mommy, did you... solicit Daddy when you first met?"

"Serena, you're mistaken; it's precisely because I didn't solicit your dad that he sent me in, who knew he was so petty!" Seraphina said, frowning.

Just then, someone walked forward, dressed smartly in a suit — Julian Rathborne had sent his top-notch personal lawyer.

"Hello, are you Ms. Seraphina Linden?" The lawyer asked politely.

Seraphina nodded, "Yes."

"Here's the situation: I've been authorized by my client, Mr. Julian Rathborne, to formally accuse you of assault on Mr. Rathborne twenty-three years ago."

Chapter 582: He Demands 10.1 Billion in Compensation from Her

What?

Serena quickly furrowed her brows, looking at the top lawyer, "What were you saying just now, could you repeat it?"

"Serena, don't panic!" Brooke Linden immediately stood up, shielding Serena Sterling behind her, she looked at the top lawyer, "Julian Rathborne wants to sue me... for rape?"

Seraphina Linden wanted to step forward when she heard these two words, but Serena beat her to it. Now, Seraphina stood her ground with a very serious expression.

"Ms. Linden, you didn't hear wrong. Mr. Rathborne wants to sue you for raping him twenty-three years ago. Ms. Linden can't deny this case because Miss Sterling is your evidence, you've been running with your child for so many years." The top lawyer said.

Serena was completely dazed. Who was she, where was she, what was she doing?

She had just brought people over to bail her madam from solicitation, and before even stepping out of the door, her biological dad was suing her mom for rape.

Quick, save the child, what did she do wrong?

Seraphina really didn't expect Julian Rathborne to have no bottom line like this. He still has the nerve to sue her. Didn't she make him satisfied back then?

Men, tsk tsk, truly shameless!

"Ms. Linden, considering your daughter Miss Sterling is already so grown-up, Mr. Rathborne does not intend to put you in prison, he chooses to settle privately."

Then the top lawyer handed a stack of documents to Seraphina Linden, "Ms. Linden, take a look, here is the estimated loss of Mr. Rathborne. Because of your actions, over the past twenty-three years, Mr. Rathborne has endured both physical and psychological impacts, so we are reasonably asking you for compensation. Once the compensation amount is paid, we'll let this matter go and not pursue it further."

Seraphina turned the documents to the last page, directly looking at the compensation amount, she murmured, "101... how many zeros are behind this?"

Serena also leaned over to take a look. The compensation amount had many zeros following 101, making it dazzling at first glance.

"Ms. Linden, the compensation amount Mr. Rathborne is asking for is 10.1 billion." The top lawyer smiled and said.

Wh... what?

10.1 billion?

Seraphina Linden looked at the top lawyer in shock, "10.1 billion, why doesn't he rob a bank?"

Twenty-three years ago, she picked the most perfect gene in the world, selecting Julian Rathborne, and in a night of passion, the seed of trouble was planted then. Twenty-three years later, Julian Rathborne actually caught hold of her to directly claim 10.1 billion.

Sleeping with Aethelgard's son Julian Rathborne that night is actually worth 10.1 billion.

He might as well rob a bank.

The top lawyer laughed, "Haha Ms. Linden, you are really humorous, Mr. Rathborne owns countless banks, they are his, no need to rob."

Seraphina Linden, "..."

...

Serena Sterling took Seraphina Linden back, carrying a high debt of 10.1 billion.

Serena entered the villa room, where Seraphina Linden had just finished showering and was using a towel to dry her damp long hair, "Mom, how exactly are you going to resolve this matter with Dad, that's 10.1 billion."

Seraphina Linden put down the towel, "Serena, you don't need to worry about this, I will handle it properly. I know it's 10.1 billion, I don't have that much money, I'm still in the early stages of my business and really need funds."

Seraphina Linden is quite a little miser.

Serena Sterling wasn't very worried about this matter, letting mom handle dad shouldn't be a problem.

"By the way mom, you told me last time about the demon bells and The Merfolk Clan, can you tell me now?"
Serena was curious.

Seraphina Linden regained her composure, "Serena, the matter of The Merfolk Clan involves our ancestors. Back then, the ancestors of The State of Westria and our Alani ancestors were a couple, but the ancestor of Westria fell in love with someone else and betrayed our ancestor."

"Fell in love? Did the ancestor of Westria fall for someone from The Merfolk Clan back then?"

Seraphina Linden looked at Serena Sterling and praised her, "Yes, the ancestor of Westria fell for the princess of The Merfolk Clan, forsaking his promise to our ancestor. And back then, our ancestor and the princess were sworn sisters."

Serena was hearing such a story for the first time, the ancestor of Westria actually meandering between a pair of opposite-sex sisters, truly a capital scoundrel.

"Our Alani ancestor experienced the dual betrayal of a lover and a sister, and in fury, left for Westria and founded our ancient kingdom! Eventually, our ancestor discovered the princess of The Merfolk Clan carried a bell at all times, its ringing could enchant people. Only then did our ancestor realize it was a demon bell; the princess was skilled in Bewitching Technique."

"Mom, since the princess of The Merfolk Clan was skilled in Bewitching Technique, could it be that the ancestor of Westria was merely enchanted and deep down he still loved our ancestor?"

Seraphina Linden spoke slowly, "Back then, our ancestor possessed the iron knights of wolves, and heavenly medical skills, naturally couldn't tolerate the existence of The Merfolk Clan among the Demonfolk. Hence, our ancestor led the wolf cavalry, pursuing the moon for thousands of miles, directly flattening The Merfolk Clan, breaking the Bewitching Technique cast on the ancestor of Westria. He regained clarity, weeping before our ancestor, begging for forgiveness, which led to reconciliation."

Serena was deeply engrossed, "This sounds like a broken mirror restoration story, why then did our Alani ancient kingdom vanish from the world, what happened later?"

"Afterwards... the ancestor of Westria proposed marriage to our ancestor, and on the day of the wedding, our ancestor donned a fiery red wedding gown thinking she'd marry her beloved admirer. However, that night, the ancestor of Westria wielded the ancient weapon, Sky Sword, and pierced through our ancestor's heart."

Serena startled.

Seraphina Linden held Serena's little hand, "At this moment, another person slowly stepped out of the bridal chamber, it was the princess of The Merfolk Clan. Turns out, the ancestor of Westria was always with the struggling princess, it was their scheme, using the wedding as a ploy to assassinate our ancestor and to bloodbath Alani that night, leading to our kingdom's annihilation."

"Since I wasn't born yet, I only saw records in the ancient scrolls of Alani. It is said that blood shone through the sky that night, all twelve elders of our Alani kingdom rushed to the Westria wedding banquet, they fell one by one, with Alani people littering the ground, countless bodies, the blood dyeing the water of Westria."

"The ancestor, pierced by Sky Sword, watched her people fall due to her mistakes, her eyes turned blood-red. At this time, the princess of The Merfolk Clan told the ancestor, 'The Merfolk Clan has already cursed Westria, from now on every ruler of Westria will fall under the Bewitching Technique, making them subjects to The Merfolk Clan.'"

