

The Formidable Son-In-Law: The Charismatic Lucas Gray

- Chapter 649 – 680

The Coles

Chapter 649: The Coles

With the exclamation, everyone turned to look at the spiral staircase on the second floor. They saw Alexis, the star of today's party and the princess everyone adored.

She finally made her appearance!

Alexis was wearing a silvery-blue starry dress with a tight halter top cinched at the waist. Starting from her waist down, the rest of her dress began to look like stardust flowing down to the hem at the bottom, with the color of the fabric gradually turning from white to ocean blue. The ethereal design made the already youthful and beautiful Alexis look like a fairy that had descended on earth.

The numerous tiny diamonds at the hem of her dress were shimmering brightly under the light.

It was luxurious, graceful, ethereal, and refined.

She was Alexis, the host of the party and the birthday girl at the center of attention.

"Wow, she's gorgeous!"

"Her beauty is divine. She's really pretty!"

"I'm so attracted to her!"

All of a sudden, the banquet hall was full of exclamations of awe and admiration.

Many women began to praise Alexis genuinely from the bottom of their hearts, not to mention the wealthy scions in the banquet hall—their eyes were all glued onto her.

There was a middle-aged couple standing beside Alexis, and those familiar with the Coles knew that they were Alexis's father and mother, Clement Cole and Jennifer Lane.

Clement stood on the steps, looking at the crowd in the hall below, and said with a cordial smile, "It's my daughter's, Alexis's, twentieth birthday today. Thank you all for coming to join us in the celebration. I hope you enjoy yourselves tonight!"

Jennifer was dressed in a presentable lilac dress, looking exceptionally graceful and elegant. She said to the crowd with an amicable smile, "Most of you here are our old friends. Thank you all very much for coming to celebrate my daughter's birthday!"

"Uncle Clement and Aunt Jennifer, you're both too polite!"

"Haha, it's our honor to receive an invitation to the birthday party of the beautiful Miss Cole!"

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In an instant, the atmosphere in the hall became extremely lively, and countless people greeted Clement and Jennifer. Of course, most of them were also praising Alexis, the star of the party.

Lucas naturally wouldn't do this. He simply stood in place quietly and shook the cocktail in his hand like a complete outsider.

But it was the first time he saw Alexis's parents, and based on first impressions, they seemed to be rather easygoing.

"They're Alexis's parents, right? How are they?" Lucas asked softly.

Since he and the Coles were fated to share some ties, and they would definitely have some dealings in the future, he should learn more about them, especially since Alexis's parents were also important people.

Only then did Connor realize that Lucas wasn't close to the Coles in the past and that this was his first time meeting Clement and Jennifer.

He inched closer to Lucas and explained softly, "Clement is Mr. Edmund Cole's only son, but he didn't inherit his father's character. I heard that he's pretty incompetent, and he once created a lot of trouble for the Coles because of his mistakes. Later on, Mr. Cole decided not to let him take over as helmsman. That's why he's still holding power now."

Standing beside Lucas, Kenneth also said softly, "Indeed, Clement Cole looks smart and shrewd, but many people criticize him for his incompetence. I heard my grandfather mention in the past that Mr. Cole used to say openly that the position of the helmsman of the Cole family will never be handed to Clement unless Mr. Cole passes away."

Lucas seemed surprised to hear what they said, and he couldn't help looking at Clement a few more times.

Based on appearance, he really couldn't tell that Clement was so incompetent.

But there are all sorts of strange things in this world, so it wasn't that surprising to him after all.

Lucas was more surprised by the fact that Clement was completely different from Edmund, who was righteous, good at socializing, powerful, strategic, and skillful, which was the very reason that he had managed to build his business empire from scratch and develop the Coles to what they were today.

Moreover, although Alexis was young, she was quirky, smart, and valiant, very much like Edmund.

Yet why was Alexis's father, Edmund's son, so incompetent?

"What about Alexis's mother?" Lucas asked.

Connor said, "I heard that Alexis's mother, Jennifer Lane, is a very capable person born to a notable family in DC. She's disciplined and proper. Now, she holds quite a significant amount of power in the Cole family, at least much greater than her husband.

"I've also heard that if it wasn't for her helping Clement with his affairs, Mr. Cole would have handed his position straight to Alexis."

This time, Lucas was really a little surprised.

He again looked at Jennifer, who was standing on the staircase steps on the second floor with a warm and amicable smile. "Is this woman that capable?"

Lena chimed in, "Aunt Jennifer is indeed very competent. She may seem gentle and nice, just like other wives of wealthy men, but she's not any less skillful than men. If not for her help, I'm afraid the whole world would have heard about how incompetent Clement Cole is by now."

"Yes, my grandfather often says the same. He said that if Clement Cole was as competent as his wife, the Coles might have become the largest hegemon in San Francisco, and the trinity of forces would no longer exist," Kenneth added.

Hearing the comments made by Connor, Kenneth, and Lena, Lucas understood that Clement was probably an extremely incompetent person who only looked good on the surface.

All of a sudden, Lucas felt sorry for Edmund.

He hadn't had much contact with Edmund. But when they drank and chatted together in the Lion Restaurant, Lucas had already learned some of Edmund's past, including the fact that he had once fought in Calico during his younger days.

As far as Lucas knew about Edmund, he felt that Edmund wasn't a power-hungry person. So logically speaking, he could have handed over his position as family head to his descendants long ago and stayed at home to enjoy his retirement.

But Edmund was now in his seventies and suffered from serious heart disease. Yet he still hadn't passed on the position of family head to his only son. Instead, he was still running the family despite being old and sick.

Since his only son, Clement, was weak and incompetent, and Alexis was only 20 years old, which was way too young to take over for him, who could he hand his position to?

It wasn't that Edmund didn't want to pass the power to someone else. But rather, his son simply couldn't gain his trust!

At this moment, another commotion started in the hall. Lucas looked up to see a servant pushing an enormous and tall cake over.

It was time to deliver birthday wishes and to blow out the candles.

Chapter 650: Public Confession

The lights in the banquet hall dimmed, and amid the uniform and loud singing of the birthday song, Alexis put her hands together, made a wish, and then blew out the twenty birthday candles on the cake in one breath.

