

Messing With Her? Are You Crazy!

Sure enough, Mr. Harrison's furrowed brow relaxed. He turned to look at Serena. "Your sister?"

Serena didn't even look up, her voice flat. "Not really."

"Oh." The answer made it clear to Mr. Harrison that Serena wanted nothing to do with Isabella.

His attitude toward Isabella, which had just softened, turned cold once again.

A chill went down Isabella's spine, and she shot a resentful glare at Serena.

She had already stooped to acknowledging Serena, this country bumpkin, as her sister, and Serena still had the gall to deny it?

Serena was clearly doing this on purpose to embarrass her in front of Mr. Harrison, to stop her from becoming his student!

Could she be any more jealous?

She really didn't understand... why on earth would Mr. Harrison hold Serena in such high regard?

Isabella clutched the research paper in her arms, feeling humiliated, and was just about to speak.

Then, a bloodcurdling scream rang out.

She immediately turned toward the sound.

A team of guards from the Department of Defense was dragging a man named Tyler toward another exit.

Tyler was still howling his lungs out.

In the middle of his screams, he seemed to spot the people standing over here and yelled at the top of his lungs, "Mr. Harrison! I really know I was wrong, don't arrest me! Don't arrest me!"

"Miss Lancaster... Miss Lancaster! I know I was wrong, I apologize! Please, ask Mr. Harrison to let me go!"

Isabella's face paled slightly.

That person...

He must be from the institute.

And he was begging Serena?

Soon, Tyler was hauled away by the guards.

From beginning to end, Serena's expression remained completely neutral, as if neither Isabella nor the man named Tyler mattered to her in the slightest.

She casually slung the canvas bag over her shoulder and said coolly, "I'm leaving."

Mr. Harrison nodded. "Alright, you go home and get some rest. Thank you for your hard work today. I'll handle the rest."

He completely ignored the pale, stiff-faced Isabella standing beside them.

Serena gave a quiet hum of acknowledgment, not even glancing at Isabella as she started to walk away.

"Mr. Harrison..."

Isabella clutched her research paper, about to speak.

Mr. Harrison waved her off. "It's late. You should hurry home and get some rest, Isabella."

With that, he clasped his hands behind his back and returned to the institute.

Isabella, unwilling to give up, took a couple of steps forward and called out, "Mr. Harrison!" again, but she got no response. She could only watch as he disappeared from sight.

She thought about the way Mr. Harrison, a man she practically worshipped, treated Serena, and how that researcher had apologized and pleaded with Serena.

Unable to contain herself, Isabella spun around and chased after Serena.

"Serena Lancaster!" she yelled as she ran.

But the tall, slender figure didn't even pause.

Isabella gritted her teeth in frustration, picked up her pace, and jogged until she was

in front of Serena, blocking her path with an outstretched arm.

"Serena, how do you know Mr. Harrison?!"

Her eyes were filled with unconcealed resentment and suspicion. "Why do you have clearance to enter the institute? Who... who are you?!"

Serena finally stopped.

Under the cold moonlight, the girl's striking features seemed as remote as a goddess's.

When she slowly lifted her eyes, her cool gaze was devoid of emotion, yet as it fell

on Isabella, it carried an unnerving, heart-stopping pressure.

Under that stare.

Isabella pressed a hand to her chest, her breath catching. But she refused to be intimidated by Serena and defiantly lifted her chin "Since you know Mr Harrison why didn't you just say so this morning? You knew how important this paper was to me, you..."

Messing With Her? Are You Crazy!

"Isabella."

Serena's voice was calm and cool. "Your business has nothing to do with me."

The implication was clear: her business also had nothing to do with Isabella, so she should mind her own.

Isabella was taken aback. "But we're family now..."

Even as she said it, she felt a pang of resentment.

Serena raised an eyebrow and spoke bluntly. "After twenty years, you even get attached to a dog. So, since you know how to please Mom and Dad, I don't mind them keeping a little plaything like you around."

Isabella's face instantly darkened. Was this bitch calling her a dog?

She made it sound like her parents were just keeping her as an amusing little pet.

It was utterly humiliating!

