

## **Substitute B 841**

### Chapter 841: Matrimonial Alliance

Ever since Serena Sterling learned that Hayden Crawford carried the blood of purity in his veins, she knew this day would come sooner or later. But, it came too quickly.

So quickly that she was caught off guard.

Zane Crawford also stopped in his tracks. He looked at Serena's suddenly pale face and said softly, "Elder Brother is still in the palace, you..."

Serena lowered her long lashes, "Zane, let's go."

Watching Serena's departing silhouette, Zane turned back to glance at the looming imperial city behind them.

...

Inside the palace.

The Imperial Physician had just finished bandaging Titus Ashworth's wound when someone hurriedly reported, "Master, bad news, the Merfolk Clan Princess has just escaped secretly!"

"What?" Titus Ashworth's fury erupted as he flipped over the teacup beside him, "You useless bunch, with so many of you, you can't even keep an eye on one Merfolk Clan Princess!"

"Master, please calm your anger." At this moment, a strategist by his side advised, "Once the Merfolk Clan Princess escapes, she will surely go to Serena. This works to our advantage, as we can sit back and watch the tigers fight."

Titus Ashworth's eyes lit up, his anger dissipated, "That's logical. Our top priority now is to ensure Harrison Ashworth ascends to the master's position promptly. The Shea family now wields significant power; their eldest daughter, Seraphina Shea, is the top aristocrat. I wish to arrange a marriage and have Harrison Ashworth marry Seraphina as his queen, ensuring Westria's eternal dominance."

At this moment, a maid walked in and reported, "Master, Prince Ashworth has awakened."

Harrison Ashworth was awake.

After bringing Harrison back, Titus had given him an antidote to counter the poison from the blade, and now he was finally awake.

Titus stood up abruptly, "Let's go see him."

...

Harrison Ashworth was already awake, though he was quite injured, his face still very pale.

He lifted the blanket to get out of bed, but a maid quickly stopped him, "Your Highness, the Imperial Physician said you need to stay in bed and rest to avoid aggravating the wound, so you can't get up."

Your Highness?

This title made a sharp light flash in Harrison's deep, narrow eyes as he glanced around the room, "Where am I now?"

Just then, the door to the room was pushed open, and Titus Ashworth rushed in, embracing Harrison and began to weep, "My dear nephew, Uncle has finally seen you. Over the years, you've suffered following your mother in hiding, all because of Uncle's fault. Uncle will surely make it up to you."

Harrison Ashworth frowned as a grown man threw himself over to cry on him. His handsome face turned all dark as he disdainfully said, "Let go."

Titus quickly released him, awkwardly looking at Harrison, "Harrison, my nephew, it's me, I am your Uncle!"

Harrison coldly glanced at Titus, then got out of bed. He wanted to find Serena!

"Harrison, my nephew, are you going to find Serena? Don't bother. We in Westria have a blood feud with the Alani, and we also killed her grandmother and aunt; you and she are impossible, better cut it off early!"

Harrison halted abruptly, turning back with a cold, fierce gaze at Titus. He wasn't aware of such things happening.

"Harrison, my nephew, you better accept reality quickly. You bear the blood of purity; Westria is your responsibility. As your Uncle, I have great faith in you. That's why I want to pass the master position to you."

"Moreover, I've chosen a fine wife for you. She's Seraphina Shea, the eldest daughter of the Shea family, a true aristocratic lady. I want you to marry her as your queen."

There was no excess expression on Harrison's handsome face. He coldly looked at Titus, "Finished talking? If so, I'm leaving."

He turned and left.

Titus was left speechless, "..."

Harrison's intentions were clear: he would do as he pleased, ask others to give him space.

"Harrison, my nephew," Titus stopped Harrison, "Serena is now a wanted criminal. I'm conducting a city-wide manhunt for her. If you go out looking for her, you're leading us right to her. I couldn't find her myself."

Harrison's steps abruptly halted. He turned around, and an angry, reddish tint appeared in his deep eyes, "Titus Ashworth, have you grown tired of living?"

Titus shrugged, "Harrison, my nephew, once you sit in my position, then speak to me like this. Otherwise, the blood feud between Alani and Westria will stand forever between you and Serena, and you'll bring nothing but disaster to her."

Harrison's hands by his sides clenched into fists, but a few seconds later, he relaxed them, and then returned to sit down, curling his thin lips into a ghostly smile, "Titus, have you thought that when I ascend to the master's position, the first thing I'll do is eliminate you?"

Titus froze, then let out an awkward laugh, "Harrison, my nephew, let's not discuss this. Seraphina Shea is already here. This top aristocrat has high standards, far from an ordinary woman. If she's not interested in you, there will be no marriage alliance. So you understand what I'm getting at, right? You must first win over this Seraphina Shea."

...

In the imperial city, several long bulletproof luxury cars slowly pulled up. A maid respectfully said, "Miss, we've arrived."

Seraphina Shea sat in the back seat without getting off.

The maid said, "Miss, let's go in just for a look. If you don't like this Prince Ashworth, no one will force you."

Seraphina Shea had an extraordinarily beautiful face, unlike anyone else. From her noble upbringing, every move exuded the elegance and charm of a top aristocrat. She had no desire to disembark and was uninterested in the so-called Harrison Ashworth. She slowly pulled out a painting, depicting a cool and dazzling figure.

This is the person she truly liked!

...

Zane Crawford brought Serena back. In the study, Wade Wyatt brought over a sealed file, "Master, just received news. Titus Ashworth wants Harrison Ashworth to marry the Shea family's eldest daughter, Seraphina Shea, as his queen."

Zane Crawford opened the sealed file, revealing a portrait of Seraphina Shea.

"It's her?"

"Master, do you know this Seraphina Shea?"

Zane Crawford casually set down the scroll, "We've met once. I treated her illness."

"This Seraphina Shea is the Shea family's eldest daughter, of noble status, highly treasured, hailed as the top aristocrat. It's said that her drawer holds many Prince's portraits meant for choosing her husband, but she hasn't looked at them."

"Now the Shea family wields great power, whoever marries Seraphina Shea gains the entire Shea family's immense influence. Precisely because of this, to cement his rule forever, Titus Ashworth has firmly set his sights on Seraphina Shea."

#### Chapter 842: She Likes Him

Zane Crawford showed no emotion. He was wearing a white shirt, with the shirt sleeves neatly buttoned, fitting snugly around his wrists. A man accustomed to wearing white lab coats was naturally suited to white, making him the most striking man in a white shirt.

"I know, how is Serena?"

"To the master, Miss Sterling went to sleep after returning to her room. She's not having a good appetite, and the chef has tried various dishes, but Miss Sterling couldn't eat."

Zane's indifferent, handsome face finally showed some fluctuation as he lowered his deep eyes to check the calendar. Tomorrow's date had been circled in red pen because tomorrow was Serena Sterling's birthday.

...

Serena took a nap, and when she woke up, it was already afternoon. She tidied up and went out, when a maid approached her, "Miss Sterling, the gentleman wants to see you, he has something for you."

Zane Crawford wanted to see her?

Serena nodded, "Alright."

The maid led Serena to a room, and Serena pushed the door open. The room was dark, with no lights on.

Suddenly, with a "bang-bang" sound, streamers exploded. Zane emerged from the darkness holding a cake. The candle flames danced on the cake as he softly sang, "Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you..."

Serena's heart trembled, and she suddenly remembered it was her birthday today.

Today was her 24th birthday.

Zane walked over, his bright black eyes shimmering with light in the candlelight as he gazed at Serena. He smiled gently, "Serena, happy birthday, you've grown a year older."

Serena curled her lips into a smile, "Zane, thank you."

"Serena, make a wish. I've heard birthday wishes always come true."