As the candles were blown out, the atmosphere in the entire birthday party instantly reached its climax. The sounds of joyful cheers and firecrackers filled the air, turning the hall into a sea of fun and bliss along with falling confetti.

Next, Alexis made the first cut on the tall birthday cake, after which someone took the knife from her and cut the cake into smaller slices. Each slice of cake was placed on an exquisite plate before being served to the guests.

Now, the highlight and main segment of the party was over. Next, it was time for Alexis's friends and relatives to present her with the gifts they brought.

Logically speaking, Alexis's elders and relatives should be the first to give their well wishes and gifts, followed by her friends and other guests.

But at this moment, Nate stepped forward in front of everyone and stood in front of Alexis. He suddenly got down on one knee and held up a small red velvet box in his hand.

The lid of the velvet box opened, revealing the dazzling diamond ring inside.

“Alexis, it’s your birthday today, and I’d like to give you this diamond ring. It symbolizes my love and admiration for you, which is stronger than steel! I hope you will accept it!” Nate said with great devotion and affection.

The significance of a man giving a woman a diamond ring on one knee during such an occasion was self-explanatory.

Everyone was stunned for a moment, but they soon started cheering and applauding joyfully.

By doing this, Nate was obviously confessing his love to Alexis or even proposing to her!

No one expected that the scion of the Walkers would pull such a move and propose to the little princess of the Coles out of the blue!

“Oh my! Nate Walker actually suddenly proposed to Alexis Cole!”

“Are the Walkers and the Coles planning to become in-laws? Why haven’t I heard about this previously? Besides, isn’t there a conflict between them?”

“The past is the past. The situation has now changed, and the two families have decided to let their descendants marry each other. There’s nothing wrong with that! Besides, the Coles and the Walkers are among the three top families in San Francisco, so they’re definitely compatible. Furthermore, Nate is really handsome while Alexis is gorgeous. They’re practically a match made in heaven!”

“Ahhh, I’m so jealous! I’m feeling really sour! This is so romantic! If I were Alexis, I’d definitely take that ring and say yes to him immediately!”

“Tsk, Alexis is such a beautiful little princess, and Mr. Walker is going to marry her. Unfortunately, my status isn’t comparable to the Walkers’. Otherwise, I would have also proposed. Ugh!”

...

All of a sudden, the hall became incredibly lively. Some people were seriously considering the possible effects of the marriage between Alexis and Nate, while many were staring at them, green with envy.

But the cheering, whistling, and miscellaneous noise didn’t last for long as the crowd gradually quieted down.

Reason being, anyone could see clearly that Alexis, who was just confessed to, didn't show the slightest trace of joy or shyness. Instead, she was extremely indifferent and in fact slightly piqued.

"Nate Walker, you and I aren't even friends. Aren't you being too presumptuous by suddenly giving me this gift?" Alexis said hostilely.

As soon as she finished speaking, the atmosphere in the room stagnated, and Nate's gentle and affectionate face also stiffened instantly.

He initially thought that by confessing to Alexis in front of everyone at her birthday party, she would definitely be touched and say yes to him immediately. He had assumed that she was a hopeless romantic, like the majority of young girls her age.

He thought that even if she didn't agree on the spot, she would at least give him some response. He would then find some people to convince her, and they could finally establish their relationship.

But Alexis actually didn't save him from any embarrassment even though they were in front of so many people.

Most of the people in the banquet hall were children from various wealthy families in California. Now that Alexis had blatantly rejected him in front of everyone, he felt that he would be too embarrassed to speak to them in the future.

But Alexis hadn't finished saying her piece. "Also, Nate, I seem to remember telling you before that I never want to see you again. I don't remember inviting you to my birthday party either. Why are you here? You owe me an explanation!

Feeling even more ashamed and embarrassed, Nate hurriedly said, "Alexis, everything that happened previously was all just a misunderstanding! I really love you very much. Aren't you even willing to give me a chance?"

Alexis sneered and looked at Nate with disgust. "After something like that happened, how dare you call it a misunderstanding? Hah, you're really thick-skinned! Not everyone is fit to call my name. Stop disgusting me by calling my name!

"Moreover, I've told you long ago that I don't want to see you again. Please get out of my sight now! Scram!"

Alexis's words were extremely stern and serious.

Everyone could tell that Alexis was not only hostile toward Nate, but she even seemed to hate him deeply. She didn't bother to save him from any embarrassment and instead told him to get out.

Nate's face became extremely sullen while the crowd around him stayed silent.

Alexis's father, Clement, standing at the side, frowned slightly while looking at the scene before him. He opened his mouth and seemed to want to say something, but Jennifer tugged his arm, so he tactfully kept quiet.

Nate said unwillingly, "Alexis, you have a huge misunderstanding about me. I really hope that you will stop being hostile to me. Can we have a good talk?"

He looked extremely sincere, like a misunderstood devoted lover.

But in Alexis's opinion, his expression was extremely repulsive and hypocritical.

Lucas raised his eyebrows and guessed that there must have been a severe conflict between them in the past, given Alexis's hostility toward Nate.

At this moment, Connor came close to Lucas and said softly, "As far as I know, Nate used to openly woo Alexis shortly after she turned eighteen. But something happened later, and she became very repulsed by him. She even said that she never wanted to see him again.

"Moreover, the Coles and the Walkers were at odds during that time, and they almost became irreconcilable enemies.

"Later, I heard that Nate's status in the Walker family declined greatly. Although he's a direct descendant of the Walkers, he isn't valued anymore. Many companies under his management were taken away from him and handed to other people. Nate was gradually marginalized, but since then, the Coles and the Walkers started communicating again."

After hearing the gossip and secrets from Connor, Lucas's mouth twitched involuntarily. "I couldn't tell that you were actually so well-informed about these matters."

Chapter 651: The Person I Like

Lucas didn't expect Connor, a handsome nobleman who had gotten married and had a child a long time ago, would pay attention to the gossip of wealthy families.

Connor also seemed a little embarrassed. He laughed and said, "*Ahem*, this isn't really a secret. Back then, many major families knew about it. But based on the way they handled it afterward, it should be the Walkers at fault."

