

Substitute B 671

Chapter 671: How Should I Punish You?

Isabelle Willow left the mansion, but as she walked across the lawn, she felt large raindrops hitting her body. It started raining.

The weather was just fine before, and the forecast didn't mention rain tonight, yet it began to pour.

The rain was heavy, a torrential downpour, and Isabelle had no umbrella, getting soaked almost immediately.

"Madam Yara, it's raining so hard you can't leave. You should go back to the villa and wait for the rain to pass," Butler Thorne came running over with an umbrella.

Isabelle had no other choice. The rain was suspicious and heavy, "Thank you, Butler Thorne."

With no other option, Isabelle returned to the mansion.

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Inside the villa, Isabelle took the towel and wiped the water off her body, just as a deep, magnetic voice came from upstairs, "Go take a hot shower and change those wet clothes."

Isabelle looked up, watching Jude Crawford step out of the study and stand at the top of the stairs, looking down at her.

"No need. I'll leave once the rain eases." Isabelle politely declined.

Jude didn't speak, his dark, profound gaze resting on her.

Isabelle sensitively noticed his gaze wandering over her body. She looked down at herself; her cheongsam was soaked and clinging to her, accentuating her curves even more. The slit in the cheongsam revealed glimpses of her legs, and Hayden Crawford was staring at them.

She had been with Jude too young, only 19, and hadn't interacted with any other men. She was conservative and reserved in this regard.

His intense stare made Isabelle's delicate face flush red, and her almond eyes glared at him fiercely—pervert!

Jude watched her shame and anger with amusement, a smirk curling his thin lips. He realized she hadn't changed—she couldn't handle the slightest teasing from men.

Just a little teasing would make her blush.

"Why are you glaring at me? I kindly suggested you take a shower, and you refused, standing in front of me all wet, isn't it a... wet-body seduction?"

Wet-body what?

Isabelle found him still as shameless and vile—bastard!

"Don't worry, I won't do anything to you now. Have you forgotten the good deeds you did for me?" Jude reminded her again.

Isabelle thought of his condition; from his tone, he might indeed be incapacitated.

Butler Thorne announced, "Madam Yara, the guest room is ready. Please take a shower and change. Sometimes, Young Master Caden also comes back. If you catch a cold, you might pass it to the young master."

His words struck a chord with Isabelle, and she no longer refused. She went up to the guest room.

The guest room door closed, and Butler Thorne walked over to Jude's side, "Sir."

Jude looked at the tightly closed door, "Is the incense lit?"

Butler Thorne nodded, "Yes, it is."

Jude didn't return to his study. He went to his master bedroom to take a shower.

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Isabelle finished a hot shower and came out, finding clothes prepared for her—a nightgown.

Why had they prepared a nightgown?

She looked out; the rain was still pouring down, making it impractical to go out and buy new clothes. So she put on the nightgown.

Then Isabelle caught a faint fragrance in the air, a clear and pleasant scent that seemed to have a calming effect conducive to sleep.

Sitting on the bed, she unwittingly felt drowsy and dozed off in a haze.

Soon, with a gentle creak, the guest room door opened, and Jude Crawford walked in.

Jude had just showered too, wearing a black silk pajama, the mist softening his features, making him appear younger and more handsome than usual.

Jude approached the bed, gazing down at Isabelle.

She was asleep, her long black hair cascading down, some strands tangled on her exquisite face and neck, exuding temptation.

Jude reached out, the rough pad of his finger lightly grazing her face.

Her skin was as white and smooth as ever, maintained beautifully over the years with Seraphina Linden, just like twenty years ago, evoking his fondness.

Jude watched her intently, his deep eyes slowly filling with fervor and obsession. He lowered his head, his thin lips landing on her forehead.

His kiss traveled downwards, from her forehead, eyelids, to her eyes, over her nose wings... finally landing on her soft lips.

He kissed her while tugging at the waist tie of her nightgown, mindful of her tender skin, fearing he'd leave marks that would arouse suspicion.

He knew her body too well. Despite twenty years apart, past intimacy was deeply ingrained, making him adept.

Soon, a melodious phone ringtone broke the silence—Isabelle’s phone rang again.

Once again, it was Chase Sullivan calling.

Jude pressed the button to answer, Chase’s anxious voice coming through quickly, "Yara, I’m coming to find you now. You must stay away from Jude Crawford; he’s a devil with ill intentions for you..."

Before Chase could finish, Jude let out a low, raspy chuckle, "Heh."

Chase froze, "Ju... Jude Crawford..."

"I see you know me quite well," Jude replied, a charming, elegant smile curving his lips.

"Jude Crawford, why are you answering Isabelle’s phone? Where is she? What have you done to her?" Chase promptly questioned.

Jude raised a well-groomed brow, the fine lines at the corners of his eyes easing into an indescribable charisma of a mature man, "Isabelle is asleep next to me. She’s tired and can’t come to the phone."

With that, Jude hung up, and he turned off the phone.

Jude gazed down at the sleeping Isabelle with love and obsession, "Yara, you’ve been so elusive, making me search for you for years. Tell me, how should I punish you?"

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Outside, the rain poured relentlessly.

After an unknown period, a luxury car drove up swiftly, stopping on the lawn outside the villa.

Chase Sullivan had arrived, and getting out, he pounded forcefully on the mansion's door.

But no one answered.

Chase was drenched, cold raindrops pelting down from above, leaving him in disarray and embarrassment. He knew it was deliberate on Jude Crawford's part.

Jude could have simply not answered the phone, but he did, an act of provocation, arrogance.

He must have guessed Chase would come, yet left him outside in the rain, remaining aloof, mysteriously powerful, in control of everything, just like years ago.

Chapter 672: Love, Like a Dream

Chase Sullivan was an orphan who became independent at a young age, and once by chance he met little Isabelle Willow, who was only three at the time, on the street.

Back then, little Isabelle was thin and small, she walked up to him and said, "Big brother, I haven't eaten for a long time, can you share a steamed bun with me?"

At that time he had two steamed buns in his hand, and he generously gave her one.

Little Isabelle took the steamed bun, bowed to him, and in a soft, polite voice said, "Thank you, big brother."

He thought she would eat the bun herself, but little Isabelle just ran to her mother and gave the bun to her.

Her mother immediately ate the bun without leaving any for little Isabelle.

At that time, little Isabelle and her mother had been blacklisted by Mrs. Willow, and the City of Aethelgard had no place for them; they could only sleep on the streets.

That area had many hooligans, and although Isabelle was very young, her small face already had the budding beauty of a future beauty; some unscrupulous men would tease her and take the opportunity to touch her face.

So he took Isabelle and her mother in; although his house was shabby, it provided the mother and daughter with a place to stay.

Little Isabelle was very grateful to him and always called him her brother.

Soon, he learned about Isabelle's background, because the Willow family's heiress, Zelda Willow, was diagnosed with an illness and needed to swap lives with Isabelle.

That day, little Isabelle left him to go to the Willow family, becoming Zelda's shadow, while her mother was admitted to the hospital with a serious illness needing a lot of money, almost like a bottomless pit.

Such a young girl had to bear everything prematurely, but she was neither timid nor confused; she remained quiet and calmly bid farewell to him, "Big brother, I have to leave, go live in a big house, I'll be very well, big brother, don't come to find me or say you know me, I don't want to be a burden to you, fearing you might be in danger, big brother, thank you, I'll remember you for my entire life."

She bowed to him again and then left.