Really?

Serena clasped her hands and gently closed her eyes. Her 24th birthday wish was... she really wanted to see Mr. Crawford, wanted Mr. Crawford to appear before her eyes.

But she knew this birthday wish was destined not to come true.

Let it go.

Serena opened her eyes and blew out the candles.

The room lights turned on, and Serena noticed two burn marks on the back of Zane's hand. She quickly said, "Zane, what happened to your hand?"

Zane's hands were fair, slender, and incredibly beautiful, made to wield surgical instruments, never having touched domestic chores, so these burns were quite noticeable.

Wade Wyatt watched this scene, thinking, Miss Sterling, the master started making a cake for you early this morning. The birthday cake is entirely made by the master himself.

Zane had never made a cake before. Even under the chef's guidance, he was clumsy, and what he held now was the best he could manage.

Zane smiled, "It's nothing, just accidentally got burned."

He didn't tell her.

Serena knitted her brows, "This hand is meant for surgery, extremely valuable. Next time, be more careful. Come, let me bandage it for you."

"Have a bite of the cake first."

Serena placed a bit on her finger and tasted it, "Mmm, it's really good."

Zane chuckled.

...

After treating Zane's hand, Serena returned to her room. She picked up her phone, her slender, fair fingers pressing the keys, pulling up that deeply familiar phone number.

Mr. Crawford...

Slightly trembling, she dialed the number.

But quickly, she hung up.

The call hadn't gone through; she couldn't dial it.

Still, she was leaving soon, going back to Alani.

Right now, she really wanted to hear his voice.

She missed him so much.

Her fair eyes gradually reddened, but before tears could fall, Serena quickly raised her gaze. She began to breathe deeply, repeatedly telling herself, it's okay, you can be stronger, don't cry.

Composing herself, Serena left the room. She wanted to get some fresh air...

...

Zane went upstairs and saw that Serena's room door was open.

It was already nine at night.

He turned around and walked into the open room, "Serena."

No response.

The sound of polished shoes on the handmade carpet was steady as he entered the bathroom.

His dark eyes froze momentarily. He slowly looked at the phone placed beside the sink; it was still lit, displaying an undialed call to Mr. Crawford...

Zane's gaze lingered on "Mr. Crawford" for a couple of seconds. Even if she didn't say it, he knew what her birthday wish was.

Zane's handsome face showed no change in emotion. He took his phone from his pocket and dialed a number.

"Hello, Miss Shea..."

After ending the call, Zane turned and left the room.

Going downstairs, he opened the villa's back door and saw a slender figure on the lawn.

Serena was there.

She was sitting alone on the wooden swing, wearing a pink long dress with a white coat draped over it, swinging alone in the deep night.

Zane approached, placing the black cloak he held over Serena's smooth, fragrant shoulders, elegantly fastening the tie at the front with his long fingers.

Serena glanced back and smiled softly, "Zane, why aren't you asleep yet?"

Zane sat down beside her on the swing.

He held a book in his hands, "I'm not asleep yet, just reading."

"Such a good boy," Serena laughed softly.

Zane gracefully crossed his long legs, his slim body leaning into the swing. At nine in the evening, the bright moonlight and dim lamplight slanted down, highlighting his exquisite, handsome face with a cool and elegant aura.

Removing the black cloak, he revealed a black turtleneck sweater. His polished shoes lightly tapped the grass, and the swing began to sway.

Serena lifted her small head to look at the moonlight, suddenly asking, "Zane, when do you think it will snow?"

It was late autumn, already cold, but still early for snow.

She suddenly longed to see snow.

Zane looked at Serena's small face, "You want to see snow?"

--A snippet from the daily tales of Lu and Liu--

Someone bumped into him, colliding right into his arms.

Jude Crawford felt soft strands of hair brush across his face, carrying a faintly eerie, youthful fragrance.

"Sorry, sorry..." The person in his arms quickly stepped back, small hands rubbing the red spot on her white jade forehead, lifting her palm-sized face.

Jude saw her clearly, Isabelle Willow's cold yet striking features crashing into his view.

It was her!

He thought she hadn't come, but she was just late.

Isabelle's eyes shimmered brightly, "Mr. Crawford, hope I didn't bump you too hard?"

Jude realized it. She had collided into his arms on purpose.

In fact, that day at the temple, he knew she liked him.

Chapter 843: I Prepared a Birthday Gift for You

"Mm." Serena nodded, "However, in this season, you won't see any snow."

Zane Crawford withdrew his gaze and glanced forward indifferently, where Wade Wyatt stood watchfully.

Upon meeting this gaze, Wade Wyatt nodded, stepped aside, and dialed a number, "Hello, the master has given orders; it will snow across the city tonight."

Two minutes later, Serena felt a snowflake fall on her little face.

She froze, then slowly looked up, seeing the snowflakes gently falling from the sky above.

Her clear pupils contracted in disbelief, and she quickly stretched out her small hand.

A snowflake landed in her palm.

"Oh my, Zane, look, it's snowing!" Serena looked happily at Zane Crawford beside her.

At this moment, Wade Wyatt stepped forward and handed over a black umbrella.

Zane Crawford's slender fingers personally took the handle, slowly covering it over Serena.

The black umbrella shielded Serena's head; the snowflakes couldn't touch her, but her little hand remained extended outside.

Zane Crawford slowly curved his lips, his voice low and magnetic with a hint of affection, "Play less in the snow, be careful not to catch a cold."

"Got it."

Looking at the snowfall everywhere, so pure and sacred, Serena's heart slowly calmed down.

She revealed a smile she hadn't worn in a long time.

Though there was still regret.

If only she could watch this snow with Mr. Crawford, she could build a snowman and have snowball fights with him.

Serena felt sleepy. Her delicate body leaned over, resting her small head gently on Zane Crawford's handsome shoulder.

She closed her eyes.

She was already asleep, for Zane Crawford could hear her soft, gentle breathing brushing against his ear.

He slowly turned his head to look at her.

Not knowing how long he watched, he raised his hand, wanting to touch her small face.

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

She was calling Mr. Crawford.

Her heart and mind were full of Hayden Crawford.

His hand paused, suspending awkwardly in mid-air.

A few seconds later, Zane Crawford softly withdrew his hand, a shallow and gentle curve formed at the corner of his lips, and he picked up the book in his hand.

The snow was flying, and he just sat on the swing, the black umbrella in his hand protecting the person in his embrace from the wind and snow, yet his shoulder was half-covered in snowflakes.

His shiny leather shoes gently tapped the grass, the swing swayed, and Serena's pink long dress fluttered softly in the air.

Everything was so beautiful.

...

However, outside was in chaos. At nine in Westria, countless noble ladies pushed open their room windows, gazing at this magical autumn snow.

Wow, it's really snowing in autumn, so beautiful and romantic.

How can it be snowing in autumn?

I don't know, maybe some prince is trying to make his princess smile.

Why don't we go for a snowball fight?

At this time, in the royal city, a stretch limousine with bulletproof armor was already waiting, and Titus Ashworth enthusiastically looked at Harrison Ashworth and Seraphina Shea, "Nephew Hayden, I didn't expect things to progress so quickly between you and Seraphina. I'm very happy. Go on a date tonight, have fun."

Now Harrison Ashworth and Seraphina were standing together, and after glancing at Titus, they turned and got into the luxury car.

The bulletproof limousine sped away.

Inside the luxury car, Harrison's expression was cold, "Miss Shea, why did you invite me out tonight?"

Seraphina Shea's beautiful face revealed a hint of a smile, "Prince Ashworth, I was entrusted by someone to bring you out of the royal city."