"If you want to live a quiet life, drop your little schemes, shut your mouth, and just be a good little plaything at home."

Serena leaned in, her voice dropping to a cold whisper near Isabella's ear. "This is your last warning. Otherwise... another twenty years won't be enough to save you."

"My patience is limited. Understand?"

Her cool voice, laced with ice, pierced Isabella's ears.

Serena paid no mind to Isabella's instantly pale face or her trembling body.

She walked past her and left without a backward glance.

Behind her, Isabella stood frozen, Serena's humiliating warning echoing in her mind.

Her whole body felt cold, her face twisted into a grotesque mask.

Every word Serena had spoken was a blatant threat.

So, from the very beginning... Serena had wanted to drive her out, to take everything that was hers!

"Isabella."

Suddenly, a voice like a snake's hiss came from behind her.

Isabella jumped and spun around to see Ian stepping out of the shadows.

He stared grimly in the direction Serena had left, his eyes glinting under the moonlight with a sinister light "Don't worry, I'll do some

digging for you Lu find

Olt what

tricks that woman used to

get into

the institute, and how she managed

to bewitch Mr. Harrison."

Isabella's eyes lit up. "Really?"

"Of course." Ian pushed up his glasses, hiding the cold, calculating glint in his eyes. "But first... you have to do something for me."

Isabella asked, "What is it?"

Ian leaned closer, his voice low, laced with persuasion and thick malice. "She's your sister, isn't she? Find a way to get me the laptop in her bag."

Isabella thought of the canvas bag Serena always carried and frowned slightly.

What was so special about a country bumpkin's laptop?

"As long as you can get her computer, with my skills, I can find out all her secrets and see what she's really up to." Ian chuckled. softly Once we have something on her, we can make sure she can never put on airs front of you again. We'll expose her for who she really is in front of everyone, so she can never compare to you."

Isabella's heart tightened, and her pupils constricted.

She stared in the direction Serena had gone, thinking of the utter humiliation she had suffered today, of Mr Harrison's coldness toward her and his completely different attitude toward Serena.

Then she thought of her family, who used to dote on her and her alone, now all stolen away by Serena.

Jealousy and resentment burned away her reason.

Her eyes filled with venom as she slowly nodded. "Fine!"

Messing With Her? Are You Crazy!

Serena walked out of the heavily guarded defense zone and was about to head to the parking garage to get her car.

A familiar black Maybach emerged from the darkness and slowly pulled up.

Serena stopped in her tracks.

The car came to a smooth halt in front of her.

The man opened the door, revealing a face that looked even more devilishly handsome under the cold moonlight.

His eyes, as deep as obsidian, held a hint of a smile. "Get in."

Serena stared at him for a second before ducking into the car.

The car started smoothly, melting back into the night.

The temperature inside was perfect.

The air, filled with the soothing scent of cedar, was calming.

Serena closed her eyes, leaning back against the seat, a hint of exhaustion finally showing in her features.

"You must be exhausted, right?" Nicholas glanced at her, his low, magnetic voice holding a mesmerizing quality in the quiet, confined space. "Want to get something to eat?"

Serena didn't open her eyes, her tone languid and stripped of its usual coolness. "No, just take me home. I have to give my grandfather his massage treatment early tomorrow morning."

"Massage?" Nicholas raised an eyebrow, a thought seemingly crossing his mind. The smile in his eyes deepened as he looked at Serena. "Is this the part where I'm supposed to say, 'Woman, what other surprises do you have that I don't know about?' You're good at everything, aren't you?"

His lazy voice was low and husky, incredibly pleasant to the ear.

The smile in his voice was just as captivating, seeming to travel from her eardrums straight to her heart.

Serena gave a soft "Mm-hmm," her tone both confident and brazen.

Nicholas couldn't help but laugh, his chest vibrating with the sound, which only made his voice sound more lazy and magnetic.

Looking at the girl's stunning, cool-toned face, Nicholas felt an urge to tease her.

The wicked smile on his thin lips deepened. "In that case... the all-powerful Miss Lancaster probably doesn't know that our families once arranged for us to be married."

Serena's eyes snapped open, and she stared at Nicholas.

