

Love's Cruel Stroke Chapter 31

When Ford Inc. announced their new project partner, everyone was shocked, as no one expected Ford Inc. to work with Yates Corporation when Yates Corporation was under fire.

'Why would Ford Inc. partner up with Yates Corporation when Yates Corporation's shares plummeted so much?'

"These two companies had never partnered up with each other before, so why would they collaborate right now? If Ford Inc. didn't help Yates Corporation out, Yates Corporation would surely suffer a serious blow!

'How can Yates Corporation be so lucky?!'

'I can't believe the Yates even managed to get associated with the Fords.'

Who would even dare to cross the Yates now?"

'Not me. Ciao!

Within half a day, Yates Corporation's shares returned to a normal level, as if the scandal last night never happened. Staring at the constantly updated news, Rachel was seen with a frown.

She thought she would surely give the Yates Family an enormous blow this time, but they still had tricks up their sleeve.

The Fords... Even ten Yates Families combined won't be able to compare to a Ford Family. With the Ford Family's protection, there's no way I would be able to deal with Shirley.

Rachel couldn't help but let out a deep sigh.

"A few years ago, there were people saying that Jordan wanted to marry Shirley, but I've always thought that it was a rumor," Caleb commented. "It looks like the Yates and the Fords are still somehow connected, although not through marriage. At least we now know that the Fords are willing to help the Yates out when something happens to them. How intriguing."

"Even a hill would collapse if you lean onto it forever. Do you really think that the Yates can rely on the Fords forever?" Elizabeth remarked indifferently. "This only shows that the Fords are loyal, but it doesn't mean that the Yates will be able to rely on them forever. Rae, there are things that can't be rushed. We need to take things slow."

Upon hearing that, Rachel smiled before saying, "Let's not talk about that anymore, Grandma. Caleb, why don't you help me tidy up the living room?"

Rachel had moved over to Yates' holiday home, along with the kids, earlier in the morning. The holiday home was located in a high-end residence worth about six figures in Seaview City. It was a detached two-story mansion with a quiet surrounding that was perfect.

Rachel loved the environment here, as it was similar to the place where she stayed overseas. Right then, Casper was playing around with the flowers in the yard while Olivia sat on a rattan chair and enjoyed the sunlight. Everything was quiet and peaceful.

Since the three of them didn't have many belongings with them, they managed to tidy their things within an hour.

"Grandma, Caleb, you guys should stay for a while longer. Since it's already noon, let me cook lunch for everyone," Rachel offered while putting on her apron.

Immediately, Elizabeth's face darkened. "Rae, you're my only granddaughter, and you should be taken care of like a pearl instead of doing chores like this."

Then, she turned around and instructed, "Caleb, get our family's chef to come over daily to prepare everyone's meals..."

"Grandma, that's really not necessary!" Rachel was speechless. "It's just cooking, and I'm alright with it since I'm already used to cooking for four years now."

"Rae, it must have been hard for you..." Elizabeth grabbed Rachel's hands with teary eyes. "You wouldn't have been so exhausted if your mother was still alive..."

"Great-grandma, Mommy's food is really delicious!" Casper came in time and interrupted Elizabeth from recalling her painful memories.

While lying on Elizabeth's lap, Casper explained with a childish voice, "Olive only likes to eat the food that Mommy cooks herself, so she got skinnier after staying at the Sinclair Residence during these few days."

A smile broke on Elizabeth's face. "Wouldn't I be a bad person if I stop your mother from cooking?"

"It's fine. However, I really want you to try Mommy's home-cooked food because it is truly delicious." Casper blinked. "You'll know after you try it."

"You're a really obedient child, Casper!"

Elizabeth ruffled Casper's head dotingly as she genuinely liked the gentle four-year old who was capable of taking care of his little sister and helping his mother.

Meanwhile, Rachel started cooking in the kitchen.

Since both Casper and Olivia were born prematurely, their bodies were weaker than kids their age, and they weren't able to eat when they were at an age where they were supposed to start eating. Thus, Rachel started learning how to cook.