"Oh? Really? Everyone knows that Miss Shea has high standards, and the two of us don't see eye to eye. I wonder who has such a favor to convince Miss Shea to help them."

"Prince Ashworth, you don't need to worry about that."

Harrison didn't speak further; he was not familiar with Seraphina, and the luxurious carriage fell silent.

At this moment, Seraphina turned to look outside the window, where the snowflakes fell one by one.

It's actually snowing.

It's only early autumn now, impossible to snow unless someone did so intentionally.

Seraphina, a genuine noble lady, accustomed to all sorts of romantic encounters since childhood, could easily guess that every snowflake that fell was filled with a story.

Who is this person?

Half an hour later, they arrived at the destination. Harrison got out of the car, looked at the villa before him, and his deep, narrow eyes slowly squinted, suddenly realizing something.

It turns out this acquaintance with Seraphina was... Zane Crawford.

"Prince Ashworth, please wait here for a moment; I'll go in first."

Harrison nodded, "Okay."

Seraphina led her maid into the villa, the maid whispered, "Miss, this time you've helped Dr. Crawford greatly, Dr. Crawford should be very grateful to you."

Seraphina curved her lips, "He saved me; if there's anyone to be thankful for, it's me who should be thankful to him."

At this moment, Seraphina's pace halted because she saw a familiar figure ahead.

On the lawn, Zane Crawford sat on the swing, holding a black umbrella, Serena sleeping lightly on his shoulder, the evening breeze gently stirring Serena's pink long dress against his sharply tailored trousers, creating an intimate scene.

Seraphina's gaze changed, landing on Serena. The Princess of Alani, she recognized her.

The maid remarked, "Miss, isn't that the Princess of Alani? Oh my, now Lord Ashworth is searching the entire city for the Princess of Alani, and Dr. Crawford is here with her, even pulling you down with him..."

Seraphina quickly looked at her maid, reprimanding softly, "Since you know this isn't trivial, keep your mouth shut!"

The maid fell silent immediately, not daring to speak.

Seraphina looked up, just as Zane Crawford stood up, bending his tall figure to gently carry the sleeping Serena horizontally.

The two disappeared from sight.

The swing only had a book left on it.

Seraphina stood there a long time without moving. The Zane Crawford in her memory was so cold and brilliant, she thought he would never be gentle.

But she was wrong; Zane Crawford, who she believed to have lived without gentleness, was actually the most gentle; his gentleness was only ever for one person.

If she remembered correctly, this Princess of Alani seemed to be his sister-in-law, she hadn't expected his beloved to be...

Seraphina opened her palm, finding it covered in cold sweat.

...

Serena groggily took a nap, then was awakened by a melodious phone ringtone, a call came.

Serena opened her sleepy eyes, pressing a button to answer the call, "Hello."

"Serena," Zane Crawford's soft voice came from the other end, "Don't sleep anymore, wake up, today is your birthday, and it hasn't ended yet."

Serena felt lazy all over, not wanting to move.

"I haven't given you your birthday gift yet, Serena. Come out; I've prepared a birthday gift for you."

Chapter 844: Serena, Let Me Take You Away

Zane prepared a birthday gift for her.

Serena Sterling quickly got up, "Okay, I'm coming out now."

Serena got out of bed and walked out.

She didn't know what the birthday gift was, but she was grateful for everything Zane had done for her during this time. Although she treated Zane as a true friend, she didn't want to drag him down, so she would soon be leaving.

Serena walked out of the villa, onto the lawn, and suddenly, her steps halted.

Because she saw a tall and handsome figure ahead, so familiar.

Familiar to the bone.

Serena's clear pupils suddenly contracted, glued to the spot—Hayden Crawford!

No, to be precise, it should now be Harrison Ashworth; he had returned to the royal family.

Serena hadn't expected to see him here; there was an insurmountable chasm between them, yet he suddenly appeared before her.

Not long ago, she had made a wish, her 24th birthday wish was to see him once.

Now her birthday wish had come true.

Harrison stood by the luxury car's door, his tall frame outlined by the bright lights that cast a golden edge around him.

With one hand in his pants pocket, he held a cigarette between two slender fingers, smoking leisurely.

In an instant, their eyes met.

Harrison strode over with long legs and stopped in front of her.

Serena's slender white fingers by her side tightened slightly, "Mr. Crawford, long time no see."

She greeted him awkwardly.

Harrison took a drag of his cigarette, then curved his thin lips into a pampering smile, answering with a simple, "Hm."

Serena didn't know what to say next.

Just then, Harrison exhaled a puff of smoke onto her small face.

Although he avoided her mouth and nose, the strong scent of tobacco quickly caused her small face to burn.

Was he doing it on purpose?

Serena bit her red lip with her delicate white teeth, "Then I'll leave first."

Harrison looked at her; her lower lip lost its vivid color when she bit it. His eyes deepened, and he nodded, "Hm."

Serena turned around, leaving.

She left.

Not knowing where to go.

Feeling very sad, like something was missing, Serena's fair eyes inexplicably reddened as she suddenly remembered that it was her 24th birthday.

Serena recalled coming to Bayside at the age of 19 from the countryside, still in her bright youthful days when she met him from the City of Aethelgard.

Time flies, fleetingly.

Then she heard steady footsteps behind her; he had followed.

Harrison followed her all the way.

As she left, he kept trailing behind her.

Yet she lowered her small head along the way, lost in her thoughts.

He stopped behind her; the cigarette in his fingertips had burned out, and he stubbed it out in the trash can.

Now, Serena was ahead, and he was behind.

With both hands in his pockets, he watched her figure. Today, she wore a nude pink dress, her pure long black hair casually resting on her delicate shoulders, and a pair of white shoes on her feet, weaving a touch of charm into her purity.

Over the years, time had slowly settled her flamboyant spirit, making her more captivating.

Serena knew he was watching her.

Though they didn't exchange a word, the emptiness in their hearts slowly filled up, warming them.

...

Outside the villa, Serena hailed a taxi on the street.

The taxi stopped, and she reached out to open the rear door, but a well-defined large hand reached over, opening it before she could.

She got in, followed by the seat next to her sinking as he joined her.

The driver in front asked, "Sir, Miss, where are you going?"

She said nothing.

His deep, magnetic voice sounded in her ear, "Just drive around."

"Okay."

The taxi started moving, the cool night breeze wafting in, stirring Serena's long hair.

She turned to look at the dazzling city neon lights outside the window. After all these years, his travels always involved limited edition luxury cars; this was truly the first time they were taking a taxi together.

Harrison felt his handsome cheek itch as the breeze played with her hair, wisps tangling against his face; he could faintly smell the fragrance of her hair.

"Sit tight."

At this moment, the driver reminded them with a turn of the steering wheel as the taxi swiftly maneuvered a corner.

Serena wasn't sitting steady; due to inertia, her whole body tilted towards the man beside her.

Just then, a strong arm snaked over, wrapping around her slender waist, naturally pulling her into his embrace.

She lifted her bright, clear eyes to look at him, and his large hand cradled her soft face, leaning in to kiss her.

His scent filled her mouth and senses immediately.

Her rosy lips were deeply sealed by his, as he slowly and firmly pried her teeth apart, enticing her into a dance.

She could feel it.

Feel his longing like a tidal wave.

Serena stretched out her tiny hands, hugging his strong waist, as her delicate lashes swept low, and she closed her eyes.

This night, on her 24th birthday, in the taxi, she snuggled in his warm, broad embrace and kissed him freely and passionately.

...

The taxi stopped, Serena opened the rear door, "Mr. Crawford, you don't need to get out, I want to watch you leave."

Harrison reached out to pinch her small face gently, "Alright."

Serena stood outside, waving her small hand.

Harrison glanced at the driver, "Drive."

"Yes, sir."