Later, he found a package at home, opened it, and it was full of money that Isabelle got from the Willow family, along with her handwriting: big brother, we should all be doing well.

He knew that Isabelle had always remembered his kindness, although he wasn't well-off himself; she sent money to him, supporting all of his pride and dignity in the gentlest way.

Chase Sullivan knew he had met the best girl in this world.

It was also that day Chase Sullivan vowed to strive and improve, wanting to become rich and become an elite in the future.

From a young age, he had a talent for painting, but it required substantial investment; he used the money Isabelle left him to find the best teacher and started delving into painting.

In the blink of an eye, many years passed, and Chase Sullivan gradually learned that the Willow family had a daughter making waves in Aethelgard, as Isabelle Willow grew up there, becoming the brightest star in the City of Aethelgard.

At that time, he often secretly went to the Willow family's door or stood at the corner outside her school to spy on her; she had become Zelda Willow, always having a special car service for transportation.

Her youthful face had matured into a cool and stunning beauty; she liked wearing white dresses, holding several books in her arms, chased by countless boys.

This included him; he fell in love with her a long time ago.

But she was too excellent, and as hard as he tried to chase her, he couldn't catch up.

At times, he pessimistically wondered if maybe she would soon be courted by some wealthy young man and she would belong to someone else.

Actually, he had mentally prepared himself for this outcome, but he didn't expect that day to come so quickly, that the man would arrive so magnificently and strong.

It was... Jude Crawford!

The first time Chase Sullivan heard of Jude Crawford was in a business and finance report; the firstborn son of the elite Crawford family in Aethelgard, Jude Crawford launched his first company, becoming the CEO, ascending as the leading figure in the business world of Aethelgard. Later on, he dominated that era's financial news, in the newspapers, on the Forbes rich list, in the list of men that every socialite and heiress wanted to marry, his name was everywhere.

Jude Crawford represented an era in the business world.

Chase Sullivan never imagined his life, or Isabelle Willow's life, would have any connection with this man, as the Crawford family was untouchable for them; Jude Crawford was up there in the sky, far too distant from them.

But one day, he suddenly heard that the Crawford and Willow families had set a wedding date, Isabelle Willow was going to marry Jude Crawford!

This news was like a thunderclap from a clear sky, Chase Sullivan took a long time to recover from it.

He had thought Isabelle Willow would marry another man someday, but he never imagined Isabelle Willow would marry Jude Crawford, would marry that... legendary first aristocrat.

She was going to marry into the Crawford family and become Mrs. Crawford.

Chase Sullivan could not accept it, so that day he secretly went to the Willow house and hid in a dark corner at the gate, and for the first time truly saw Jude Crawford in person.

The wedding was very near, Jude Crawford went to the Willow house for dinner, the whole house was brightly lit, a world-class Rolls-Royce luxury car was parked on the lawn, Jude Crawford wore a classic white shirt and black trousers, the fabric, without the slightest crease, bespoke his elegance and sophistication as a member of the elite, his dominant aura showcasing extraordinary vibes, inspiring admiration from others.

Chase Sullivan just stood in a corner, when he saw Jude Crawford, he deeply understood the gap between him and Jude Crawford, some people are born as the favored by heaven, which cannot be matched with acquired effort.

Jude Crawford was so superior, so brilliant, so dazzling.

At that time, Mr. Willow was standing beside Jude Crawford, saying something pleasing and flattering, while Jude Crawford listened indifferently, although his gaze was directed somewhere else.

Chase Sullivan followed Jude Crawford's gaze and saw that Isabelle was there too, that night Isabelle wore a white furry coat, standing obediently next to a Christmas tree, her head bowed, seemingly looking at her own toes.

At that time, Jude Crawford looked at Isabelle quietly, his handsome eyes softened slightly with a faint smile, gazing at her every so often.

Mr. Willow, being experienced, ended the conversation quickly and let Isabelle send Jude Crawford off.

So Jude Crawford and Isabelle walked together.

At that time, Chase Sullivan followed them, Jude Crawford and Isabelle walked in front, they strolled, Isabelle seemed to have just gotten to know Jude Crawford and accepted that he was going to become her husband, she appeared particularly obedient and gentle.

The two didn't speak, but Jude Crawford kept one hand in his trousers pocket, and while walking, he took out his large hand, wanting to hold Isabelle's little hand.

Chapter 673: Be My Mrs. Crawford

However, his slender fingers reached out, then curled back up, and then reached out again... After trying several times, he ultimately didn't hold her small hand.

Chase followed them all the way, and eventually, the two of them stopped. Jude Crawford took out a delicate gift bag, inside which was a white fluffy earmuff, and Jude reached out and placed the earmuff on Isabelle Willow's small ears.

Isabelle was afraid of the cold. By the time they arrived, her small ears had already turned red from the cold.

At that time, Chase had not yet been exposed to luxury items, but he had heard a teacher's daughter say she wanted an earmuff, one that vaguely resembled the one Jude gave, known to be an upscale item, one that reportedly cost tens of thousands.

This was the biggest difference between him and Jude Crawford. Jude could casually spend a fortune; born of high society, he had a sophisticated sense of aesthetics, shining like gold.

That day, Isabelle wore a white fluffy coat with the white earmuffs he gave her, an incredibly pure and stunning look, so crystal clear it was hard to look away.

Jude placed his big hands on the earmuffs and didn't remove them. Looking down at her, they exchanged their first words of the night. He asked in a low voice, "Are you... afraid of me?"

Isabelle never lifted her head. She kept it lowered, saying nothing.

Chase knew Isabelle too well. Despite her young age, even when life cornered her, she could handle it calmly with her brilliant mind.

That night, Isabelle was quiet and obedient, not passionately interacting with Jude. She was behaving very normally, but being too normal was abnormal.

"Are you afraid of me, or of marrying me? Regardless of which, you don't need to worry. The Crawford family is simple. My mother is reasonable and open-minded. She will like you, and I've prepared a marital home. After marriage, we'll live on our own, avoiding any mother-in-law conflict."

"As for me, I genuinely wish to marry you. I'll resolve the Willow family's current financial difficulties. Whatever you want, I can give you. You can cling to me, rely on me, and of course, I want a Mrs. Crawford whose eyes and heart are full of me. Is that okay?"

Jude spoke to her softly. Unlike cheap sweet nothings, he had already taken care of all her post-marital concerns. He would become her mountain, her strongest support, and all she needed to do was... have him in her eyes and heart, to marry and love him, giving him her love.

If it were any other woman in the world, she would be moved by Jude.

At that moment, Isabelle slowly raised her head, her clear, almond-shaped eyes landing on Jude's handsome face, gazing at him with watery eyes.

Jude lowered his head, intending to kiss her.

But the kiss was interrupted because a Rolls-Royce Phantom pulled up.

Jude paused his actions, and Isabelle's face turned red as she lowered her head again.

"Well... I'll be off then."

Isabelle nodded, "Okay."

So Jude got into the Rolls-Royce Phantom and sped away.

Chase watched Isabelle from behind. She didn't immediately leave; she just stood still, gazing in the direction in which Jude had left.

She stood there, watching for a long time.

Chase closed his eyes, forcing himself to break free from distant memories. He kept knocking on the door, consumed by anxiety whenever he thought of Isabelle inside and what Jude might do given his beastly nature.

Chase felt as if there were thousands of ants crawling and gnawing at his heart; the sensation was torture.