Before she turned eighteen, she was a young lady who had never done any chores, but she started trying things out after conceiving two children and slowly fell in love with cooking

Rachel liked using all sorts of ingredients to prepare a filling breakfast and enjoyed watching her loved ones eat the food she prepared. To her, that was the ultimate joy.

After an hour, the dining table was filled with five dishes and a bowl of soup.

There was a tofu dish that was suitable for the elderly, pumpkin and fried chicken dishes for the kids, flavorful pork ribs and fish dishes, as well as a huge bowl of seafood soup.

“Rae, did you cook all of these?” There was a disbelief look on Elizabeth’s face. “Your culinary skills can be compared to a restaurant’s chef at this rate.”

Then, Casper grabbed some tofu and placed it in Elizabeth’s bowl. “Great-grandma, Mommy’s culinary skills are way better than those restaurant chefs.”

With a doubtful expression on her face, Elizabeth took a bite of the food before a shocked look appeared on her face.

The soft and smooth tofu blended nicely with the chicken and melted right after entering her mouth. This was way better than anything that she had eaten in the past.

*Rae, your culinary skills are amazing!” Caleb looked stunned after trying the food out. “The chef at the Yates Family can’t even reach half of your level.”

Rachel laughed. “Stop exaggerating, won’t you?”

Nevertheless, everyone’s reaction proved that Caleb wasn’t being dramatic.

Olivia, who had buried her face in her bowl, finished her plate of chicken within minutes before she blinked and raised her cutlery, indicating that she wanted another serving

Meanwhile, Casper, who was usually calm and reserved, licked his lips before grabbing the thong and getting himself more.

On the other hand, Elizabeth, who was old and didn’t have a good appetite, also drank another bowl of soup, despite the fact that she usually only drank half a bowl.

In no time, all five of them finished everything on the table.

“Rae, you can easily open a restaurant with your culinary skills. I’m sure your restaurant will go viral,” Caleb said genuinely, while Rachel chuckled and replied, “I’m not interested in opening a restaurant. However, I do need your help with a few things.”

Then, she paused for a while before continuing, “I’m planning to open a studio, and I might need your help to look around for an office to rent. Also, Casper and Olive are already four years old, and I’m planning to send them to a kindergarten, so I’m wondering if you have any recommendations for kindergartens? It would be best if they would accept special needs children like Olive.”

Caleb nodded. “Grandma did ask me to check around for kindergarten previously, and I found Golden Sun Kindergarten. It is a kindergarten with top-notch education resources, and they treat every child equally, most importantly. If you’re free during the afternoon, we can go and check the kindergarten out.”

Since the children were Rachel’s top priority, she had decided to delay her appointment during the afternoon to bring the kids to check the kindergarten out.

At the same time, Shirley and Damian came down from a car at the entrance of Golden Sun Kindergarten.

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Chapter 32 Golden Sun Kindergarten was a prestigious kindergarten that was built like a castle.

While Shirley held Damian’s hand and wanted to go in, Damian shrugged her off forcefully. At this moment, a cold glint flashed past her eyes before it disappeared. “Damie, why are you throwing a tantrum at me when this is your father’s decision?”

“Since when did I throw a tantrum?” Damian harrumphed coldly. “I just don’t want you to touch me.”

“You little-”

Shirley almost lost her composure before she took a deep breath. “You better be obedient and stop causing me any trouble, or it’ll be hard for me to explain to your father.”

“Aren’t you here to help me apply for study deferment? What kind of trouble can I even cause you?” Damian had an impatient look on his face. “Get in and sign the papers quickly. I’ll be waiting for you here.”

“You better stay here obediently. Your father won’t let you off the hook if you try to escape.”

Then, Shirley strutted into the kindergarten while the anger within her continued rising

I should have choked this little b*stard to death back then. How dare he cause me so much trouble after I raised him?

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On the other hand, Damian looked displeased as he sat on the staircase outside of the kindergarten building.

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It won’t be easy for me to get out of the Ford Residence once the application for my study deferment is settled.

He used to think that going to the kindergarten was a childish thing to do, and he would flunk class to play outside because he thought that singing and dancing every day’ was too boring.

However, he’d rather sing and dance with these childish people than be trapped in the Ford Residence.