The driver stepped on the gas, and the taxi sped away.

As the car drove further, Harrison looked back through the rearview mirror, seeing that she was still there, seeing him off.

Her slender figure gradually faded, dissipated, disappearing from his sight.

The well-defined hands balled into fists, using all his strength not to look back.

He actually wanted to tell her, Serena, come with me, let me take you away.

Don't worry about Alani, don't worry about Westria, none of that matters to them; they could settle in a place without disturbances, where he could protect her, give her a lifetime of love, never to part again.

But in the end, he said nothing.

Because he couldn't.

He knew she had many responsibilities and missions, and he knew what she wanted to achieve; he could only let her go, let her do what she had to do.

Just then, a melodious ringtone echoed—it was a call...from Zane Crawford.

Looking at the name "Zane Crawford" on the phone screen, Harrison slightly furrowed his brows. He knew his brother's feelings had begun without knowing, yet ran deep and unwavering.

Chapter 845: Straightforward Words—I Like You!

Harrison Ashworth pressed the button to connect the call, "Hello, Zane, thank you for today."

At this moment, Zane Crawford was standing by the floor-to-ceiling window, holding his phone in one hand. His bright black eyes remained on the lawn where Serena Sterling was still standing, gazing longingly in the direction Hayden had left.

She looks at others, though unaware that she herself is the most beautiful sight in someone's eyes.

Zane Crawford curled his lips, "Brother, no need to thank me, these are things I should do."

Actually, Zane Crawford's character truly mirrors his mother, Isabelle Willow, with a disposition that is indifferent and cool. Coupled with the circumstances of his origins, he has never been loved, so he lacks any concept of family affection.

He and Hayden just maintained basic courtesy today. Because Serena Sterling's birthday wish was Hayden, he gave Hayden to Serena Sterling.

The birthday gift he gave her was her birthday wish.

No matter what her birthday wish was, he would help her achieve it.

This principle, of course, Hayden also understood, "Zane, Mom and Dad left too suddenly. You are my younger brother, elder brother as father; whether you believe it or not, I have a responsibility towards you. Everything I own can be given to you, except... she can't be. Serena is my life."

Hayden said Serena is my life.

Zane Crawford held the phone, his handsome face showed no fluctuation, only a faint curl of his thin lips, "Yes, I know."

"Zane, you should leave Westria as soon as possible, don't get involved in this whirlpool, this place is not suitable for you."

Is it?

But, it's already too late.

Zane Crawford's gaze deeply rested on Serena Sterling's slender figure, wondering how he could leave when she was here?

"Brother, actually, whether Serena is your life has nothing to do with me. If she loved me even a little, I would exhaust all my efforts to fight for her. But brother, you're also her life, so how could I bear to take her life?"

"Brother, love Serena well in the future. I've never envied you all these years, whether it was Grandma, Dad, or... Mom's love for you, I've never envied you. But you have Serena, you'll never know how crazily I've envied you, you arrived a step earlier than me, so you're luckier for life."

"Brother, your beloved is also my beloved. I also have the right to love, so don't be too harsh on me. Serena is the fleeting light held in my palm, even if I stand the closest to her, it's the furthest distance. I know this fleeting light will bury my life, become the greatest regret in my life, but I have no regrets; I can't give

everything to fight for her love, so I can only give everything to protect what she loves. In this life, I will ensure her years are unrestrained, without separation or wounds."

The taxi sped along the road, the scenery outside the window whizzed by in Hayden's view. After their parents passed away, this younger brother became his greatest concern and worry.

Now, listening to Zane Crawford speaking these words in an extremely gentle tone, words that were meant for Serena Sterling but destined never to be spoken, Hayden had already furrowed his heroic sword-like brows into a deep "JII" character.

"Zane, why are you saying these things? Why do I feel you're acting weird?" Hayden had a very bad premonition, he felt Zane Crawford was going to do something bad.

"Zane, I'm your brother; whether it's Serena or you, both are my responsibility. You mustn't get involved in this whirlpool..."

"Beep beep" - before Hayden finished speaking, on that end, Zane Crawford directly hung up the phone.

Listening to the busy tone on that end, Hayden tightly pressed his thin lips into a cold arc, wanting the driver to turn back, but at that moment, the phone rang again, this time it was Titus Ashworth...

...

Inside the villa, Zane Crawford put away the phone, Wade Wyatt walked in, reporting softly, "Master, Miss Shea has arrived."

Seraphina Shea walked in and immediately saw Zane Crawford standing in front of the floor-to-ceiling window, his handsome and elegant features bathed in the pale light, appearing increasingly clean and aloof.

Such a man, it's difficult not to be moved.

A year ago, she was ill, and he treated her. Since then, she has never forgotten him.

Zane Crawford glanced at Seraphina Shea's beautiful little face, "Miss Shea, thank you this time. Last time you said I could ask you for help if needed, so I acted first and reported later. Surely with Miss Shea's wisdom, you've already seen the cause of events. Rest assured, I have arranged everything properly; you and Hayden only went on a date, there will be witnesses and evidence, not a hair out of place, absolutely won't involve Miss Shea. Now I will have someone send Miss Shea back."

Seraphina Shea looked at him, slowly curling her red lips, "Indeed, Doctor Crawford has arranged everything perfectly. Who knew Doctor Crawford excels not only in treating and saving lives but also in engaging in such national conspiracies with meticulous thoughts, leaving no gaps."

"Does Miss Shea want to say something?"

"What can I say? Didn't Doctor Crawford also count me in today's plans? I must keep today's events a secret, or if I get into trouble, Doctor Crawford will not be responsible."

Zane Crawford put one hand in his pocket, saying nothing more, quietly watching Seraphina Shea, clearly waiting for her next words.

Seraphina Shea stepped forward, coming to his side, "Doctor Crawford, you managed all this for the Princess of Alani, but you only fell in love with someone you shouldn't have."

Zane Crawford paused for two seconds, then raised his attractive sword-like brows, "Miss Shea, who I love, what's it to you?"

Seraphina Shea stood on tiptoe, bringing her beautiful little face closer to his, "Of course it matters, Doctor Crawford, there's no need to beat around the bush, I like you."

"And then?"

"For the Princess of Alani, Doctor Crawford will surely need my help again, I'll wait for you." With that, Seraphina Shea left.

--A Daily Story of Jude and Willow--

Jude Crawford was never surrounded by an absence of girls. In his view, Isabelle Willow was no different from those other girls who liked him; she also had little schemes, doing everything in her power to attract his gaze, to gain his attention.

Jude Crawford felt that one must treat everyone equally, ignore her, stay away from her, never give her special treatment.

So, he snorted coldly and walked away.

Approaching the luxury car, his gaze fell on the shiny car window and, seemingly uncontrollably, looked at her through the window.

In that glance, Jude Crawford directly collided with Isabelle Willow's flowing eyes in the shiny car window, she was also looking at him.

In an instant, their eyes met.

Isabelle Willow quickly covered her mouth and chuckled, "Mr. Crawford, I've caught you, you're looking at me."

## Chapter 846: Never Learned to Love, Loves Better Than Anyone

Zane Crawford glanced at Seraphina Shea's disappearing figure and withdrew his gaze indifferently.

At this point, Wade Wyatt stepped forward, "Master, it seems Miss Shea is quite fond of you. Behind her stands the formidable power of the entire Shea family, a power that even Titus Ashworth greatly fears..."

Wade didn't continue but instead carefully observed Zane Crawford's expression.

Unfortunately, Zane didn't reveal anything nor did he say a word. He merely said blandly, "I'm going to the research lab. No need to follow."