At this moment, there was a "click" sound, and the villa door suddenly opened. Someone had opened the door.

"Sir, may I ask who you are?"

Chase shoved the maid aside and stormed in, "Yara! Yara, where are you?"

He called loudly, searching everywhere for Isabelle's figure.

At this moment, Butler Thorne approached. He wasn't at all surprised to see Chase, "Mr. Sullivan, please have a seat. Mr. and Mrs. Crawford have already retired for the night. If it's urgent, I can ask for them."

Chase looked up at the room doorway upstairs. The door was tightly closed, and Jude and Isabelle were resting inside...

Chase quickly clenched his fists, "Where's Jude? I want to see Jude now!"

Just as he spoke, a deep and magnetic voice came from upstairs, "Chase, you're looking for me?"

Hearing this devil-like voice again, Chase froze, quickly looking up.

He saw Jude walking out of the room, wearing a black silk robe. At his age, he particularly suited these dark tones like black and gray, which rendered him profound and mysterious, restrained yet powerful.

Now standing at the ornate railing of the second floor, Jude gazed down at Chase with his deep, narrow eyes from above.

In this position, Chase had to look up to see Jude, his clothes completely soaked with rain, still dripping water onto the incredibly luxurious hand-crafted wool carpet of the villa. Just moments ago, Chase hadn't felt disheveled, but seeing Jude now, he felt his disarray laid bare.

After more than twenty years, Jude seemed unchanged.

Chase tightened his fists, "Jude, where's Yara? Where have you hidden Yara?"

Jude looked at Chase, subtly curling his cold, thin lips, "I already said, Yara is sleeping beside me, already asleep. What, can't understand human speech?"

"Jude, what have you done to Yara? You and Yara are over, she won't be with you anymore..."

"Oh, she's not with me, then with whom, you?" Jude interrupted him indifferently.

Chase paused.

At this moment, Jude leisurely descended the stairs. His steps were firm and composed, like an emperor's presence, and Butler Thorne handed him a file. Jude, with his handsome eyes lowered, casually perused it, "Chase, you've done quite well these years. Your reputation in the art world has soared, and globally, you've held many solo exhibitions. Your assets are barely passable, and for so many years, you've remained unmarried..."

Jude moved his thin lips lightly, recounting Chase's achievements and life over the years with a hint of indifference. Chase only felt a chill penetrating his bones as he looked at Jude in shock and fear.

In such a short time, Butler Thorne had presented everything about him to this man.

Whether over thirty years ago or after more than thirty years, in front of Jude Crawford, he stood without dignity!

Chapter 674: Amidst a City of Storms, He Came from the Sea

However, Chase Sullivan knew Jude Crawford's weak spot, and he quickly said, "Jude Crawford, it's been so many years. What kind of woman can't you have? Why do you keep bothering Yara? Yara has never liked you, not even a bit, anything you do is just you being delusional."

Butler Thorne watched Chase Sullivan coldly from the side, though he was already horrified inside. Having worked for the Crawford family for so many years, he knew the only person in the world who could make his master lose control was Mrs. Crawford. The thorn in his master's heart was always Mrs. Crawford never having liked him, ever.

Butler Thorne carefully observed Jude Crawford's expression, but in fact, Jude Crawford's face showed no emotional fluctuations. He stretched his long legs and sat on the sofa in the living room, then slowly pulled out a cigar and lit it with a lighter.

The scarlet flame leaped, Jude Crawford took a harsh puff of the cigar, then slightly raised his head to exhale the smoke from his mouth. He then reached out and gestured towards Chase Sullivan's right leg with the fingers holding the cigar, laughing nonchalantly, "How's that, your right leg is healed already?"

As he made this gesture, some ash fell down; his masculinity was strong.

Mentioning the right leg, Chase Sullivan stiffened entirely, his face turning pale.

His right leg hadn't fully recovered, though the disability was cured, he still limped a bit when walking, different from ordinary people.

His right leg was ruined, all thanks to Jude Crawford!

More than thirty years ago, ever since that night outside the Willow family gates when he spied on Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow, he returned sleepless. He loved Isabelle Willow deeply and did not want her to marry.

However, he also deeply understood that whether now, Jude Crawford, the foremost merchant noble in Aethelgard, or Isabelle Willow, the daughter of the acclaimed Willow family, were both heights he could never reach.

Every minute, every second felt like torture to him—heartache, unwillingness, jealousy... These emotions nearly drove him insane.

At that time, someone suddenly came to him. That person was... Zelda Willow!

Zelda Willow came with a few bodyguards in black, intending to capture him.

He immediately sensed something was wrong, and since he was quite skilled, he managed to smoothly escape those bodyguards in black and directly ran.

At this moment, Zelda Willow suddenly said to him, "Chase Sullivan, you can run away. If you run this time, then Isabelle will really become Mrs. Crawford. If you don't run and cooperate with me, I will tell Isabelle that I've kidnapped you, then lure her to the dock, allowing you to take her on a boat for an elopement, escaping to a place with no people, wouldn't that be nice?"

He eventually halted his steps.

On the wedding day, it was heard that with royal procession and opulent bridal attire, Jude Crawford gave Isabelle Willow a grand wedding. It was further heard that Jude Crawford built Jill's room high, promising Isabelle Willow unmatched affection. That day, this love story was discussed in every street and alley of Aethelgard.

He was bound by Zelda Willow in the ship's cabin at the dock, yet his mood was exceptionally calm because he knew, Isabelle would certainly come.

Indeed, it was nightfall when Isabelle Willow hurriedly arrived to save him.

In the cabin, Isabelle Willow quickly untied him, "Brother Chase, how did Zelda Willow find out? I've told you, you always have to pretend not to know me, otherwise, you'll surely be in danger. You should leave now."

He firmly grabbed Isabelle Willow's small hand and earnestly said, "Yara, I know your life is precarious. Don't be Zelda Willow's shadow anymore, come with me, let's leave here together."

However, Isabelle Willow slowly withdrew her small hand, gently shaking her head, "I won't leave."

His whole heart kept sinking, as if falling to the bottom of an abyss, and the nonstop thought in his mind crazily emerged. He voiced it out, "Yara, why don't you want to leave? What's here worth longing for? I know you've been bound since childhood, longing for freedom, so you created the jewelry brand Fly, wanting a pair of wings."

"Now the chance has come, Zelda Willow is interested in Jude Crawford, she's willing to let you go. We could take mother out of the hospital and leave. You're so smart; you should know this chance will be lost if missed. Why don't you want to go?"

"Yara, is it... because you've fallen in love with Jude Crawford? You want to stay in this City of Aethelgard because of him?"

He asked out loud, actually having always wanted to inquire, has she fallen for Jude Crawford?

At that time, Isabelle Willow lowered her lashes, remaining silent for a long while, "I..."

"Enough!" he interrupted her directly, at the moment she wanted to speak, he found he lacked the courage to listen.

He extended his arms and tightly embraced Isabelle Willow, "Yara, Jude Crawford and you belong to completely different worlds; you'll have no outcome, don't hope for it."

Just as his words fell, there was a "boom", and the cabin door was directly kicked open.

The piercing cold wind outside swiftly invaded in, scratching faces like knives, painfully. He looked up and promptly saw Jude Crawford outside.

That night, Jude Crawford came with storm and fury from the city and the sea, carrying a heavy aura of killing and hostility.

He hadn't anticipated Jude Crawford to arrive so quickly, nor that he would immediately recognize the resemblance between Isabelle Willow and Zelda Willow, thus unraveling the plot.

