

Substitute B 731

Chapter 731: Have You Ever Loved Me?

Isabelle Willow quickly raised her hand to cover her face, her face flushed hot. "It's none of your business. I'm leaving."

She turned and left.

But Jude Crawford's well-defined fingers reached over, gently pinched her face, holding it in his palm with interest as he looked left and right. "I didn't do anything to you. Why are you blushing for no reason, Isabelle Willow? What kind of unhealthy thoughts do you have in your head?"

"..." Although Isabelle Willow was used to his preemptive tactics, she was left speechless by his question. "Let go of me. I want to go back."

She had to leave here immediately and wouldn't come back again, no matter the reason.

However, before Isabelle Willow could act, Jude Crawford already took a step forward, his broad and solid chest directly blocking her way, his tall figure casting a shadow over her. "What's the rush, Isabelle Willow? Could it be that... you're longing for a man?"

What?

Isabelle Willow was already forced into the corner by him. She looked up at him in shock. Just now... what did he say?

She... longing for a man?

Jude Crawford found her shocked and bewildered look amusing; she hadn't changed a bit over the years.

The once-renowned and aloof Isabelle Willow seemed like a goddess living in the clouds, untouched by worldly matters. But who would know she blushes easily in a man's arms, dodging like a fawn.

He loved teasing her – he did before, and he still does now.

"Could it be that I guessed wrong? In the years you spent in Alani, there shouldn't have been any men, right? At your age, you're in your sexual prime. You've blushed several times in front of me; come on, admit it, how do you fantasize about me in your mind?" Jude Crawford raised an eyebrow.

Isabelle Willow took a sharp breath—what sexual prime? Not at all!

And, fantasy what, about what? How could he say such indecent words? She had no feelings for him at all.

Isabelle Willow wanted to retort with confidence, but unsuitably, last night's erotic dream suddenly popped into her head. Her gaze immediately faltered guiltily, and her voice weakened, "I didn't! Don't falsely accuse me!"

At this moment, Jude Crawford lowered his body, bringing his deep, handsome face close to hers. The two were now very close, their breaths mingling. If he got just a little closer, he could kiss her. "Isabelle Willow, be honest. Don't lie. Just admit it; I won't tell anyone, and I definitely won't laugh at you."

"..." This lunatic!

Isabelle Willow clenched her fist and punched him hard. "I don't want to talk to you now. Go away!"

A few tender teasing smiles appeared in Jude Crawford's deep eyes. Silly girl, after all these years, she still couldn't even insult someone properly.

Cough.

Cough, cough.

Suddenly, Jude Crawford started coughing.

What happened to him?

She had just punched him, but why did he suddenly start coughing?

"Jude Crawford, what's wrong with you? Are you feeling unwell?" Isabelle Willow hurriedly asked.

Jude Crawford let her go and stood up, but his coughing didn't stop. He took a handkerchief from his trouser pocket and covered his mouth with it.

The pressure in front of her vanished, but Isabelle Willow's almond-shaped eyes were filled with tension and concern. She reached out and pulled his sleeve. "Jude Crawford, what's really happening to you, you..."

At this moment, Jude Crawford suddenly looked up at her, slowly curling his thin lips. "Gotcha, Isabelle Willow, you're worried about me."

Isabelle Willow froze; so he was faking it just now?

"Isabelle Willow," Jude Crawford looked deeply at her, as if wanting to see into her soul, "have you ever loved me?"

Isabelle Willow felt incredibly angry; when he was coughing, it seemed severe, and she was worried sick. He was actually pretending.

He was as devious as ever, always liking to trick her.

Now he asked, "Have you ever loved me?"

Isabelle Willow clenched her fist, "Jude Crawford, you've asked this question for many years already, and my answer has never changed. No, I have never loved you!"

After saying this, she turned and left, directly exiting the villa.

She was gone.

Jude Crawford stood there, watching her figure disappear from his sight. Suddenly, many things welled up in his eyes, a storm of emotions, but upon closer inspection, it seemed thick and as if nothing was there.

Cough.

Cough, cough.

Jude Crawford started coughing again. He took out a handkerchief to cover his mouth. When the coughing stopped, there was already blood on the handkerchief.

Butler Thorne's expression changed drastically as he quickly ran over. "Sir, you're coughing up blood again. I'll get a doctor!"

Jude Crawford raised his hand to stop him. "No need. I know my body well. I've held on for so many years. I don't have much time left."

Butler Thorne was astonished. "Sir!"

Jude Crawford showed little emotion. This once legendary business emperor remained deep and calm, only his face showed a bit of paleness, revealing a hint of weariness. "Don't let anyone know about my health."

"Sir!"

Jude Crawford walked into the study, taking out an item. Butler Thorne looked up, and his pupils instantly shrank—the words "Inheritance Division Document" brutally entered his eyes.

Jude Crawford's voice was deep as he spoke, "I've already drafted my will, dividing my movable and immovable assets. I'm relieved to leave the Crawford family and the entire Crawford Group to Hayden, as he's the most like me. As for Zane..."

Upon mentioning Zane Crawford, Butler Thorne's nerves tensed, and he cautiously probed, "Sir, about Master Zane's background..."

Jude Crawford shook his head, muttering, "Zane is not my biological son, but his brows are much like his mother's. When he was little, I wanted to be ruthless several times but couldn't bring myself to."

"Zane knew from a young age that I didn't like him. I remember once he fell while learning to walk. He scraped his little hands on the ground. He saw me but didn't ask for a hug. Instead, he hid his injured little hands."

"Later, when I walked away, I saw through the glass that Iris came, picking him up tenderly. Zane looked at my departing back and then buried his face in his aunt's arms, his small lips pouting in grievance."

"As Zane grew older, he left home early. I knew he wasn't close to Zelda Willow – how could Isabelle Willow's own son be close to Zelda Willow?"

"As Zane grew up, he resembled his mother more and more. He has an exceptional talent and passion for medicine, and his outstanding charm and aloofness are just like his mother, Isabelle Willow."

Chapter 732: Heart Disease

"Gradually, I actually started to get used to Zane's presence. Iris is very fond of Zane, as if it's predestined. Zane has filled in the gap of Iris's regret of not being able to be a mother. He's been by her side for all these years, while I... I've been so lonely over these years. Time quietly slips away in the endless waiting; I've long been accustomed to seeking Yara's shadow in Zane."

"So I've been thinking, let it be, just pretend I have two sons. Apart from you and me, no one else should know about Zane's true parentage."

Butler Thorne has been with the Crawford family for decades, prudent and cautious in his actions. Apart from Jude Crawford, only he knows the truth about Zane Crawford's parentage.

Zane Crawford is not the son of Zelda Willow at all; Zane's biological mother is... Isabelle Willow!

Back then, Isabelle Willow's second child wasn't a daughter but a son. Zane Crawford is the baby that was taken out via caesarean section.

Jude Crawford entrusted this matter solely to Butler Thorne to handle flawlessly. It's laughable that over the years, Zelda Willow has poured all her thoughts into Zane Crawford, unaware that her meticulous planning ultimately served as someone else's bridal gown.

Jude Crawford began leading the Crawford family at eighteen, becoming the new generation of successors. All these years, he's been in a position of power, strategizing with ease, causing upheavals between his applauses, for over thirty years now. He is a natural-born emperor, a legendary figure to be admired.

Butler Thorne nodded respectfully, "Yes, sir."

Jude Crawford's deep, narrow eyes fell upon the estate division document, "For my two sons, I've left all movable assets to Hayden, and all immovable assets to Zane. The distribution is equal, with legal efficacy. Once I'm gone, there will be lawyers to execute this."