Kenneth also nodded. "That should be the case. Nate isn't a good person at all, and he's definitely considered a playboy among the scions of his generation. He's so much more of a womanizer than I used to be."

Noticing Lucas's bizarre gaze, Kenneth coughed twice and hurriedly said, "I'm no longer the same as before, and I've long kicked a lot of my bad habits. But according to a few of my friends, Nate is still a womanizer who has plenty of lovers out there. We're all men, and we can tell that he was obviously lying about loving Alexis."

"Besides, given the status of the Walkers, Nate's marriage will be nothing more than an alliance between two families. He was obviously lying about being in love with Alexis. I'm certain that Nate Walker did this on purpose!"

After all, Kenneth was also a scion of a wealthy family, so he knew Nate's mentally very well.

Although what Kenneth said about marriages in wealthy families being nothing but loveless alliances between families didn't sit too well with Lena, she had to admit that what he said made sense.

If Nate really fancied Alexis, he could have confessed to her at any other time, but he chose her 20th birthday party. Clearly, he had an ulterior motive.

But it was true that not everyone present could be so insightful.

Many young women in their twenties were impressed by Nate's behavior and were rather bewildered by Alexis's decision to reject him on the spot.

"Seriously, isn't Alexis being a little too heartless? Nate has already said all of that, and he even specially chose to confess to her on her twentieth birthday. Isn't it really romantic!?! Why did she turn him down?"

"Yeah, my thoughts exactly. Nate is from a top-tier family in San Francisco! If he proposed to me, I would definitely say yes to him without a second thought!"

"Hey, Miss Cole is just too condescending, and her standards are too high. If even a man like Nate can't even impress her, what kind of man does she want? She really doesn't know how lucky she is."

...

Most of them were young women who were hopeless romantics that cared only about love. Although their voices were soft when they gathered together to chat, Lucas had an impeccable sense of hearing, so he heard everything they said clearly.

He smiled a little with contempt before turning around to look at Alexis to see what decision she would make.

Alexis wasn't touched by Nate's pestering and clingy confession. Instead, she was extremely disgusted. "Nate, do you not understand human language? I said that there's no misunderstanding between us, and I'm repulsed by everything you do!

"Don't treat me like a silly young girl or try to coax me like I'm one. You know best just what your motive is. Don't take everyone for a fool!"

Nate clenched his teeth with all his might before barely managing to control his expression.

Alexis's disgust toward him was really far beyond his imagination, making him furious.

I may be at fault for that incident, but two years have passed since then. Why is Alexis still being so calculative and bearing a grudge against me?

After taking a deep breath, Nate continued to act like a devoted lover and said with determination, "Alexis, I know that no matter what I say today, you will still have misunderstandings about me, so I won't go on any further. I really adore you, and I want you to be my wife. I'll never give up on this!"

Alexis was about to hit the roof because of how shameless and thick-skinned Nate was.

Does this shameless man not understand English?

Aren't my disgust and rejection obvious enough? Why does he keep talking and acting like he's so devoted to me?

Seeing the pretentiously devoted look on his face, Alexis felt nauseous.

"Nate, that's enough! No matter what you say, I won't like you because there's someone else I adore. So, just give up!" Alexis hollered in exasperation.

"What? There's someone you like?" Nate was stunned for a moment, and a fleeting trace of anger suddenly surged in his heart

But he soon came back to his senses and said with an affectionate expression, "Alexis, I know you're upset with me. But even so, you don't have to turn me down with such an excuse, do you? I know you won't fall for someone else."

With his understanding of Alexis, the noble little princess of the Cole family, who had high standards and wouldn't take ordinary people seriously, he felt that she wouldn't easily fall for anyone. He thought so because she had always been hostile toward him even though he was self-admittedly outstanding and had put in so much effort to pursue her.

Thus, Nate was very certain that Alexis must have said it as an excuse to reject him.

The others in the hall also started discussing Alexis.

“Does Alexis really have someone she likes? I’ve never heard her mention it before. I wonder which scion it is.”

“Who knows? We’re pretty close to Alexis, and we’ve never heard her mentioning anything about having a crush on someone! Could it be that she’s just finding an excuse to turn Nate down, just like he said?”

“That’s hard to say. Just because Alexis doesn’t like Nate, it doesn’t mean that she can’t be in love with someone else, right? But it’s her birthday today, so the person she’s in love with should also be here, right? We just don’t know who he is.”

“What’s going on? Is Alexis going to announce the identity of her crush today? The scions of California are all here today. That means Alexis’s crush must be here too!”

“But Nate should have the highest status in the whole of California, right? If Alexis doesn’t even like Nate, which scion do you think she would fall for?”

...

While everyone was discussing, Alexis suddenly said sneeringly, “Nate, do you think I must be in love with you? Let me tell you. The person I like is really right here!”

Then under everyone’s surprised gaze, Alexis walked straight toward a spot near a corner.

Chapter 652: Your Identity

Alexis’s flabbergasting statement just now and the fact that she was now clearly walking toward someone sparked a huge uproar in the hall as countless people exclaimed in unison.

“Could... the person Alexis likes really be here?”

“Wow, this is so exciting! I thought Alexis just said that casually to reject Nate, but now it seems she really does like someone, and she’s planning to announce it now.”

“Look in the direction Alexis is walking! That’s Connor Hale from Orange County and Kenneth Parker from LA! Could the person Alexis likes be one of these two?”

“But didn’t someone just say that Connor Hale is already married and even has a child? In that case, it seems the only person left is Kenneth Parker? Is the person Alexis likes actually Kenneth?”

“Ah, right, now that you’ve said it, I remember now. Didn’t Alexis happen to go to LA with Mr. Cole Sr. some time ago? Maybe Alexis and Kenneth fell in love at that time!”

“Wow! It’s true! This is definitely huge news!”

...

The gossiping eyes and topics spread throughout the entire hall almost instantly.

Since Kenneth was standing there and still single, everyone immediately guessed that he was the one.

As for Lucas, who was standing next to him, he was directly treated like air.

Only Lena, standing beside Lucas, instinctively felt something with a woman’s sixth sense. She subconsciously wanted to stand in front of him and block the sight of the others, especially Alexis’s.