Right when Damian pondered mindlessly, a car stopped in front of the entrance of the kindergarten before a group of four came down.

Immediately, his eyes brightened up.

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It's Rachel and Olive! Huh! Who is that boy holding Olive's hand?

Damian narrowed his eyes. Then, he recalled how the same boy pushed him away at the airport a few days ago and addressed Rachel as his 'mommy.

This boy is Rachel's son, which means that he's Olive's brother!

At the thought of that, Damian started to feel uneasy, and his aura started turning cold. However, none of the four noticed his presence.

When Rachel took Casper and Olive into the kindergarten, she said softly, "Casper, you should take your sister to look around the place while we talk to the teachers."

Since Olivia had autism, Rachel had to explain Olivia's situation in detail so that they could proceed to enrollment procedures if the kindergarten was willing to accept her.

Then, Rachel and Caleb entered the teacher's office to be greeted by a young female teacher. "Hello, Mr. Caleb, Miss Yates. Nice to meet you two. I was already informed about the children's condition by Mr. Caleb previously. Autism is actually a common disorder, and we do accept children who need special care. If you are to send an autistic kid to a special needs school, they might think that they are sick and shut themselves out. However, if you send them to a normal kindergarten and allow them to grow up under the influence of other kids around them, they might slowly step out of their shells to interact with the others. This will also help with their disorder... We have experience dealing with situations like this, so you guys don't have to worry...

The young teacher explained everything in detail, relieving Rachel of her worries.

On the other hand, Casper took Olivia to play with the swing. Right then, the swing went up high, lifting the little girl in her fluffy princess dress as her dress flew around graciously.

At that moment, there was a faint smile on the corner of her lips.

Olive looks so pretty when she's smiling.

Damian was hiding behind a tree while he stared at Olivia's smiling face greedily.

If only she were my real sister. I would have been able to take her out to play together just like this...

Suddenly, he paused as he thought of something and ran away. At the same time, Casper's gaze shifted past Damian's figure before a wry smile appeared on his face.

I can't believe that we would even run into that man's son here. I guess it's inevitable to run into your enemies. Huh? Still, this is none of my problems.

He continued pushing Olivia, who was on the swing. Five minutes later, Damian ran toward Casper with an arm full of toys. "All of these are for you."

Casper frowned. "What's the meaning of this?"

"I'm giving you all my toys in exchange for me playing with Olive," Damian raised his chin and said in an arrogant tone.

These were toys that he frequently played with at the kindergarten, and one toy plane easily cost tens of thousands. The teachers had said that these toys were extremely expensive, so none of the other children were able to touch them.

Damian refused to believe that Casper wouldn't be tempted by these toys.

Yet, Casper really wasn't tempted by the toys at all. Instead, a cold look appeared on his face. "My sister is not your toy."

Casper's tone was cold, and it scared Damian.

Why does he talk like Dmitri?

He pouted. "What do you want me to do for you to let me play with Olive?"

"Nothing."

Casper lifted Olivia down from the swing and wanted to leave.

"Hey!" Damian was upset. "Why are you acting like this? What if Olive wants to play with me?"

Then, he tried to inch closer to poke Olivia's cheek. However, Casper grabbed his wrist before he could say anything.

"Do not touch my sister!" Casper warned coldly before he pushed Damian away forcefully and stood in front of Olivia.

As a young master who had been spoiled ever since he was a child, Damian had never been pushed away so rudely before.

Immediately, he frowned and had the urge to dash over to pick a fight with Casper.

"I'm warning you, do not come near my sister or my mother," Casper said slowly. "If I see you bullying my sister again, I won't be as nice as today."

After that, he pushed Damian away. Right then, Damian lost his balance as he staggered backward and almost fell to the ground.

He was so peeved off that his eyes were turning red. Still, there was nothing that he could have done because Olivia wasn't his sister.

After Shirley came out of the office, the scene that unfolded in front of her was seeing Damian almost falling to the ground after getting pushed. At this moment, she felt joyous, and she secretly hoped that the two kids would start fighting. Great! I shall wait for Damian to be beaten up.

However, the argument between the two kids stopped at that.

