

The Kiss 571

Chapter 571

Ellinor was puzzled

Byran picked up an antique and said, "Although I'm not blood related to my grandparents, they've been super nice to me over the years. Not so much to my sister, though."

Ellinor was lost in thought, making Byran think she was worried about lending him money so he reassured her

"Don't worry, I'll definitely pay you back! My brother said as soon as I pass all my subjects, he'll give me back my credit card limit"

Ellinor snapped out of it and burst into laughter, "Might as well say you're not paying me back!"

Byran frowned. "Ellinor, don't underestimate me I can definitely pass!"

Ellinor didn't care about his grades She thought for a moment and said, "I can lend you the money for the gift and you don't have to pay me back. But you have to promise me one thing"

Byran widened his eyes curiously at her, "What condition do you want me to agree to?"

"Take me to your grandpa's birthday party tomorrow!"

Byran was stunned and confused. "Why do you want to go to my grandpa's birthday party?"

"Just out of curiosity I'm bored and want to go to a party: is that okay?"

Byran thought for a moment, "Okay Deal, I'll take you!"

They agreed, and Ellinor paid for Byran's gift

It wasn't very expensive, but it wasn't cheap either.

As they walked out of the antique shop with the gift, a black business car pulled up in front of them.

The car was a worldwide limited-edition, it was pretty much a status symbol for some guys

The moment Ellinor saw the car, she couldn't help but feel a bit down. She thought to herself, "What a small world! How come I ran into him here?"

The driver got out of the car, respectfully opened the back door, and then Theo stepped out gracefully, stretching his tall body and making everyone aware of his presence.

"Thea!"

Byran was very surprised to see him here.

Theo

glanced at Byran, responded indifferently, and then his deep and indifferent gaze fell on Ellinor next to him.

"What are you two doing here?" Theo asked.

Byran answered truthfully, "I'm here to buy a birthday gift for my grandpa. Ellinor is working at my brother's company now, so when I saw she had nothing to do, I decided to bring her along!"

Ellinor fell silent.

Who said she had nothing to do? Byran was taking this way too lightly.

Theo's inscrutable gaze moved to Ellinor, seeming a bit unhappy. Then he asked Byran in a cold tone. "How did you guys get here?"

"We took a taxi," Byran answered.

Theo narrowed his eyes, "Wait for me then, I'll give you both a ride later."

Byran was happy to hear about the free ride, "Great! Theo, what are you doing here? Are you shopping too?"

"Mm."

Theo didn't say much. He simply put his hands in his pockets and walked into the antique shop.

Just as Byran was about to follow him in, he suddenly remembered something. He turned his head to look at Ellinor but found that she had spaced out a little. So he waved his hand in front of her eyes, "Hey! What are you thinking about?"

Chapter 572

Ellinor snapped back to reality. "I wasn't thinking about anything. You wait here for Mr. Blanchet, I'm taking off."

With that, she prepared to hail a cab and leave.

Byran instantly grabbed Ellinor, "Why are you leaving first? Theo just said he'd take us both, why are you trying to get a cab?"

"I need to get back to the office ASAP."

Byran didn't buy her excuse. "What's the rush? You're done with work, aren't you?"

Ellinor forced a smile, "My morning work is done, but I still have work to do in the afternoon! Mr. Howard, you think work is that simple?"

Byran didn't believe her at all and he had his eyes fixed on her face.

"Ellinor, are you in such a hurry to leave because you're afraid to face Theo?"

Ellinor fell silent.

Byran thought he'd uncovered a secret and arrogantly said, 'I'm right, huh? Now that Theo's with my sister, you can't handle it, can you? I told you ages ago that you and Theo aren't right for each other and that he'd end up choosing my sister but you didn't believe me!'

Ellinor chuckled lightly, "Mr Howard, can you stop making assumptions about other people's thoughts?"

Byran arrogantly answered. "Why would I need to make assumptions? If it's not as I said, then wait with me for Theo to take us both! Otherwise, you must be hiding something!"

Ellinor was taken aback by Byran's actions and ended up being dragged back to the antique store.