Chapter 583: Unable to Resist Bewitching Technique

"When our ancestor from Alani heard the curse of the Merfolk Clan's princess, she immediately laughed out loud. The ancestor slowly pulled the ancient weapon, the Sky Sword, from her own heart, and then forcefully inserted it into the foundation of the ancient kingdom of Alani. From then on, the gates of the ancient kingdom of Alani were sealed, preventing the massacre by the thousands of armies of the State of Westria, yet it vanished into the sea, disappearing completely from this world."

"In the last moment of her life, the ancestor swore with her blood and left a prophecy, that a hundred years later, there would be a daughter of Alani, destined to captivate the world. When the iron cavalry of wolves reappears, it would mark the day of the State of Westria's destruction."

"The ancestor died that night, filled with towering rage, amidst the storm of blood."

Serena listened to the thrilling tale, the buried past between the State of Westria, the ancient kingdom of Alani, and the Merfolk Clan. So, the mystery of the ancient kingdom's disappearance was like this, destroyed in the joint massacre by the State of Westria and the Merfolk Clan.

The ancestor of the ancient kingdom of Alani was truly a legendary woman. Clad in a blood-drenched red gown and wielding the Sky Sword, she herself severed the foundation of Alani, sealing its gates, leaving behind the roots that allowed its perpetual reproduction through generations.

However, Serena also heard in the tale the ancestor's deep-seated hatred for the ancestors of Westria. Ever since she awakened in Alani, she had felt the seed of deep hatred for the State of Westria sown in the hearts of Alani's people, a seed passed down through generations, so much so that reconciliation between the two nations may never occur.

Serena's small and exquisite face showed no emotional waves, yet she rose to her feet and gazed out the window at the moonlit night.

"Serena, what are you pondering, are you thinking about you and Hayden?" Seraphina Linden asked.

Serena nodded, "Yes, Hayden has noble blood flowing through him. Aunt Yara was likely the princess born alongside Titus Ashworth all those years ago, but during the escape, a maid took her to Aethelgard."

In fact, when Seraphina Linden and Isabelle Willow became close friends over twenty years ago, she didn't know Isabelle Willow was the sister of Westria's monarch Titus Ashworth. Later, when the matter of Hayden's noble blood became known, Seraphina could easily guess the whole situation.

Seth Sullivan holds the secrets of the world in his hand, and everyone harbors a little secret within them. These small secrets are the most formidable weapons in the world, and learning the royal secrets of the State of Westria is not difficult.

Before Serena came to the State of Westria, Seth had already chosen Rosalind Newman, making this battle an immediate success.

From ancient times, manipulating human hearts has been the most powerful skill.

Seraphina also looked out at the moonlit night, "Serena, the hatred between Alani and Westria runs too deep. You, now exalted as the Princess of Alani, will soon become the new queen. You have your duties and your people. So if Hayden rules the world, the two of you will never have a day to be together."

"I know." Serena nodded, "So, I don't want Aunt Yara and Hayden to learn their true heritage, it's better this way."

"Your Aunt Yara is indifferent to worldly fame, knowing or not making no difference to her, but as for Hayden..."

Seraphina paused, then continued, "Just now, Seth brought news that your Aunt Yara's false birth mother is now in Axel Ashworth's hands. Serena, what is your view on Axel Ashworth?"

Serena replied, "As the first general of the State of Westria, Axel Ashworth is brave and wise. He clearly understands the current situation but doesn't want to get involved. It's evident he harbors no ambitions for the throne. He has always been biding his time, waiting for someone, waiting for his true master, the real master of the State of Westria, before seeking out Hayden!"

Seraphina nodded, "Yes, this maid is indeed a thorny issue; I've probed. Your Aunt Yara is certain to want to meet this false mother. Now that she is in Axel Ashworth's hands, they expect her to walk into the trap; as soon as she does, their heritage will be exposed."

Serena thought for a moment, "I have my plans for this matter."

Seraphina saw her daughter's calm composure, knowing that she already had a strategy. Nonetheless, getting the maid out under Axel Ashworth's watchful eye won't be easy.

"Serena, shall Seth take action tomorrow?"

"No need, now isn't the time for Seth's appearance. He's too dazzling and would only attract a lot of trouble." Serena declined decisively.

Seraphina fell silent; regarding political tactics, this daughter of hers was more outstanding than herself.

The mother and daughter stood by the window; Seraphina spoke softly, "Serena, the Merfolk Clan princess cursed the generations of rulers of the State of Westria. None could escape the Merfolk Clan's Bewitching Technique. Even though the ancestor of Westria and our ancestor once shared a deep love, they still fell under the Bewitching Technique, bloodbathed Alani, and assassinated our ancestor."

"Titus Ashworth's unwavering favor towards Consort Willow for all these years makes me uncertain of her status in the Merfolk Clan. The higher the status, the more potent the Bewitching Technique, but one thing is certain: Titus Ashworth has fallen under the spell."

"Hayden possesses noble blood and is the true heir to the State of Westria. Serena, do you think he can resist the Bewitching Technique?"

Serena gazed at the full moon in the sky. The situation now is complex; Consort Willow, Melody Ashworth, Kyle Ashworth, all clearly originate from the Merfolk Clan.

Back then, the ancestor of Alani led the iron cavalry of wolves, chasing the moon across a thousand miles, and flattened the Merfolk Clan. However, the Merfolk Clan's princess and many of her people survived the upheavals, and Consort Willow still lurks beside Titus Ashworth. But where is the Merfolk Clan hiding now, and what is their objective?

With a clear and melodious voice, Serena spoke, "Mom, you ask if Hayden can withstand the Merfolk Clan's Bewitching Technique; I cannot say. Many profound affections fail against the allure of prosperity, and once great oaths become void in an instant. However..."

Seraphina looked at Serena, "However what?"

At this moment, the gentle breeze from outside drifted in, fluttering the delicate veil of Serena's white dress. She stood by the window, poised and ethereal, as the red three-petaled flower on her forehead seemed alive, radiating unparalleled beauty.

Serena spoke softly, "However, back then, the Merfolk Clan barely survived under the ancestor's might. This time, they'll be less fortunate. I will one day fulfill the ancestor's wish, draw the Sky Sword, revive Alani, again lead the iron cavalry of wolves into battle, and sweep the lands, making them disappear from this world."

Chapter 584: Princess Royal of the State of Westria

Serena Sterling's voice was calm and measured, each word like a knock on the heart, bringing a sense of thrilling suspense.

Seraphina Linden nodded in satisfaction, knowing her daughter could do it.

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Isabelle Willow's biological mother was once only a palace maid, later killed by Titus Ashworth's mother. Before her death, Isabelle's mother secretly handed her over to a close maid, who took Isabelle and fled Westria, eventually reaching the City of Aethelgard.

This maid later became a top hostess in a bar in the City of Aethelgard and caught the eye of Zelda Willow's father, who kept her as a mistress.