“Lucas, I’m sorry I’m only telling you now that you’re the person I like!” Alexis stood in front of Lucas with a bright smile on her face.

Her words immediately left everyone in astonishment, like a bomb exploding in the party.

“What?!”

The person the little princess of the Coles, Alexis liked... was the person whose origin and background they didn’t know at all?

In an instant, countless gazes of disbelief were cast on Lucas.

Lucas’s eyes also suddenly widened in astonishment, and a rare look of dismay appeared on his face.

But seeing the pleading gaze in Alexis’s eyes, he immediately understood why she had suddenly said that.

Alexis didn’t really fancy him and merely wanted to use him as a shield to stop Nate.

After figuring this out, Lucas secretly heaved a sigh of relief.

He was fine with being Alexis’s shield, but he would be at a loss if Alexis really liked him.

Seeing that Lucas understood what she meant, Alexis smiled at him slyly and then walked forward to hold his arm intimately.

Almost all the people present were so shocked that their jaws dropped!

Although they didn't know who this late twenties man in front of them was, they assumed that, based on his shabby attire, he had to be a poor man who couldn't even afford a decent suit.

But who is Alexis?

She is the precious princess of the Coles!

Edmund, the head of the Coles, only had one son, Clement, whose only daughter was Alexis. No matter what, Alexis was bound to take over the entire Cole family in the future.

Moreover, Alexis naturally wouldn't be able to handle so many of her family's businesses on her own, so she would definitely need the help of her future husband.

In other words, as long as he married Alexis, it would be akin to getting hold of the Coles' empire.

Yet this godsent opportunity was going to land in the hands of a nameless poor man!

At this moment, Nate was undoubtedly the one who looked the most upset.

The reason he confessed to Alexis and tried every possible way to marry her was naturally for the sake of the Coles' massive empire.

But Alexis was now standing next to the penniless Lucas and holding his arm, making Nate extraordinarily enraged.

In Nate's heart, Alexis had long been his woman, whom he would grasp tightly sooner or later. Moreover, he saw the Coles' empire as his belonging that no one else was allowed to covet.

Thus, in Nate's opinion, Lucas had snatched away the woman who should belong to him, together with the Coles' empire. This made him feel a strong urge to kill Lucas immediately.

"Nate, the person I like is Lucas, so stop pestering me now. I will never like you, so just give up!" Alexis held Lucas's hand and looked at Nate with a straight face.

Feeling extremely humiliated, Nate wished he could curse at them and call them adulterers to vent his hatred.

But he fortunately still had the last trace of rationality in his head and knew that he was still on the Coles's turf and surrounded by the Coles's friends and relatives, as well as the children of other wealthy families in California.

Trying his best to hold his anger back, he asked resentfully, "Kid, who exactly are you?"

He had previously already asked Lucas about his identity because of his uneasiness due to Connor's and Kenneth's overly respectful attitude toward Lucas.

Unfortunately, Lucas had merely said that he was an orphan who didn't have a family to support him. He didn't reveal any other information.

But now, even Alexis, whom Nate had been longing for a long time but hadn't been able to conquer, actually said that she liked Lucas, making him feel extremely indignant.

If... if Lucas was really the scion of some big family in DC, Nate would be willing to bow down and admit defeat.

But if Lucas was really just a penniless man, Nate would never be willing to accept defeat!

Seeing Nate glowering at Lucas as though he was about to devour him, Alexis frowned in displeasure, stood in front of Lucas with her chest puffed up, and chastised, "What are you doing? It's my freedom to date who I want. What else do you want?"

Seeing Alexis defending Lucas like this, anger and sourness surged in Nate's heart.

"Lucas Gray, if you call yourself a man, answer me honestly. Don't keep hiding behind a woman and making her stand up for you. I really despise you!"

Nate questioned again. He was about to suffocate to death if he still couldn't find out Lucas's true identity!

Lucas looked at his furious face and smiled gently. "You're not qualified to know what my identity is. You just need to bear in mind that I'm not someone you can afford to provoke. Don't appear in front of me again!"

Lucas's words were extremely domineering and arrogant. He didn't even take Nate, the scion of one of the top three families of San Francisco, seriously.

As soon as Lucas finished speaking, the entire hall fell dead silent.

Chapter 653: Is It A Wealthy Family?

If Lucas was standing there alone, dressed in such ordinary and shabby clothes, everyone would have been nonchalant toward him or even wondered if he was out of his mind.

But Connor Hale, the youngest helmsman of the four top families in Orange County, was standing behind Lucas. Moreover, Lena, the daughter of Ethan Sawyer, the richest man in Orange County, and Kenneth Parker from LA were standing beside him with respectful expressions.

Furthermore, Alexis, the heiress of the Coles, had even openly declared that she had a crush on him.

With all these elements, would anyone still think that Lucas was a penniless man who didn't have a high status or a powerful background?

Many were shocked by Lucas's domineering words, but they no longer saw him as a penniless man talking big and blowing his trumpet. Instead, they started seriously pondering about which wealthy family he was from.

With his formidable and imposing aura, they thought that he was very likely from one of the terrifying families in DC!

But not everyone thought so.

Dallas, Nate's longtime lapdog, immediately came forth and looked at Lucas with a contemptuous expression. He exclaimed to the surrounding guests, "Don't be fooled by him. Lucas isn't the scion of a wealthy family at all. He's just a penniless man who likes bragging and pretending!

"Look at the clothes he's wearing. Which scion would dress so shabbily? Even if they prefer to keep a low profile, they would at most choose not to wear clothes with large designer logos. Who would really wear these cheap clothes that cost less than a hundred bucks?

"Also, you guys probably don't know that this guy came alone without any bodyguards, and he drives a lousy Jaguar only worth around fifty grand. Even our servants don't drive such cheap cars.

"Besides, even if he's pretending to be low-key, he can just do so when there are lots of people. But even when no one was paying attention to him outside just now, he still looked so shabby. What does that say about him? It means that he's really just a penniless man who's putting up a pretense in front of us!

"Don't be fooled by his seemingly domineering words into thinking that he's impressive. In my opinion, Mr. Hale and the others might have been fooled by his appearance into thinking that he's the heir of some big family!"

Dallas's remarks made many people subconsciously waver and second-guess Lucas's identity.