Inside the antique store

Theo was already sitting there waiting and being personally attended to by the store's owner.

"Mr. Blanchet, have a look! This is an antique I brought in especially for you, do you like it?"

Theo glanced at it with an indifferent expression but he agreed readily. "Sure, wrap it up"

The owner was thrilled, "Great, quickly wrap it up for Mr. Blanchet. Remember to be careful!"

"Yes, sir"

Byran, curious, also went over to see the gift.

Ellinor didn't go over. She really didn't want to leave with Theo, but she couldn't resist Byran, who dragged her back.

If she left now, it would seem like she was too nervous to face Theo.

The truth was, she wasn't scared, she just didn't want to.

But since she was brought back, she decided to just roll with it and started browsing around the store.

Out of boredom, Ellinor picked up a small wooden horse she'd looked at earlier, admiring the workmanship.

The wooden horse was delicately carved, but the surface was a bit worn, probably by the previous owner. It was a deep color with a glossy finish.

She really liked the wooden horse and had been debating earlier whether to buy it, but felt it wasn't really practical.

Just then, a store clerk came over and told her, "I'm sorry, ma'am, but the item you're holding has been purchased by another customer; could you hand it over for wrapping?" Someone had bought it?

Ellinor looked at the clerk, then glanced around the store. Besides her and Byran, the only customer was Theo; had he bought it?

Theo was still leisurely sitting in the store. As an honored guest of the antique shop, he didn't need to browse around, the owner would have staff bring the most valuable items for him to choose from. He looked like a typical rich guy

Moreover, his deep, narrow eyes were slightly squinted as if watching her, or maybe not.

Ellinor looked away. Feeling a little disappointed, she handed the wooden horse to the clerk, then walked further away to look at other items.

Chapter 573

The merchandise shelf did a pretty good job hiding her petite figure.

Theo frowned slightly

After finishing his shopping, Theo didn't linger. He got up and left.

The antique shop owner saw him off respectfully, "Goodbye, Mr. Blanchet. Come again when you need something. Your gift has been safely delivered to your car"

"Hmm"

Theo then sauntered out of the shop

Byran called Ellinor and followed him after seeing him exit and get into his car

Once in Theo's car, Ellinor quietly sat by the window, busying herself with her phone, while Byran sat between her and Theo.

Byran was a bit curious and asked. "Theo, is that antique you bought also a birthday present for my grandpa?"

Theo kept a poker face, looking out the car window, and just responded, "Hmm"

Byran was thrilled, "I knew it! I've never heard of you having a thing for antiques, but my grandpa loves collecting old stuff, he'll definitely love it!"

Byran kept mumbling

to himself, listing some of the stuff in his grandpa's collection, without Theo responding

Ellinor kept silent too and continued to stare at her phone while deep in thought.

From their conversation, she figured out that Theo was also attending the birthday party tomorrow

So she was gonna run into this guy again tomorrow.

The more she tried to avoid him, the more she bumped into him:

Man, what a pain!

The Howard Group was not far from the antique shop, and they arrived quickly

Byran and Ellinor got out of the car.

"Theo, thanks! See you at the birthday party tomorrow!"

Theo gave a slight nod, still stone-faced, then rolled up the car window.

The car slowly sped up and headed into the distance

Byran proudly said to Ellinor as they watched Theo's car leave, "See, even someone as icy as Theo is willing to give me a lift. Do you know why?"

Ellinor kept a straight face, "No idea"

Byran looked even prouder, "Well, it's because Theo treats me like family, that's why he's so nice to me!"

Ellinor gave a faint smile, "Really? But I remember that your family doesn't get along with the Blanchet family, so why is Mr. Blanchet attending your grandpa's birthday party

tomorrow?

Byran explained, "Although our family doesn't get along with the Blanchet family, my grandparents don't have any issues with the Blanchets. They've been on good terms for years"

The two chatted as they walked into the elevator and went upstairs

After getting out of the elevator, Byran followed Ellinor to her office to avoid going back to his brother's office, where he might get scolded.

But he couldn't avoid it forever.

Byran strode into Ellinor's office, only to freeze in the doorway. His face turned sour as he felt a chill run down his spine.