The maid considered abandoning Isabelle Willow, since having a burden like her would hinder her prospects. However, things soon turned bleak as Zelda's mother, Mrs. Willow, quickly discovered this mistress and started to suppress and persecute her, even banning her from the City of Aethelgard.

The maid lost her job, had no friends, and Zelda's father soon tired of her, beginning to abandon her. Desperate, she devised a plan, falsely claiming she was pregnant and giving birth to a daughter, who she claimed was Princess Isabelle Willow of the Royal Family of The State of Westria. From then on, Isabelle was labelled as the Willow family's illegitimate daughter.

But having a daughter like Isabelle did not change her life situation, especially since she was a girl and not a boy; Zelda's father showed little concern for Isabelle. Misfortunes never come singly, as the maid was also diagnosed with a benign tumor that, while not fatal, required long-term treatment to prevent it from worsening, meaning she needed a lot of money.

When the maid was at her wit's end, Isabelle grew up slowly. As a little girl, she was always well-behaved and quiet, knowing by the age of two or three to fetch a stool, pour some water, and wipe the maid's body.

Then, Zelda Willow, the young lady of the Willow family, was diagnosed with an illness that required a close relative to match her marrow and blood type. The maid knew about this and immediately pushed Isabelle out there.

The hospital test revealed that Isabelle's marrow was a 100% match with Zelda's, and they even shared the same blood type. Thus, Isabelle became Zelda's blood donor.

At that time, Isabelle was still very young but sensible. Each time she returned from the Willow family, she was covered in injuries, with her tender arms and thighs bearing rough needle marks.

Once, after donating marrow, Isabelle returned pale and trembling. She handed over the money given by the Willows with a smile, saying, "Mom, I brought the money back."

As soon as she finished speaking, little Isabelle fell to the ground with a smile.

This was essentially Isabelle's entire childhood.

Later, when it was time to attend elementary school, Zelda, because of her condition, could not be exposed to light. Skipping kindergarten was fine, but skipping elementary, middle, and high school would inevitably lead to rumors, labeling Zelda as an illiterate who couldn't integrate into the high society of Aethelgard's elite ladies, thus ruining her chances of a good marriage and her entire life.

So, the Willow family came up with a solution. As Isabelle and Zelda grew older, they began to look more and more alike. Zelda eventually underwent micro-cosmetic surgery to recreate Isabelle's face, rendering the two sisters indistinguishable.

According to the Willow family's requirements, Isabelle officially replaced Zelda, entering elementary school under Zelda's name and appearing in the public eye.

Who would have expected that Isabelle was a genius girl? Her academic performance was exceptional, skipping grades one after another. Young Isabelle, in her prime, stunned the entire City of Aethelgard with her talent. Later, at eighteen, she established her own jewelry brand, Fly, became a fashion icon with each new collection highly anticipated, and officially embarked on an extraordinary life.

Eventually, Isabelle met Jude Crawford, the eldest son of the Crawford family in the business world. The Willow sisters experienced a tortuous love story with Jude Crawford.

At the story's end, Isabelle leaped from a high platform at Jill's house into a mighty river, disappearing for over twenty years.

The false mother, the maid, having lost her daughter's financial support, fell back into poverty. Recently, she returned home to the State of Westria and now lives in a shabby little house.

The maid was critically ill, lying in bed, coughing ceaselessly, waiting for Isabelle.

Isabelle is supposed to come back to see her for the last time today.

Cough, cough~

At this time, Axel Ashworth and Kaleb Newman were already lurking around, waiting patiently. Listening to the maid's aged cough, Kaleb whispered, "King of Nine Peaks, it's getting late. How come the baby girl from back then, the Grand Princess, hasn't appeared yet?"

Axel glanced at the night scene, "I have a feeling tonight won't go smoothly... Let's wait a bit more."

"Yes."

Just then, an abnormal noise came from the ear. Several jeeps raced in, and a squad of black-clad bodyguards disembarked. "Hurry inside, surround this little broken house!"

What's going on?

Axel and Kaleb's expressions changed. They were here, waiting for the Grand Princess, but who would have thought that while the mantis stalks the cicada, the oriole waits behind, another group came to surround them.

"Who are these people? I'll go out and see." Kaleb was about to step forward.

But Axel grabbed Kaleb, "Chief Newman, Kyle Ashworth has arrived!"

What?

Why did Kyle Ashworth come here?

Sure enough, Kyle Ashworth came storming in, commanding, "Quick, kick open this little door. I need to catch Kaleb, alive too!"

Kyle Ashworth came because he had received secret intel, claiming that Kaleb was hiding here, hence he immediately led his men over.

With a bang, the small house's door was kicked open. Kyle Ashworth walked in but did not see Kaleb, only a critically ill old woman lying on the bed, leaving him deeply disappointed, "Who are you; where's Kaleb? No matter, take this old woman back!"

"Who... who are you people? Cough, cough, where is my daughter... cough, cough..." The elderly maid struggled in fear.

What daughter?

Kyle Ashworth suspected this old woman might have an infectious disease due to her persistent coughing, disdainfully covering his mouth and nose with a handkerchief, impatiently urging, "Take her away! Bring her to the royal family for Father to decide!"

"Yes, Prince Kyle."

Two black-clad bodyguards took the elderly maid away, and Kyle Ashworth, having achieved nothing, also got into a car and left, heading straight to the royal family.

After they all left, Axel and Kaleb reappeared, their expressions somewhat grim. They didn't expect that tonight they wouldn't catch the Grand Princess, and the person was taken away by Kyle Ashworth!

Chapter 585: Bitch, You Just Love Seducing Men!

Today's plan has changed, catching them off guard.

"King of Nine Peaks, how did Kyle Ashworth find out I was here? I suspect someone intentionally leaked the information," Kaleb Newman said.

Axel Ashworth nodded, "Indeed, it seems that regarding the Crown Princess's lineage, there is a mysterious force secretly involved."

Where does this mysterious force come from?

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The Royal Palace.

Kyle Ashworth escorted the elderly maid in. Titus Ashworth was in a meeting and would come later.

Recently, Titus was overwhelmed with worry. He thought he had resolved matters perfectly by arranging a marriage between Kyle Ashworth and Rosalind Newman, but Rosaline had run away. Just as he was planning to eliminate Kaleb Newman, Kaleb had also fled, angering Titus so much that he returned and kicked Kyle again.

The royal family's reputation has been quite poor lately, with Kaleb and Rosalind Newman being a significant hidden threat. Titus is now fully chasing after the father and daughter.

So when Kyle received a tip-off that Kaleb was in that little broken house, he saw it as a chance to redeem himself by immediately capturing him, only to bring back an old woman.

Kyle was displeased.

The elderly maid was roughly thrown to the ground. Over the years, Isabelle Willow had treated her like a mother, even after disappearing for over twenty years, she left her with a large sum of money to spoil herself. If it weren't for a past lover running off with her money recently, she wouldn't be so destitute now.

The old maid looked at the familiar palace with clouded eyes, trembling with fear, muttering, "Let me go, my daughter... will come see me, my daughter is very powerful, and you cannot afford to offend her... when she returns, I'll live a good life again..."