The man's smile widened as he drawled playfully, "Which is to say, Miss. All- Powerful... technically speaking... you are my fiancée."

Serena was at a loss for words.

She simply shot him a questioning look.

"You don't believe me?" The corners of Nicholas's eyes tilted up, making his seductive eyes even more captivating and alluring. "You can ask your grandfather when you get back."

Actually, their grandfathers had mentioned it before, but he'd found Isabella so pretentious that he had never given it a second thought.

It wasn't until...

He saw her at the hospital, saving Brianna, and learned she was the true daughter of the Lancaster family.

That was when the engagement he'd never cared about suddenly rushed back into his mind.

Serena was silent for a couple of seconds before speaking. "What century are we in? We should get rid of such old-fashioned ideas."

"But..."

The man deliberately drew out his words again, his tone lazy, magnetic, and full of a loose smile that was dangerously alluring. "If it's you, maybe old-fashioned isn't so bad."

Serena was speechless. "Are you hitting on me?"

Nicholas gave her a look that said, "You're just now figuring that out?" He replied, "I thought I was being obvious enough."

Serena fell silent.

It was so obvious that it was strange.

After all, they had known each other for less than twenty-four hours.

To talk about feelings...

It was too fake.

Nicholas seemed to read her

thoughts, his captivating eyes becoming even more bewitching. His lazy voice was hypnotic, "Perhaps... it's love at first sight?"

"Or maybe, since you saved my life... I should repay you with my body?"

Serena didn't know how to respond.

When did she ever save his life?

It was nearly one in the morning by the time they arrived at the Lancaster estate.

The lights in the main hall were still blazing.

The moment Serena walked in, she was immediately surrounded by her family.

Messing With Her? Are You Crazy!

"Serena, you're finally back!" Catherine grabbed her hand, her face full of concern. "Why were you so late? You must be exhausted."

Serena's eyes softened, a warmth spreading through her chest. She felt a mix of touched and helpless. "Didn't I call and tell you I'd be late and that you should all go to bed?"

"It's fine, we weren't tired anyway." Edward looked her up and down, and only when he confirmed she was unharmed did his tense expression relax.

Julian pushed up his glasses, his expression gentle as he spoke kindly, "Welcome back, little sister. We're just glad you're home safe."

Serena's tone became even more exasperated. "If you guys keep this up, I'll have to improve my work efficiency just to get home earlier."

Her gaze drifted past her family to Old Mr. Lancaster, who was sitting in his wheelchair. He was clearly exhausted but forcing himself to stay awake.

Her expression turned serious. "Especially you, Grandpa. Staying up so late... haven't all those medicinal baths been for nothing? You won't be in the right condition for massage tomorrow."

Old Mr. Lancaster's weary eyes instantly lit up, and he looked at Serena with anticipation. "Serena, tomorrow... I can have the acupuncture treatment tomorrow?"

Ever since she had decided to treat him, Serena had written out a special herbal formula for him to use in a series of medicinal baths.

After about three sessions, they could begin the massage.

"If you don't go to sleep right now, we'll have to postpone it another day," Serena said, giving him a stern look.

"I'm going! I'm going right now!" Old Mr. Lancaster immediately gripped the arms of his wheelchair and turned his head, yelling, "Alfred, quick! Push me back to my room, I'm going to sleep this instant!"

Alfred suppressed a laugh and stepped forward to wheel Old Mr. Lancaster to his room.

Catherine led Serena to the sofa, then went to the kitchen and brought out a bowl of homemade soup she had kept simmering for her ere, have something to eat. dark

You look so tired you've

circles under your eyes."

Serena didn't refuse her mother's kindness, taking the bowl and slowly sipping the soup.

The family gathered around her, fussing over her, but they all tactfully avoided asking what she had been busy with.

After a while.

Catherine glanced at the time and frowned slightly. "It's so late... why isn't Isabella back yet? And she's not answering her phone."

"Don't worry, Mom. She went to meet with Mr. Harrison today, right? From what she said, it sounded like he really liked her and thought highly of her Julian said in a soothing voice. "Maybe she got his approval and officially became his student, so she's out celebrating with friends."