When Ellinor saw him standing still in the doorway, she knew there must be someone else in the office. So he walked a few steps forward and saw Balfour sitting in her

office

Balfour was sitting in front of Ellinor's desk, his handsome face unreadable and his tone devoid of any inflection.

"Where have you two been?"

Chapter 574

Byran, looking a tad uneasy, said, "I was really tired from doing my homework this morning so I went out for a walk to give my brain a bit of rest

"Tired from doing homework?"

Balfour, as if he heard a joke that wasn't funny, smirked and looked at him sternly, "You didn't even get one question right and you have the audacity to let your brain rest? If your brain rests anymore, it might just stop working altogether. What's the difference between that and not having a brain at all?"

With his head hanging low in embarrassment, Byran stuttered

Balfour, with a look of disappointment, stared at Byran, "Go back and do your homework right now. By the time I get back, you should at least get two questions right. Or else, your bank card being suspended will become the least of your worries!"

"Oh, got it" Byran turned around, looking pretty mortified. He didn't even dare sneak a glance at Ellinor and quickly took off.

After Byran left, Ellinor saw that Balfour was still sitting at her desk, showing no signs of leaving

"Mr. Howard, would you like some coffee? She said as she walked in, smiling.

Balfour looked at her with a serious and detached expression, "Ellinor, what exactly are you trying to do?"

Ellinor raised an eyebrow.

"Mr. Howard, all I did was ask if you wanted some coffee. What else could I possibly do?"

Balfour gave her a contemptuous look, "Ms Mendoza, you're clearly just looking for opportunities right now. Your main goal must be to target someone of value. Even Byran, who's still in high school, isn't spared. You're crossing a line. Let me remind you, don't waste your energy on that boy. Even if you manage to make that dumb kid fall for you without my consent, you're not getting into the Howard family"

Ellinor laughed.

"Mr. Howard, you and Patricia truly are two peas in a pod. You both view me as someone desperate to find a man to elevate my status. Let me just clarify, I came to the Howard Group to work. Even if I had other thoughts, it wouldn't be about marrying into the Howard family. So, Mr. Howard, you can rest easy. I'm not interested in you, and even less so in your brother! Even if one day you begged me to become part of the Howard family, I wouldn't agree!"

Beg her to join the Howard family?

Balfour thought her delusions of grandeur were not only arrogant but also laughable. Beg her? That would never happen!

Without a

word, he stared at Ellinor's face for a moment, his gaze slowly drifting down to her belly, his eyes cold and unflinching.

"Ellinor, there are things I haven't explicitly said, but that doesn't mean I'm not aware. Things will eventually come to light. I hope you know your capabilities and do what you're supposed to. Don't make me step in and help you"

Ellinor was taken aback, not fully understanding Balfour's words, but she could clearly feel his murderous gaze coldly fixed on her stomach, which made her extremely uncomfortable

"Mr. Howard, your words are too profound. I need to ponder over it."

"Ms. Mendoza, you're smart. I believe you'll find the right answer soon. It would be best not to disappoint me"

With that, Balfour gracefully stood up, not intending to stay in her office any longer.

As he walked past Ellinor, Balfour added. "You were absent without leave today, so you won't be receiving today's wages."

Ellinor fell silent

First, she was dragged out by Byran to help him buy a gift, and now her wages were docked by Balfour. She was at a loss for words

It was clear that she couldn't peacefully coexist with the Howard family and its members.

Chapter 575

Chapter 575

But it was okay, she could put up with it for the sake of her mother's investigation.

Tomorrow, she was going to meet her maternal grandparents. She was hoping to find out some stuff about the past there. Stuff that could bring her closer to the truth.

At the office door, Balfour suddenly stopped, turned around, and said, "Also, I've thought about it, and we can go ahead with the sales plan you made this morning. Start getting things ready"

Ellinor snapped back to reality and put on a professional smile. "Sure thing. Mr Howard"

Balfour didn't respond and just walked out the door

Ellinor was left alone in the office

She sat down at her desk, absently touching her flat stomach.