What he said did make some sense.

If Lucas was really the noble scion of a wealthy family, there was no need for him to pretend to be poor even when there was no one around. Who would he be pretending to be poor for?

Well, unless... he wasn't pretending but was poor to begin with, which was why he wore such low-class clothes and drove a car that was unimpressive in the eyes of the ultra-rich.

Hearing the derogatory remarks about Lucas, the few people standing beside him were instantly annoyed.

Alexis was the fastest to act. Almost immediately, she frowned and shouted angrily, "Don't spout nonsense here! You don't know anything, so why are you trying to mar Lucas's reputation? Do you know who he really is? How dare you babble nonsense."

Being scolded, Dallas shrank back in fear. But having gotten used to being Nate's lapdog, he had become much more thick-skinned than the average person. He hurriedly said playfully, "Miss Cole, don't be upset with me. I'm just being kind because I'm afraid that you might get deceived by some people with evil intentions."

He couldn't afford to offend Alexis, but he didn't take a penniless man seriously at all.

"Brat, you sounded really impressive when you were speaking to Nate just now. You even said that you're someone whom even Nate can't afford to provoke. You sounded really confident, but you should see if you have the grounds to do so!

"It happens that everyone here has prepared gifts for Alexis since it's her birthday today. In that case, why don't you show us the gift you brought and let us see if you have what it takes to be Miss Cole's boyfriend.

"If you say that you've forgotten to bring the gift or try to brush us off with a gift that costs a couple of hundred dollars, you'd better drop the act in front of us now!"

For a moment, countless gazes were on Lucas.

Indeed, although Dallas was Nate's loyal lapdog, and what he said was rather unpleasant, his idea wasn't too bad.

If Lucas was unwilling to reveal his identity and was deliberately pretending to be a low-key penniless man, the gift that he would give Alexis shouldn't be too cheap and unpresentable.

Nate's eyes instantly lit up.

Indeed, since he couldn't find out the truth from Lucas, he decided to gauge Lucas's financial power through the gift he prepared for Alexis.

If he couldn't present a decent gift or took out one with a low value, it would be enough to show that he was lying!

"That's right, Lucas. Since you want to be Alexis's boyfriend, you won't give her a cheap birthday gift, will you? Hurry up and show us what you've got!" Nate said with an expectant look on his face.

Kenneth sneered.

The gift Lucas prepared for Alexis was from his Heavenly Pavilion, so it naturally wouldn't be something shabby. Nate and Dallas, who wanted to shame Lucas, were probably going to end up proving themselves wrong.

But after Alexis heard what Nate and Dallas said, her expression changed slightly.

Lucas had saved Edmund's life and thus ended up becoming friends with them. Because he was Edmund's savior, both Edmund and Alexis respected him enough not to send anyone to investigate his background.

According to the information Alexis had received before, she only knew that Lucas had married Cheyenne Carter and became her live-in husband. It seemed his family conditions had been really poor at the time, and he didn't have parents, so he had lived with his wife's family.

When Lucas barged into the Kingston manor in San Francisco, Alexis finally learned that he was the person in charge of Stardust Corporation's Orange County branch, and he also had some ties with the Hales and the Parkers. But how much could he possibly achieve within a few short years?

Therefore, in Alexis's opinion, Lucas might not be poor, but there was definitely a gap between him and Nate, who had his family's massive wealth.

Thus, she assumed that Lucas's birthday present for her wouldn't be particularly expensive. Once he presented a gift incomparable to Nate's and Dallas's gifts, he would probably be ridiculed relentlessly right on the spot.

At the thought of it, Alexis immediately stood up and rebuked loudly, "Lucas's gift is meant for me, so why should I show it to you? What right do you people have to pass judgment and make remarks about his gift to me?"

Chapter 654: The Value of the Gift

Dallas shook his head and said with a smile, "Miss Cole, don't say that. We're doing this for your own good! Think about it. You're being so nice to Lucas, and you defend him all the time. But if he really gives you a gift worth only a few hundred bucks, that'll be enough to show that you don't mean much to him at all! Are you sure you want to continue letting such a man fool you?"

Nate took the opportunity to chime in, "That's right, Alexis. Don't be fooled by this man. How about this? The diamond ring I just gave you costs a million dollars, and it's also a symbol of my devotion to you. The receipt is in my car, and I can bring it over for everyone to see at any time.

"But since you said that you like Lucas, his gift for you as your boyfriend should at least not be any worse than mine, right, everyone?"

Some gossipmongers in the hall who enjoyed watching drama immediately yelled loudly, "That's right! If his gift to Alexis as her boyfriend is less valuable than Nate's gift, I think she should get a new boyfriend!"

"Haha, that makes sense! In the past, people used to say that it's the thought that counts. But if a man isn't even willing to spend money on his girlfriend, he shouldn't be called a man at all!"

"That's right. Hurry up and let us see what you got Miss Cole!"

...

Amid the uproar and commotion, Dallas looked at Lucas sneeringly and said condescendingly, "Based on how shabby you look, I bet you can't afford any decent gift, let alone one comparable to Nate's! If you can present a gift more expensive than Nate's diamond ring, I'll kneel on the ground and lick your shoes!"

"Likewise, if you can't, then you will kneel on the ground to lick my, no, Nate's shoes. How about that? Hahaha!" Dallas guffawed arrogantly.

"What did you say?!" Alexis flew into a rage and was just about to lose her temper when Lucas suddenly reached out to stop her.

He looked at Dallas and drawled, "That's what you said. If my gift is more expensive than Nate's, you'll get on your knees and lick my shoes, huh?"

With a contemptuous smile on his face, Dallas said, "That's right. That's what I said! But if your gift is worse than Nate's, you will kneel in front of Nate and lick his shoes!"

They didn't keep their volumes down, and the people around them could hear their conversation clearly.

Soon, this exciting bet spread throughout the entire banquet hall.

Kneeling on the ground and licking someone's shoes was definitely an incredible bet!

In an instant, the crowd around them came closer to see the final outcome.

"Fine, since you want to lick my shoes so much, I'll fulfill your wish!" Lucas looked at Dallas's face and suddenly smiled.