Then, Shirley walked over with a motherly look on her face. "What's wrong, Damie? Who bullied you?" ||

However, Damian really hated when Shirley faked her worries, so he snapped coldly, "It's none of your business! Go away!"

Immediately, Shirley's facial expression stiffened before she took a deep breath and said, "Damie, you can't talk to me like this. I'm just worried that you might keep quiet after getting bullied—"

"I don't need you to worry about me!"

Damian pushed Shirley away harshly before running away while Shirley gritted her teeth and ran after him.

Meanwhile, Casper had a frown on his face while holding Olivia's hand.

Why is that horrible woman from the Yates so close to the Ford Family's young master? What's their relationship with each

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The enrollment for the kids was swiftly done, and Rachel sent her kids to the kindergarten the next day at 7:00AM.

"Casper, take care of your sister, and call me if anything happens, alright?"

Casper nodded obediently. "Don't worry, Mommy. I'll take care of Olive well."

After ruffling the kids' heads, Rachel left while she kept looking back at them. Meanwhile, Casper held Olivia's hand and entered the kindergarten after Rachel left.

The two kids were set to enter Class Nine, and the homeroom teacher for Class Nine was a young lady in her twenties named Emily Morris.

When Emily saw the two good-looking children, she immediately took a liking to Casper. "Hey! You must be Casper, and this is your sister, Olivia, isn't it?"

Casper answered politely, "Good morning, Miss Morris. My name is Casper Yates, and this is my sister, Olivia Yates. We will be students in Class Nine from now onward, so please take care of us."

He spoke in a steady and elegant manner before staring at Emily without any hint of shyness.

It was at that moment when Emily ruffled their heads before introducing them to everyone in the class. "These two are the newest addition to our class. I hope everyone will make friends with them."

Since the new students were good-looking all of the children in class showed immense hospitality. During recess, all the kids gathered around Casper and Olivia before they quickly realized that Olivia wouldn't speak.

"Olivia, I'm talking to you. Why won't you talk to me?"

"Olivia, you look really pretty, and I want to be friends with you. Can you at least spare me a look?"

"Olivia, are you a mute?"

Upon hearing that, Casper's face darkened immediately before he pulled Olivia behind his back. He stared at the girl who asked that question before he said coldly, "What did you just say? I dare you to say that again."

As all of the students in this kindergarten were children of rich families, they were spoiled since birth and none of the teachers dared to be harsh with the kids.

Thus, when the girl was treated coldly by Casper in front of everyone, in defense, "What's wrong with calling her a mute? She didn't even utter a word after we spoke to her for so long. What is she, if not a mute?"

At this moment, a few other girls who were jealous of Olivia's looks gathered around as well.

"Hmph! Since she can't speak, let us give her a nickname. Little Mute Girl!"

"Haha! Little Mute Girl! That's a nice one!"

"Blueh! Blueh! Olivia the Little Mute Girl!"

Still, Olivia didn't react, although everyone around her was calling her a mute.

Her large doe eyes gazed outside the window in an unfocused manner, as if everyone around her did not exist at all.

Right then, Casper gently patted Olivia's back before he looked up and glared at the girls picking a fight with Olivia. Chuckling, he announced, "It's unfair that you guys only gave my sister a nickname, so why don't I give all of you nicknames as well? We will address each other by our nicknames only from now onward."

Then, his gaze landed on the first girl, and he smirked before saying, "Since you're so tanned, why don't you call yourself Farm Girl?"

The girl was horrified.

She had always known that she had a dark complexion, but no one dared to laugh at her about it since she was from a wealthy family. However, the new boy actually had the audacity to give her a nickname like this.

However, Casper spoke again before she could argue.

"Your front teeth fell, so I shall name you as Leaky Rat."

"Since you're chubby, you'll be Chubs."

His voice was cold with a suppressive aura, causing all of the children present to lose the ability to argue against him.

Basically, all of the children who made fun of Olivia had been given nicknames. Although Casper didn't like to body shame, these people shouldn't have made fun of Olivia in the first place.

Since they had done so, he decided to let them have a taste of their own medicine.

As expected, after Casper gave those girls nicknames, all the boys in class started laughing

*Farm Girl! Leaky Raul Chubs! That's your nicknames from now onward!"