Jude Crawford explained his affairs with a low voice, aware of his own physical state. He has been holding on for so many years; his end is near.

Butler Thorne's eyes were red. Probably only he knew Jude Crawford suffered from heart disease.

The plot that swept the Crawford family back then harmed too many people—Isabelle Willow left, leaving these Crawford members behind: Madam Crawford, Jude Crawford, Iris Crawford, Hayden Crawford... They haven't lived well.

Years ago, Jude Crawford started coughing blood. Sometimes Butler Thorne thought the person he disliked the most was... Isabelle Willow. If it weren't for Isabelle Willow, their esteemed sir wouldn't have developed heart disease. During those prime years, as Aethelgard's foremost noble, Jude Crawford first saw Isabelle Willow in the hospital—one glance sealed his fate.

Butler Thorne didn't know what psychological torment his esteemed sir has endured over the years. Every time he faced his sister Iris, what a pain it was; watching Zane born to Isabelle Willow and Chase Sullivan, how much hurt he felt; staying put day after day in waiting, how lonely he was, experiencing countless lengthy nights and despair.

This heart disease is like a madly growing black flower. Physical ailment may be cured, but for a heart disease, there's no remedy.

Jude Crawford walked step by step towards his own end like this.

Now that Isabelle Willow has returned, he just asked, "Did you ever love me?" Only receiving Isabelle Willow's reply, "My answer hasn't changed—never!"

Butler Thorne looked with reddened eyes at Jude Crawford sitting on the main seat. His expression was hard to discern in the backlight, "Sir, what do you intend to do with madam?"

Butler Thorne knew too well about this man Jude Crawford. Isabelle Willow was his greatest obsession. He couldn't let go throughout his life. If he died, what did he plan to do with Isabelle Willow?

Speaking of this issue, Jude Crawford looked up and glanced at Butler Thorne. He slowly curled his thin lips into a casual, thoughtless arc and softly uttered four words, "Burial together, how?"

Burial together?

These two words froze Butler Thorne.

"I've sought her for so many years, seemingly spending two-thirds of my life on her. She still appears young, just like before, playful and easily blushing. I don't want to leave her like this to other men—my woman cannot be tainted by anyone."

"She has fled for so many years, and even now that she's back, I can feel her trying hard to draw lines with me. How could I let her have her way? I want to keep her by my side forever, living and dying together, so she can never escape."

"However, I haven't decided yet. I need to think... cough, cough..."

Jude Crawford started coughing again.

Butler Thorne quickly said, "Sir, there's no hurry now. You have plenty of time to think carefully. Please rest for now; you seem very tired."

Jude Crawford rose, "Alright, I'll go rest for a while."

...

Jude Crawford returned to his bedroom, lay down on the bed, and began to sleep, dreaming a very long dream.

Actually, in those years he spent with Isabelle Willow, there wasn't only pain; they had joyful moments too.

When Iris lost the child, it delivered a fatal blow to the entire Crawford family. Facing the hysterical Iris, he still protected Isabelle Willow with unwavering strength in his embrace.

On one side was a close relative, on the other was true love. His heart was overwhelmed with demons, gradually developing heart disease. The first time he coughed blood, he was just twenty-seven, in his prime, yet the doctors declared his heart had started to fail.

He and Isabelle Willow had a cold war for a period, but coincidentally, Isabelle Willow became pregnant during that time, expecting their first son, Hayden.

After Hayden was born, he didn't know what had changed in her. During that period, her temperament altered significantly, no longer cold and resistant towards him, but starting to show tenderness and affection.

At night, when he returned from the company, she would leave a lamp for him. Beneath the dim light, she and her son slept on his big bed.

He stood at the bedside, lowered his head to kiss their son's face. His tall figure bent low, enveloping the mother and son in his embrace. As he looked at her, she had quietly opened her eyes beneath him, gazing at him with those beautiful almond-shaped eyes, shimmering with watery brilliance, holding a pool of glittering spring light in her eyes. Though she didn't smile, her eyes sparkled like stars, tender to the core, captivating.

His heart was completely stolen by her, leaning down to kiss her.

She no longer resisted but instead lifted her small hand to wrap around his neck, responding to him bashfully.

Hayden would cry with hunger, even though there was a nursemaid in Jill's room, she insisted on feeding him herself.

Her small face turned red as she pushed him away, turning to nurse the son under cover.

He refused to leave, dropping his lips beside her ear, "The nursemaid said you have plenty of milk. Hayden can't finish it all; when excess milk accumulates, it needs to be expressed..."

She anxiously covered his mouth.

He stared intently at her, "I can help you."

In her bewildered gaze, he directly pounced on her, with Hayden on one side, him on the other.

Chapter 733: Why Am I Still Alive?

She was both nervous and scared, her tiny hands tightly clutching the bedsheet, quickly leaving it wrinkled, while his slender fingers would weave through her small hands, intertwining with her fingers.

Finally, amidst her half-hearted resistance, they made love.

When she fell asleep from exhaustion, sometimes Hayden would cry, and he would get up to hold Hayden, using a clumsy posture to lull him to sleep.

That period was the happiest time of his life; the girl he had chosen at first glance became his wife, the mother of his son. She became so gentle, her gaze at him seemed to be filled with unspoken shy affection, as if her love for him was as torrential and intense as his love for her.

He thought that it would last a lifetime.

But who could have known, who could have known she was pretending, she had reconnected with Chase Sullivan.

Actually, Jude Crawford wasn't willing to recall the memories of what happened later, and all these years, he never wanted to think about it.

The day she brought Chase Sullivan to Jill's room, she ruined herself, and she ruined him too.

Those days he was traveling for work, and because he missed her and their son, he returned a day earlier than planned to surprise her.

He returned to Jill's room, reached the outside of the bedroom, stretched out his hand to push the door open, but the next second he froze.

Because he heard the sounds coming from inside, abnormal sounds.

It was Isabelle Willow's soft and tender voice saying, "Chase, a little gentle, I can't take it..."

He was immediately stunned outside, his dark pupils suddenly constricting; her voice was unmistakable. On countless nights when he cherished her, she would also make such sounds, begging him to let her go...

But now her voice was even more delicate, more enchanting than usual.

He was stunned for a few seconds, then lifted his long leg and kicked the bedroom door open with a "boom".

The scene he saw, he hasn't forgotten a single bit over the years.

On the bed, Isabelle Willow was straddling Chase Sullivan, both of them disheveled, the man's tan skin and the woman's creamy white skin intertwined, stinging his eyes painfully.

It was Chase Sullivan who saw him first, pulling clothes to cover Isabelle Willow's body, then she turned her head.

That woman, she smiled at him.

He thought he must have looked sinister at that moment, his eyes blood-red staring at her, but she wasn't afraid at all, she slowly got off the bed.

She was almost undressed, only wearing a slip dress, her snow-white, radiant little feet stepping on the soft wool carpet, each step exuding a seductive allure.

The once cool and elegant Isabelle Willow, nurtured in Jill's room, had somehow been spoiled by him into such a captivating woman.

She looked at him, her beautiful almond eyes shimmering with bright laughter, "Jude Crawford, why are you back? Didn't you say you were returning tomorrow? I'm really sorry you had to see this, are you shocked, surprised?"

"Chase and I are childhood sweethearts; you forced and took me, imprisoned me here. Honestly, I've never forgotten about Chase for a day, I've always wanted to escape from you!"

