

DON'T MESS WITH THE GIRL WITH CANDY

Chapter 2

After carefully packing her grandfather's belongings, Juniper knelt on the ground. Facing the memorial hall, she bowed her head. Her tears mixed with the rain, vanishing as quickly as they fell.

After a few seconds of silent mourning, she rose and faced the Sherwin family, her voice cold and final. "From this day on, I have nothing to do with the Sherwin family. As for this money..."

Her gaze swept over the bank card. "Keep it. Maybe you can buy an enema to flush the crap out of all three of your heads!"

"Juniper Sherwin!" Malcolm's mask of civility nearly cracked under the sheer humiliation.

"My name is Juniper Payne!" Juniper corrected him sharply. Pushing down the grief in her heart, she turned and walked away without a second glance.

The guests exchanged confused looks. Wasn't she supposed to be a greedy leech, refusing to leave? What was going on?

"She left that easily?" Frigga muttered under her breath, her jaw tight with suspicion. "I guess she doesn't know about the inheritance."

"Shut up!" Malcolm hissed, shooting her a warning look. He scanned the crowd before lowering his voice. "What does the Sherwin family inheritance have to do with some stray?"

The Sherwin family had seen a meteoric rise, transforming from a small-town company into a respectable corporation in just a few years, allowing them to move to the prestigious Eclara City. Yolanda had even caught the eye of a

young master from the Lonsdale family, one of Eclara's wealthiest clans, securing a brilliant future.

But the family patriarch, Lemuel Sherwin, had been utterly bewitched. He ignored his own blood and instead showered affection on the adopted Juniper, even planning to leave her eighty percent of his estate.

If Lemuel hadn't taken pity on her and insisted on keeping her around all those years ago, they would have thrown her out in a heartbeat. Now, without Lemuel's protection, crushing her would be easier than crushing an ant.

It was a damp spring day. A fine mist enveloped the city, and the streets were quiet.

A man with a commanding presence and refined air sat reclined in the back of a sports car, his long legs crossed elegantly. He was casually flipping through a file, but the sharp, intense aura around him was palpable.

"Report," he said, his head slightly bowed. The dim light in the car cast shadows across his handsome, chiseled face.

"Boss, the trail's gone cold," Felton reported, bowing respectfully. "We've found no trace of any other Subterra Vanguard members. Only Specter."

Subterra Vanguard was a new arms manufacturer that had risen to prominence in Australis, led by the enigmatic 'Specter.' In just a few years, they had become a formidable rival to their own Sigma Network in Borealia. The two factions had clashed multiple times over markets and resources, and Sigma Network had suffered several setbacks. They had tracked Specter to Eclara City, but just as they closed in, the trail had vanished completely.

The man's fingers paused on the file, his expression darkening with a chilling intensity. "Keep searching," he ordered, his voice sharp as steel.

Just then, a phone rang, jarring the tense silence.

"Shanley, dear, did you look at the photos?" an elderly woman's cheerful voice chirped through the speaker, sounding slightly out of place. "Are you satisfied?"

The man, Shanley Schwartz, tugged at his black tie, his handsome face a mask of cold patience. "Grandma, I need an explanation. Why was there a man in the portfolio of potential dates you sent me?"

"Oh-uh..." The voice on the other end faltered for a moment before she mumbled, "Well, I was just worried you didn't like girls, so..."

"Don't you worry, dear. Our family is very open-minded. As long as you're happy, we'd welcome a puppy if that's what you chose."

Shanley slowly closed his eyes, a hint of weariness in his deep gaze. A wry smile touched his lips. "That's awfully thoughtful of you, Grandma."

He chuckled softly and turned his head to look out the window.

Suddenly, his eyes locked onto a slender figure shrouded in the misty rain, and his gaze froze.