The things Balfour said earlier. It was like he somehow knew she was pregnant and was hinting that she should get an abortion.

Did Patricia say something to Balfour this morning?

If so, Patricia must have told Balfour about her possible pregnancy.

"Ellinor!"

Just as Ellinor was getting started on the sales plan, Byran barged in again.

But this time, he brought his homework with him.

Having been interrupted, Ellinor frowned and looked at him "What brings you back here?"

Byran slumped down in a chair, throwing his homework onto the desk with a disgruntled look on his face. "I didn't get a single question right. My brother kicked me out of

his office!"

Ellinor took one of his mock exam papers and scanned it with a frown.

Not only was the handwriting terrible, but every answer was also wrong.

"Mr. Howard, what have you been doing in school all these years?"

Byran scoffed and lifted his chin. "School is boring and class is even more boring. I can't help but fall asleep when the teachers start talking. And I don't even want to go to school! I want to be a pro gamer. I don't need the stuff they teach in school!"

Ellinor raised an eyebrow, looking at him disapprovingly.

“Byran, the Howard family might be loaded, but no matter how much money you have, your share will still be finite. Whether you want to take over the family business or pursue your dream of being a pro gamer, you’ll need knowledge and wisdom. Having a lot of skills and knowledge is what’s important!”

Byran looked at her dumbstruck, seeming to have understood but unwilling to admit it. He frowned, “Ellinor, are you lecturing me?”

Ellinor gave a soft laugh, then turned her attention back to her computer screen, continuing her work. “I’m not in a position to lecture you. I’m just not pleased with your attitude towards your studies.”

“Hmph, you’re amazing! Aren’t you a top student? If you’re so capable, then teach me!”

Chapter 576

Byran Howard was lounging in Ellinor’s office with his arms crossed and feet up on her desk, without a hint of the fear he’d shown in front of Balfour.

Ellinor paid him no mind and continued to focus on her work.

Byran frowned at her lack of a reaction. He sat upright and knocked on her desk. “Hey! Ellinor, I’m talking to you!”

She glanced at him, “What? If you need help with your homework, just spit it out!”

Byran blinked and snorted in pride, “Did I say I needed help with homework?”

“Ah, then I must have misunderstood. Ellinor didn’t look at him again as she continued her work.

Seeing her still unresponsive, Byran’s pride faded a bit, “Ellinor, Balfour’s frozen all my cards, but I have a big e-sports match at the end of the month in C city, and I can’t even afford a ticket!”

Ellinor typed as she talked, “Mr. Howard, I’ve already paid for the gift you sent to your grandfather today. You’re not trying to borrow more money from me for your e-sports match, are you?”

Byran felt a bit humiliated

and struggled to meet her gaze, “No. I don’t want to borrow your money. Actually, I really do want your help with my homework! Balfour said he’d only let me go to the match if I pass my midterms next week. I heard you

were a top student at Creston University, you must be great at studying, right? Can you teach me how to improve my grades quickly so I can deal with Balfour? That match at the end of the month is really important to me, I can’t miss it!”

Ellinor looked up at him, his face full of humble determination, “I’m busy right now; I don’t have time.”

Byran pleaded sincerely, “I can wait for you to finish your work. Ellinor, I’m begging you!”

Ellinor looked at Byran again. This proud boy was willing to humble himself for his dreams; it was a rare sight.

Perhaps because of their shared blood, Ellinor felt a sense of responsibility for Byran. Even though he was often a nuisance, she never held it against him and didn't even find the little guy annoying

After a moment's silence, Ellinor picked up Byran's homework from her desk and skimmed through it, "Your foundation is too weak. It's basically impossible to improve to a passing grade in a short period of time."

*Byran ran his hands through his hair in distress,
"Then how long will it take for me to reach a passing grade?"*

Ellinor thought for a moment, then said, "A teacher can only provide you with the basic knowledge, the real learning needs to be done by yourself! I can only find time to teach you one problem, for the rest, you'll have to understand and apply the formula. First, you need to master the basic knowledge, then try to understand the other content. Everything is up to you!"