That night, Jude Crawford's black clothes were billowing in the sea wind, his handsome and jade-like features were so sullen they seemed to be dripping water. The corners of his long narrow eyes were filled with fierce red blood, "Ha, Mrs. Crawford, I didn't expect such a big surprise on the wedding night!"

Isabelle Willow quickly pushed him aside, looking at Jude Crawford, attempting to explain, "I..."

"Jude Crawford!" He stepped forward, directly shielding Isabelle Willow behind him, "Yes, Isabelle never intended to marry you. I grew up with Isabelle, and you relied on having a bit of money to forcibly and greedily want to marry Isabelle. Tonight, we had already planned to elope and leave!"

He was provoking Jude Crawford, and the result of the provocation was that he didn't even see how Jude Crawford acted; the next second, he was hit right in the chest.

He fell messily to the ground, immediately spitting out a mouthful of blood.

At this moment, Isabelle Willow extended her slender arms to block Jude Crawford, "Jude Crawford, don't do this, stop hitting, Brother Chase, you should leave."

"Brother Chase?" Jude Crawford repeated the term, then curved his thin lips, looking down at him with a contemptuous gaze like looking at a lower life form, mocking and cold. "She's my Mrs. Crawford. You dare to covet Mrs. Crawford? Huh? Which leg wanted to take her away, this, the right leg?"

Jude Crawford stepped heavily on his right knee, with a "crack" sound; the bone inside broke.

Chapter 675: Bite Him Once, Pain for Half a Lifetime

Jude Crawford acted ruthlessly, crippling his right leg with a single move.

That was also the first time he realized what kind of man Jude Crawford was – he was a demon.

Ah!

He curled up on the ground in agony, howling.

Jude Crawford showed no sign of stopping. A sinister and bloodthirsty smile adorned his lips, "You shouldn't need this left leg either, right? Why don't I help you get rid of that too?"

Jude Crawford intended to cripple his left leg as well.

"Jude Crawford, don't!" At that moment, Isabelle Willow rushed over, wrapping her arms tightly around his strong waist, clutching him without letting go. "Don't hurt my brother Chase. I was wrong, I'm sorry. I'll go back with you now. You've already crippled Chase's right leg. If you lay waste to his left leg, I won't forgive you."

Jude Crawford finally stopped. He reached out with his large hand to grab her delicate, fair wrist, dragging her away. Moreover, he ordered, "Take Chase back for me!"

He was hauled away by two black-clad bodyguards, dragged into Jill's room.

That was his first time in Jill's room – the wedding suite that Jude Crawford had reportedly prepared for Isabelle Willow.

He was thrown clumsily outside the room by the bodyguards in black, and Isabelle Willow, her eyes red, wanted to walk toward him. But Jude Crawford stopped her with a single glance. "Mrs. Crawford, don't provoke me further, hmm? Dare to take one step forward and find out what happens!"

Isabelle Willow accepted the threat, standing woodenly in place.

At this point, Jude Crawford signaled with a look toward the master bedroom. "Go in."

Isabelle Willow looked at him.

Jude Crawford raised an eyebrow slightly. "Mrs. Crawford, why are you looking at me like that? Tonight is our wedding night, and we must finish what we started."

"Of course, since you've given me such a surprise tonight, it's only fair I play with you too. How about letting your brother Chase lie here all night?"

As he lay pathetically on the ground, upon hearing these words his eyes turned bloodshot. Jude Crawford was too good at torturing people; he intended to have him lie outside their bridal bedroom all night.

"Yara, don't listen to him, don't succumb to his threats. I'm fine."

Jude Crawford glanced at him casually, then turned to Isabelle Willow. "Still not going in? My patience is limited."

Isabelle Willow hesitated for a few seconds, then turned around and entered the master bedroom.

What happened in the bedroom afterward he didn't know, as he hadn't witnessed it personally, but he was aware... that night, Jude Crawford and Isabelle Willow consummated their marriage.

Jude Crawford forcibly took Isabelle Willow; he was lying outside at that time. He could hear Isabelle Willow's soft, delicate voice, holding back and not daring to speak loudly, which made it particularly suggestive. "Jude Crawford, it hurts... I'm in pain..."

Jude Crawford said, "If it hurts, endure it."

Due to the severe injury in his leg and lack of timely treatment, he developed a fever and infection at night, and for years he was left disabled.

Chase Sullivan awoke from the nightmare over thirty years ago and looked at the present Jude Crawford sitting on the sofa. "Jude Crawford, you laugh at my leg, while I laugh at your pitiful attempt to only possess Yara through coercion!"

"Oh, is that so?" Jude Crawford looked at Chase Sullivan amidst swirling smoke with a smile that was not quite a smile and said, "I admit, perhaps on that wedding night I wasn't very gentle, I took her by force, but afterward, our second time, third time, countless times, it was Yara who came to me voluntarily."

Jude Crawford softened his tone and observing Chase Sullivan's face as he spoke, watching his expression change dramatically as expected.

"Jude Crawford, what nonsense are you spouting? Impossible, Yara would never initiate!"

Jude Crawford curled his thin lips into an elegant, alluring smile. "Did Yara ever tell you about it? Later, when you were hospitalized due to your leg injury, I made sure no hospital in the City of Aethelgard would admit you, leaving you potentially to rot and die from leg infection."

"I intentionally let someone relay this news to her. After our wedding night, I was furious, so I left her alone for many nights. Knowing your situation, she obediently called me. When I didn't answer, she sought me out at the company."

"Our second time was in my CEO office. I was seated in my office chair, and she climbed onto my lap, carefully watching my expression, using clumsy techniques to please me, unbuttoning her clothes with embarrassment, clasping my neck and kissing me..."

Chase Sullivan had never known this, and now his pupils constricted suddenly, and his hands at his sides clenched tightly into fists. "Enough, stop talking!"

"Heh," Jude Crawford let out a low chuckle from his throat. "Can't take it anymore? Chase, stay away from her, she was never someone you could long for. Do you know how privileged she is? Over the years, I've provided for her in Jill's room, with the finest of everything, and what are you, could you afford to maintain her?"

Chase Sullivan felt completely humiliated; history seemed to be repeating itself, he could never defeat the man in front of him.

"Jude Crawford, even if you have Yara's body, you'll never have her heart! You've clipped Yara's wings and imprisoned her in Jill's room, molding her to your will. You probably never considered that she'd jump from the golden cage you created and bite you viciously."

"Jude Crawford, you'll never encounter another woman like Yara in your lifetime, so cold yet fiery. She was your equal, the first beauty of Aethelgard, admired across the city. She offered you the fiercest love and left you with the most soul-penetrating pain, causing you half a lifetime of torment."

Jude Crawford's hand holding the cigar slowly paused. Though he didn't wish to admit it, he had to acknowledge that Isabelle Willow had indeed bitten deeply into his heart, leaving a pain that would last a lifetime.

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The Crawford Group's New Year's party.

The personal secretary hurried over to whisper a report to the evening's star, Hayden Crawford. "President, news just came in that your mother-in-law took your mother to the club to find some young men to entertain them and got caught by Mr. Rathborne and Mr. Crawford. Now everyone has gone their separate ways."

Hayden Crawford, "..."

What?

His mother-in-law took his mother to a club to find some young men to entertain them?

Hayden Crawford's forehead showed three black lines.