Kyle Ashworth was bored waiting for Titus, and now hearing the old woman repeatedly mention her daughter, as though she was someone notable, he casually asked, "Old woman, who is your daughter?"

"If I tell you, you must let me go back. I don't want to stay here. My daughter is..."

Before the old woman could finish, a clear and melodious voice suddenly sounded beside her ear, "Your Highness Kyle, long time no see."

Kyle turned his head to see a stunningly beautiful figure appear in his sight — Serena Sterling had arrived!

Seeing Serena, Kyle's eyes brightened; now all his thoughts and emotions were filled with Serena, wishing he could possess this peerless beauty.

"Princess of Alani, what brings you here?" Kyle asked.

Serena approached, her lips curving into a smile, "Of course, I came because the Lord summoned me to discuss the engagement date with the King of Nine Peaks."

"You're getting engaged to Axel Ashworth?"

Serena nodded, "Yes."

Kyle wanted to speak, but at that moment the old maid lying on the ground coughed and interrupted, "Listen to me, my daughter is truly remarkable, if you need to investigate then... investigate her, she has nothing to do with me, my daughter is..."

"Your Highness Kyle," Serena chimed in at the right moment, cutting off Kyle's words as she casually glanced at the old maid, asking indifferently, "Who is this old woman? Could it be she has tuberculosis with all that coughing? That can be contagious."

What?

When Kyle heard the word "contagious," his expression changed, and he immediately gestured for two guards, "Take this old lady away quickly, and bring her back after father finishes his meeting."

"Yes, Your Highness Kyle." The two guards promptly dragged the old maid away.

The old maid still wanted to speak, mumbling something, but Kyle had no intention of listening.

Now only Serena and Kyle were left. Being next to the beauty, Kyle was immediately eager, approaching Serena and reaching out to embrace her, "Princess of Alani, why are you insistent on marrying Axel Ashworth? In what way am I inferior to Axel?"

Serena deftly avoided Kyle's lecherous hands, stating firmly, "Your Highness Kyle, show some respect, this is the royal palace!"

Kyle liked Serena's unblemished demeanor, wishing he could strip away her exterior to see her most fiery side.

Kyle felt the time was right; Serena had come to the palace at this time to be alone with him. There were only the two of them here, and he could do as he pleased.

Truly, heaven was helping him, hahaha.

"Princess of Alani," Kyle's eyes shone with lust, as he eagerly moved closer, rubbing his hands in anticipation, "Don't marry Axel, marry me. I've liked you, admired you for a long time, become my queen consort, and I promise to cherish you dearly."

Serena retreated, quickly finding herself backed against a wall, looking at Kyle with a clear and cold gaze, "Your Highness Kyle, don't come any closer. If you come closer, I'll call for help. The repercussions of estrangement between you and the King of Nine Peaks, and the friendship between Westria and Alani breaking will be severe!"

Kyle was not afraid at all; now he only wanted to conquer Serena. Serena had already stirred his desire to conquer.

"Hahaha, Princess of Alani, who are you trying to scare? Go ahead and shout, shout as loud as you can. If anyone barges in, I'll claim you seduced me, and then I'll have my father arrange our marriage, and you'll be mine!" With that, Kyle lunged at Serena.

Serena had already timed it well, as Kyle approached, she suddenly kned him swiftly and accurately between the legs.

Ah!

Kyle, unprepared, was hit directly.

The piercing pain made him let out a wail, akin to a slaughtered pig, as cold sweat broke out on his forehead, "Princess of Alani, you!"

Just then, with a "thud," the door opened, and someone walked in, "Your Highness Kyle, Your Highness Kyle, where are you?"

It was Consort Melinda, another of Titus Ashworth's favored consorts.

Melinda, only 20 years old, was around the same age as Titus's daughter, with fair skin, a beautiful face, and long legs, whom Titus favored greatly.

Melinda's own stomach was particularly cooperative, having become pregnant half a year ago, now five months along with a big belly.

Titus was quite proud to have his consort pregnant at his age, proving that he was still very capable, so he valued Melinda's pregnancy highly.

After Melinda gives birth, he plans to throw a grand banquet to show everyone how competent Titus Ashworth is.

Melinda had heard Kyle was here and eagerly came over, now seeing Serena and Kyle together. Her face immediately changed, pointing at Serena and cursing, "You slut, always seducing men. His Highness Kyle is not someone you can seduce!"

Chapter 586: Once the Whole World of That Little Girl

Consort Melinda came in, looking arrogant and overbearing.

Serena Sterling glanced at her indifferently, then curled her red lips into a slight arc, "Consort Melinda, you may be the master's favorite consort, but why are you so tense about Prince Kyle's matters?"

Consort Melinda then realized she had overreacted, quickly covering herself, "As the master's favorite consort, naturally I'm like a stepmother to Prince Kyle. I've seen many vixens like you clinging to Prince Kyle, all wanting to become a phoenix."

"Like a stepmother?" Serena Sterling repeated these four words with interest, her clear eyes glancing between Consort Melinda and Kyle Ashworth.

Kyle Ashworth's face was pale now, his mood at rock bottom, another day where he hadn't achieved anything but trouble.

Now seeing Serena Sterling's brilliant eyes darting between the two of them, Kyle Ashworth had the illusion of being caught by Serena Sterling. He quickly spoke up, "Consort Melinda, behave yourself, this lady is not a palace maid but the Princess of Alani."

Princess of Alani?

So she was the Princess of Alani!

Consort Melinda stared at Serena Sterling with jealousy and hostility, sarcastically remarked, "So you are the Princess of Alani. I thought the Princess of Alani was pure and noble, but it turns out you like to play coy between men, waltzing between Prince Kyle and the King of Nine Peaks."

Serena Sterling wasn't angry. Instead, she raised her refined willow eyebrows, "Even if I play coy between men, it's none of Consort Melinda's business, is it? Consort Melinda should retract her saintly heart and take care of her belly."

"You!"

Consort Melinda was lost for words by Serena Sterling's sharp tongue, as the latter's status as Princess of Alani definitely overshadowed a minor consort like her.

Consort Melinda immediately held her belly, "Oh dear, my stomach hurts. Princess of Alani, you've upset me to the point of stomach pain. Do you know how much the master values this child? If anything happens to the child in my belly, you're doomed."

Serena Sterling looked at Consort Melinda, "Enough with the acting, save some energy. Later, when the master arrives, act it out for him."

After speaking, Serena Sterling turned and walked out.

Seeing Serena Sterling leave, Kyle Ashworth wanted to chase after, "Princess of Alani!"

But Consort Melinda reached out, grabbing Kyle Ashworth, "Prince Kyle, why are you chasing that Princess of Alani? They say you're already enamored with her, is it true?"

Kyle Ashworth, entangled, could only stop. He immediately tried to push Consort Melinda away, cautiously reminding, "Consort Melinda, this is the palace, let go quickly!"

Seeing Kyle Ashworth's heart was no longer with her, Consort Melinda stomped her foot, "Kyle Ashworth, now you're afraid, where were you earlier? You were happy when you were with me in bed, weren't you?"