"But who are you? You're Jude Crawford. No matter where I flee, you'll catch me back. I can't outdo you, but it doesn't matter, I've meticulously prepared a big gift for you, a nice crown of infidelity!"

"Jude Crawford, did you also feel I've become abnormal after giving birth? You wouldn't naively believe I've fallen in love with you, right? Don't flatter yourself, I've never loved you. Every moment with you makes me feel utterly disgusted. I was just deceiving you, lulling you into a false sense of security, creating an illusion, then pushing you from heaven into hell. Jude Crawford, you must be feeling awful now!"

"Jude Crawford, I hate you, I really, really hate you. You ruined my life, so I'm going to retaliate against you!"

Her words, every word she spoke filled his ears, his eyes bloodshot staring at her, his palm clenched making crackling sounds, all reason burned to ashes, and in an instant, he lost his mind.

He strode forward, gripping her slender wrist tightly, dragging her away.

She refused to leave, unwilling to accompany him.

He cast a faint glance back at her, a ruthless sneer, "I was wrong, letting Chase live these two years was my biggest mistake, he should have died long ago, shouldn't he?"

Upon hearing this threat, Isabelle Willow was shocked, and indeed followed him again.

...

He took her away from Jill's room to a small villa, throwing her into the bathroom, coldly spitting out a few words, "Take off your clothes and clean your filthy body!"

He shut the door for her to clean herself up.

He stood on the room's balcony, smoking between his long fingers, chain-smoking three cigarettes in a row.

The third cigarette's end was extinguished in the ashtray. He turned, those blood-red phoenix eyes staring at the bathroom door, time seemed to drag into an eternity, and she hadn't come out yet.

He stepped forward, palm on the doorknob, intending to open the door.

But, it wouldn't open, she had locked it from inside.

She locked the door from inside.

His heart sank, suddenly having a bad premonition. He raised his long leg to kick the door.

The door opened, and he walked in, stepping into a puddle of water; the bathwater had overflowed, and under the water lay a graceful figure.

Her beautiful black hair spread entirely under the water, the white hem of her dress rippling, her appearance ethereal and otherworldly. Her eyes were closed, rose-red lips curved in a soft and peaceful smile.

She attempted suicide.

She wanted to drown herself.

His dark pupils contracted intensely. He didn't know how he approached or how he lifted her out of the water; he placed her on the room's soft big bed repeatedly administering CPR.

Her small face was deathly pale, showing no sign of life.

She died.

Did she die?

His handsome face remained expressionless, two large palms stacked on her heart, pressing down repeatedly. He didn't know what he was doing; if she never woke up, he would keep pressing, forever and ever.

Time passed, until he was almost numb when a soft groan was heard, she spat out water, waking up.

Her beautiful almond eyes slowly opened, she looked blankly at the crystal chandelier overhead, a few seconds later, she murmured to herself, "Still alive... why still alive?"

She asked, why still alive?

He gasped for air, shirt and trousers soaked, sweat dripping from his handsome face, glaring down at her, wanting to strangle her.

He didn't know what game she was playing with her suicide attempt.

Chapter 734: He Began to Feel a Bit Afraid

All her tender affections were fake; she just wanted to deliver a fatal blow to him.

Her heart and mind were always on her first love, Chase Sullivan, while he was nothing more than a demon who forced his way into her life; she felt no affection or love for him, just hatred.

Why did she want to commit suicide?

Could it be... every moment with him had become so unbearable that she was willing to use death as an extreme means to escape him?

Jude Crawford strode into the bathtub, directly pulling open his belt, possessing her silently, yet roughly.

The woman beneath him didn't cry out in pain, she just looked at him and laughed, "Jude Crawford, I haven't bathed yet, don't you find it dirty?"

He froze.

"Ha, haha, Jude Crawford, are you disgusted? Yes, that's the feeling, every time I kiss you, lying beneath you, that's how I feel."

He quickly closed his bloodshot eyes, pinning her forcefully against the cold bathtub wall.

She curled up in pain, but she refused to cry out; her fingernails etched deep blood marks on his muscle, "Jude Crawford, get lost, don't touch me. If you want to satisfy your beastly desires, go find another woman!"

She told him to find another woman!

He froze quickly, the most distinguished figure in Aethelgard's business world, born a child of the heavens, with an unassailable pride and dignity, but in that moment, she trampled all over his pride and dignity.

He pulled out and left immediately.

He didn't return for several days, and she didn't contact him either. This routine was interrupted one day because Isabelle Willow suddenly got pregnant.

She had been pregnant for a month.

He calculated the dates, the child was conceived the night she was with Chase Sullivan.

The child in her belly was Chase Sullivan's.

She was carrying another man's child.

The child in her belly was illegitimate.

He began to drown himself in alcohol, needing it to numb himself; only in this way could he prevent himself from finding her, fearing he would strangle her. This woman had been spoiled by him, how dare she... how dare she humiliate him like this?

It was then that Zelda Willow approached him.

He had always known Zelda Willow's thoughts about him. Before, he never gave Zelda Willow any chance to get close, not once, but this time was different; she wanted him to find another woman, and if that woman was Zelda Willow, would her heart ache, would she be jealous?

And so, he gave Zelda Willow an opportunity, pretending to be drunk, allowing Zelda Willow to take him to a presidential suite.

That night, Zelda Willow always believed she had spent the spring night with him. Ha, Zelda Willow would never know, the man that night was not him, but a stand-in he had hired.

After that night, Zelda Willow also got pregnant.

With Isabelle Willow and Zelda Willow becoming pregnant one after another, he began to feign closeness with Zelda Willow, also tacitly allowing all the provocations from Zelda Willow. He knew Zelda Willow often went to Jill's room with her big belly to provoke Isabelle Willow, but she showed no reaction.

She seemed disinterested in Zelda Willow carrying his child, but then again, things seemed a bit different, as she rapidly lost weight during that time, and her mental state deteriorated. The maid said she hadn't picked up a pen in a long time, seemingly having given up on her beloved Fly jewelry design, becoming quiet and hollow, staying in her room alone, all day.

If she still harbored interest or concern for the outside world, it was for Hayden.

Hayden, besides studies, stayed by her side all the time, curiously lying on her big belly, "Mommy, is there a little Mimi or a little brother in your belly?"

She would smile, "Hayden, do you want a little brother or a little Mimi?"

"Hmm... although I really want a little Mimi, I feel like it's a little brother in there."

She only spoke to Hayden, only had eyes for Hayden. Since that night he left, she never contacted him on her own again, seemingly having forgotten about him.

He hadn't touched her for a long time either; the youthful affection in a person's life is long. Never did he imagine he would fall in love with any girl, now, besides her, he couldn't fall in love with another.

He found himself starting to miss her, to long for her, but due to his pride and dignity, he wouldn't allow himself to actively seek her again.

Just then, Zelda Willow proposed to take Hayden over to raise him.

He agreed.

Zelda Willow's little thoughts weren't enough to catch his attention, he thought if Zelda Willow touched her Hayden, she would inevitably come to him, come to beg him.

Sure enough, she came to him that evening, and he returned ahead of his schedule, waiting for her.

But he didn't expect she would carry a knife with her. Ever since he saved her from drowning and suicide that time, she actually brought a knife again.

A wave of panic spread from his heart, he raised his hand and slapped her hard.

She was already as thin as a paper kite, with his slap, she fell to the ground, her right cheek swollen and red.

His hand trembled, the girl he cherished and loved most in his heart, even in his deepest hurt, he couldn't bear to touch her, yet he had given her a harsh slap.