Byran nodded in understanding. "Alright! Teach me quickly. Balfour is really angry. I at least need to be able to solve one problem to calm him down!"

So Ellinor put her work aside for a moment to explain to Byran.

Byran's thirst for knowledge was unprecedented. He pulled up a chair without hesitation and sat next to Ellinor.

Ellinor took out a blank piece of paper and a pen, selected a representative problem from Byran's homework, broke it down, and drew a clear and easy-to-understand diagram, explaining it to him step by step.

At first, Byran's face was full of confusion, but as he listened more, his brow slowly relaxed because he found that he could easily understand what Ellinor was explaining.

Chapter 577

It was really weird. Even though Balfour had previously spent a fortune hiring all sorts of famous tutors for him, no matter how in depth their explanations were, he always seemed to turn a deaf ear. However, when Ellinor explained using drawings, he could understand it easily.

After answering a question, Ellinor pushed the paper to Byran, "Alright, I've explained the problem, and the formulas used are all applicable to the topics you're currently studying. The rest of the problems require you to apply these formulas. You don't need to show me once you're done, just hand them over to Balfour."

Byran obeyed without hesitation, redoing the paper that Balfour had almost torn to shreds previously.

Working on the problems next to Ellinor was way less stressful than being next to Balfour. Once he relaxed, Byran found it much easier to concentrate. He went from not understanding the problems at first to understanding what they meant and knowing how to solve them.

After he was done, he didn't ask Ellinor to check for him but gratefully said. "Thank you! I think I can do some of the problems now, I'll go and have Balfour check if they're"

correct!"

Ellinor just responded casually, continuing her work while saying. "Just a friendly tip, you might want to practice your handwriting. Even elementary school students write better than you."

Byran blushed, "Hmph, that's my personal style. What would you know!"

Ellinor just raised an eyebrow, not caring whether he took her advice or not. She just couldn't stand his handwriting and couldn't help but speak up.

As Byran was about to leave, he suddenly turned back and scribbled his phone number on a piece of paper with his unique handwriting and handed it to Ellinor, "Here's my number, call me after work. I promised to take you to my grandfather's birthday party, and I always keep my word."

Ellinor glanced at the number on the paper, took it, and smiled, "Okay, see you tomorrow"

"See you tomorrow" Byran quickly left with his homework, eager to get Balfour's approval and calm him down.

Otherwise, not only would he be unable to participate in the e-sports competition at the end of the month, but he was also worried that Balfour would get so angry that he would pull some strings and cancel the competition altogether. That would be a disaster

Balfour definitely had the power to do that with ease.

In the CEO's office, Byran carefully walked in and handed the corrected mock exam paper to the disgruntled Balfour, "Balfour, I can do some of the problems now; take a look."

Balfour was looking at work documents and spoke in a cold tone, "Take it away, I don't have time to be angry with you now."

Byran mustered up the courage to push the paper to Balfour again, "Balfour, I really can do the problems now, can you check if I did them correctly? If not, I'll just go home."

Balfour let out a long sigh, then somewhat impatiently took the paper and skimmed it with a blank face. He paused for a bit, furrowed his brows, and looked at Byran in confusion, "Did you write this yourself?"

Chapter 578

"Yup, I did it myself. Byran nodded, nervously asking "Balfour, did I get it right this time?" But Balfour slammed the paper on the table, "I told you to step up your game, not cheat!" Startled, Byran instinctively stepped back and innocently replied, "Balfour, I didn't cheat!"

"You couldn't answer a single question just recently, and now after a short break, you can answer a bunch?" Balfour looked at him disappointed, "Who are you trying to

fool

How could he possibly believe that this little guy did it himself?!

At first, Byran not only got every question wrong, but his answers were also way off the mark. One look and he'd know he had no clue about the basics. There was no point in correcting his mistakes

But now, this corrected paper was almost 80% correct. With this kid's brainpower, there was no way he could have done it.

Feeling Balfour's doubt, Byran knew he must have gotten a lot right, so he quickly explained.

**Balfour, I really did it myself. I could do it because Ellinor taught me a super useful formula I understood it, and then I used the formula to find the answers! If you don't believe me, I can do another test paper for you to see."*

Ellinor taught him?