Kyle Ashworth immediately covered Consort Melinda's mouth, "Please, be quieter, I'm begging you."

Consort Melinda, taking advantage, nestled in Kyle Ashworth's arms, coquettishly said, "Then accompany me for a while, you haven't been in the palace for quite some time, I had no chance to see you, now the baby is over five months, carrying a child is hard~"

...

Serena Sterling quickly walked out, Cherie followed in the corridor, whispering, "Princess, that old woman is locked in this room, I just sent the two guards at the door away."

Serena Sterling nodded, "Good."

She pushed open the door and went in.

In the room, the old maid was still rudely thrown onto the cold ground; she was really in her last stages of illness, unable to move on her own.

Serena Sterling walked in, the old maid looked at Serena Sterling, "Who, who are you... let me see Prince Kyle quickly, this is the palace, I... I'm back again, they must know I took the princess away back then, they want to kill me..."

"Don't kill me, I'll confess everything, the princess from back then is... is Isabelle Willow, you all go catch Yara... as long as you won't kill me, I can help you catch her... Yara promised to come back to see me, you can catch her then..."

The old maid struggled on the ground, vaguely revealing everything, indeed she was vain and afraid of death.

Serena Sterling squatted down slowly, it was all part of her plan today.

First, she informed Kyle Ashworth, successfully using Kyle Ashworth to bring the old maid out from the clutches of Axel Ashworth and Kaleb Newman.

Then she entered the palace, knowing Kyle Ashworth's interest in her was definitely greater than that in the old maid, giving her the chance to deal with the maid.

Serena Sterling extended her delicate hand, felt the old maid's pulse, then quickly withdrew her hand, softly saying, "You're running out of time, won't live more than a quarter of an hour."

What?

The old maid was stunned, she quickly grabbed Serena Sterling's dress, like clutching at a life-saving straw, "I... I don't want to die, save me, I beg you to save me... I want to see my daughter, she'll save me..."

Serena Sterling's clear eyes were crystal clear, looking at the old maid without joy or sorrow, "You won't be able to see Aunt Yara again, I'm here in her stead to see you one last time."

"Who, who are you... no, I want to see Yara!"

"Aunt Yara is the princess of The State of Westria, having lived a life of hardship, with few kin, she cherishes you particularly as her mother," Serena Sterling looked at the old maid, her voice gentle, "As a daughter,

Aunt Yara never owed you anything. She repaid your nurturing kindness long ago, yet as a mother, at the end of your life, you still thought to push your daughter out to take the blow for you, how heartless. Think about whether you ever gave Aunt Yara a bit of motherly love over the years. Yara is also her biological mother's treasured darling, protected with her own life, are you worthy of your only friend's dying trust?"

With that, Serena Sterling gently but resolutely drew back her dress sleeve from the old maid's hand, stood up, her skirt falling to the ground without a speck of dust, "You did save Aunt Yara's life, so rest assured, Yara will collect your body after your death, ensuring you're not exposed to the elements or left unburied, as repayment for your life-saving grace back then."

Serena Sterling left.

The old maid stared blankly at Serena Sterling's retreating figure, her cloudy eyes suddenly welled with large tears.

It's said that when one is about to die, their words are kind. The old maid suddenly remembered many years ago, when Yara was still young, with two little braids always following her, sweetly and happily calling her mommy~ mommy~

She used to be the world to that little girl.

Chapter 587: Hiding Beside His Legs

The old maid lay on the ground, sobbing.

At this moment, the door was opened again, and two guards dressed in black entered, dragging the old maid away. "The lord has finished the court assembly and will question you now."

Soon, the old maid was brought before Titus Ashworth, who had just stepped down from the assembly and was worried about capturing Kaleb Newman and Rosalind Newman. He looked down at the old maid and asked coldly, "Speak, what is your relationship with Kaleb? Where is Kaleb hiding now?"

The old maid looked at Titus Ashworth, trembling all over in fear.

Then Titus Ashworth squinted slightly, walked to the old maid, and suspiciously asked, "Why do I feel like... you look familiar? Have I seen you before?"

The old maid was filled with dread, her two aged hands feebly scratching at the floor, but she quickly lowered her head and slowly shook it, "I... don't know you, cough cough."

The old maid suddenly coughed up a mouthful of blood.

Blood splattered on Titus Ashworth's shoes, making him furious, and he kicked the old maid in the chest. "Old hag, how dare you dirty my shoes!"

Servants quickly stepped forward and crouched down to wipe Titus Ashworth's shoes with a clean handkerchief.

"Lord, this old woman has lost her breath and is dead."

The old maid was kicked two meters away by Titus Ashworth and now lay motionless on the ground, dead.

Feeling irritated, Titus Ashworth waved his hand. He had felt the old maid looked familiar, but she hadn't said anything before dying and even dirtied his shoes, dispelling any doubts he had. "Throw this old woman into the mass grave."

"Yes, Lord."

The guards came and carried the old maid away.

...

Serena was still in the palace when Cherie quietly reported, "Princess, that old woman is dead."

Serena was not surprised; she had already known while checking her pulse that her time was near. "Did she say anything before she died?"

Cherie shook her head, "No, originally Titus Ashworth felt the old woman looked familiar, but she clung firmly to her silence."

Serena wondered if her earlier words had awakened the old woman's last shred of conscience. Her mother-daughter bond with Aunt Yara ended with her protection of Aunt Yara. "I understand. Notify Aunt Yara and ask her to retrieve the body from the mass grave."

"Yes." Cherie quickly retreated.

Serena also wanted to leave, but then she heard footsteps approaching from afar, someone coming.

Who is it?

Serena swiftly heard Melody Ashworth's charming voice, "Mr. Crawford, this is my mother, Consort Willow. My mother has long wanted to meet you, so she invited you to the palace today for a chat."

Soon, Consort Willow's voice was heard, "Mr. Crawford, a pleasure to meet you."

"Consort Willow, you're too kind." Hayden Crawford's distinctive deep and magnetic voice gradually came over.

Serena's long lashes trembled; she didn't expect Hayden Crawford to enter the palace today and be directly invited by Consort Willow.

Since arriving in The State of Westria, Consort Willow had not appeared before her, clearly not considering her worth her attention. But now, Consort Willow personally invited Hayden Crawford, showing how highly she regarded him. What does Consort Willow want?

When did Consort Willow start focusing on Hayden Crawford?

Does Consort Willow know something?

"Mr. Crawford, let's not talk here, let's go inside to chat." Consort Willow suggested at this time.

Serena quickly opened the door to a room and slipped inside, realizing the three people were also approaching, and in a hurry, she hid under a coffee table.

Just as she hid, Hayden Crawford, Consort Willow, and Melody Ashworth entered.

Consort Willow said, "Mr. Crawford, please sit. Melody, serve the tea."

In front of Consort Willow, Melody Ashworth maintained her charming daughter's demeanor, shyly and adoringly glanced at Hayden Crawford, then obediently went to make tea, personally brewing it.