He crouched down, holding her tightly in his arms, and in that moment he was scared, truly scared; he feared she would one day leave him far behind.

He felt she was like sand tightly clutched in his palm, the tighter he held, the faster she slipped away.

Could it be... she really detested him to such an extent?

After that, he conveniently returned to Jill's room, pushing aside many work commitments to stay with her.

For some reason, her physical and mental state never improved, her appetite was terrible. He forced her to eat, and though she obediently complied, she couldn't help but vomit everything back up immediately after.

The doctor already secretly told him, she was carrying a son.

This son had a quiet personality and would likely resemble her as he grew; at the time, he didn't believe it, but in later years, seeing Zane becoming increasingly like her—elegant and refined—proved it.

Back then, he didn't plan on keeping the child; Jude Crawford would never allow his woman to bear another man's son.

However, her health was too poor; if he forced an abortion, the doctor said she definitely couldn't take it, and she already loathed him so much that he unexpectedly felt a few moments of cowardice, fearing to truly drive her into despair.

Therefore, he waited until she went into labor prematurely in the ninth month before acting.

Babies, Xue Xue has registered a Weibo, search for Liuli Xue Xue skr, come and play with me.

Chapter 735: The Great Dream of Three Lifetimes

The room was full of his people. If he wanted to play some tricks to have this child die at birth, it would have been easy.

But he didn't expect her to sense it so sharply. At that time, premature labor struck, and she lay on the bed drenched in cold sweat. Clearly such a fragile person, yet at that moment, she burst forth with immense energy, becoming so decisive and fierce. She ordered all the doctors and nurses away, and when the amniotic fluid had drained and the fetus was about to suffocate and die, she brought in the doctor's scalpel and directly cut open her own belly, taking out the infant inside.

She didn't use any anesthesia, performing a cesarean in that way. Before she could even get a look at the child, she collapsed backward.

The child, naturally, fell into his hands.

At that time, he held the newborn Zane, who, being premature, was so tiny, there wasn't even a cry when he was brought out. Isabelle Willow lay weakly on the bed, the sheets soaked with fresh blood, so much it was dripping down with a 'drip-drop' sound.

She struggled to lift her small hand, grabbing his sleeve, "Give me... back my child!"

He looked down at her while holding Zane, "You know, I cannot allow this child."

Tears immediately welled up in her eyes.

"Moreover, this child didn't cry out at birth, he's already dead." He lied.

Upon hearing that the child was already dead, large teardrops fell from her eyes, and soon she fell into a coma.

Later, he handed Zane over to Zelda Willow for upbringing. Zelda never knew that the child she gave birth to that year was a stillbirth, and Zane was Isabelle Willow's biological son.

Gradually, the wounds on her body began to heal, but the scars in her heart were beyond any medicine. She became very quiet and refused to speak to him again, not even a single word.

Yet he still kept her by his side, until one night, he woke up from sharp pain, only to see her holding a pair of scissors, the sharp blades had already injured his most critical spot.

Jill's room was brightly lit, all the doctors rushed over, his face was as gloomy as a storm cloud, he sternly and coldly stared at her but found that she had somehow already run to stand on Jill's high platform amid the chaos.

That day, she was so, so beautiful. Her charming apricot eyes became so gentle, she looked softly at this world, at every person and every thing.

However, she never looked at him.

Not once.

Back then he didn't understand, that was her final glance, as she softly said farewell to this world.

She was going to leave.

"Isabelle Willow, come back, what are you doing standing there?" He thought it was dangerous there and wanted to pull her back.

But she reached out her small hands and pushed open the window, climbing up dexterously, standing on the platform.

Here, in the mountains, opening the window revealed the cliff-like sea, the sound of waves hitting the rocks could be heard all around.

She turned her little head and looked at him, calling his name, "Jude Crawford."

She called him softly, her starry apricot eyes looking at him, "I'm leaving."

She said, Jude Crawford, I'm leaving.

These words exploded in his ears, the veins in his body bulged, and his heart rapidly plummeted into the abyss, the very thing he had always feared and dreaded happening, she was leaving him.

"Isabelle Willow, stop messing around! Get down here quickly, for today's injury you gave me, I won't hold it against you, but if you continue causing trouble, I'll get angry, you know, the consequences of my anger are serious!"

She seemed not to hear him, lifting a small hand to brush the hair from her cheek, "Jude Crawford, these years I stayed by your side must have been tiring for you, because... it seems I'm always causing trouble, sorry."

When she said "sorry," she pouted her red lips, showing a bit of a girl's charm.

He had never seen such a girl-like charm in her because she had never acted spoiled to him before, this sight seemed like ages ago.

His heart felt clawed by a huge hand, boundlessly engulfed by bewilderment and helplessness, "Isabelle Willow, what trick are you trying to pull this time, do you want that child? Fine, I'll have someone find him back."

"Jude Crawford," she didn't listen to him, only calling his name again and again, she slowly lifted her red lips, giving him a slight smile, "Let me go, let yourself go, let everyone go."

His deep and narrow eyes instantly reddened, let her go?

He extended his big hand towards her, "I'm afraid I'll have to disappoint you, letting you go, I never thought of it."

She was very self-aware, since he met her, he had made his life a mess.

He never thought to let her go when things were full of wounds before, now even less, if love is a cup of lethal poison, since she handed it over, he accepts it with relish.

He lifted his leg, walking towards her, step by step.

She lightly lifted her small head, looking at him again, "Jude Crawford, we were originally people from two worlds, you, you are too costly, your love, too heavy, I can't afford it, I'm leaving, from now on mountains high, waters long, we'll go our separate ways, you... take care."

Finishing her words, she leapt, that figure rode the wind back, instantly plunging into the sea below, disappearing completely from his sight.

"No!" He lunged forward, reaching out to grab her.

But, caught nothing, her clothing swiftly slipped through his fingers.

She jumped into the sea, never to be seen again.

Afterward, he searched for her for many years.

He never believed, she was already dead.

But she seemed to have vanished, never again appearing in his life.

He embarked on the journey of searching for her, to the ends of the earth, this search lasting a long twenty years.

Now she came back, he asked her, did you ever love me?

She said, never.

In his dreams Jude Crawford faintly hooked his thin lips, desolate and mocking, he spent his life unrequited in love.

Then came a "knock knock knock" at the door, accompanied by Butler Thorne's anxious and frantic voice, "Sir! Sir! Something terrible has happened!"

Jude Crawford's eyes suddenly opened, he sat up, cold sweat was on his forehead, really not knowing just now if he was actually asleep, or just in his own dreams... a dream of three lifetimes.

Jude Crawford's deep and narrow eyes rested on the tightly closed door, Butler Thorne was still knocking, he pursed his thin lips tightly, Butler Thorne was by nature steady, seldom so restless and flustered, unless something major had happened.

Jude Crawford threw off the covers, got out of bed, and went to open the room door.

"Sir, it's bad news, we just got word that Miss Iris... she took pills and committed suicide!"

Chapter 736: Spent the Night at His Place

Iris Crawford committed suicide by taking pills!

Jude Crawford's complexion suddenly changed, "What did you say?"

Something happened to Iris Crawford, becoming a hidden pain for the entire Crawford family. Old Mrs. Crawford shed many tears over it, Jude Crawford suddenly developed a heart condition, and they were most worried about Iris Crawford.

No one expected that something would still happen to Iris Crawford—she actually committed suicide by taking pills!

"Sir, you didn't hear wrong, Miss Iris committed suicide and couldn't be saved. When she was found, there was no breath left in her, and she was declared dead upon arrival at the hospital!"