"President, the party is now entering the highlight segment. It's time for your first dance. Now you can go on stage to draw the lucky number and select your dance partner." The personal secretary redirected back to the primary topic.

Hayden Crawford pressed his thin lips together, temporarily setting aside the issues of his parents, father-in-law, and mother-in-law, and walked handsomely onto the stage.

In the party hall, Melody Ashworth was surrounded by a group of socialites, all looking at her with various expressions of envy.

"Look quickly, Mr. Crawford is on stage. He's about to have his first dance."

Chapter 676: She Got the Lucky Number

The melodious sound of music quickly resonated through the party hall, signaling the start of tonight's main event.

Hayden Crawford stood tall and handsome on the stage, in the midst of brilliant lights. His flawless features seemed to be edged with a golden halo, making it hard for people to look directly at him.

The socialites and young ladies gazed at him with flushed cheeks, their hearts pounding wildly.

They all hoped to dance the first dance with Hayden Crawford. However, the recent rumors about Hayden and the Princess of Alani were at their peak, and everyone speculated that this lucky number was already reserved for the Princess of Alani.

Everyone gathered around Melody Ashworth,

"Princess of Alani, has Mr. Crawford reserved you for the first dance? Are you going to dance with him on stage soon?"

"Princess of Alani, we really envy you."

Melody Ashworth, basking in such flattery, smiled brightly. She recalled asking Hayden Crawford in the elevator earlier if she was the chosen one, to which Hayden had mysteriously responded that he would give her a surprise.

This surprise should be the first dance with him.

Melody Ashworth looked up at Hayden Crawford, and noticed that his deep, narrow eyes briefly glanced in her direction.

It felt like an affirmation and a hint, causing Melody's heart to flutter even more intensely.

At that moment, Melody turned her gaze and happened to see Serena Sterling in a corner.

Serena was keeping a low profile tonight, and with her face resembling that of a little maid, no one talked to her.

Meanwhile, Melody was being surrounded and revered, marking a stark contrast between the two.

Melody straightened her back even more, proud and pleased like a peacock displaying its feathers.

Then, the personal secretary took to the stage, "Alright, esteemed guests, tonight's finale is about to begin. We invite our president to personally draw the lucky number. The lady holding this number will have the honor of dancing the first dance with our president."

Everyone received their number when they entered, one each.

Melody glanced at the number she held—it was 29.

Melody was very nervous; her heart was about to leap out of her chest.

Even though she knew she was predetermined, joy mixed with apprehension persisted until Hayden announced it publicly.

Hayden had started drawing the lucky number.

Despite knowing a predetermined choice existed, the young ladies were still nervous; what if one of them was chosen?

The entire room held their breath in anticipation.

Serena stood in the corner, utterly disappointed in Hayden and knowing the first dance had nothing to do with her, so she took a piece of cake to eat.

Hayden must have already reserved Melody Ashworth, right?

Serena glanced at Melody, who was proud like a peacock, arranging her dress, ready to step up once Hayden made his announcement.

At this moment, Hayden had drawn the lucky number, and the personal secretary walked over, "Let's see what number our president has drawn."

The personal secretary glanced at the lucky number and then looked up, fixing their gaze on Melody Ashworth.

Melody Ashworth!

The noble ladies, filled with tension and anticipation, immediately showed disappointment; it turned out the choice was predetermined for the Princess of Alani.

Melody finally relaxed, it turned out to be her indeed.

Holding her number, she walked toward the stage with the most perfect posture, feeling this was the highlight of her life, like walking a runway, even waving to people on both sides as she walked.

"Mr. Crawford hasn't announced the lucky number yet, and the Princess of Alani is already rushing up there!"

"I saw the personal secretary look at her twice; it's probably her!"

"Lately, she and Mr. Crawford have been a hot topic in the tabloids; it seems she's really enchanted Mr. Crawford."

"This Princess of Alani truly has great allure."

Holding her number, Melody hurried to the stage, when suddenly the personal secretary announced, "Number 19."

Number 19?

Melody froze, the brilliant smile on her face instantly stiffened.

She thought she had misheard, quickly lowering her head to look at her number.

She had number 29.

The personal secretary had said... 19?

Could the personal secretary have made a mistake?

Melody stood frozen, secretly winking at Hayden.

But Hayden's gaze wasn't on her at all, treating her like thin air.

The personal secretary approached with a microphone, "Princess of Alani, our president drew lucky number 19, are you number 19?"

Before Melody could say anything, the personal secretary snatched the number from her hand and presented it to everyone, "Let's see if the Princess of Alani is the lucky one, oh, what's this, number 29, Princess, you have number 29?"

The room was silent for a few seconds before someone chuckled maliciously, soon followed by laughter from many others.

Melody stood on the stage, unable to step back, unable to move forward.

The smile on her face collapsed, overwhelmed with extreme embarrassment.

The noble ladies who had previously flattered her now covered their mouths to laugh discreetly, pointing and whispering at her,

"This Princess of Alani is too eager, I even feel embarrassed for her."

"Mr. Crawford drew number 19, and she, a 29, rushed up there, this joke will last me a whole year."

"Turns out the Princess of Alani wasn't predetermined, her rumored romance with Mr. Crawford must be fake too."

"Hahahaha—"

Melody heard the mocking whispers of the noble ladies loud and clear, her face reddened with humiliation and disgrace, but she was unwilling to believe and give up, so she looked at Hayden, "Mr. Crawford, is there a mistake, what number did you actually draw?"

Hayden finally glanced at Melody, then handed her the number, "Number 19."

Number 19!

It was really number 19!

Melody felt like she'd fallen from heaven straight to hell.

Then the personal secretary said, "Princess of Alani, since you're not number 19, this doesn't concern you, could you please step down now."

The personal secretary was already asking her to leave.

Oh.

The laughter below grew louder, and even the noble ladies showed a bit of sympathy.

With anger causing her whole body to tremble, Melody had no choice but to slink off the stage under everyone's scrutinizing eyes.

Then the personal secretary smiled and said, "Apologies for the slight interruption earlier, now let's get back to the topic, who is lucky number 19, please, the lady holding number 19, come up on stage."

Chapter 677: Dancing With Him

No one in the audience responded.

The person who got the lucky number 19 didn't stand up.

What's going on?

Everyone started whispering,

"Who got the number 19? It's an honor to dance the first dance with Mr. Crawford, yet no one is speaking up. That's really unusual."

"Everyone, quickly take another look at your number cards, open your eyes wide and see clearly!"

"Mr. Crawford, let go of that number 19, let me do it!"

The entire party hall started to stir, everyone was searching for the person who got the lucky number 19.

Serena was still eating dessert when two socialites next to her whispered, "I'm not number 19, are you?"

"I'm not either."

One of the socialites nudged Serena, "Where's your number card, quickly check if you got number 19!"

When Serena entered the hall, she indeed took a number card, but she hadn't taken it out, thinking it was fixed for Melody Ashworth this time.

Now that no one in the annual party was stepping forward, it seemed no one else had number 19. So where did number 19 go?

Serena took out her own number card, looked down, and was stunned.

Number 19!

She never expected she would actually get the legendary lucky number 19 card.

What's going on?

The two socialites beside her exclaimed as soon as they saw Serena had number 19, "Number 19! Number 19 is here!"

In a flash, all eyes turned and focused on Serena.

Melody Ashworth felt humiliated, and she was very unwilling, so she had to see who exactly got number 19.

Now that the person surfaced, it was... Serena!