Seeing his smile, Dallas felt his heart sink.

Lucas appeared completely confident about winning.

What's going on?

Surely he can't produce a gift worth more than Nate's, can he?

In fact, the families of these scions were indeed rich. But the wealth and assets belonged to their families, and they were only given a small portion.

For example, Dallas had only about two million dollars in liquid funds. The rest was in real estate and other immovable assets. So his gift for Alexis was only a crystal sculpture worth a little over a hundred thousand dollars.

Besides, most of the gifts of their peers ranged from tens of thousands to a few hundred thousand dollars.

Dallas was certain that no one would be able to give Alexis a million-dollar gift like Nate did.

Once he thought of Nate's ability and financial power, Dallas was finally relieved.

"Punk, stop bragging. Hurry up and show the gift to everyone!" Dallas urged impatiently.

Lucas stopped speaking and simply took out his gift. When the exquisite gift box with the two words 'Heavenly Pavilion' appeared in front of everyone, Dallas's face instantly turned pale.

"Hah. Even if it's something from the Heavenly Pavilion, that can't prove it's expensive. After all, the items on display on the first floor of the Heavenly Pavilion are specially meant for bottom feeders trying to look rich! The items sold there are a few hundred dollars. Who knows what's in your box?" Dallas even smirked contemptuously.

Lucas simply ignored him and handed the gift box to Alexis beside him.

“This is a set of emerald jewelry I chanced upon. I think it suits you well, so I bought it as a gift for you. Open it and see if you like it.” Lucas smiled.

Alexis took the gift box curiously, opened it, and immediately beamed with joy and surprise. “Wow, it’s so beautiful!”

The set of emerald jewelry Lucas had chosen was carved from the same piece of top-quality emerald, and it included a necklace, two bracelets, and two earrings.

The emerald was highly transparent and carved exquisitely, making them extraordinary pieces. In particular, they were now glistening under the light and emitting an ethereal aura.

The color and style were very much to Alexis’s liking.

The crowd, craning their necks to watch, exclaimed in amazement.

“What a beautiful set of emerald jewelry! The color and transparency are so beautiful!”

“Ahhhhh! I’ve been telling my mom that emeralds look better on older people and that it’s not popular among young people. But now, I eat my words. This set of emerald jewelry is gorgeous! It totally suits young women like us! Look at the transparency and color. It’s so mesmerizing!”

“I saw this set of emerald jewelry in the Heavenly Pavilion before, and I remember that it cost over a million dollars!”

“What? It’s more than a million dollars? It doesn’t seem to have required much material. This is really expensive!”

“The material is not the issue. The key depends on the quality of emerald and the workmanship! If the shape and design are ordinary, they may not be worth much. This set of emerald jewelry is so beautiful that even I’m tempted! If I had known, I would have asked my father to buy it for me!”

Many people, especially women who loved jewelry, wouldn’t be able to resist their desire for beautiful gemstones and jewelry. Many of them were speculating and discussing the value of the emerald jewelry.

After Dallas heard the price, his face twitched vigorously before turning sullen immediately.

Next to him, Nate felt extremely furious.

He initially thought that his gift, which was worth more than a million dollars, was already extremely expensive. But he didn't expect Lucas's gift to be even more expensive than his!

Chapter 655: Seriously?

Alexis looked at the beautiful set of emerald jewelry with fondness and joy written all over her face. She then removed the diamond necklace, bracelets, and earrings she was wearing before excitedly putting on the emerald jewelry Lucas had given her.

But it wasn't very convenient for her to put on the necklace herself, so she looked at Lucas with great anticipation and asked, "Lucas, can you help me put this necklace on?"

Slightly stunned to hear this, Lucas smiled and said, "Of course."

He had always treated Alexis as his sister and didn't harbor any other intentions, so he naturally didn't pretentiously decline.

He picked up the exquisite emerald necklace, placed it across Alexis's slender and fair neck, and quickly fastened both ends of the necklace.

Alexis turned around and smiled at Lucas radiantly.

Upon seeing this scene, Nate gritted his teeth, filled with jealousy.

Donning the full set of emerald jewelry and the ombré-colored starry dress that already made her look like a fairy in the first place, Alexis exuded an ethereal aura. As green light glimmered with every movement of hers, she looked even more like an angel that had descended on the world.

"Wow! Alexis is really pretty today!"

"She's simply like a fairy and a celestial princess! We all seem so tacky next to her. I'm so envious!"

"I've decided that I must get an identical set of emerald jewelry. The jewelry goes so well with the dress!"

...

Many women looked at Alexis enviously.

With her outfit and jewelry, Alexis was undoubtedly the most beautiful woman in the hall!

Lena looked at Alexis, who became even more beautiful and ethereal after putting on the emerald jewelry. Her eyes were full of envy when she saw the emerald jewelry on her wrists, ears, and neck.

At this moment, she was extremely jealous of Alexis for receiving such a beautiful set of jewelry from Lucas and getting to hold his hand in front of everyone with the identity of his girlfriend.

Despite knowing that it was just an act, she was green with envy!

“I remember someone saying that he would get on his knees and lick Mr. Gray’s shoes if Mr. Gray’s gift for Miss Cole was more expensive, right?” Connor suddenly said with a grin while looking at Dallas.

Hearing this, everyone suddenly remembered the good show that was about to begin and immediately rubbed their hands eagerly.

Dallas was particularly arrogant and condescending to everyone just because he was close to Nate. He often criticized others and thus ended up offending plenty of people. But most of them chose not to hold it against him on the Walkers’ account.

Since Dallas was the one who had proposed the bet, many guests present seemed to be gloating and waiting to see what this arrogant lapdog would do.

“Dallas, you are a wealthy scion after all. Are you really going to get on your knees and lick someone else’s shoe? That’s really shocking!”

“Hahaha, this is definitely a rare scene that comes once in a blue moon. I must take a video of this for remembrance!”

“Hehe, you’re too malicious! But I like it. I’m also going to record a video of what our noble Mr. Watson looks like when licking someone else’s shoe!”

...

When Dallas heard the taunts around him, his face immediately flushed red.

Lucas said with a smile, “Like I told you before, since you like to lick shoes, I’ll fulfill your wishes. Dallas Watson, please!”