"Yes." Wade watched Zane leave. He knew his master was engaged in some kind of blood research because the blood report of Harrison Ashworth's Pristine Blood had been sent over several days ago. However, what this research specifically entailed, Wade didn't know, as even Zane hadn't allowed him to be involved.

Wade frowned. He always felt that his master was engaging in something rather dangerous.

...

Research Lab.

Zane Crawford wore a clean and immaculate white lab coat. His long fingers held a test tube filled with a red liquid that looked quite enchanting.

A laptop was open, and Zane was engaged in a medical conference video call. On the other end was a foreign man of mixed descent, a world-renowned blood professor.

The professor looked at the red test tube in Zane's hand and spoke in English, "Prof. Crawford, we have decomposed the special blood within Harrison Ashworth and extracted the most important element. That element is now in the test tube you are holding."

Zane's cold black eyes fell on the professor's face, "I have also decomposed my own blood. Harrison Ashworth and I are blood brothers. Through data comparison, if I inject this element into my body and it successfully fuses, I, too, can possess Pristine Blood."

The professor quickly shook his head, his expression serious. He warned, "Prof. Crawford, as a physician, I shouldn't have to remind you how dangerous your idea is. Attempting to change your own blood genes is truly terrifying. The important element in Pristine Blood is congenital, and ordinary blood simply cannot handle it. Even though you and Harrison Ashworth are blood brothers, the success rate is only five percent. If the fusion fails, all of your blood vessels will burst, resulting in death. Prof. Crawford, I really don't know what drives you to have such an idea. You must understand that you are... defying the laws of nature."

Defying the laws of nature?

Zane's thin lips curved slightly. If it could protect her, what harm was there in defying the laws of nature?

From the moment Harrison Ashworth's blood report arrived, he had already begun defying the laws of nature.

"I understand. Precisely because I am a physician, I have confidence. I don't want to die yet because there are many things I haven't completed. So I will inject in two phases."

"Prof. Crawford..." the professor on the other side was still advising him sincerely, "Prof. Crawford, take my advice. Those who defy the laws of nature will not meet a good end."

Zane reached out and directly cut off the video call.

Without the professor's voice, the research lab seemed quiet. Zane sat on the sofa, his fair and slender fingers unbuttoning his shirt cuffs. Then he picked up the red test tube and slowly pushed half of the liquid into his bloodstream.

He sat on the sofa, and the surroundings were quiet, so quiet that he could hear the flow of his own blood vessels.

Soon, a sharp pain arose.

It was the Pristine Blood clashing with the blood in his body.

Zane's handsome face turned pale instantly, cold sweat beaded densely on his forehead, and he suddenly fell from the sofa, rolling onto the handcrafted wool carpet.

The professor was right. Although he and Harrison Ashworth were blood brothers and met the basic conditions for blood fusion, the Pristine Blood was overwhelmingly fierce and difficult to control.

Zane's cold black eyes were tinged with a crimson hue. He felt as if his blood vessels were about to burst, and he let out a cry of agony!

Zane had a long, long dream.

In the dream, he returned to his childhood. At that time, he was very young, just learning to walk. One day, he stumbled and fell.

His little hand scraped against the ground, and the skin on his palm was torn, causing pain.

At that moment, he heard the voice of his father, Jude Crawford. As a child, he idolized his father deeply. His father was tall and imposing, revered as a business magnate of his era, with an aura that was both awe-inspiring and intimidating.

He hurriedly got up from the ground and ran to the door. There, he saw his father stepping out of a luxury car on the lawn. His older brother was with him, and his father bent down, stretching out powerful arms to lift his brother into a loving embrace.

His father had never held him. As a young child, tears filled his eyes, and he secretly hid his injured hand behind his back, hiding himself behind the door.

From that moment, he learned to stay away.

Staying away meant no more hurt.

The scene shifted, and the noise returned, the sound of Aunt Iris and his father arguing fiercely, the complaints and schemes of his mother, Zelda Willow. As a small child, he accidentally ran into his father's study and saw the painting his father kept in the drawer as a precious treasure.

He unrolled the painting; it was the first and only time he saw his birth mother, Isabelle Willow.

Such a beautiful person.

The young boy felt a stirring in his heart, as if something intangible was tugging at him. He wanted to look again, but just then, his father appeared and snatched the painting from his hands.

That day, his father was furious, harshly scolding him, forbidding him from stepping into the study again, and declaring that the person in the painting was off limits to him.

Just like that, all the warmth he yearned for withered before it could bloom.

Those feelings of love never belonged to him.

The scene shifted once more, returning to the streets of Aethelgard many years ago. That day, the sun was bright, the spring breeze gentle. He met Serena Sterling, the girl he loved most in his life.

They rescued someone together. Her soft, slender fingers intertwined with his, tightly locking them together.

In the underground base, he was poisoned by a toxic moth, and she risked herself to save him. Her warm voice echoed at his ears, "Zane, I'm here, I've always been here."

He opened his eyes, caught in her glistening, bright eyes. She was looking at him, smiling.

Out of love comes sorrow, out of love comes fear. Zane remembered a wandering monk who had once come to the Crawford estate to read the fortune of the second son.

The fortune said, "In life, those who are deeply attached will never understand love; the more one loves, how can they end happily?"

Chapter 847: Defying Fate

At this moment, that familiar warm voice echoed by his ear again, Zane! Zane, wake up!

Zane Crawford's eyelids fluttered, and then he opened his eyes.

However, what entered his sight was not Serena Sterling's small face, but... Wade Wyatt.

Wade Wyatt looked tense and anxious, "Master, you're finally awake, what happened to you? When I came in, I saw you collapsed here!"

Zane Crawford's gaze slowly moved away from Wade Wyatt's face and looked around, as if searching for someone.

"Master, are you looking for Miss Sterling? Right, Miss Sterling knows medicine. I'll go get her right away!"  
Wade Wyatt got up to leave.

Zane Crawford immediately spoke, "Stop!"

Wade Wyatt stopped, and Zane Crawford sat up, looking at Wade Wyatt, "You must not let Serena know about this, understand?"

Wade Wyatt really wanted to ask why, but seeing his master's stern expression, he dared not ask anything.

Zane Crawford stood up and returned to his room.

...

In the room.

Zane Crawford entered the shower, today he injected half the reagent, although he fainted halfway, he had successfully merged it.

He now had half of the Red Child's Blood, and he just needed to successfully merge the remaining half to truly possess it.

Human life is indeed full of passion, living without loving anyone, loving the most, how can it end well?

Zane Crawford recalled the prophecy left by the high priest all those years ago, and he smiled faintly, since he aimed to reverse fate, he never intended it to end well.

After washing up, Zane Crawford put on a white bathrobe and came out, picked up the phone on the bedside table, and dialed a number.

Soon, the call was connected, and a familiar voice came through, "Hello?"

It was Titus Ashworth.

...

Serena Sterling bid farewell to Zane Crawford, "Zane, thank you for this time, but I have to leave now to handle my own matters."

Zane Crawford looked at her and asked, "What matters?"

First, to resolve the Merfolk Clan, second, to pull out the Sky Sword, she had to leave.

Serena Sterling smiled, "Zane, you don't need to know my matters, that's the safest for you."

"Do you need my help?"

Serena Sterling understood Zane Crawford's concern, all the people of Alani had evacuated from Westria, and she's still a wanted criminal, with the outside world hunting for her, how could she accomplish these two things on her own?

Serena Sterling's clear eyes shone brightly, and she gently shook her head, "No, I can do it myself."

With that, she turned and left.

...

Serena Sterling arrived at a small wooden cabin on the outskirts, pushed open the door, and walked in, finding Consort Willow inside.