Melody Ashworth's mouth dropped open instantly, how could it be, how could it be Serena?

Melody's face turned pale as paper, and her body swayed unsteadily.

How could it be so coincidental?

Lately, Hayden Crawford had not contacted Serena and was busy dating her. He should have forgotten about Serena Sterling.

But, if it wasn't deliberately arranged, how could Serena luckily get number 19?

"Number 19 is here." The socialite by her side waved to Hayden Crawford and the private secretary on the podium.

Serena was in shock herself, standing still for a long time.

That number card wasn't chosen by her but was slipped to her by a staff member. Was it luck, or was it deliberate?

Hayden Crawford stood tall and elegant on the podium, his deep, narrow eyes falling on Serena's small face, then he slowly extended his large hand, his thin lips lifted slightly, "Come here!"

Come here.

Two simple words, direct and domineering.

Perhaps intimidated by Hayden Crawford's powerful aura, the previously restless party hall quieted down instantly.

Serena looked at Hayden Crawford under the brilliant lights, and held her breath, not knowing if it was the attention from the crowd or his deep gaze on her, her heartbeat noticeably quickened.

Thump, thump, thump.

One beat after another as if it was going to jump out of her chest.

His exquisite features and contours appeared even more noble and charming under the light. Perhaps it was her illusion, but she seemed to see a hint of gentle smile in his narrow eyes.

Serena lifted her feet and walked step by step to the podium, coming to him.

The two exchanged glances. Hayden Crawford bent over in a gentlemanly manner, "May I have this dance?"

Serena's white earlobes turned a little red; she nodded and then extended her small hand to him.

Hayden Crawford clasped her silky soft hand in his broad palm and led her to the dance floor.

Beautiful music played in the hall. Hayden wrapped one arm around Serena's smooth fragrant shoulder, while the other intertwined with her slim white fingers, locking fingers with her.

The guests in the banquet hall all watched enviously at the pair gracefully dancing in the dance floor.

Although Serena's face was not outstanding, her figure was slim and graceful, with an ethereal temperament, like a fairy descending from the heavens.

Hayden Crawford stood tall and noble, the most dazzling star tonight. He, dancing with Serena, created a scene as beautiful as a sand painting.

Melody Ashworth watched the dancing couple, her face blank, her eyes full of disbelief.

No, things shouldn't have developed like this. Was this a surprise? No, it was a shock!

What exactly was going on?

Melody looked at Serena in the dance floor, realizing that Serena had noble blood from Alani flowing through her veins. She was confident, elegant, and charming while dancing.

Every step, every rhythm, could seamlessly keep up with Hayden Crawford, perfectly matching him.

Melody Ashworth had practiced her dance hard for today, originally thinking she would shine brightly, catching all eyes, making Serena and other socialites envious and jealous, but she became a big joke!

Melody felt a mouthful of blood would gush out at any time!

...

In the dance floor, Serena already felt Melody's envious, jealous, and hateful gaze. She lifted her bright eyes to look at Hayden Crawford, "Did you do it on purpose?"

Hayden looked at her dark, shimmering eyes, his thin lips pursed a little, "What are you referring to?"

"Mr. Crawford, you wouldn't tell me that number 19 lucky card was just a coincidence, right?" Serena asked.

Hayden showed no emotional fluctuation and remained silent.

Clearly, he did not want to tell her.

Or rather, he did not want to pay attention to her.

Serena found him strange, his current attitude towards her was cold and indifferent, as if she had done something wrong to hurt him.

Serena realized that the Hayden Crawford from three years later was very unpredictable, and she had no idea what she might have done to provoke him again.

"Mr. Crawford, was it you who saved me that day at The Manor of the Ninth Spire?"

Originally, after seeing him entangled with Melody Ashworth, Serena had given up hope on him, but since he premeditatedly set her number, she quickly rekindled her hope. She had an intuition that he had already recognized her.

Moreover, his behavior with Melody Ashworth seemed unusual, Serena suspected he had some plan.

Hayden's cold gaze fell on Serena's clear eyes, then slowly curled his thin lips into a mocking arc, "Yes, I saved you. Are you disappointed?"

"... Hayden Crawford, if you have something to say, just say it, why act so sarcastically?" Serena furrowed her delicate brows.

Hayden snorted coldly in his heart, every time recalling the call she made to Seth Sullivan at The Manor of the Ninth Spire, a gloomy anger surged in his strong chest.

At a critical moment, she thought of another man!

"I have always said that I am hot-tempered, domineering, and demand a lot. You didn't say I was bad before, now why the change? Turns out, love truly can disappear!"

Chapter 678: Tonight I'm Going to Be a Little Bad

What nonsense is he spouting? Serena furrowed her delicate brows even deeper.

At this moment, a dance ended, and Hayden let go of her, saying nothing, and turned to leave immediately.

Serena stood there watching his tall figure, growing even more puzzled. What was going on with him?

She had so many questions for him, and with him being so uncooperative, what was she to do?

No, she had to take him down.

But how to take him down?

Serena was a bit troubled; she quickly took out her phone and sent a WeChat message to Leah. Leah, what do you do when a man is angry?

"Ding," Leah's reply came in. Is Mr. Crawford angry? Then you should try... making up on the bed.

Making up on the bed...?

Perfect, Leah never disappoints!

Serena's face turned red; she quickly hid her phone, fearing anyone might see this message. It was too embarrassing.

But to deal with Hayden, that man with strong desires, this trick should be foolproof, right? He should love it.

Serena had an intense internal struggle now. Should she try it? If she did, she was embarrassed; if she didn't, she couldn't coax him well.

Perhaps, she should drink some liquid courage.

Serena went to the food area. She liked drinking, but her alcohol tolerance was poor. She would get drunk just by touching alcohol, and this time she had two glasses. Tonight, she had to conquer Hayden!

...

In the hallway, Serena didn't find Hayden, but she ran into his private secretary. "Hello, may I ask where Mr. Crawford is now?"

The private secretary, seeing it was Serena, was very respectful. "The president is in a meeting now. If you are looking for him, you can wait for a moment in his office."

"Okay, thank you." Serena entered the president's office and began waiting for Hayden.

But she waited and waited, and he didn't return. The aftereffect of the two glasses of alcohol kicked in, and Serena just felt her little head was muddled by the heat.

She was really drunk.

Just then, a series of steady and robust footsteps came from outside; someone was coming.

Serena quickly looked up, only to see the office door being pushed open, and Hayden's tall and distinguished figure entered her vision.

He finally returned.

Serena's eyes lit up, and she immediately flew over, stretching out her slender arms and pouncing into his arms, tightly hugging his strong waist.

She deeply buried her reddened little face in his chest, charmingly nuzzling like a small kitten, whispering in a slightly intoxicated soft voice, "Hayden, hug... hug me~"

The crowd of top executives from The Crawford Group by the door was instantly petrified. What... what was this situation?

Serena was drunk; she didn't know that Hayden hadn't come in alone. A group of executives with blue badges around their necks followed him; the meeting wasn't over yet.

Now, before everyone had entered, she flew over directly into Hayden's arms, asking for a hug like a coquettish girl.

When Serena sobered up and realized what an embarrassing thing she had done, she wished she could dig a hole and hide in it.

All these executives were frozen at the door, mouths agape in shock. Who... who was this woman? She was far too audacious!

All these years, numerous beauties tried to throw themselves at their president, and they had seen quite a bit. But they had never seen a woman who dared to come to The Crawford Group's gates and directly bear-hug their president like this!