Balfour frowned, suspiciously asking. "Why would she tutor you?"

Byran answered truthfully. "She didn't want to at first; I asked her to. I heard she aced her studies at Creston University, so I thought she may know some study tricks and asked her to teach me how to improve quickly."

Balfour was silent for a minute and his frown deepened, "Stay away from her in the future!"

Baffled, Byran asked, "Why? I think she's really nice and she explains things so simply."

Balfour sneered, "What do you know about judging people? What's her relationship with you? Why would she tutor you for free? You're not a kid anymore you should know not to trust people so easily!"

"Oh, but if she's not good, why do you keep her in the company?"

Balfour was speechless for a moment, "Don't ask too many questions! Have Quinton take you home to study. Remember to prepare well for your test next week!"

Byran pouted, "Balfour, my bank card"

Balfour looked serious, "Don't mention your bank card until you pass your test."

"Oh, got it" Byran sighed sadly, grabbed his work, and went to find Quinton.

After Byran left, Balfour looked down at the paper in his hand, his brow still furrowed. It was impressive that Ellinor managed to improve Byran's grades in such a short time. Why would she tutor Byran? If she really didn't

intend to marry into the Howard family, what was her real motive? What was she hiding? What was she plotting? What was her real goal?

With her smarts, she could be successful anywhere. Why come here for the high salary offered by the Howard Group?

Balfour couldn't figure it out and felt a bit tired. He rubbed his temples.

Whenever he felt worn out, he would think of his mother and sister. He reached out and touched the photo on his desk.

Lately, he had a stronger feeling than ever that his mother and sister were still alive

Once, he had sent people to look for their remains with a glimmer of hope. But now, he felt as if they were right beside him and silently watching him.

The next day in the afternoon.

After arranging the execution of the sales plan, Ellinor leaned back in her chair, picked up her phone, and checked the time

With only ten minutes left before quitting time, she dialed Byran's number.

Chapter 579

Byran's disgruntled voice came from the other end of the phone, "Hello? Who's this?"

"It's me, Ellinor, Mr Howard"

Hearing Ellinor's voice, Byran's tone softened a bit, "Ellinor, are you off work yet?"

"Almost, there's less than ten minutes"

"Alright, I'm coming to pick you up now Meet me at the alley near the office. And be sure to dodge Balfour!" Byran instructed carefully

Ellinor was somewhat puzzled, "We're not doing anything shady, why should we avoid Mr. Howard?"

Byran stuttered a bit, "Well Balfour's not a fan of me hanging out with you, so he can't know that I'm the one taking you to Grandpa's birthday party. You'd better avoid him, or I'll get an earful from Balfour again!"

Ellinor let out a sarcastic laugh, "Oh, so that's the reason!"

Byran seemed to feel awkward and added 'Don't take it to heart; Balfour has the wrong opinion about you. Once he gets to know you, he won't think like this.'

Ellinor just smiled and didn't say anything, "Alright, call me when you're near the office

"Sure!"

Byran arrived very quickly in just fifteen minutes.

According to the location Byran sent, Ellinor found the alley near the Howard Group and got into the car.

Carlos was Byran's assistant, so he was driving while Byran sat in the back. Seeing Ellinor get in, he gave her a disapproving once-over.

"Hey! Ellinor, you're going to my grandpa's birthday party dressed like this?"

Ellinor was in her work clothes and had just removed her blazer, leaving a simple white shirt. It was simple and crisp, but a bit too casual.

"What's wrong with this? I'm just tagging along for fun. There's no need to dress up, right?"

Byran frowned, "Ellinor, you're such a weirdo!"

"Oh? How so?"

"You're obviously into Balfour, yet you don't even bother to dress up! Do you know how many women are after Balfour? How can you stand out and make Balfour like you like this?"

Ellinor laughed, "Don't you think it's possible that I'm not interested in Balfour at all?"

After a moment of thought, Byran seemed to believe her, "Well, that's a shame! Actually, I was kind of hoping you could be a part of our family!"