All of the girls were so furious that they started crying while their cries rang loudly in the classroom. Upon hearing that, Emily returned and the girls rushed over to her to complain about Casper.

"Miss Morris, Casper gave us nicknames!"

"Miss Morris, Casper made fun of me for being chubby! Sob..."

Emily was taken aback.

Casper looks like an educated child, so he shouldn't have done something like this.

"Miss Morris, these girls said that having nicknames would strengthen our friendships and started addressing Olive as 'Little Mute Girl', so I returned the gesture out of politeness," Casper commented indifferently. "All of the other kids also heard what the girls said."

Then, the boys around them nodded. "Yeah. Casper only gave them nicknames because they started calling Olivia a mute."

At this moment, Emily finally realized what was happening.

She had already known yesterday that one of the two transferred students was an autistic kid and even promised Rachel that she would take care of Olivia well. However, an accident like this had already happened on their first day of school.

After giving the girls some tissue papers to wipe their tears, Emily commented in a stern manner, "Do you guys finally realize how upsetting it is to be given nicknames?"

The girls were out of breath from crying. "Y-Yes."

"If you guys continue calling Olivia a mute, everyone in class can continue addressing you by your nicknames, and I won't interfere," Emily remarked calmly. "If you guys don't want your classmates to call everyone by nicknames, you guys have to promise to stop making fun of Olivia too. Can you guys do that?"

These girls were at the blossoming age of four to five, and none of them could accept verbal attacks on their appearances.

Thus, all of them nodded after hearing Emily. Soon, they walked toward Olivia hand-in-hand, "We are sorry for making fun of you, Olivia. Can you forgive us?"

However, Olivia had no reaction at all.

Meanwhile, Casper apologized, "I shouldn't have given you guys nicknames based on your appearances as well. I'm sorry."

The girls broke into laughter. "It's fine since we were wrong in the first place. Casper, can you and Olivia be friends with us?"

"Of course." He nodded lightly.

Although he didn't need any friends, he knew that Olivia needed them. If these people were genuinely nice to Olivia, he would be willing to let them enter their little circle.

When Emily saw that the kids started to nicely play with each other, she sighed in relief before returning to the office to grab her teaching materials. However, she overheard someone else speaking right when she entered the office, and she couldn't help but notice that they mentioned the names of the two kids that had transferred over today...

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"That newly enrolled pretty little girl is autistic, and apparently, her affliction is a rather serious one."

"Our kindergarten has never had an autistic child on the more extreme end of the spectrum. Shouldn't she go to a special school? Why would she be sent here?"

"I heard that autistic children usually displayed violent tendencies. What if she were to act out and hurt the other children?"

The teachers in the lounge were each adding their input on the matter when Emily opened the door and walked in. "Olivia may be autistic, but she has shown no violent tendencies thus far, so I suggest you keep your noses out of a child's business."

"It would be too late to stop her from wreaking havoc by the time she shows her violent tendencies," one of the older teachers pointed out with a sigh. "We should find an excuse to expel her before the worst happens. Autism isn't curable; to send her here would be to add extra work for us teachers."

Emily grew grim as she countered, "It would only be extra work for me, so you can all rest easy."

Having said that, she opened the door and walked out of the lounge. She had only just left when a small figure came out from behind one of the columns near the doorway of the teacher's lounge.

After hearing everything the teachers had said, Casper had a somber look on his little face. It seemed as if his sister was fated to become the subject of malicious gossip no matter which school she went to, be it here in the country or in those institutions

abroad.

He was only all too adept at handling matters like this. He needed to nip this in the bud before his mother found out about it, or she wouldn't be able to focus on her work at all.

Presently, he took out a tablet from his backpack. While others might use the tablet for gaming and other leisurely purposes, Casper treated it as a highly useful tool. His little fingers tapped away on the simulated keyboard, and within seconds, the screen of the tablet lit up in blue, followed by a series of words that popped up in quick succession.

Ten minutes later, Casper locked the tablet screen and rose to his feet. He walked over to the door of the teacher's lounge and pushed it open.