"Who... who is she? This is too brazen, daring to take liberties with our president. Where's security? Get security to kick this woman out!" the manager shouted at this moment.

But before the manager could finish, a cold and displeased gaze fell on his face. He looked up to see their president's piercing hawk-like sharp eyes giving him a bland look, as if to say he'd prefer kicking him out!

The manager felt a shiver down his spine, "..."

Why did he have the feeling of a dog meddling in others' business?

As Serena pounced, Hayden reached out his firm arms to envelop her slender waist, keeping her safe in his arms, fearing she'd fall.

Now that she was clinging to him, he used his big hands to cover her head, ruffling her hair, and asked in a low voice, "What's wrong, hm?"

"Dizzy... dizzy..."

Hayden lifted her with one big hand, carrying her vertically, taking a few strides to the desk, and then setting her down on top.

His two large hands propped on the desk, leaning his tall and distinguished body down, moving closer to her as he looked at her flushed little face. "Did you drink?"

He had already caught a faint whiff of alcohol on her.

"Yes, I drank a little bit."

"You can't drink. Why did you drink?"

Serena sat on the desk, her two slender white legs swinging in the air, occasionally kicking against Hayden's sharply tailored black trousers. She raised her slightly intoxicated clear eyes to look at him and suddenly, coyly curled her red lips. "Because... tonight I... I want to do something bad..."

Just now, Hayden had come down from the meeting, still holding a document in one hand, his handmade black suit exuding a cold, elite aura. But holding the delicate girl on his desk, trapping her assertively in his embrace, there was a distinct whiff of forbidden indulgence.

"What bad thing do you want to do, hm?" Hayden curved his thin lips slightly.

"Do... do..." Serena bit her red lips gently with her pearl-like teeth, finding it hard to say, as she raised her hands to wrap around Hayden's neck, pulling him down, and then softly told him, "With you... to do something bad, do you want to... do it?"

Though Serena spoke softly, the higher-ups at the door still heard it, hissing in unison, completely taken aback.

The private secretary couldn't stand it anymore; these two were simply flaunting their love. "Ahem, President, do you want to continue this meeting?"

Hayden didn't turn around. His tall frame shielded Serena securely in his arms, preventing anyone from seeing her shy state, as he lightly parted his thin lips, "Adjourn."

"Yes, President."

The private secretary swiftly slammed the door of the president's office shut with a "bang," blocking everyone's view.

The company executives stood there for ages, unable to snap out of it. They had no idea since when their usually abstinent president had become enamored with a woman and spoiled her like this!

...

Inside the president's office.

Hearing Serena wanted to do something bad, Hayden quickly arched his heroic eyebrows, a roguish mature charm radiating from the corners of his long eyes. "You really want to do something bad?"

"Yes~"

Serena looked at his impeccable handsome face, then moved her red lips closer, wanting to kiss him.

But she didn't manage it because Hayden dodged.

What was going on?

Why wouldn't he let her kiss him?

Serena tightened her hold around his neck and went to kiss him again.

Yet again, Hayden dodged her.

Chapter 679: Pip Is Your Son!

All along, he was always the one to make the first move between them. This time, she took the initiative for once, yet he avoided her, not letting her kiss him.

Serena felt utterly humiliated!

She clenched her fists and punched him forcefully, "Hayden Crawford, what are you doing? Why won't you let me kiss you? I want to kiss you~"

Hayden Crawford closed his handsome eyes, his large hand pinching her soft waist, trying his best to push her away. Now that she was clinging onto him limply like she was boneless, he was using all his self-control to restrain himself.

She looked as adorable drunk as a kitten, sweetly naive with a hint of stubbornness. When he didn't let her kiss him, she leaned in and managed to kiss his face.

The protruding Adam's apple in his throat bobbed twice. He looked down at her flushed little face, "Serena Sterling, do you have to get yourself drunk to do naughty things with me now?"

Hayden Crawford almost burst into laughter in anger. Back in City of Aethelgard, she drugged him with an aphrodisiac, and now she got herself drunk to throw herself at him. She really kept finding new ways to humiliate him, time and again.

Serena was completely dazed, "What are you saying?"

Little drunkard!

Hayden Crawford reached out, picked her up horizontally, and started walking to the bathroom.

The sudden sensation of weightlessness made Serena cling tightly to his neck, "Where, where are you taking me?"

"To take a bath."

"Ah, to take a bath?" Serena quickly showed a shy smile, "Hayden Crawford, you're so naughty, wanting to take a bath with me."

Saying this, Serena foolishly giggled again, "Alright then, I can help scrub your back~"

She fluttered her long eyelashes, looking at him with a smile in her eyes.

Hayden Crawford felt as if his throat was on fire. He quickly walked into the bathroom in the lounge and then tossed her in.

With a thud, Serena was thrown directly into the large bathtub, the cold water immediately enveloping her.

Ah!

Three parts of Serena's drunkenness went away immediately. She quickly waved her little hands and feet, splashing in the bathtub. After a moment, her little head broke through the surface.

Now, her long black hair was wet and clinging to her face, dripping water constantly. Serena gasped for air, then looked up in shock and anger at Hayden Crawford, "Hayden Crawford, are you insane?"

At this moment, Hayden Crawford stood tall and erect by the bathtub. The cold water had splashed onto his trousers, but he didn't care at all. He looked down at the furiously angry Serena, "Sobered up?"

Wh-what?

He threw her into the cold water just to sober her up?

There are countless ways to sober someone up, so why did he choose such a brutal method?

"Hayden Crawford, you're truly... despicable!" Serena said, clenching her fist.

Hayden Crawford looked at her water-drenched little face without a tinge of regret, "I don't like wasting time on a drunk. You'd better stay sober before speaking or acting around me."

"..." Serena had been determined to make this night a success, even drinking to muster the courage to take him down. And now, it was all in vain.

Serena no longer had any mood for anything. She felt so cold, so she stretched out her slender arms, looking at him pitifully, "I'm so cold, carry me out."

Hayden Crawford took a large towel to wrap her up, then picked her up horizontally.

Serena lifted her little hand, her slender white fingers landing on his handsome face, gently caressing, "Hayden Crawford, am I not beautiful anymore, so you don't like me now?"

Hayden Crawford looked at her; her little face was indeed not as beautiful as before. Yet, nothing else about her had changed, still attracting him. Otherwise, he wouldn't have recognized her.

Now she looked at him pitifully, her long eyelashes still hanging with glistening water droplets, trembling, making her absolutely adorable.

Hayden Crawford's throat bobbed up and down, "Why ask such a question?"

"Isn't it obvious? Mr. Crawford used to be very... lustful, but now you're not anymore! Humph, Mr. Crawford clearly likes beautiful women, the more beautiful the better. Shallow scoundrel!" Serena accused.

Hayden Crawford slowly curled his thin lips. He admitted all of this, that he liked her beauty, he liked all of her pretty and slender features.

At this moment, Serena's bright eyes filled with a few traces of tipsiness again. She looked foolishly at Hayden Crawford, "Mr. Crawford, don't you really want to do something naughty with me? I..."

With another thud, Serena was once again tossed into the cold water.

...

When Serena was fished out, she was already exhausted, completely drained of energy. Hayden Crawford placed her gently on the big bed, and she turned over, nestling into the soft blanket to find the most comfortable spot to sleep.

Hayden Crawford looked at her, now seeing her slender figure curled up into a small ball. Clearly, she had suffered a severe blow from him, seeking warmth under the covers.