"Moreover... just a few hours before Miss Iris committed suicide by taking pills, Mrs. Yara visited her. No one knows what the two talked about in the room, but Beryl, who had always served Miss Iris, said that after Mrs. Yara left, Miss Iris's mood became unstable and very unusual. Later, Miss Iris sent Beryl away and locked herself in the room to take the pills."

"According to Beryl's testimony now, Mrs. Yara is highly suspicious. Miss Iris is still at the hospital, and Mrs. Yara has already been taken away by the police!"

Butler Thorne knew how serious this matter is, it was as if the entire sky had collapsed for the Crawford family. With both Miss Iris and Mrs. Yara in trouble, it's like going back to many years ago, and Jude Crawford is once again pushed to the forefront, facing a painful decision.

On one side is family, on the other is a beloved.

The Crawford family seemed to be under some curse, unable to escape.

Jude Crawford casually picked up a coat, his face grim, and said, "Let's set off immediately."

"Yes, sir."

...

A few hours earlier.

Isabelle Willow had just left the villa, planning to return, when her phone rang in her bag.

She took out her phone and saw the name 'Iris Crawford' flashing on the screen.

It was a call from Iris Crawford.

Isabelle Willow's hands trembled slightly. She knew she and Iris Crawford would meet sooner or later, and she didn't want Jude Crawford to always be caught in a dilemma between them.

Isabelle Willow pressed the answer button, "Hello."

"Isabelle Willow, it's me," Iris Crawford's cold, slightly tired voice quickly came through, "I want you to come to see me right now, I want to have a good talk with you."

"Alright, send me the address."

The two hung up, and Iris Crawford quickly sent her location. Isabelle Willow took a cab to Iris Crawford's place.

...

When she arrived at Iris Crawford's villa, Beryl opened the door and pointed upstairs, "Miss is waiting for you in the room upstairs."

"Okay, thank you." Isabelle Willow went upstairs.

Beryl stood below, watching Isabelle Willow's figure disappear into the room upstairs, revealing a faint, eerie smile immediately.

In the room upstairs, Isabelle Willow walked in, and she immediately saw Iris Crawford, who was draped in a sweater and seated on the sofa.

Their eyes met, and Isabelle Willow spoke first, "Iris, long time no see."

Iris Crawford curled her lips in a mocking smile. She gestured towards the opposite sofa with her eyes, "Sit down, let's sit and talk."

Isabelle Willow sat opposite. Iris Crawford had brewed the tea herself, clearly waiting there the entire time. She poured Isabelle Willow a cup of tea, "When you jumped off Jill's balcony back then, I thought you were dead; who would have thought you're still alive."

Isabelle Willow accepted the tea, took a sip, Iris Crawford's tea art was still superb, leaving a lingering fragrance, they could have become good friends as sisters-in-law.

"When I jumped from Jill's balcony back then, I also thought I was doomed, but Seraphina saved me, and Seraphina took me to Alani."

So it was Seraphina Linden, no wonder.

Iris Crawford's face was a bit pale, she hadn't slept well last night. She looked at Isabelle Willow, "Then why did you come back? You've been gone for twenty years, why come back now?"

"Because I still have ties here."

"Ties? Your ties are Hayden, or...my brother?"

This time Isabelle Willow didn't answer.

Iris Crawford got her answer, "Heh, Isabelle Willow, all these years you still long for my brother. Did you forget that my brother developed a heart condition because of you, at 27, his heart began to fail and he started coughing up blood?"

Jude Crawford always thought no one knew about his heart condition except Butler Thorne, but actually, both Iris Crawford and Isabelle Willow knew.

Iris Crawford studied medicine, and once, she inadvertently saw a bottle of medication in her brother's room, which was meant for treating heart conditions.

Later, she rummaged through the trash bin and quickly found a blood-stained handkerchief; she knew her brother had started coughing up blood.

She quickly arranged to meet Isabelle Willow and told her about it, urging Isabelle Willow to stay away from her brother.

Not long after, news spread about Isabelle Willow's affair with Chase Sullivan at Jill's place.

Isabelle Willow slightly frowned, whispering, "I just...wanted to see him..."

"My brother doesn't need your attention!" Iris Crawford quickly interrupted her, "In those years you were gone, my brother lived very well. He hasn't taken medicine for many years, which means his heart condition is better now. You see, I was right, as long as you disappear, my brother will recover, but if you stay here, he will eventually die because of you!"

"Throughout these years, my brother has been living with Zelda Willow harmoniously and lovingly, they've never had a fight. By the way, you haven't seen the son Zelda gave my brother, Zane Crawford, have you? You couldn't imagine how outstanding Zane is. He is now a renowned surgeon in the medical field, his talents as high as the sky, no less than your son Hayden Crawford!"

Mentioning the son Zelda gave Jude Crawford, Isabelle Willow's fingers clenched, pressing her nails into her palms without feeling pain.

When she learned about his heart condition, she started planning how to leave him, and the affair with Chase Sullivan was merely an act.

She wanted him to hate her, loathe her, and abandon her.

Soon she reaped the results, he had a fling with Zelda, and Zelda got pregnant.

Zelda would strut around in front of her with her big belly, she pretended to be indifferent on the outside, but her heart was bleeding.

She knew Zelda later gave him a son, a son she never dared to see, inquire about, or hear any news about, fearing jealousy would consume her.

Zane Crawford...

His son's name is... Zane Crawford?

What a lovely name.

Isabelle Willow looked at Iris Crawford, "His heart condition, is it really better?"

The heart condition had been her greatest concern all these years.

"Of course, it's better. Isabelle Willow, haven't you seen my brother? Couldn't you tell how he is physically? I heard you even stayed over at my brother's place." Iris Crawford hinted with intent.

Chapter 737: Call Serena Sterling

Isabelle Willow quickly recalled the dream she had and awkwardly tucked a strand of hair behind her ear, "Nothing happened between your brother and me."

"Really?" Iris Crawford didn't believe her, not because she doubted Isabelle, but because she didn't trust her own brother. She knew all too well the kind of man he was. Another little rabbit had fallen into his trap, and he, the carnivorous beast, would never let go of the chance for a hearty feast.

"Isabelle Willow, I have no interest in what happened between you and my brother. Just hurry up and get the divorce papers processed with him and make a clean break. I don't want my brother or the Crawford family to have any more accidents because of you. The farther away you are from us, the better!"

Isabelle Willow didn't say anything. She hadn't returned this time with the intention of rekindling anything with Jude Crawford. There was no way back for them.

He did seem to be in good shape, stable and full of strength. It appeared his heart condition was indeed cured, which put her at ease.

Isabelle Willow looked up at Iris Crawford, "Iris, I will settle things with your brother, but I still want to explain the events back then. Dylan Gardner and I were not what you think. I can't explain the surveillance footage from that time. Even now, I can't remember what I actually did. It felt like I was being controlled."

If it were the past, Iris Crawford might have lost her temper and become hysterical, but this time she was very calm.

She had actually called Isabelle Willow over because she wanted to hear what Isabelle had to say. Upon closer thought, everything seemed like what Serena had told her a few days ago—there were too many improbabilities and doubts about the past events.

Iris Crawford frowned, "Controlled? What does that mean, you're saying... someone might have infiltrated the Crawford family back then?"

Isabelle Willow recalled some details. Over the years, she constantly searched through her few remaining memories for valuable information. "That night I really felt unwell. I remember the last person I saw was... a little girl..."