Seeing Serena Sterling, Consort Willow immediately burst into laughter, "Princess of Alani, I heard you've had a rough time recently, several of your loved ones have died, and you're a wanted criminal. I warned you before, you could never be a match for our Merfolk Princess. Years ago, your ancestors of Alani couldn't beat the merfolk, and years later, your Alani are still losing to us!"

Serena Sterling's exquisite face wore a faint smile as she arched a delicate eyebrow, "Is that so? Who wins and who loses will be revealed tonight."

"What do you mean?" Consort Willow looked at Serena Sterling skeptically, "Princess of Alani, are you up to some scheme again?"

"Guess."

"Hmph, pretending to be mysterious! Princess of Alani, you better face reality. You can barely move, how will you fight us?"

Serena Sterling didn't answer the question. She simply stepped forward, unfastened the ropes on the wall, and led Consort Willow out.

Consort Willow had been kept here for over a month, in utter darkness, and now suddenly stepping out to breathe fresh air, a sinister smile immediately curved on her lips.

But Consort Willow quickly sensed something was off because Serena Sterling led her into the dark forest ahead.

The forest stretched endlessly like a dark abyss ready to swallow someone whole. This mysterious and dangerous force of nature seemed particularly eerie on such a night.

Even Consort Willow felt creeped out, but Serena Sterling walked ahead, holding her rope, each step firm and composed, a faint moonlight overhead added a touch of ethereal grace.

Consort Willow was increasingly puzzled, "Princess of Alani, where are you taking me?"

Serena Sterling did not turn around and simply replied, "Just a walk."

A walk?

This answer almost made Consort Willow spit blood. Who goes for a random walk in the forest at night? To stroll?

At this point, Serena Sterling's steps gradually came to a halt. She turned back, looking at Consort Willow, "Haven't you already notified the merfolk?"

Consort Willow's sinister smile instantly froze, she looked at Serena Sterling in shock, "How did you know?"

The Merfolk Clan had a secret signal, and once it was sent out, merfolk would quickly gather.

Currently, Westria and the merfolk were looking to capture Serena Sterling, with the merfolk especially, now that Serena appeared, the entire merfolk was likely on the move, leaving no opportunity wasted.

Serena Sterling's lips curled, "Consort Willow, what do you think I brought you out here for? A walk? No, you're not as interesting as a walk."

"You!"

"There's a big show tonight, and I was waiting for you to summon the merfolk. Over the years, the Merfolk Clan has thrived and lurked, but now, instead of me having to hunt you down, you've all come to me. Isn't that delightful?"

Consort Willow's body stiffened. So Serena Sterling utilized her to summon the merfolk.

Over the years, the Merfolk Clan's influence had spread widely and secretly, but this time Serena Sterling exposed the entire clan to the light.

Consort Willow felt a sense of foreboding, but she quickly dismissed it, as it seemed impossible, "Princess of Alani, stop pretending to be mysterious. When my merfolk army attacks, you won't have the strength to resist, and you'll die terribly!"

As soon as she finished speaking, a disturbance arose in the silent forest, and a large group of people arrived, with the spirited merfolk princess in the lead.

The Merfolk Princess laughed heartily, "Princess of Alani, didn't expect us to meet so soon, did you? Run, run, tonight you won't escape even with wings!"

Serena Sterling looked up, finding herself surrounded by merfolk.

Consort Willow was overjoyed, straightening her back rapidly, "Princess of Alani, tonight is your end!"

Chapter 848: Serena Is the Wolf Tamer Girl

At this moment, another group of people had arrived as well, with Titus Ashworth leading Axel Ashworth, lurking deep within the forest,

without revealing themselves.

Axel spotted Serena Sterling with The Merfolk Clan and was startled, "Father, how did you know Serena Sterling and The Merfolk Clan are here?"

The intelligence under Axel's command had always been the quickest. Two days ago, Serena had taken the people of Alani away from the Xuanwu Gate without a trace, and everyone outside had been searching for her since.

Unexpectedly, as soon as Serena showed up, Titus arrived with his forces, making Axel question where Titus had obtained this first-hand information.

Titus waved a hand mysteriously, "Axel, you don't need to worry about this matter. All we need to do now is watch the tigers fight from the mountain top."

Axel knew Titus wouldn't reveal anything, "Father, what's your plan? When Alani and The Merfolk battle to the death, we take the opportunity to eliminate them?"

Titus nodded, his eyes shining brightly, "Exactly, this opportunity is once in a lifetime."

Axel's gaze fell onto the delicate figure of Serena in the distance, "I've dealt with this Princess of Alani a few times. It seems she's at a disadvantage now, but since she's come alone tonight, it's obvious she's here to face The Merfolk army by herself. She surely has a strategy; the reputation of the unmatched beauty of Alani is not without reason."

Titus smirked, "That's why I said, don't act rashly; let's observe first."

Axel felt his father suddenly became smarter, wondering which sage was advising him behind the scenes.

...

Ahead, The Merfolk Princess looked at Serena, her eyes glowing faintly, as if Serena was already in her grasp, "Princess of Alani, what are you waiting for? Release Consort Willow now."

Serena's bright eyes shined brilliantly, "Alright, you say release, I'll release."

Serena let go of the rope with one hand.

Consort Willow quickly moved behind The Merfolk Princess and whispered, "Princess, this Princess of Alani is suspicious, there might be deception."

The Merfolk Princess was indifferent, "Consort Willow, why have you become so timid? The Princess of Alani is alone now; could she possibly resist our Merfolk army?"

"This..."

The Merfolk Princess ignored Consort Willow and looked at Serena, "Princess of Alani, surrender now, and I can still grant you a swift end."

Serena's bright eyes slowly passed over The Merfolk Princess and Consort Willow's faces and then landed on The Merfolk army. She slowly lifted the corners of her lips into a smile, "It seems everyone who's supposed to come has arrived tonight. Everyone is here."

The Merfolk Princess was taken aback, "What do you mean?"

Serena took a step back and suddenly winked playfully, then whistled.

Serena was actually whistling.

The whistle was light and pleasing, as if it penetrated the entire forest.

The next second, a howl~

A sound was heard.

Consort Willow's eardrums moved, "What sound is that?"

The Merfolk Princess was also stunned in place, this sound seemed to be... wolves!

The low growls of wolves.

"Wolves! Wolves are coming!"

Someone gasped in shock and shouted.

The Merfolk Princess and Consort Willow quickly looked up, only to see a wolf running out from the dark depths of the forest, standing as tall as a person, with golden fur and fierce beastly eyes that were a daunting green.

"Oh my God!" Titus, who had been lurking, widened his eyes and couldn't help but take a step back.

Axel squinted his dark eyes, and after a few seconds, he spoke in shock, "Wolf-taming magic!"

Wolf-taming magic?

Titus glanced at Axel and then at Serena. A storm was already brewing inside him. He never thought the wolf-taming magic, lost for a century, would reappear in this world.

Back then, Titus hadn't been born yet, but he later heard from the elders that the ancestors of Alani were brilliant and had once led an unstoppable force of wolves in the chase of the moon, shaking the earth and mountains.

Later, the wolf-taming magic was lost.

Unexpectedly, Serena was the wolf-taming girl after a hundred years.

Everyone was scared and stepped back, afraid of the wolf attacking them. The next second, they were all stunned.

Because that wolf approached Serena and slowly crouched beside her, howling softly~

The fierce wolf was as obedient as a small pet in front of Serena.

Serena flipped elegantly onto the wolf's back. The moonlight tonight was as beautiful as a watery jade. She wore a white long dress, radiating beauty.

The Merfolk Princess gaped in shock, wide enough to fit an egg, "Princess of Alani, you... you actually..."

Consort Willow's heart sank to the bottom. Her ominous premonition had finally been confirmed. Serena came prepared, even mastering the millennia-old wolf-taming magic!