Hayden Crawford tucked her in, then pressed his thin lips to her forehead for a gentle kiss.

At this moment, Serena murmured in her sleep, "Mr. Crawford... Mr. Crawford..."

Hayden Crawford froze. She was calling his name.

She was calling his name in her sleep.

If it weren't for deep love, why would she be calling his name?

But wasn't she in love with Seth Sullivan?

Three years ago, she bore a child for Seth Sullivan and left him. Three years later, in moments of crisis, it was Seth Sullivan she thought of.

Hayden Crawford admitted to himself that he was deeply jealous, to the point of madness. Now she was calling his name in her sleep, causing him confusion once more. She always did this, casually throwing a pebble into the lake of his heart, causing surging waves here, while she remained untouched by it all.

What was she truly thinking inside?

Hayden Crawford really wished he could open up her heart and take a good look, see who she really loved.

"Serena, what should I do with you? I can't bear to hit you or scold you, let alone abandon you. You always, relying on my affection for you, bully me at will."

Serena seemed to hear his voice in her dreams. His voice gave her peace, and she moved, like a little kitten, to his side.

"Mr. Crawford... Pip... Pip is your... son..." Serena murmured in her sleep.

What?

Hayden Crawford was completely stiff, his deep pupils suddenly contracted, and his whole surroundings seemed to explode.

Pip... Pip is your son!

The words echoed continuously in Hayden Crawford's ears. At first, it was one voice, then countless voices, and then it seemed like the whole world was telling him Pip was his son!

"Serena Sterling, what are you saying? What did you just say? Say it again now!" Hayden Crawford quickly grasped her delicate shoulders and shook her hard.

Chapter 680: Your Mommy Gave Birth to Triplets

Serena was sleeping, and when Hayden Crawford shook her like this, she pouted her red lips in dissatisfaction, "Mmm, go away, don't disturb my sleep!"

"Serena Sterling, how can you still feel like sleeping at a time like this? Get up and explain clearly, what do you mean Pip is my son?" Hayden Crawford felt like he was going crazy; he had never thought, never dared to think about it.

"Pip..." Serena was still murmuring in her sleep, "Pip, you need to take care of... Stella, you as the brother must take good care of Mimi..."

Stella?

Hayden suddenly recalled the little pink and tender dumpling he encountered at the airport that day, a porcelain-like little girl who was simply a miniature version of Serena Sterling. At that time, she had melted his heart.

He knew Stella was Pip's sister; they were fraternal twins.

Stella, Pip, and his son Caden Crawford were the same age, all three years old. Could it be...

Hayden quickly thought of a possibility, and his deep narrow eyes were instantly filled with turmoil. He realized he might have been living in a deception his whole life!

Tonight he discovered an earth-shattering secret!

...

Little Caden Crawford was brought back to the villa, "Young master, sir is waiting for you in the study."

"I know." Little Caden Crawford went upstairs and pushed open the door to the study.

It was already late at night, and outside the lights were off, with the whole world quiet, but the study was brightly lit. Hayden Crawford hadn't slept; he was sitting in his office chair, a cigarette burning between his long fingers, enveloped in smoke.

The ashtray was already filled with cigarette butts, clearly showing that Hayden had been smoking here for a long time. The study was filled with a choking smell of smoke.

Little Caden Crawford walked up and quietly opened a window to let fresh air in from outside. He looked at Hayden, "Dad, what's wrong with you?"

Little Caden Crawford had been urgently brought back because he received an order from Hayden.

Little Caden Crawford and Hayden had depended on each other for support for three years. It was the first time he had seen such a father, one now so deep and cold that it was frightening.

Amidst the swirling smoke, Hayden had furrowed his handsome brows into a tight "JII" character. He flicked the ash into the ashtray, then spoke, "I need you to find Pip for me as fast as you can."

"This Pip is a top-notch computer hacker. I've had a few encounters with him, and we're evenly matched. He's very cunning and good at counter-tracking, so it will take some time to find him." Little Caden Crawford said objectively.

At this point, Hayden took out a photo and slid it in front of Little Caden Crawford.

Little Caden Crawford looked down, his eyes lighting up. The photo was of little Stella, her delicate little face identical to Serena Sterling's, just like a little pink and tender dumpling.

Perhaps due to a mutual feeling, Little Caden Crawford almost immediately in his heart concluded that this was his mommy's daughter. "Dad, what does this mean—didn't mommy only give birth to Pip? She also gave birth to little Mimi? Did she have twins?"

"Heh," Hayden took a long drag on his cigarette and then exhaled the smoke, giving Little Caden Crawford a glance. "Why not say your mommy had... triplets?"

Triplets?

Both Hayden and Little Caden Crawford were geniuses with high IQs, never wasting words on each other. Upon hearing the word "triplets," something quickly flashed across Little Caden Crawford's bright eyes.

"Dad, that joke isn't funny at all!"

Hayden withdrew his gaze and said faintly, "Indeed, it's not funny."

Father and son both fell silent, the atmosphere in the study oppressive and heavy.

After a while, Hayden spoke in a low voice, "You just need to keep Pip preoccupied for me, making him unable to attend to anything else."

"Dad, you're going to capture this little Mimi?" Little Caden Crawford quickly realized Hayden's plan.

Hayden nodded, "Exactly, once we capture Stella, Pip will naturally show up, and the truth will surface."

Little Caden Crawford agreed, and the father and son reached an understanding. "Okay."

...

Stella had already started attending kindergarten. With her high beauty, sweet personality, kindness, and politeness, she was a bona fide little princess, becoming the kindergarten's superstar, beloved by everyone.

However, today an unexpected event occurred.

A pretty little girl, with one hand on her hip and the other pointing at the delicate little Stella, shouted, "I've never seen your dad drop you off. Do you even have a dad? My mommy told me that kids without dads are little bastards, and nobody likes bastards."

The girl who insulted Stella was named Tanya. Before Stella came to this kindergarten, Tanya was the most popular little princess, but once Stella arrived, she quickly stole Tanya's spotlight, turning her into a mere backdrop.

Not only that, but Tanya's dad had once come to pick her up from school and happened to meet Serena Sterling. Serena's stunning beauty had left Tanya's dad speechless and mesmerized.

Since then, Tanya's dad had become infatuated with Serena, showing up every day to pick Tanya up, just to catch a glimpse of Serena.

This comparison led to hurt, and Tanya's dad began to despise Tanya's mom, calling her a hag who didn't take care of her figure, embarrassing him when they were out.

Tanya had caught her mom crying in secret many times.

Tanya deeply disliked Stella and her mom, feeling that Stella not only stole her spotlight but her mom also disrupted her parents' relationship. Her mom said Serena was a vixen, seducing other people's husbands.

Tanya also noticed Stella's dad never came around, heard Serena was never married, and that she had a child out of wedlock, making Stella a little bastard who seduces men every day.

"Stella, I heard you don't have a dad, haha, you're really pathetic. Although you lack one dad, your mom has many uncles, right? Those uncles are all your mom's lovers, and she gets you a new dad every day!"

Stella was naturally soft and protected meticulously from a young age, never insulted in such a nasty manner, especially not about her beloved mom.

Stella's little face turned cold as she stepped forward, glaring at Tanya, "I have a dad, and my mom is not a vixen!"

Tanya immediately reached out and pushed Stella.

But Stella wasn't one to be trifled with, and she promptly engaged Tanya in a scuffle.