A little girl?

Could it be... Caroline Sloan?

Iris Crawford had been sponsoring impoverished children in mountainous areas from an early age, with Caroline Sloan being her favorite among them.

Caroline Sloan was smart and hardworking, and during that summer holiday, Iris had brought her to explore the bustling city of Aethelgard.

That night was her birthday, and everyone in the Crawford family had gathered at the family mansion. She also brought Caroline Sloan along.

At that time, Caroline Sloan was still very young, just a few years old, and didn't have much presence. Later, with so many things happening in chaos, she had truly forgotten about Caroline Sloan.

Now, with Isabelle's mention, Iris's mind suddenly flashed with many images. Isabelle and Dylan were in the room, and someone was the first to discover them, screaming and drawing everyone upstairs. She remembered... that it was Caroline Sloan.

Later, when she stumbled out of the room in a daze, heavily pregnant, she stood on the stairs and missed a step. At that moment, she also seemed to have seen Caroline Sloan.

Caroline Sloan?

Caroline Sloan!

Could it be that this entire event was related to Caroline Sloan?

Iris Crawford felt shocked but quickly dismissed the idea. A mere few-year-old girl—it might just be a coincidence.

However, it was too much of a coincidence, highly abnormal. Abnormalities often have something sinister behind them.

"Iris! Iris, what's wrong?" came Isabelle's voice.

Iris Crawford snapped back to reality. She wanted to speak, but then the sound of a bell rang in her ears again, making her feel like her head would split open.

"Iris, you don't look good. Let me call you a doctor."

"No need." Iris stopped her, "Isabelle Willow, you should go now. I have some matters I need to verify myself. If there are any developments, I'll call you."

Seeing Iris's reluctance to talk more, Isabelle could only nod, "Alright, I'll leave then. I'll wait for your call."

Isabelle Willow left.

...

With Iris Crawford left alone in the room, she pressed her head with her hands, trying to stay conscious.

There had to be something wrong with Caroline Sloan!

A few days ago, she had even witnessed Caroline Sloan appearing again, being carried in Hayden Crawford's arms...

Iris Crawford's pupils constricted, and she felt her heart drop continuously. She pondered a possibility—that Caroline Sloan had intentionally gotten close to her, stealthily infiltrating the Crawford family, and now appearing by Hayden's side. Was her target... Isabelle Willow and Hayden Crawford's mother?

And she was nothing more than a sacrificial pawn.

Oh my God!

It seemed like Iris had uncovered an earth-shattering secret. She realized the Crawford family had been living under a great conspiracy all these years.

What should she do?

Iris quickly retrieved her phone, intending to make a call, wanting to call Serena Sterling.

At this moment, the only person she thought of was Serena Sterling. Serena was the person she relied on and trusted the most. With Serena's sharp intellect, she could surely help break this spell that had plagued the Crawford family for years.

But just as she found Serena's number and was about to call, a voice suddenly echoed in her ears, "Miss, who are you planning to call?"

Iris jumped, dropping the phone onto the carpet. She immediately looked up to see Beryl's old face growing larger in her view.

"Beryl, why did you come in without knocking? You scared me to death!"

Beryl glanced down at the phone on the carpet. Illuminated on the screen were the words "Serena Sterling." She bent down, picked up the phone, and directly turned it off. Then, she took out two pills alongside a glass

of water. "Miss, is your head aching again? It's time for your medication. Come, be a good girl and take these pills, and the pain will go away, bringing you relief."

Iris immediately sensed something was off about Beryl. She had barged in without knocking, confiscated her phone, and now insisted on giving her medicine.

Warily, Iris retreated a few steps. Then she noticed a red bell tied to Beryl's waist—the very source of the piercing bell sound that had been causing her headaches.

"You're not Beryl. Who are you really?" Iris demanded, her voice cold and cautious.

Beryl chuckled, a sinister smile that sent chills down the spine. "Who I am doesn't matter. You only need to know, Miss, that Serena can't save you!"

At that moment, all of Iris's suspicions seemed confirmed. She cursed herself for being so foolish, realizing things too late.

She used her long nails to dig into her fingertip until it bled, then quietly placed her hand behind her. On the sofa, she wrote "Lian" with her blood—a last message meant for Serena!

She believed Serena would discover it upon returning!

Chapter 738: He Was the Unexpected in Her Life

Iris Crawford kept writing while vigilantly staring at Beryl, "Do you know Serena? Who exactly are you?"

As she spoke, the flames of hatred ignited fiercely in Iris Crawford's eyes, "I should ask, what is your relationship with Caroline Sloan, and who is Caroline Sloan? Were the events of that year all planned by you? Did you destroy the Crawford family and kill my child? What is your true intention?"

"Now that you're here again, what do you want this time? Why are you approaching Hayden Crawford and Serena? What are you trying to do?"

Beryl showed a hint of surprise, but she took the medicine and stepped towards Iris Crawford, "As expected of the Crawford family's eldest young lady, you saw through it, but unfortunately, the dead cannot speak, and this secret will remain unknown."

"Do you think you can succeed? Serena will be back soon; she will save me, she will personally expose all of this and pull out every one of you poisonous snakes from the shadows!" Iris Crawford said with hatred.

Beryl moved, and the bell on her waist immediately emitted an enchanting sound. Iris Crawford's face turned pale, and her head felt like it exploded. She collapsed in pain on the sofa.

"Miss, that's enough, don't speak anymore, I know you're very tired, come on, take the medicine obediently."

Iris Crawford lost her ability to resist; she was in too much pain. Beryl's voice kept enticing her, she just wanted relief now.

Iris Crawford opened her mouth, and Beryl fed her two pills.

Soon, Iris Crawford's pupils dilated, and she fell down.

After finishing everything, Beryl raised her hand and tore off the human skin mask on her face, revealing her true appearance.

She was the long-lost... Consort Willow.

Consort Willow had been defeated miserably by Serena Sterling and Hayden Crawford in the last battle, but fortunately, her keen sense of smell allowed her to escape.

Now that Hayden Crawford was hunting her everywhere, the safest place is the most dangerous one, so she disguised herself as Beryl and infiltrated close to the crucial figure, Iris Crawford.

Serena Sterling!

Consort Willow truly hated Serena Sterling. At Serena's hands, she had already lost her two children. Iris Crawford's last thoughts were of Serena before her death, which made Consort Willow very discontent.

Consort Willow took out her phone and dialed a number.

Soon, the call connected, and a soft lark-like voice came through, "Hello, Consort Willow."

Consort Willow's eyes immediately showed respect, "Princess, everything on my side is done."

On the other end was Caroline Sloan, the Merfolk Clan's Princess.

The Merfolk Clan's influence had long infiltrated Westria, so they knew about Isabelle Willow's background sooner than anyone else. Over the years, the Merfolk Clan had been orchestrating everything happening to the Crawford family from behind the scenes.

"Good, now I entrust the next phase to you, it must be foolproof," Caroline Sloan said.

"Yes, Princess," Consort Willow respectfully hung up the phone.

...

Isabelle Willow came out and prepared to leave, but as she walked on the road, she suddenly stopped because of a terrible premonition.

Seeing Iris Crawford in such a poor state earlier, could something have happened?

Isabelle Willow couldn't rest easy about Iris Crawford, so she turned around and went back.

Walking up to the villa's lawn, she heard the piercing sound of ambulance sirens in the distance, and two ambulances had stopped.

The villa was brightly lit now, and someone was carrying Iris Crawford out.