Today, Hayden Crawford wore a well-cut, exquisite black suit, the high-quality fabric pressed without a hint of wrinkle, handsome and noble. His every move was filled with elegance, his restrained yet powerful presence perfectly fitting the opulent royal environment.

Hayden Crawford intended to sit down but noticed a small portion of a white chiffon dress under the coffee table — someone was hiding there!

Hayden Crawford raised his long, narrow brow slightly, a few playful expressions flickering in his handsome eyes. He discreetly nudged the portion of the white chiffon dress underneath with the tip of his polished leather shoe.

"Mr. Crawford, sit here," suggested Consort Willow.

"No need, I'll sit here." Hayden Crawford bent his legs and sat on the dark red sofa in front of the coffee table.

Serena, hiding under the coffee table, didn't want to be exposed, but Hayden Crawford actually sat down, lifting her clear eyes directly to see Hayden Crawford's flawless handsome face.

Now, Hayden Crawford also lowered his gaze, looking at her.

Their eyes met, Serena crouched beside his legs, appearing like a cute, soft little darling, while Hayden Crawford looked down with interest, like her owner playfully teasing her.

Serena's little head exploded with a "boom." He had evidently noticed her already and deliberately sat down here now.

She was now curled up in a cramped space, a bit embarrassed, while his two impressive long legs dangled before her, very close, and she felt her little face had brushed against his sharply tailored black trousers.

Serena wanted to retreat, but she couldn't move back any further.

At this moment, Consort Willow's voice reached her ears, "Mr. Crawford, inviting you over today is to discuss matters between you and my daughter Melody. Mr. Crawford should know Melody likes you very much and had love at first sight, eager to become your wife. What does Mr. Crawford mean, do you like Melody?"

While making tea, Melody Ashworth heard the words, shyly glanced at Consort Willow, pouting and whining, "Mother~"

Then Melody Ashworth expectantly looked at Hayden Crawford, waiting for his answer.

Serena's heart skipped a beat; she hadn't expected Consort Willow to be so straightforward, impatiently wanting to marry off Melody Ashworth to Hayden Crawford.

Serena raised her palm-sized, exquisite face, looking at Hayden Crawford.

Everyone was waiting for Hayden Crawford's answer, his gaze falling on Serena's face. She was also waiting for his answer, their proximity causing her face to approach him a bit more. His long legs weren't elegantly crossed but stretched forward; now her little face was close to the crotch of his trousers, her orchid-like breath brushing over it.

Chapter 588: He Made Her Meow Like a Cat

Hayden Crawford's eyes darkened a bit.

Why wasn't he speaking?

Did he really plan to marry Melody Ashworth?

Serena Sterling shifted slightly, and her innocent eyes accidentally landed on his trousers, only to see that part of him distinctly outlined, already...

Oh my God!

What was he thinking right now?

Serena's stunning little face, the size of a palm, immediately blushed as red as a boiled shrimp, ready to drip blood.

She pulled back her tiny head, moving away from him, farther and farther.

Hayden observed her retreating, fearful manner and immediately pressed his thin lips together, speaking with a hint of displeasure, "Consort Willow, Princess Melody, I currently don't have any plans to marry."

He rejected them directly.

Serena's previously tense heart swiftly relaxed.

Melody Ashworth, who had been full of expectation, was now very disappointed being rejected by Hayden. Consort Willow, however, displayed no particular emotion, only smiled and said, "Mr. Crawford, Melody is deeply in love with you. Regarding your marriage with Melody, there's no need to rush your response to me. As long as Mr. Crawford is unmarried, Melody will wait for you."

Serena saw Consort Willow lowering her stance so much. Melody Ashworth is currently the most noble princess in The State of Westria. People who want to become her prince consort could probably line up from here to the Huangpu River. But Consort Willow specifically chose Hayden, striving to push Melody Ashworth towards him.

Serena's bright eyes revealed a hint of sharpness. Consort Willow comes from the Merfolk Clan, and she had been lurking in Westria for years, bewitching Titus Ashworth. So, does she know about Hayden Crawford's lineage?

It seems that the Merfolk Clan intervened in Westria and Alani earlier than she imagined. Truly, a centipede dies but never falls down.

Hayden sat on the dark-red sofa, elegantly and lazily leaning his strong back against the sofa back, exuding an extraordinary aura, "Consort Willow, Princess Melody, whether you wait or not is your matter, you don't need to tell me. Not wanting to get married is my matter."

Hayden's few words were simple and indifferent.

Consort Willow looked at Hayden. Although rejected, her eyes were filled with a satisfied smile. As expected of someone with the blood of a noble, truly extraordinary.

"Mr. Crawford, I still have matters to attend to, so I'll take my leave. Melody, you go make some tea for Mr. Crawford." Consort Willow left, leaving the space to Hayden and Melody Ashworth.

Melody Ashworth walked over and looked at Hayden, "Mr. Crawford, have you not forgotten Sister Serena yet? Do you still like her in your heart?"

Serena's heart skipped a beat upon hearing this question. She lifted her small face and looked at Hayden.

In his heart... is there still a place for her?

Hayden's gaze swept over Serena's exquisite little face, and he spoke indifferently, "It's all in the past, past matters and past people. Why bring it up now?"

He didn't want to talk about her.

Serena's bright eyes slowly dimmed. She already knew the answer; he and she were already in the past, and there was no going back.

The happiest one was Melody Ashworth. Melody came over, sat beside Hayden, and in a bird-like, soft voice, she joked, "Actually, I really like Sister Serena, but feelings can't be forced. Sister Serena doesn't like you now either. I heard my father has already set the wedding date, and in a few days, Sister Serena and Brother Axel are about to get engaged."

Serena felt anxious upon hearing Melody's tricky words; seeing Melody sitting over, she was worried that she would be discovered at any moment.

At this moment, the vision blacked out; Hayden moved, his two long legs pressing forward, directly trapping Serena in a small corner.

This way, Melody couldn't see her, but Serena had to curl up even more tightly, snug against his leg.

The position was even more intimate. Serena didn't know if Hayden was doing it on purpose; his trouser front was just beside her little face.

Serena's face flushed again, steaming with heat, and she practically held her breath, not daring to touch him even a little.

Though talking to Melody Ashworth, Hayden's entire attention was focused on the small bundle hidden by his leg, "The engagement date for the Princess of Alani and the King of Nine Peaks is so soon, it's happening in a few days?"

"Yes, I heard it was Sister Serena's suggestion. Sister Serena is eager to marry Brother Axel, the sooner, the better." Melody said playfully and naively.

Hayden's narrow eyes suddenly narrowed. Was she really so eager to marry Axel Ashworth?

Soon, Hayden curved his thin lips into an amused yet dangerous arc. He shifted, pressing his legs closer.

Serena was deliberately avoiding him, but suddenly something poked her little face, hot and hard.

Her bright pupils suddenly contracted, Serena's long lashes trembling chaotically. What was he doing, was he crazy, with Melody just beside him, and yet he... acted so shamelessly.

Despicable, lewd!