The teachers in the lounge had moved on to another conversational topic after brutally picking apart Olivia and her condition. They were in the midst of an earnest

discussion when they heard the door swing open, and they turned to see a little boy standing at the entryway.

"Which class are you from? Hasn't anyone told you it's common courtesy to knock before you enter a room?" the older teacher from earlier demanded disparagingly. Her brows arching

She had been an educator for over a decade, and she knew exactly which expressions would intimidate children.

Alas, she did not know that the child before her was no ordinary child.

Casper merely brushed into the room impassively, looking at ease as he pulled out a seat for himself. There was an air of superiority about him, and the atmosphere in the lounge grew heavy all of a sudden. He parted his lips and drawled, "I'd just like to know if no one has ever told you, a bunch of teachers, that it's bad etiquette to badmouth others behind their backs."

"What did you just say?" The older teacher had a stony look on her face as she snapped, "Tell me your name and your class right now, boy! How dare you storm in here and talk down to us? Our school could produce no insolent students like you! Have your parents drop by, and we'll have a talk about your expulsion!"

Casper, however, was not at all rattled by her outburst. "I think you have no right to call yourself an educator if you're going around whispering nonsense about your students."

The teacher was so mad she thought she would lose her mind. This was the first time someone had picked on her faults in front of her colleagues, and to make it worse, she was being criticized by a child who didn't look older than five.

The other teachers in the lounge seemed to recognize Casper. "Miss Kruger, I believe this is the new transfer student. He's in Class Nine, and he goes by the name of... what is it... Casper Yates! Yes, that's the one!"

It was only then that Miss Kruger understood why the child had come barging into the lounge in the first place. He must have overheard us talking about the autistic girl.

"Olivia Yates is my sister, and I won't have you talking about her condescendingly," Casper said imperiously as he lifted his chin. There was no mistaking the hard edge in his voice when he added, "If I hear another mean word from you about my sister, then I'm going to take this up to the education ministry."

The adults in the lounge took a cautious step backward when they heard his warning.

As though realizing that it was ridiculous to be intimidated by a child, Miss Kruger snapped furiously, "I don't know where you got the nerve to come in here and put us down like this, young man, but you need to be taught a hard lesson! I'll call your

guardians right away and have them take you home!"

Instead of being frightened, Casper leaped down from the chair and sauntered over to the blackboard in the lounge. "Maybe you should hear about the statistics I've gathered before you make that call, Miss Kruger." He took up a piece of chalk and scribbled down a series of figures, then said, "You've been a teacher for eighteen years, and in that time, your personal assets have seen a remarkable increase. I was curious as to how that might have happened, so I did a little research and found that you have been receiving generous payments from parents over the years, the least amount of which was around ten thousand, and the highest being two hundred thousand."

A cold smirk played on the little boy's lips as he continued, "We're talking about more than six hundred thousand worth of under-table money amassed over the course of these years, and according to the law, such payments are deemed illegal. With the sum that you have accrued, it could very well amount to bribery, which is a crime, in case you're wondering."

At once, all the color drained from Miss Kruger's face. She opened and closed her mouth like a fish, then stammered at last, "Y-You're making up ridiculous lies against me!"

"In that case, I'm sure it wouldn't hurt you if I were to take my findings up to the top brass in the education ministry and have them look into these lies."

Upon hearing this, Miss Kruger nearly fainted on the spot.

The other teachers in the lounge began to distance themselves from her like she was a leper.

Casper scoffed contemptuously. "Oh, don't be so righteous, all of you. I've done some extra digging, and while the payments you all received on the side are not as ludicrous as Miss Kruger's, I'd like to think that the education ministry would have a word or two to say if they found out about it."

The teachers immediately bridled at this. The five or six of them exchanged bewildered looks, and the fear in their eyes was evident.

It was an unwritten custom for teachers to receive payments from parents throughout the year, and everyone in the industry knew about this. However, if this fact were to be publicized as a scandal, then none of them would be able to keep their jobs,

They were working as educators in one of the most elite private kindergartens in Seaview City, and the monthly wages here were five or six times more than the average teachers in working-class kindergartens. There was no way they could afford to lose a job that paid this well.