Isabelle Willow's bag instantly fell onto the lawn, her pupils contracted sharply, and she felt like she couldn't breathe. She immediately ran over at full speed.

She pushed through the crowd and quickly saw Iris Crawford, who was now lifelessly lying on a white stretcher.

"Iris!" Isabelle Willow ran over and grabbed Iris Crawford, shaking her vigorously, "Iris, what's wrong with you? Wake up, hurry!"

"Miss Crawford took pills to commit suicide," a doctor said.

Took pills to commit suicide?

These four words exploded in Isabelle Willow's ears. She shook her head in disbelief. How could this be? She had just been sitting opposite her, talking animatedly!

Isabelle Willow slowly raised her hand and touched Iris Crawford's hand, cold, cold as ice.

She remembered years ago, standing in the hospital corridor, it was also these doctors in white coats who took the child from Iris Crawford's belly, that child was bruised all over, his body stiff, also so cold, so devoid of warmth.

"Iris!" Tears swiftly filled Isabelle Willow's eyes, "Iris, wake up, wake up quickly! Don't you hate me? Hate me when you wake up, I'm not dead yet, how come you're the first to..."

At this moment, Beryl rushed over and pushed Isabelle Willow down, "Enough, stop pretending! The last person my family's young lady ever wanted to see was you!"

Isabelle Willow, unguarded, fell to the ground, her hand scraped against the ground, quickly bleeding.

But she didn't notice her injury, her gaze lingered on Iris Crawford. The doctors lifted Iris Crawford into the ambulance, which sped away.

Beryl looked down on Isabelle Willow, "Isabelle Willow, you're a jinx, years ago you brought chaos to the Crawford family. Now that you returned, Miss Crawford took pills to commit suicide. Why won't you stay away from the Crawford family!"

"Oh, I remember, you were talking in the room with Miss Crawford for so long earlier. Did you provoke her again? I suspect you did it on purpose. I'm calling the police now; you are a prime suspect!"

Beryl immediately took out her phone to call the police, and soon Isabelle Willow was taken away.

...

Isabelle Willow was locked in a small room, sitting curled up in a corner.

She felt very cold, with no warmth on her body, she extended her arms, hugging herself tightly, but found she was already shivering all over.

Her mind flashed with images: Iris Crawford being carried to the ambulance, the child being taken out all those years ago, the Crawford matriarch wiping her tears secretly, Jude Crawford being diagnosed with a heart disease...

Beryl was right; she was indeed a jinx, bringing calamity to the Crawford family.

She had always known her destiny since young, bound for life, unable to pursue freedom.

Each step she took was with caution, never daring to dream, never daring to desire, leading to her indifferent and aloof nature.

Jude Crawford was an anomaly in her life.

For the first time, she wanted to possess someone, beginning to dream, beginning to desire.

These years, she had never forgotten that day when she stood amid a bustling crowd and looked up at him; the most distinguished merchant noble of Aethelgard stood on the podium, elegant and captivating, attracting all attention. That one glance felt like eternity.

Chapter 739: He's Here!

Later, the Willow family faced an economic crisis. She kneeled at the Crawford family's doorstep as heavy snow fell that day. He approached, stepping steadily in his black boots, looking down at her and said, "I can save the Willow family, but you have to marry me, become my Mrs. Crawford."

And then, she married him.

On the day of the grand wedding, adorned with splendid decorations for miles, she wore a beautiful wedding dress. The old Mrs. Crawford liked her very much and gave her a large red envelope, much like a mother giving her daughter New Year's money, and slipped the Crawford family heirloom bracelet on her wrist.

His sister, Iris Crawford, was lively and playful, she also liked her very much. She came over, grabbed her hand, and sweetly called her sister-in-law.

She lost her balance and nearly fell. He came over and reprimanded Iris, who stuck out her tongue and hid behind her, "Brother is biased, marrying a wife and forgetting his sister. Now I can only follow my sister-in-law; you have to protect me."

That day was like a dream, the breeze was gentle, the sunlight perfect. He came over and held her small hand tightly in his palm. She smiled slightly, thinking that the cycle of time had begun to favor her, granting her reachable happiness.

She thought it was just the beginning.

She liked him, liked the old Mrs. Crawford, liked his sister Iris. She imagined that in the future, she would be a good wife, giving birth to his children, not wasting the beautiful years; she would be a good daughter, accompanying Mrs. Crawford, sharing family joys; she would also be a good sister-in-law, protecting this sister with him.

However, little did she know, before it began, it had already ended.

Falling from heaven to hell took only a moment. She wasn't prepared for anything, wasn't a good wife, failed to fulfill any filial duty, couldn't protect Iris, the only sister, causing her to lose her lively and playful self.

Her existence was the biggest mistake.

If she hadn't been there, everything wouldn't have happened.

Now Iris has attempted suicide by taking pills. Isabelle Willow feels as if a giant hand is squeezing her heart tightly, causing great pain.

Her eyes grew hot and wet. She quickly lifted her gaze upwards. Actually, everyone is born not knowing how to cry, but she found a way not to cry—by looking up at the sky when wanting to cry, letting tears flow back.

But this time it didn't work. She kept her eyes wide open, looking upwards, yet the burning tears still gushed out in big droplets.

Isabelle Willow hugged herself tightly, buried her tear-streaked face deep between her knees, and cried inconsolably.

She was wrong.

She shouldn't have hoped for anything from the start.

She shouldn't have fallen in love with Jude Crawford.

She shouldn't have returned.

Not wanting to see, hear, or think meant not having to be sad.

At that moment, a chill invaded as someone arrived.

Jude Crawford hurried over. His deep, handsome face showed little emotion, but the cold wind outside fluttered the hem of his black wool coat. His persistent, stable footsteps on the floor reflected a stern, powerful aura that made people shy away.

Jude Crawford walked inside and immediately saw the woman curled up in the corner. She was hugging her knees, her small face buried in them, her whole slender figure hidden in the dim light, alone and desolate.

Her shoulders still shook as if she was crying.

"It's been just a few hours, and you're locked up here, huh?"

Isabelle Willow froze entirely, the familiar low and mocking voice echoing in her ears.

She slowly raised her head, Jude Crawford's handsome face enlarged in her view.

How did he come here?

Out of surprise from looking up, she hadn't wiped her face, so her face was covered with tears, as dirty as could be. Jude Crawford frowned his sword-like eyebrows and strode forward, bending one knee to the ground, extending a clearly defined hand to scoop her tear-stained face into his palm.

His thin lips pressed into a cold, displeased arc. His perfect facial contour was stern and sharp, "Just this little courage, hiding here crying secretly, how much are your tears worth?"

"..."

Initially, Isabelle Willow didn't feel aggrieved; now, being chided made her feel very wronged. If he hadn't come to provoke her, it would've been fine.

She wouldn't have fallen for him, been obsessed with him, started daydreaming.

In her whole life, Jude Crawford was the only man she ever wanted.

Isabelle Willow cried uncontrollably, "Jude Crawford, you're scolding me..."

Jude Crawford's firm heart suddenly softened. His deep and narrow eyes slowly flooded with some indulgence and helplessness. Forget it, in this life, he was doomed to be captivated by her.

He pulled out a handkerchief from his pocket, lifted her face, and meticulously wiped away all her tears, "Isabelle Willow, I'm a bit worried about how you'll live without me in the future."

Isabelle Willow stiffened, forgetting to cry, staring at him blankly, "You... what do you mean?"

Jude Crawford threw the handkerchief into the trash can, then lifted her like a little chick, making her stand, "I mean you're foolish."