Serena sat on the wolf's back, looking down at The Merfolk from above, her voice clear and resonant like jewels falling on a jade plate, each word striking the heart, "Back then, my ancestor led the wolf cavalry chasing the moon, conquering the lands of The Merfolk Kingdom. Unfortunately, he died before accomplishing his goals. Now it is I, Serena Sterling, as the eighth queen of the ancient Alani, who inherits my ancestor's will, leading the wolf cavalry on an expedition once more, driving out the invaders, and restoring the land!"

At this moment, the moonlight shone brightly like water, highlighting Serena's radiant, breathtaking face.

The Merfolk Princess stood there, speechless, not knowing what to say.

Then Serena took out a jade flute. She placed it by her rosy lips and began to play. Soon, a melodious and pleasant flute sound echoed throughout the forest.

Howl~

Howl, howl, howl~

One wolf emerged from the darkness, followed by a second wolf, a third, a fourth... Hundreds upon hundreds of wolves emerged.

These wolves, with both grace and a ruthless gait, came to stand behind Serena, proudly occupying the mountaintop, letting out a long howl~

--A daily story snippet from The Crawford and Willow--

Isabelle Willow officially participated in The Crawford Group's design competition, but an exceptionally talented and beautiful woman was destined to be ostracized and attacked by others.

"Is that Isabelle Willow?"

"Yes, it's her!"

"She's truly beautiful. I just saw her bump into Mr. Crawford's arms."

"She's definitely trying to seduce Mr. Crawford, a vixen!"

"Mr. Crawford isn't dating anyone at the moment. Maybe he's not interested in women, only men."

Isabelle didn't want to pay attention to these people, but they mentioned her Jude Crawford, and she couldn't tolerate it.

Isabelle walked up to those girls, "Don't talk nonsense, Jude Crawford isn't interested in men; he's perfectly normal and likes women!"

"Hmph! What does it matter to you if we talk about Jude Crawford? Why do you think you can control us?"

Isabelle said, "You absolutely can't talk about Jude Crawford like that, because I will be his future Mrs. Crawford!"

Chapter 849: Alani's Daughter Shakes the World

The Merfolk Clan witnessed the scene and were terrified out of their wits, "Run! Run quickly!"

Everyone dropped their helmets and armor, turned around, and fled.

The princess of the Merfolk Clan was shocked, and now seeing her people retreat without a fight, she was even more panicked. She shouted, "Stop! Don't run, none of you are allowed to flee, you cannot become deserters!"

However, no one listened to her. The scene had already devolved into chaos.

Serena Sterling sat astride a wolf; the sound of her flute transformed from slow to urgent, eventually becoming a whirlwind and torrential rain. All the wolves were howling, their eyes emitting a sinister green glow.

Suddenly, the flute stopped, and Serena's bright eyes turned fierce, "Kill!"

Kill!

The moment the word fell, the wolf pack surged forward.

The princess of the Merfolk Clan felt a gust of wind approach. She turned her head and her pupils contracted; now in her ears, there was only one sound left—Run! Run quickly!

The princess of the Merfolk Clan took off running.

However, human legs are fated not to outrun the legs of wolves. The wolf king underneath Serena pounced, pinning the princess of the Merfolk Clan beneath it, and its sharp claws aimed at her heart...

Titus Ashworth and Axel Ashworth had been lying in wait deep in the forest. They watched the scenes before them with utmost shock, feeling as though they would never witness another spectacle as grand and thrilling in their lifetimes.

That night, Serena Sterling rode wolves northward, leading the legendary wolf cavalry to conquer the Merfolk Clan's city, riding the momentum to world renown.

That day, in the imperial garden of the capital city, Harrison Ashworth and Seraphina Shea were there when they soon overheard the gossip of several nobles,

"Do you all know what the hottest news these past couple of days is?"

"Of course! There's a girl from Alani who has stunned the world!"

Several nobles excitedly gossiped, "The girl from Alani, Serena Sterling, rode away at the break of dawn, stunning the entire world. She was as mighty as a kingdom, and now everyone is saying that the girl from Alani has a beauty unparalleled, becoming a legend as the eighth queen of Alani."

"This girl from Alani was always hidden too well among the common folk, and we've only just found out now."

"I just wonder how unparalleled in beauty this girl from Alani truly is?"

A noble brought out a painting and slowly unfurled the scroll, revealing an artist's meticulously drawn masterpiece.

"Look, everyone, this is the girl from Alani, Serena Sterling!"

Harrison Ashworth raised his deep, narrow eyes to glance at the painting held by the noble. That night, he was not present.

However, these past two days he often heard news of her, hearing that she rode away with the wolf pack that day, and the roaring wolves echoed through the sky with crowds on both sides of the road, marveling at her celestial presence. The girl from Alani spread like wildfire, and numerous grandmasters and famed teachers came to depict her peerless beauty in that moment.

Harrison Ashworth looked at the painting, as dawn had just broken, the distant sky opened up a crevice, and the golden sunlight shone down. Serena rode the wolf, her ethereal white gown flowing like a waterfall, her three thousand strands of black hair dancing in the wind, tracing an exquisite and vibrant arc in the air.

She led the wolf cavalry, which galloped behind her, raising a storm of dust wherever they went.

This scene was etched into the artist's brilliant tableau, destined never to fade with the passage of time.

From then on, Serena Sterling was written into legend.

Harrison Ashworth looked at the painting with serene, narrow eyes that revealed no emotional disturbance, yet he looked at it for a long time.

That day had been her birthday; he and she kissed goodbye in a taxi, leaving unsaid many words.

He knew he was already Harrison Ashworth.

And she was already Serena Sterling, the girl from Alani.

Seraphina also looked at the scroll of the painting. Even as a fellow woman, her eyes flashed with deep admiration. So this was Serena Sterling.

This was... the person on Zane Crawford's heart.

In fact, Seraphina had thought long ago about what kind of girl could captivate the ever aloof and distinguished Zane Crawford. Now, upon seeing Serena Sterling, she finally understood.

Seraphina deeply realized too, that no one else would ever enter Zane Crawford's heart because in those verdant, blissful times, he encountered Serena Sterling, and none else would ever stir his heart again.

Just then a cough sounded; it was Titus Ashworth who had arrived.

Seraphina turned back, "My lord."

Titus Ashworth came forward, "Nephew Hayden, Seraphina, I'm sure you've already heard about these events in the past couple of days. This girl from Alani, Serena Sterling, is truly extraordinary. She alone could take on a thousand armies, leveling the Merfolk Clan. The Merfolk Clan is gone, next will be... our Westria."

Harrison Ashworth slowly narrowed his profound eyes, "So?"

"So, we wait for Serena Sterling to come. She's certain to enter Westria's ancestral temple, to pull out the Sky Sword!" Titus Ashworth laughed.

Harrison Ashworth scrutinized Titus Ashworth, feeling that in the past couple of days Titus was glowing, exuding confidence, a stark contrast from before.

Titus Ashworth stepped forward two steps, approaching Harrison Ashworth. He smiled enigmatically, "Nephew Hayden, do you know who holds the key to pulling out the Sky Sword?"

"Who?"

"You!"

Harrison Ashworth moved his handsome brow slightly, indicating for him to continue.

In front of Harrison Ashworth, Titus Ashworth often felt a mistaken sense of being commanded, "Nephew Hayden, no matter how Serena Sterling dominates the world, she cannot pull out the Sky Sword. Only the blood of the pure-hearted can draw the Sky Sword. In other words, only you can pull the Sky Sword."

Harrison Ashworth was silent for a few seconds, "Then you're not afraid?"