One of the younger teachers took a deep breath and said, "Casper, we only accepted those payments to give the parents peace of mind. It's an unwritten custom in most kindergartens, and even if you were to take it up to the education ministry, it wouldn't make a difference."

"I don't need it to make a difference; I only want you all to pay for badmouthing my sister," he countered. "It goes without saying that I know bribery is widespread and commonplace among the elite schools, but once it blows up into a scandal, those involved would be punished accordingly, regardless of it being the norm. If you don't want this to affect the rest of your careers, then promise me three things."

The few teachers in the lounge knew they had no bargaining power in this matter, so they nodded reluctantly.

"One, do not ever badmouth my sister or talk about her behind our backs ever again; two, do not give my sister odd or disparaging looks; and three, if the other kids make fun of my sister, then I trust all of you to teach them all a lesson."

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Chapter 35 Casper returned to Class Nine indifferently after that.

Relieved to see him, Emily asked, "Where did you go? I was about to go and look for you."

"I needed the restroom," Casper answered as he walked into the classroom and took his seat next to Olivia.

Emily stared at him for a moment. She had always found the little boy to be intimidating, and there were times when she couldn't even bring herself to look him in the eye. However, he had proven himself to be nothing but a little angel. He was polite and sweet, so much so that Emily was convinced she had imagined the somewhat domineering quality of his behavior.

During the morning break, Emily was called over by Miss Kruger.

It didn't take long for the other teachers in the lounge to swarm around Emily as they said in hushed tones, "Casper's sister might be autistic, but it's not as if we have no experience in guiding her. Don't ever hesitate to come to me for help should you need it!"

"Olivia is such a pretty child, and it's our great fortune to have a child as gorgeous as her roaming around school grounds. We must take splendid care of her and make sure she stays in school."

"Miss Morris, I do hope that you have the patience to guide the child, but if you find it challenging, then you could always have Olivia transferred to our class."

Emily felt the corner of her lips twitch in disbelief. "Weren't you all just telling me to find an excuse to expel Olivia?"

"We were only testing you to see if you truly had the selfless heart to educate the child!" Miss Kruger said with a dry laugh. "Now, Miss Morris, I certainly hope you are able to see that child's early years of education to the end and care for her to the best of your ability so that she could learn to cope in spite of autism."

At present, Casper had enough evidence to destroy their careers, and if they allowed Olivia to be expelled, then their act of accepting bribery from their parents would be publicized by Casper. If that came to pass, then these teachers would lose both their income and their reputation,

It would be much easier for them to treat Casper and Olivia respectfully until they graduated kindergarten, whereupon they would be free of the little boy's threat.

While Emily had no idea as to why these teachers had a sudden change of heart

about Olivia, she was unbothered. She had never thought anything mean of Olivia, so naturally, she didn't care about how others might perceive the little girl.

After school, Casper held Olivia's hand while waiting for Rachel to arrive. Their first day of kindergarten had gotten off to a turbulent start, but it was resolved eventually, and both children were rather calm at the end of the day.

Presently, Rachel arrived at school, and she beamed at the teacher as she said, "Miss Morris, thank you for your hard work today. Were the kids well-behaved?"

"Don't worry, Miss Yates, both Casper and Olivia did well today. The kids in the class were all clamoring to be friends with them, too," Emily said, then ruffled both children's hair affectionately. "Why don't you both go home and rehearse the song and-dance routine that we did today? Alright now, say bye-bye!"

Casper waved goodbye to Emily obediently, and after Rachel bid the teacher goodbye, she led both children into the car. She seemed somewhat surprised as she asked, "Casper, your teacher seems to like Olivia a whole lot, doesn't she?"

Casper nodded. "Miss Morris is nice to Olivia, and Olivia doesn't mind holding her hand."

Rachel heaved a small sigh of relief. She had seen the way Emily ruffled Olivia's hair earlier, and she was worried that the little girl might object to it. Much to her surprise, however, Olivia seemed to take the affectionate gesture in stride.

It seemed as if Caleb was right when he said the kindergarten treated its students without discrimination, and such confirmation reassured Rachel.

She drove over to the farmer's market first to pick out fresh ingredients, then headed to the supermarket to grab a couple of snacks for the kids before she returned home.