He cooperatively put one leg forward, raised his foot, and swung his toes in front of Dallas.

Dallas’s face flushed as red as a tomato. He felt an unprecedented sense of humiliation!

He said through clenched teeth, “Do you think you won?”

Lucas smiled. "I'm sure you've heard the cost of the gifts just now. Do you think a million dollars is more than 1.4 million dollars?"

"Hmph, who knows where you got those fake emeralds to pass off as a 1.4-million jewelry set from the Heavenly Pavilion. Do you take all of us for fools?"

Dallas insisted that Lucas bought a counterfeit emerald jewelry set and even rebuked loudly, "If you can really afford such an expensive gift, why would you dress so shabbily and drive such a lousy car? Hmph! I'm right. Pretending is your forte, and you're an out-and-out swindler!"

"Huh? That jewelry set is fake?"

"That can't be. It has high transparency, which is impossible for fakes to replicate."

"Yeah! The jewelry looks gorgeous on Miss Cole. How can it be a counterfeit?"

"Miss Cole is from a top-tier family, and she has seen all sorts of fine things since she was a child. Moreover, the Coles run an antique and treasures business. If Lucas really gave her a bunch of counterfeits, how could she fail to identify it? Besides, how could she possibly wear a bunch of fakes on her body?"

"Psht, Dallas Watson must be deliberately slandering Lucas because he's a sore loser!"

"Haha, that must be the case. But Dallas Watson, you're the one who lost the bet, and you have to lick Lucas's shoes. Are you going back on your word?"

...

For some time, the air was full of commotion and mockery.

Alexis was now donning the set of emerald jewelry that Lucas gave her, so it was obviously genuine.

Dallas was just trying to lay a trap for Lucas, but he didn't expect to end up harming himself instead.

With a look of annoyance, Dallas wanted to continue arguing, but Kenneth interjected from the side.

"Dallas Watson, Mr. Gray personally picked out this set of emerald jewelry in the Heavenly Pavilion. As the proprietor of the Heavenly Pavilion, I can guarantee that it's definitely not counterfeit. If you insist on claiming that the jewelry is counterfeit, you're no longer just accusing Mr. Gray but accusing our Heavenly Pavilion of selling counterfeit products. Is that what you mean?"

He glared at Dallas hostilely with a mirthless smile.

At this moment, many people suddenly came to the realization that the Parkers were the owners of the Heavenly Pavilion.

Kenneth was the one who vouched for Lucas, and he was clearly on good terms with him too. How could Lucas possibly give Alexis a set of counterfeit emerald jewelry?

The truth was now clear, and it was that the emerald jewelry set Lucas gave Alexis was more expensive than the diamond ring Nate gave her.

Dallas and Nate both lost the bet completely.

In that case, what they said about the loser having to lick the shoes of the winner...

Chapter 656: Heart Racing

Dallas's face repeatedly changed between red and pale. "Hah, so what if his gift is more expensive? It's just 1.4 million dollars. Who can't afford that? What's there to show off?"

Connor sneered. "Who's showing off? Weren't you the ones who kept making trouble for Mr. Gray by wanting him to take out his gift for Alexis? You were also the one who proposed the shoe-licking bet? Now that you've lost, do you want to go back on your word?"

"You!" Dallas was ashamed and furious. He roared at Lucas, "I'm not going to fulfill the bet, so what? Can you kill me?"

Lucas looked at him coldly and pursed his lips in disdain. "Even if you want to lick my shoes, I'd find it dirty! But you should be glad that it's Alexis's birthday today, so I don't want there to be any bloodshed. Otherwise... Heh."

He sneered with a sharp gaze in his eyes, piercing into Dallas's eyes like a sharp dagger.

"You... you..." Dallas was so frightened that he took two steps back. He originally wanted to issue some threats, but the murderous gaze in Lucas's eyes really intimidated him so much that he didn't dare to act rashly or even say anything.

Why does this damn Lucas Gray have such a terrifying gaze?

Alexis had been watching the farce from the side, and at this point, she could no longer tolerate it. "Dallas Watson, Nate Walker, I've had enough of you two!

"You two have ruined my birthday party! I don't want to see you again! Please get lost immediately!

“If you still insist on making a scene at my birthday party, it will be a provocation to the Coles! If you can afford to bear the consequences, go ahead and continue making a scene!”

Alexis was still young and usually seemed lively and bubbly, which made her seem non-threatening.

But once she really lost her temper, she would be as domineering and intimidating as her grandfather Edmund.

Dallas felt like it was his first time knowing Alexis, and he was frightened by her aura.

It was only now that he finally remembered he was at Alexis’s birthday party, so he was simply courting death by going against her boyfriend!

He had always been Nate’s lackey, and he had gotten used to leveraging Nate’s power to throw his weight around and provoke others everywhere. But he had forgotten that the Coles were a top-tier family in the state, and Alexis, the Coles’ only heiress, had a status far higher than that of Nate, who had been marginalized by the Walkers!

After Dallas thought about this, his back broke out into cold sweat from fear.

The Coles wouldn’t attack the Walkers easily, but it would be a piece of cake for them to target the Watsons or even kill Dallas!

“I’m sorry, Miss Cole! I... I lost my mind for a moment. I didn’t mean to create trouble. Please forgive me! I-I’ll get lost right now. I won’t annoy you!” Dallas almost crawled out of the hall as he fled.

“What about you? Aren’t you going to scram?” Alexis looked at Nate again.

Nate had made a fool out of himself today and even got chased out by Alexis. In just one day, he felt humiliation that he had never suffered before in his life!

Looking at Alexis’s cold and disgusted gaze, the contemptuous smile on Lucas’s lips, and the peculiar looks being cast on him by the people around them, Nate felt extremely embarrassed and enraged.

“Okay, just you wait and see!” In the end, Nate could only say these words before leaving Alexis’s birthday party in disgrace.

But before he left, Nate glowered at Lucas with a resentful and threatening gaze.

He blamed Lucas for all the humiliation he suffered today.

Lucas narrowed his eyes.

He didn't have anything to do with the Walkers currently, but if Nate insisted on courting death and creating trouble for him, he wouldn't be kind to them.