Serena quickly extended her small hand, pressed on his leg, trying to push him a bit away.

But she couldn't push him away. The man's calf seemed to contain endless strength, all solid muscle, like a wall, no matter how hard she pushed, it did not budge an inch.

Serena bit her red lips lightly with her teeth. She stretched her hand, fiercely pinching his calf muscle.

Hayden was teasing her on purpose. She was so eager to marry Axel Ashworth, his robust chest surged with rage, along with his evil playfulness towards her.

However, he found that he himself was the one suffering in the end. She was now at his leg side, in an ambiguous position, making him wish he could make this troublesome Melody disappear right now and then pull Serena up to harshly deal with her once.

He hadn't expected Serena to pinch him hard, this really hurt.

His little kitten, when angry, could really bite.

Hiss.

Hayden took a breath, his heroic brows furrowing.

Melody Ashworth quickly showed a puzzled expression, "Mr. Crawford, what's wrong with you?"

Hiding under the coffee table, Serena quickly stopped her actions. It's over; she was about to be exposed.

At this moment, Hayden's deep magnetic voice resonated in her ear, with a hint of amusement, "I don't know, seems like...a little kitten took a bite out of me."

"Little kitten?" Melody looked around, "There's no cat here."

"I think there is, Princess Melody. Didn't you hear the little kitten's meow?"

Serena, "...". She had every reason to suspect that Hayden was doing it on purpose, actually making her meow like a cat.

But with Melody here, she couldn't refuse.

Chapter 589: Hayden Crawford's Supreme Handsome Charm

This Hayden Crawford is really too much!

Serena Sterling could only mimic a cat and let out a meow~

Meow~

Melody Ashworth naturally heard the cat's meow, "I heard a cat's meow, but it seems no one in the palace keeps a cat, and it feels like the sound came from here..."

Saying this, Melody Ashworth lowered her head, looking for the little cat.

At this moment, Hayden Crawford spoke nonchalantly. Everything was his doing, yet his handsome face showed no sign of tension or panic, it was very composed, "I hear the meow seems to come from outside. The little kitten's meow sounds nice. Princess Melody, could you please go outside and find the kitten for me? I'd like to take it home, is that okay?"

Hayden Crawford's deep and narrow eyes were calmly fixed on Melody Ashworth's pretty face. A man like Hayden, with his vast experience and powerful status, looking at a girl so gently, would give that girl an illusion of deep feelings, making her unwittingly imagine an emotional drama.

Moreover, Melody Ashworth seldom received such a direct gaze from Hayden Crawford. Being looked at by him like this, she immediately felt ecstatic, about to swoon.

She was completely seduced by Hayden Crawford's exceptional good looks, and now whatever he asked her to do, she couldn't refuse.

"Okay, I'll go out to catch the cat for you now. No matter whose cat it is, I'll get it for you. Mr. Crawford, wait for me~" Melody Ashworth cheerfully went out.

...

Melody Ashworth left, and now only Hayden Crawford and Serena were left, it was safe.

Serena Sterling moved, wanting to come out, but Hayden Crawford remained unmoved, clearly not wanting to let her out.

"Hayden Crawford, move away, let me out!" Serena Sterling lifted her little face, her bright eyes glaring at him angrily.

Hayden Crawford clicked his tongue twice, looking down at her, then stretched out his hand to pinch her blushing cheek, "Princess of Alani, I just saved you, and this is how you thank me?"

He did save her, but he also teased her. Thinking about his indecent and lewd behavior just now made Serena Sterling angry.

"Then thank you, is that enough? Can you let me out now?"

Hayden Crawford held her small face in his palm, his gaze falling on the three-petal flower on her forehead. When she left Aethelgard, she did not have this three-petal flower, but now she did, and it complemented her ethereal, pristine appearance, elevating her beauty to another level.

She truly was becoming more and more beautiful.

"Just saying thank you is too insincere, let's change it," Hayden Crawford feigned thinking, "You imitated a little cat's meow very well earlier, do it again for me now."

"..." Serena Sterling felt a rush of indignation, he had her crouching by his knees, meowing like a cat just for his amusement.

Serena Sterling realized he had changed, becoming mischievous, and more playful.

"I don't want to!" Serena Sterling refused.

"Really? Then perhaps... let's find another way to thank me."

What kind of way?

Serena Sterling looked at him, confused, only to see Hayden Crawford release her face, but his hand moved to his belt, about to undo it.

Wait... wait a minute, what's he doing?

The blush on Serena Sterling's face spread to her snow-white earlobes, immediately compromising, "Hayden Crawford, stop messing around, I'll meow... Meow~"

Serena Sterling truly imitated the cat's meow again.

This meow was quite humiliating.

Hayden Crawford patted her little head, "Good girl."

"..." Serena Sterling pushed him away, scrambling out from the coffee table.

As she came in contact with the fresh air outside, Serena Sterling quickly stood up. This place wasn't safe to stay, and she didn't want to get entangled with Hayden Crawford, so she opened the door and quickly left.

...

In the corridor, Cherie came up to her, "Princess, where did you go just now? I was worried you'd be discovered."

Serena Sterling adjusted her skirt, "No worries, let's head back."

"Yes."

Serena Sterling, with Cherie, was about to leave the palace when two people approached from the front—Consort Willow and Consort Melinda.

"Oh, isn't this the Princess of Alani? Consort Willow, let me introduce you, this is the famous Princess of Alani, the future betrothed of the King of Nine Peaks," Consort Melinda said sarcastically.

Serena Sterling directly ignored Consort Melinda, turning her gaze to Consort Willow. If the earlier encounter didn't count, this was her first official meeting with Consort Willow.

Consort Willow was very beautiful, with a small bell hanging at her waist, crisp and melodious, without using the Bewitching Technique.

"You are the Princess of Alani?" Consort Willow looked Serena Sterling up and down scornfully, clearly not considering Serena Sterling on the same level as herself, "Where is your mother, Seraphina Linden? Why didn't she come?"

Serena Sterling stood tall, slowly curling her red lips, "In a few days, my engagement party with the King of Nine Peaks will happen, my mommy will naturally come, but Consort Willow, are you really prepared for my mommy's arrival?"

Saying this, Serena Sterling leaned in closer to Consort Willow's ear and whispered, "Aren't you afraid that your reigning glory in the palace will disappear from now on?"

How much Titus Ashworth adored Seraphina Linden was no secret, everyone knew.

If Seraphina Linden arrives, it will certainly threaten Consort Willow's favor.

Consort Willow's elevated face suddenly turned ugly.

Just then, the steady sound of footsteps was heard, Hayden Crawford arrived.

Hayden Crawford's deep and narrow eyes locked onto Serena Sterling and Consort Willow.

"Consort Willow, I have something to do, I'm leaving now." Serena Sterling left directly.

Hayden Crawford also left immediately after.

At this time, Consort Melinda said indignantly, "Consort Willow, this Serena Sterling is really too arrogant, daring to defy you."

Consort Willow watched Serena Sterling's disappearing figure and sneered, "Let her be arrogant for a few days, at her engagement party with the King of Nine Peaks..."