Olivia might be autistic, but she was an independent child by nature. As soon as they got home, she quietly made her way over to the rug and set herself to work on the jigsaw puzzle.

Casper, on the other hand, followed Rachel into the kitchen to help with the groceries,

He helped Rachel wash the vegetables in the sink. He was only four, but he knew how to tackle most of the housework. There were even days when Rachel was swamped with work, and he would whip up lunch for his sister,

Rachel was cooking while making small talk with her son, tuning in to all that had happened at school today,

Just then, her phone buzzed with an incoming call. There weren't a lot of people who had her new number ever since she returned to the country, Thinking that it was a

cold call, she rejected it swiftly.

However, it didn't take long for the other person to call her again. This time, she wiped her hands and put the call through.

"Rachel, it's you, isn't it?"

Upon hearing the man's voice on the other line, Rachel felt her expression turn grim. The voice belonged to her father, Francis. She couldn't help noting sourly how he had only called her days after her return to the country. Ah, but what do I expect from a father who has done nothing but love and indulge in me since my childhood days?

"Mr. Yates, I trust you've been well," she said now, her tone dripping with sarcasm.

Francis nearly choked on his words. He took a deep breath, then said, "Rachel, I know you blame me for what happened, but you've got to cut me some slack here and put yourself in my shoes. You literally set our family home on fire and walked away, and now that you've returned, you decided to wage war against us. It's only reasonable that I get upset over it, don't you think?"

"So let me get this straight, Mr. Yates-you don't think I'm as important as your company, is that right?" she countered icily. "In that case, why do you even bother calling me?"

"There are no grudges between father and daughter," he said, attempting to soften the hard edge of his voice. "Besides, you're my daughter, Rachel; my firstborn. How could I not care about you? You don't belong to the Sinclairs, and it's not right that you stay with them. I'll have someone bring you home, okay?"

The sneer on Rachel's face grew even more disdainful. She could sense that there was something fishy going on behind his sudden kindness. Moving back to the Yates Residence was equivalent to volunteering as Shirley's torture subject. As if I'd fall for that!

With that in mind, Rachel bit out, "That won't be necessary because I'll never go back to the Yates Residence."

Francis nearly threw his phone on the ground in a fit of rage. He thought he was being gracious by calling up this ingrate daughter of his and inviting her home, only to have his kind favor rejected. She used to be so obedient. What in the world happened to her? Alas, he swallowed his anger and said through gritted teeth, "Your grandmother's seventieth birthday banquet is just around the corner. Won't you at least come home and visit her?"

She stiffened at this. When she was younger, her grandmother, Vivian, had been the only one who doted on her. She still remembered how Vivian had fought tooth and nail just to keep Miranda from marrying into the family,

Unfortunately, Miranda fell pregnant and gave birth to Shirley in secret. It was only then that Vivian had no choice but to allow Francis to marry her and bring her into the family.

At the beginning of the marriage, Vivian had stayed at Yates Residence to keep an eye on Miranda so that she would not dream of hurting Rachel.

However, Miranda proved to be quite the actress. She would buy Rachel all the nicest clothes and the most delicious chocolates just to get on her good side, and at some point, Rachel started calling her 'Mom'.

As the years passed, Miranda never once revealed her true colors, and she had always played the role of the indulgent mother. When Rachel finally left Yates Residence, she realized in retrospect how Miranda had weaponized those bonding moments.

She also realized that Francis had been coerced into loving her and how Shirley had only pretended to love her as a sister,

Rachel had only been eighteen when the life she had always known came unraveled. Looking back, she couldn't believe how stupid and blind she had been. It was her naivety that allowed her to be manipulated and set up by others; she was knocked up at a young age and nearly died in a fire, one which would have taken five lives.

"Your grandmother had a heart attack after she thought you died, and she stayed in the hospital for four years. Now that she knows you're alive and here in the country, she insisted on leaving the hospital just so she could throw a birthday banquet," Francis explained, his voice pulling Rachel out of her thoughts. "Rachel, I won't force you to come home if you don't want to, but before you make up your mind, at least think about your grandmother and the grief she's been through."