Ellinor raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

Byran blurted out, "Because if you marry Balfour, you won't be a threat to my sister's happiness anymore."

Ellinor was taken aback.

So it was all for his sister

Byran continued,

"But mainly, you're not like those flashy and vulgar women that are a dime a dozen. I find you quite interesting, we have a lot in common, and we can have enjoyable chats I'd hate it if Balfour ended up marrying a gold-digger, that would really bug me."

Ellinor could only laugh and cry at his words. She had common topics with him? If that were the case, wouldn't it mean she was dumbing herself down?

The car soon arrived at the Bagley family's house.

Byran looked out the window and his eyes lit up. "It's Theo's car, he came early too!"

Chapter 580

Ellinor, following Byran's lead, glanced in the direction of the man who had just stepped out of his car. He was dressed in a dark suit, had neatly combed hair, and his handsome features were as prominent as ever. He radiated a mature and dangerous allure

She knew she would encounter him here today, but she didn't expect to see him right off the bat.

Enthusiastically. Byran hopped out of the car. "Theo, you're early too!"

"Hmm" Theo responded coldly, his gaze seemingly sweeping over Ellinor, who was just getting out of the car

Ellinor didn't meet his gaze, instead, she looked around the Bagley family's grand courtyard.

Byran said, "Mr. Blanchet my sister is already here, she must be waiting for you! Come on, let's go in together!"

The Bagley family's place was buzzing. Guests trickled in, gathering around the sofa to present gifts and their birthday wishes to old Mr. Bagley

Byran handed over his own present, "Happy birthday, Grandpa. This is my gift for you!"

Old Mr. Bagley took a look at the gift Byran presented with a stern yet tender expression, "You're still a student, why did you spend so much on a gift for me?"

Byran emphasized, "Grandpa, I'm not a kid anymore; I'm an adult now!"

Old Mr. Bagley frowned, "But you're still in high school, stop trying to be a grown-up!"

Everyone in the family knew about Byran's failure to get into college, so he felt both embarrassed and ashamed, not knowing how to respond.

At this moment, Collin stepped forward, presenting a rectangular gift box, "Old Mr. Bagley, this is a token of appreciation from Mr. Blanchet. Happy birthday"

Old Mr. Bagley smiled, nodding for a servant to accept the gift, "Thank you, Mr. Blanchet."

Old Mr. Bagley looked at Theo Blanchet as his eyes filled with admiration for the younger man.

"Theo, how's your grandpa doing lately? He must be recovering well after the surgery, right?"

Theo nodded. "Thank you for your concern, he's recovering well. When he returns, I'll have him come over for a chat."

Old Mr. Bagley chuckled, "Good, that old coot must be bored out of his mind lying in bed all this time. When he gets back, we old geezers should go play some golf"

Theo politely agreed and chatted with old Mr. Bagley for a bit.

"Theo, you're here!"

Patricia Howard's voice rang out like silver bells.

Dressed in a sparkling diamond gown, Patricia emerged from the crowd, looking incredibly gorgeous and sweet.

She walked up to Theo, looking up at him with longing in her eyes, "I thought you'd be busy with work and come later."

"I don't have much work today" He replied indifferently

Patricia flashed a sweet smile, then turned towards old Mr. Bagley on the sofa, saying softly.

"Grandpa, I have prepared a special birthday gift for you. I think you'll really like it!"

However, old Mr. Bagley didn't respond to Patricia's words, instead turning to chat with his wife.

Patricia felt a bit awkward and forced herself to maintain a smile

She was the center of attention in the Howard family. But in the Bagley family, her status was pretty low and nobody paid her much mind.

In reality, the old folks of the Bagley family were not her grandparents.

The Bagley family was the family of her father's ex-wife. Patricia was the daughter of her father and his second wife and had no blood relation to the Bagley family

It made sense that the Bagley family would treat her coldly. However, old Mr. Bagley treated Byran exceptionally well, much like his own beloved grandson, even though Byran, just like her, had no blood relation to the Bagley family

Yet for her, they always turned a blind eye. She couldn't understand why there was such a disparity in their treatment of them.