Consort Willow cast her gaze on Consort Melinda's prominently swollen belly, then slowly extended her hand to stroke Consort Melinda's belly, "The leader cherishes this child so much that if at the engagement party Serena Sterling were to kill this child herself, the leader would surely be enraged. Harming the royal offspring is a capital offense."

Saying this, Consort Willow revealed a sinister smile, as terrifying as a scorpion, "Keeping this child for so long, it's time to make use of his value."

Consort Melinda and Consort Willow were in cahoots. It was Consort Willow who chose Consort Melinda, giving her the opportunity to enter the palace and enjoy wealth and honor.

It was also Consort Willow who provided Consort Melinda with the pills, ensuring her pregnancy.

Chapter 590: Stay Overnight at My Place Tonight

Consort Melinda had known from the start that she and the child were just pawns, and now it was time to sacrifice the child in her belly.

But...

Consort Melinda felt a deep reluctance because this child was the result of her love with... the man she adored. Moreover, she was more than five months pregnant, and feeling the baby's movements had become a daily habit.

"Consort Willow, I..." Consort Melinda hesitated.

"What is it?" Consort Willow cast a sinister glance at Consort Melinda. "Do you have any objections?"

Consort Melinda's face turned pale. She feared Consort Willow greatly and immediately shook her head, "No, whatever you say, I will comply."

Only then did Consort Willow withdraw her hand, "That's good. Consort Melinda, you must understand this game doesn't give you any choice. Obey my commands, and you can continue to enjoy your current wealth and power. But if anything goes wrong, if you ruin my plan, you'll face the consequences!"

Consort Melinda was trembling in fear.

...

Serena Sterling left the royal palace and walked toward her luxurious nanny car. At this moment, Hayden Crawford approached her, speaking in a low voice, "Are you really going to get engaged to Axel Ashworth?"

Why was he here? Like a ghost that wouldn't leave.

Did he come over just to question her about the engagement to Axel Ashworth?

Serena nodded, "Yes, Mr. Crawford, I have other matters, so I'll be going." Cherie had already respectfully opened the rear door, and Serena was about to get in the car.

However, at that moment, a large, defined hand reached out, grabbing her delicate wrist. Hayden pulled her close and pushed her forward, directly pinning her against the body of the luxury car.

Serena, completely unprepared, looked up only to meet Hayden's dark and displeased handsome face. He dominantly trapped her between his strong chest and the car.

Serena quickly furrowed her eyebrows and began to struggle, "Hayden Crawford, what are you doing? Let go of me immediately. We are still outside the palace, and someone will see us."

Hayden let out a soft scoff from his throat, "What are you afraid of? Afraid that if Axel Ashworth learns about our relationship, you won't become the King of Nine Peaks' consort?"

Cherie saw her princess being restrained by Hayden Crawford, and her expression changed drastically, "Mr. Crawford, please release Her Highness immediately, otherwise..."

"Otherwise what?" Hayden gently lifted his handsome eyelid and gave Cherie a cold glance.

Cherie, who was used to seeing big scenes as Serena's lady-in-waiting, suddenly felt an unfamiliar fear under Hayden's gaze.

"Cherie, stand down," Serena commanded.

"Yes, Your Highness," Cherie could only comply.

Serena lifted her bright eyes to look at Hayden Crawford, "Hayden Crawford, what exactly do you want to do? There's nothing left between us. You have so many other women by your side. If you're only here to avenge me, for entangling me, then in the City of Aethelgard, I've accompanied you a few times already in that regard. What more do you want? Hayden Crawford, let me go, and let yourself go too."

Hayden's narrow eyes were as impenetrable as ink, "Are you done?"

"..."

"If you're done, then it's my turn to speak. Serena Sterling, you are not allowed to get engaged to Axel Ashworth. Call off the engagement immediately!"

"I will not call off the engagement," Serena refused firmly.

"Ha," Hayden let out a low, dangerous laugh, leaning closer to her with his tall, imposing figure, "Serena Sterling, what is your purpose in marrying Axel Ashworth, or rather, your purpose in coming to The State of Westria?"

Serena's heart suddenly skipped a beat. Had he guessed something?

"I heard that the disappearance of Alani was due to their ancestor securing the ancient weapon, the Sky Sword, into Alani's foundation. I have studied the old maps, researched them, and if I'm not mistaken, the Sky Sword has now fallen within Westria's royal temple."

"The palace temple is a restricted area, no outsider can enter, but on the day you marry Axel Ashworth, as per ancestral custom, you'll have a chance to go in for the ritual. Then, you can retrieve the Sky Sword, unravel the mystery of Alani's disappearance, and let Alani bask in the sun once more, restoring the kingdom."

"Serena Sterling, am I right?"

Serena's heart was pounding furiously. Even Axel Ashworth couldn't fathom her intentions on this trip, yet Hayden Crawford had figured it out.

Over the years, the Crawford family had become the preeminent business family, while Hayden had risen to be the world's top financier. But being a businessman was merely his surface identity; his covert operations extended into all corners, likely already entangled in Westria's political intrigue.

He held a lot of intelligence, including the sealed secrets of Westria and Alani.

Hayden's eagle-like sharp eyes looked at her, "Serena Sterling, what would happen if I told Axel Ashworth about your plan to extract the Sky Sword? Would Axel Ashworth still marry you? Once the Sky Sword is pulled out, the gravitational forces will trigger an earthquake at Westria's ancestral temple, destroying it. Alani will rise again amidst upheaval. Is Axel Ashworth prepared for this?"

Serena felt alarmingly overwhelmed, realizing this was the first time she saw Hayden Crawford for who he truly was. No matter how she tried to conceal her lineage, within him flowed the hundred-year-old blood that was destined to one day ascend to the supreme throne of Westria, ruling the nation.

With Westria and Alani locked in such an insoluble deadlock, she and he would walk diametrically opposed paths.

Serena's eyelashes trembled slightly, "Hayden Crawford, don't tell Axel Ashworth about this."

Hayden slightly raised his heroic eyebrows, "Why should I help you?"

"What do you want?" Serena asked directly.

Hayden leaned in, his thin lips almost touching her white ear lobe, his voice lowering, "Come to my place tonight, don't go back."

Serena's pupils contracted; he actually wanted... her to spend the night at his place.

Serena wasn't naive and sweet; she wasn't foolish enough to think that spending the night at Hayden's wouldn't involve anything but talking under the covers about stars and life's philosophies, doing nothing more.

"I can't..." Serena said, softly yielding due to her current circumstances, "Hayden Crawford, you can have any woman you want now. Could you stop troubling me... I have my own mission and responsibilities. The Sky Sword is crucial to Alani's restoration; you must not tell Axel Ashworth. And could you refrain from getting involved in these matters, return to Aethelgard..."

As she continued to speak, urging him to leave, Hayden abruptly kissed her passionately on her lips.

He kissed fiercely, intentionally causing her discomfort, and Serena immediately felt her breath being seized. The clean and fresh masculine scent of him overwhelmed her instantly.

Mm.