"Even so, she should call or at least answer her phone to let us know," Catherine sighed. But her tone was clearly less worried, and there was even a hint of pride that Isabella might become Mr. Harrison's student.

Serena quietly drank her soup, taking in her mother's expressions and reactions.

Her mother was a sentimental person. Twenty years of raising a child had forged a deep bond.

She thought for a moment, then put down her spoon and asked, "Mom, do you really want Isabella to become Mr. Harrison's student? Is it that important to the family?"

Catherine paused, then shook her head. "That's Isabella's own dream and ambition. Whether she succeeds, whether she becomes his student, that's her own path in life. It's the result of her own effort and fortune, and it has nothing to do with the Lancaster family."

"The foundation of the Lancaster family doesn't need to be propped up by one of the children becoming someone's protégé."

As she spoke, Catherine patted Serena's hand. "All I want is for both of you girls to follow the path you love and live happily. That's enough."

Messing With Her? Are You Crazy!

A flash of understanding crossed Serena's eyes, and she nodded slightly. "I see."

Initially, she had thought that if her family wanted Isabella to become Mr. Harrison's protégé, she wouldn't have minded intervening to make them happy.

But the family's stance was clear.

Isabella's path was her own to walk.

Just then, the sound of high heels clicking on the floor came from the entryway.

The steps were heavy, as if suppressing a great deal of anger.

Isabella walked in, her face pale and her eyes red-rimmed, her chest heaving with rage.

She had heard what her mother just said to Serena.

She had heard the words, "it has nothing to do with the Lancaster family."

In front of Serena, her mother had so decisively stated that her affairs were separate from the family, every word distancing her from them.

An icy chill seeped into Isabella's heart.

She was so hurt that tears welled up in her eyes.

It was Serena!

It had to be Serena!

Serena had deliberately asked those questions to stop the family from helping her, to block her path so she couldn't become Mr. Harrison's student, steal her thunder, and threaten her position!

And her mother, just to please Serena, had said such cold words!

"Isabella?" Catherine stood up when she saw her adopted daughter's furious, red-eyed face, her own expression full of concern. "What's wrong?"

Isabella bit her lip hard, holding back the tears that threatened to spill. With her head down, she rushed up the stairs.

The bedroom door slammed shut with a loud bang.

The hall fell silent for a moment.

Catherine looked worriedly at the second floor. "What's wrong with her?"

"Isabella has always been so even-tempered. Why would she suddenly throw such

a tantrum?" Edward was also puzzled.

"Maybe... her meeting with Mr. Harrison today didn't go well," Julian suggested, pushing up his glasses.

Edward sighed. "Yes, Isabella has always had high standards and a lot of pride She's very strict with herself. She probably feels like she failed to reach her goal and is afraid of disappointing us, so she's upset."

"That child..."

Catherine couldn't sit still. She truly loved Isabella as her own daughter.

re

The soup had just been finished, so Catherine went to the kitchen brought out another I

up and check on her."

snack. "I'll go up a

Once her door was shut, Isabella threw herself onto her bed, tears soaking her pillow.

Thinking about what her mother had said to Serena made the tears fall even faster.

Her heart churned with hatred for Serena.

Just then, there was a soft knock on the door, and she heard Catherine's gentle voice.
"Isabella, would you like something to eat?"

Isabella bit her lip, wiped her eyes forcefully until they were bright red, and then got up to open the door.

Her eyes were swollen, and she looked like she was struggling to hold back her grief.
"Mom..."

Catherine entered the room and placed the snack on the table. "Silly girl, is it because of what happened with Mr. Harrison?"

Isabella's gaze swept over the items on the tray Catherine was holding: a glass of

milk and a few slices of bread.

Her fingers clenched into a fist.

Just a moment ago... Serena had been eating a specially made soup!

But when it was her turn, all she got was some cheap bread?

Seeing her silence, Catherine

thought she had touched a sore spot. She took her hand and

Kenet

comforted her gently. "I know you want to become Mr. Harrison's student, and you've worked v

hard for it. But... as a daughter of the Lancaster family, the outcome

doesn't really matter, does it?"