"Afraid? Nephew Hayden, are you saying I should be afraid you'll help Serena Sterling pull out the Sky Sword?" Titus Ashworth shook his head with a smile, "This Sky Sword cannot be pulled out easily. Once you pull the Sky Sword, your pure-hearted blood will be destroyed and all your veins severed, and your life will be short-lived."

This is the price of pulling the Sky Sword!

There was no emotional ripple on Harrison Ashworth's handsome face, nor did he reply.

"Nephew Hayden, Serena Sterling will soon be coming, think it over yourself." With that, Titus Ashworth left.

...

Titus Ashworth returned to his study. As he pushed open the door, a cold and elegant silhouette was already waiting for him.

Titus Ashworth entered, "Hello, Doctor Lu."

In front was Zane Crawford!

Zane Crawford had arrived.

Appearing in Titus Ashworth's study.

Today, Zane Crawford wore a black cloak, his handsome face like jade. He stood silently by the floor-to-ceiling window, his cold black eyes landing on Titus Ashworth's face, and with a slight curl of his thin lips, "Serena Sterling is already on her way to Westria, Lord Titus, are you ready?"

Chapter 850: He's Mine Alone!

Two days ago, when Titus Ashworth received the call from Zane Crawford, he was quite surprised. He never expected Zane Crawford to want to cooperate with him.

Thus, he gained firsthand intelligence and was always able to locate Serena Sterling promptly.

"Mr. Crawford, Serena Sterling is definitely after the Sky Sword. To prevent any accidents, we should capture her now. Anyway, you know Serena Sterling's whereabouts like the back of your hand."

Zane Crawford looked at Titus Ashworth, "I know Serena Sterling's whereabouts well, but the timing isn't right. Serena Sterling wants to enter the ancestral temple to pull out the Sky Sword, so we should let her in."

"Does Mr. Crawford have a clever plan?"

"Master Ashworth, do you truly want Harrison Ashworth to inherit your throne? Putting aside Harrison Ashworth's hatred towards you, wouldn't letting the heir of an ancient bloodline inherit the throne leave you sleepless?"

Titus Ashworth brought Harrison Ashworth back to the royal city and made him the ruler, which already raised suspicions. Now, with his thoughts revealed, Titus scoffed at the idea that he genuinely wanted Harrison to inherit the throne. He was merely using Harrison to restrain Serena Sterling, and even more so to utilize the ancient bloodline for his own ends.

Zane Crawford looked with subtle intrigue in his eyes at Titus Ashworth. "Master Ashworth, perhaps we should use the chance at the ancestral temple to capture both Harrison Ashworth and Serena Sterling in one fell swoop."

"Mr. Crawford, whether it's Harrison Ashworth or Serena Sterling, they're just ordinary people. Are you really confident?"

Zane Crawford's thin lips curved into a subtle smile, "I will personally deal with Harrison Ashworth."

Titus Ashworth showed a hint of skepticism, "Mr. Crawford, Harrison Ashworth is your elder brother. Can you really bring yourself to do it? Plus, you are a renowned healer, how did you suddenly involve yourself in these plots, even helping me betray your own? Mr. Crawford, you're not a double agent, are you?"

Looking at the scenery outside the window, Zane Crawford's handsome face remained calm and indifferent, showing no emotions. "I have never had a brother, not since I was young, and certainly not now. I don't understand why he has everything while I have nothing. All these should be mine, including Serena Sterling. I must have her."

Then Zane Crawford turned to Titus Ashworth. "Master Ashworth, I'm not helping you unconditionally. If I help you achieve your goals, you must give me your throne."

Zane Crawford wants to replace Harrison Ashworth to become the ruler of Westria.

Moreover, he wants Serena Sterling.

The throne and the beauty, he wants them both.

In Titus Ashworth's cold gaze, Zane Crawford's ambition was clear, dispelling any doubts. He laughed heartily, "Zane, you are also of the Westria royal bloodline; passing the throne to you is possible, but you must first accomplish the task for me."

"Don't worry, I will deal with Harrison Ashworth. As for Serena Sterling... you can't harm her, Serena Sterling possesses the ancient wolf taming secret technique. Master Ashworth, don't you want it?"

Mentioning the wolf taming secret technique, Titus Ashworth recalled that astonishing night, a night that made him change his mind.

Initially, he wanted Serena Sterling to disappear, but it's clear that letting her live is much more valuable.

"Alright, nephew Zane, I'll follow your lead. The ancestral temple trip is all up to you." Titus Ashworth decisively agreed.

...

Zane Crawford secretly resided in the royal city, Wade Wyatt always followed, "Master, it seems Titus Ashworth is temporarily trusting you, but what will happen during the ancestral temple trip? Then you'll be exposed."

Wade Wyatt didn't know what plans his master had; could it be during the trip to the ancestral temple, the master would really take down Harrison Ashworth and then marry Serena Sterling?

Zane Crawford's expression was unreadable, demonstrating an enigmatic and profound aura. He glanced at Wade Wyatt, "You don't need to worry about these matters."

After finishing speaking, Zane Crawford returned to his room.

In the room, Zane Crawford stared at the satellite tracker displaying the little red dot, representing Serena Sterling's current position.

Serena Sterling was already approaching the ancestral temple.

She was coming.

Zane Crawford took out the half red reagent, then rolled up his shirt sleeve and slowly injected the red reagent into his blood.

...

Serena Sterling arrived; this was her second time coming to Westria's ancestral temple.

She had been here once before to pull the Sky Sword, but she failed.

This time she came again.

The surroundings were quiet, not a single sound. This night should be calm, but Serena Sterling's sharp and alert eyes sensed an unusual atmosphere.

Serena Sterling pushed open the inner chamber's door and walked inside. With her previous experience, she easily dodged the traps and reached the interior.

She saw the Sky Sword.

The Sky Sword now pierced the foundation of the ancestral temple, its blade emitting a sharp golden chill, making it intimidating.

Serena Sterling gazed at the Sky Sword, it was this very sword that sealed the ancient kingdom Alani, making it disappear in the sea.

Serena Sterling slowly raised her small hand, intending to pull out the Sky Sword.

At that moment, footsteps sounded in her ears, "Serena Sterling, you finally arrived. I have been waiting a long time!"

Serena Sterling turned around, Titus Ashworth arrived with a large team. The entire ancestral temple was heavily surrounded by guards.

Alongside Titus Ashworth were Harrison Ashworth and Seraphina Shea. Everyone was present; no one missed this grand drama.

Serena Sterling's eyes slightly moved, her bright gaze fell on Titus Ashworth's face, "Master Ashworth, it seems tonight you've prepared a trap, but how did you know my whereabouts?"

This was the suspicious part; Titus Ashworth had pinpointed her whereabouts flawlessly.

-- A short story by Isabelle Willow --

Isabelle Willow claimed to be the future Mrs. Crawford.

Immediately, several young and beautiful girls stood up and started attacking Isabelle Willow. They were already jealous of her, so they acted directly, pushing Isabelle Willow, "You may be Mrs. Crawford, but then we are Mr. Crawford's mistresses too. We'll all serve Mr. Crawford together!"

The previous life of Isabelle Willow was cold and aloof; she would never clash with these girls. But this life was different.

Being pushed, Isabelle Willow immediately reached out and grabbed a girl's clothes, fiercely declaring, "Don't dream about it, Jude Crawford belongs to me alone!"

The girls surrounded her and started fighting with Isabelle Willow.

The other girls were stunned, "Fight... a fight!"

They were really fighting, the battle among girls was fierce. Those girls were all jealous of Isabelle Willow's enchanting face, their long nails aimed at her face.

Isabelle Willow wasn't someone to be messed with; she grabbed a girl's long hair and pushed her to the ground, then mounted her, showing explosive fighting prowess.