

## SUBSTITUTE BRIDE: UTTERLY PAMPERED BY HER BILLIONAIRE HUSBAND

### Chapter 9: Chapter 9: Sleeping with Her in My Arms

Hayden Crawford's pupils contracted sharply. He quickly took out the first aid kit and used an alcohol swab to treat her wound. "Now remember, this is what happens when you make me repeat myself a third time."

Serena Sterling looked at his hard jawline, "Mr. Crawford, is the consequence you're talking about domestic violence?"

Hayden patched her up with a band-aid, a slight smile playing on his cold thin lips. "Knowing that I would resort to domestic violence and yet you still dare to come in, isn't your courage quite impressive, huh?"

Serena Sterling lifted her beautiful almond-shaped eyes to gaze at him, "Mr. Crawford, others may fear you, but I do not."

Hayden Crawford's long fingers paused slightly as he looked at her face that appeared somewhat pitiful due to the band-aid. "Leave now, let me be alone."

Saying that, Hayden helped Serena up.

Serena quickly extended her slender pale hand and embraced his strong and muscular waist.

The moment she hugged him, Hayden's tall and upright body stiffened. Her body was so soft it was as if she had no bones, her small face pressed against his firm chest, like a docile and soft little kitten sticking to him.

Hayden caught a whiff of her pleasant body fragrance once again, the scent gently teasing his nerves.

At this time, Serena spoke softly in his arms, "Mr. Crawford, don't be alone, you can have company, let me stay with you."

Hayden's whole body, tense with bulging veins, gradually calmed down, even the terrifying anger in the depths of his eyes began to fade. He raised his hand and hugged her.

He rubbed his handsome face against her soft hair, her fragrance making him feel... a sense of *déjà vu*.

Perhaps because she had just eaten some strawberry jam, there was a hint of fruity and milky dessert scent on her.

Serena quietly held him for a moment, then her small hands moved up from his robust waist and gently touched the wings of his shoulder blades on his broad back. "If you still feel uncomfortable, you can try biting."

Appropriate emotional release is necessary.

"Bite you? Aren't you afraid of pain?"

"In your dreams, I meant..."

Serena stood on tiptoe and bit into his strong shoulder.

She bit quickly and hard, catching him off guard, and blood swiftly seeped through his white shirt.

She had bitten him until he bled.

Almost taking a piece of flesh.

The sudden pain made Hayden's muscles tense. He stepped back a few paces with the girl in his arms, causing Serena's calf to hit the edge of the sofa, and the next second, they both tumbled into the soft sofa.

"Mrs. Crawford, is this revenge?" Hayden pressed down on her, the sharp pain bringing clarity back into his once-clouded gaze.

Serena Sterling arched her delicate eyebrows, "You pushed me earlier, now I bite you, and we're even."

Serena tried to get up, but Hayden pressed her smooth shoulder back down.

Their current position was somewhat ambiguous.

Serena fell into his eyes, where two dim red flames danced, staring at her as if she were a delectable prey.

"Mr. Crawford, what are you doing?"

"You're quite fragrant. Last time, you still didn't tell me what brand of perfume you used."

Serena curved her lips in a playful smile, "Mr. Crawford, I already told you I didn't use perfume. Your repeated inquiry makes me suspect you're flirting with me. Could it be... you want to woo me?"

Hayden had always known her eyes were beautiful, especially now when she was sparring with him, full of vibrant charm. He lowered his handsome gaze, his thin lips pressed a gentle kiss against the band-aid on her forehead, "Does it hurt? I'm very sorry for earlier, I apologize..."

This domineering man with his deep, low voice saying "I'm sorry" made Serena's scalp tingle.

This devil!

"We're already even, so it's okay, Mr. Crawford, please let me go." Serena placed her hand on his chest, trying to push him away.

But Hayden didn't move. Instead, he held her small face in his hands.

His long fingers wove into her dark hair along her cheek, his thin lips slowly descending from her forehead...

Serena's eyelashes fluttered like a fan, she didn't dare to move. What was he... trying to do?

As he got closer, their breaths entwined.

When he was almost upon her, Serena quickly and neatly pierced a long silver needle into his acupoint.

Hayden closed his eyes and collapsed beside her.

Serena looked up at the dazzling crystal chandelier, squeezing her eyes shut. Even a fool would know he intended to... kiss her just now.

She asked if he wanted to woo her; he never answered, but it seemed like he was trying to prove something with his actions.

Serena quickly opened her eyes, no!

No matter his intentions, their relationship was merely a peace agreement. She still had a lot to do, and she couldn't be captivated by him.

As Serena tried to get up, a strong arm wrapped around her, pulling her back to his chest.

She looked up and saw that Hayden was still asleep.

He was sleeping, but even in dreams, he wouldn't let her leave.

Serena wanted to break free, but his grip was firm and strong. Not wanting to wake him, risking everything, she lay back down.

The sofa in the study wasn't very big, so it was a bit crowded with the two of them sleeping there. Serena had to lie on her side to make room.

After a while, a soothing ringtone sounded—it was a phone call for her.

Serena quickly reached for her phone. She hadn't intended to answer, but it was Gregory Sterling calling.

It was her dad.

Serena lay on her side in Hayden's embrace, answered the call, and whispered, "Hello, Dad."

Gregory Sterling's reprimanding voice quickly came through, "Serena, what happened today? Mr. Cox had agreed to invest in The Sterling Group's medical center, but I heard you offended Mr. Cox. Now he says that he will only invest if you apologize to him. Otherwise, it's off the table."

"Dad, didn't Lillian Sterling tell you what happened today? If I say this investment was in exchange for your daughter's company in bed, do you still want it?" Serena retorted.

At the Sterling family home, Lillian quickly added, "Gregory, it's true, I was going to send Serena to Mr. Cox's bed today, but The Sterling Group's medical center is experiencing a financial shortfall and urgently needs investment. Serena is the Sterling family's daughter, so she should contribute."

Serena sneered, "Auntie, you have two daughters, besides Vanessa, there's Yasmine. Both daughters are part of the Sterling family; why aren't you asking them to contribute?"

When Yasmine was mentioned, Lillian's whole demeanor turned proud and pleased.

The Sterling family was known for their scholarly and medicinal heritage. Since childhood, Yasmine had shown great medical talent, becoming Gregory's favorite.

Inheriting her mother's beauty, Yasmine was gentle and sweet, hailed as the top socialite in Bayside, a beauty with brains, and everyone praised Lillian for having such a wonderful daughter.

This was also the biggest reason why Lillian had remained in favor in the Sterling family for so many years.

When Serena and Yasmine were young, they were best friends. Serena was extraordinarily talented, excelling in every aspect over Yasmine. But, Serena had been left in the countryside for nearly a decade and was no longer a threat, so how could she compete with her daughter?

"Gregory, look at what Serena is saying. How can she insult our Yasmine like this?"

As expected, Gregory was displeased too. He spoke in a deep voice, "Serena, meet Mr. Cox at 1949 Bar, tomorrow evening, on time!"