"..." Isabelle Willow managed to stand, but she slipped back down.

Jude Crawford frowned, looking at her impatiently, "What happened again?"

"I... my legs are numb..."

Jude Crawford gave her a dark look, then removed his wool coat and draped it over her shoulders before bending to carry her in his arms.

Isabelle Willow smelled his familiar masculine scent, reassuring and comforting, and slowly reached out her small hands to hug his neck, choking, "Jude Crawford, Iris... Iris..."

"I know, don't worry about Iris's incident. A lawyer is already here dealing with the procedures. I'll take you home first." Jude Crawford carried her out.

Isabelle Willow looked up at him. He pressed his thin lips, looking reserved, obviously not wanting to discuss Iris's matter. Iris was standing between them, pushing them further apart.

...

Reaching the luxurious car, Isabelle Willow jumped down from Jude Crawford's arms, looking at him, "Jude Crawford, I want to go to the hospital."

"Go to the hospital for what?" Jude Crawford revealed a hint of mockery, "Go back."

"I and Iris..."

Jude Crawford directly interrupted her, as if the topic of Iris Crawford had exhausted his last bit of patience. He directly opened the passenger door, "Get in."

Isabelle Willow originally had many things to say, about Iris's abnormal behavior, but now she understood she didn't need to say anything. She realized whatever she said would be wrong.

Isabelle Willow curled her fingers, "Jude Crawford, go to the hospital. I'll go back myself. I already told you last time, I've never loved you. Don't appear in front of me again. I'm annoyed!"

Chapter 740: She Threw Up

Jude Crawford quickly pressed his thin lips, "Isabelle Willow, I've rushed over here eagerly, and this is all you have to say to me? Sometimes I really want to dig into your heart to see if you even have one!"

Isabelle Willow hardened her heart, Jude Crawford, just go, don't bother about me anymore. I will only bring you disasters.

"Jude Crawford, can you not understand human words? I never asked you to rush over. Even if you don't come, Chase Sullivan will. You clinging to me like this is simply self-indulgent and only makes me increasingly disgusted, feeling like you're a ghost that won't go away."

A dangerous storm quickly gathered in Jude Crawford's deep and narrow eyes. He glared fiercely at Isabelle Willow and then forced a low laugh from his throat, "Heh, Isabelle Willow, you've got some nerve!"

He was furious; if it were anyone else daring to make him this angry, he would make sure that person disappeared from the world.

But this person was Isabelle Willow.

Even when she made him this angry, in his rage, he could only utter through clenched teeth, "You've got some nerve!"

Jude Crawford grabbed her wrist and forcefully shoved her into the passenger seat.

Isabelle Willow quickly struggled, "Jude Crawford, let go of me, I don't want to get in your car!"

"You can shut up now, I don't want to hear you talk right now!"

"Jude Crawford!" Isabelle Willow forcefully shook him off.

Jude Crawford's large hand, hanging at his side, quickly clenched into a fist. His deep and handsome face was dark enough to drip water, "Isabelle Willow, my patience is limited, are you sure you want to provoke me like this?"

Isabelle Willow gave him a glance, then turned and walked away.

She stood by the roadside and hailed a taxi, "Driver, please drive quickly."

Jude Crawford stood in place, watching that taxi take Isabelle Willow away. A storm had already been stirred up in his eyes, this woman! How dare she! How could she be so daring!

A few seconds later, Jude Crawford turned back to the driver's seat, pressed the accelerator, and the luxury car immediately sped down the road.

In the silent car cabin, a "ding" sounded, his phone rang with a message.

It was from little Caden Crawford.

Jude Crawford opened the message; little Caden Crawford had sent only a few words, simple and clear.

Jude Crawford closed the message, then tossed the phone onto the passenger seat, sliding down the car window to let the cold wind from outside rush in, only this way could he breathe.

In the taxi ahead, the driver spoke, "Hey, why is there a luxury car following us?"

Isabelle Willow was initially checking her phone. She also received a message, from little Pip. Hearing the driver's words, she quickly turned her head. Through the rear windshield, she saw Jude Crawford driving the luxury car, following them all the way.

What was he doing?

Wasn't he going to the hospital to see Iris?

She had already said it all, why was he still following?

Isabelle Willow looked at his luxury car, under the brilliant neon lights of the night. His shiny, luxurious black car exuded both a restrained and dazzling glow, just like him.

"Should we pull over?" the driver asked at this point.

Isabelle Willow slowly turned her head back, not looking at Jude Crawford anymore. She said softly, "No, let's just drive, if he likes to follow, let him follow."

"Okay."

Isabelle Willow lowered her gaze to Jude Crawford, "Go back, I beg you, please...stop tempting me."

...

Isabelle Willow returned to the apartment, where little Pip had been waiting for a long time, "Grandmother, you're back?"

Isabelle Willow quickly hugged little Pip with affection, "Pip, what was that message you sent me earlier? Why did you say your Aunt Iris is fine?"

Little Pip giggled in a childish voice, "Because Mommy left a golden pill when she left, Aunt Iris is temporarily safe with the protection of that golden pill, but it only lasts for three nights. Which means, Mommy must return within these three days, otherwise, even gods couldn't save Aunt Iris."

Isabelle Willow's heart tightened, "Can Serena really make it back within these three days?"

If she doesn't make it back, what should we do?

"Grandmother, you've been very tired, just take a bath and go to sleep. You don't need to go anywhere these three days, just stay here."

"But, I want to go to the hospital to see Iris."

"No need, Grandmother, my big brother has gone to the hospital."

Big brother?

Caden?

Little Pip nodded, "Grandmother, Mommy asked us to protect everyone here before she left, so don't worry, big brother has gone to catch ghosts."

The heavy burden in Isabelle Willow's heart slowly lifted. It seemed that Serena had made all the arrangements before leaving, and now with Caden and Pip, everything would be taken care of. Serena just needs to make it back within three days.

Isabelle Willow returned to her room, went to the window, and was about to close the curtains, but her actions froze soon after because she saw Jude Crawford's luxury car downstairs.

He not only followed her all the way but also parked the luxury car right below her building.

Jude Crawford got out, took out a cigar, lit it with a lighter, and began to smoke, with one hand in his pocket and the other holding the cigar, leaning lazily against the car's body, quietly puffing away.

Isabelle Willow couldn't make out the expressions on his face, but she saw the faint worry furrow between his brows forming a 'J' shape through the hazy smoke.

At that moment, Isabelle Willow saw some weariness in him, as if he was very, very tired.

She felt a sudden twist of pain in her heart as she gazed at him, noticing that when he left, he hadn't even changed shoes, still wearing those deep blue house slippers.

He actually left the house wearing slippers.

He must have hurried over upon hearing she was locked away, not even taking the time to change his shoes.

Isabelle Willow's eyes suddenly turned red, and tears quickly welled up in her almond eyes.

Soon, a sourness surged up in her chest; pressing a hand to her heart, Isabelle Willow rushed into the bathroom, doubling over as she retched.

She retched till the world spun, having eaten nothing, even dry heaving the bile from her stomach.

Finally stopping, Isabelle Willow slumped onto the carpet, her face ashen.

What's happening to her?

Why did she start vomiting inexplicably?

Was she ill?

...

Downstairs, Jude Crawford smoked a cigar quietly for a while, soon the ground beneath his feet was littered with cigarette ends.

He looked up at the window above, her room light was still on, but not for him, truthfully, she never left a light on for him.

Jude Crawford turned back to his luxury car, pressing the accelerator to speed off towards the hospital.