After the annoying Nate and Dallas both left, Alexis sighed in relief and then puffed her cheeks at Lucas. She said apologetically, "I'm really sorry for causing you trouble today, Lucas."

The reason she had asked Lucas to be her shield was that she had gotten sick of Nate pestering her. So in a moment of anger, she had blurted out that she had a crush on someone. Furthermore, the only male present she had a good impression of was Lucas, so she had asked him to be her shield.

But Alexis hadn't expected things to turn out this way.

Alexis felt extremely apologetic at the thought that she had inadvertently made Nate hold a grudge against Lucas.

Lucas simply smiled without taking it seriously. "It's alright. Don't worry. The Walkers can't do anything to me."

Seeing how confident and imposing Lucas was, Alexis suddenly felt her heart racing as an unprecedented feeling surged within her chest.

If... Lucas were really my boyfriend...

No! No!

Alexis immediately raised her hand and pressed it on her chest to force herself to curb these dangerous thoughts.

Lucas is already married and has a child. How can I think that way?

I definitely can't do such a thing!

Lena, next to Alexis, felt her heart sink when she saw the way Alexis looked at Lucas and the way she frantically lowered her head with her hand covering her chest, as well as the faint rosiness on her face.

Could... Alexis have really fallen in love with Lucas?

At the thought that she was already having a hard time courting Lucas, but now she suddenly had a young and beautiful 'love rival', she felt even more uncomfortable.

The party soon resumed.

Meanwhile, outside the Coles' manor...

Nate stormed out of the Coles' manor furiously and saw his lapdog Dallas waiting for him outside.

As soon as he saw Dallas's face, Nate felt a strong urge to slap him.

If not because of this idiot, he wouldn't have embarrassed himself so terribly in front of everyone nor get kicked out by Alexis.

He had a gloomy look and was about to lose his temper when he suddenly heard Dallas say, "Nate, I've just investigated and found out the true identity of Lucas Gray!"

Chapter 657: Meeting Alexis's Father

As soon as he heard Dallas's words, regardless of how angry Nate was, he could only suppress his anger and ask, "Who exactly is he? Quickly tell me!"

"I just called a friend of mine in Orange County to ask about Lucas Gray, and he told me that Lucas Gray used to be the live-in husband of a woman from the Carter family, a third-rate family there. He seems to be quite well-known in Orange County because of this matter," Dallas hurriedly told Nate what he had found out.

"What? He's already married? And he's a live-in husband?" Nate was astonished.

Dallas nodded. "Yes, Lucas Gray married his wife six years ago as a live-in husband because of a scandal. They were caught red-handed in a hotel... Afterward, almost all of Orange County knew about this scandal, so the Carters decided to let him marry their daughter.

"I thought that it was impossible for the matter of a man and a woman getting intimate in a hotel to become the talk of the town. But later, I found out that Lucas Gray's luck was good because the woman he married was known as the most beautiful woman in Orange County. She is quite well-known there, so their scandal spread like wildfire and blew out of proportion.

"But this also means that my friend didn't lie to me. Many people in Orange County are aware of this matter too."

Dallas said with an excited expression, "Nate, I told you Lucas Gray is just a pauper pretending to be a rich scion! If he really belonged to a prestigious family, how could he possibly become a live-in husband?"

Nate thought about it and said decisively, "No, there must be something amiss about this. If Lucas Gray is really just a live-in husband without a powerful background, why are Connor Hale and Kenneth Parker so close to him? They even speak up for him and

defend him all the time. Logically speaking, the two of them are figures of high statuses who don't have to care about the live-in husband of a woman from a third-rate family."

"Uh..." Dallas also noticed the flaw in the logic of this matter. But after thinking about it, he came to a sudden realization. "Nate, I know! It must be because of his wife! I heard that she's gorgeous and is only around 27. Since she was lauded as the most beautiful woman in Orange County, a place with numerous beauties, she must be exceptionally stunning!"

"Connor Hale and Kenneth Parker are both men. Who doesn't like a pretty girl? Moreover, Lucas Gray's wife is the general manager of the Brilliance Corporation in Orange County. So I reckon that they both must want to get their hands on Lucas Gray's wife. That's why they're deliberately being nice to him. They're trying to make him lower his guard before slowly cuckolding him!"

A lewd smile appeared on Dallas's face as he talked about this.

His explanation was somewhat plausible, but Nate didn't believe it.

Given the statuses of Connor and Kenneth, they had countless means to get a woman. There was no need for them to please her husband in order to get their hands on her.

Besides, Nate kept feeling that Connor and Kenneth were rather deferential toward Lucas, as if they were facing someone superior, which bothered him a lot.

At this thought, Nate decided to call someone himself. "Immediately investigate a matter for me. There's a man in Orange County named Lucas Gray, whose wife is said to be the former most beautiful woman in Orange County and is also the general manager of the Brilliance Corporation. Find out who exactly Lucas Gray is!"

Since he was now aware that Lucas was from Orange County and had a wife famous in the city, it would be much easier to find the information he wanted.

After just a few minutes, Nate's phone started ringing, and his subordinate told him all the information he had found about Lucas.

Nate raised his eyebrows in apprehension at first. But soon, he smiled a little, and eventually, his smile widened.

When he finally hung up the phone, Dallas immediately asked impatiently, "Nate, how is it?"

Nate laughed contemptuously. "Haha, it's pretty much as you said. Lucas Gray is really just a live-in husband. He was just putting on an act in front of us!"

Dallas immediately asked to take on the task. "Nate, since this guy is just a good-for-nothing, leave it to me to handle! How dare this bastard want me to lick his shoes? He really doesn't know any better. I definitely won't spare him!"

Nate sneered. "Okay, I'll leave it to you then! Lucas Gray, how dare you snatch my woman and cause me to be so embarrassed? I'll definitely make sure you die a horrible death! Dallas, remember to abuse him to death. Only then can I vent my resentment!"

"Yes, Nate! I will definitely do it!" Dallas immediately promised with a ruthless expression and a menacing smile on his face.

Meanwhile, after staying at the birthday party for a while, Lucas decided to find an excuse to visit Edmund and deliver his gift to him. Afterward, it would be time to head home.

Lucas didn't really like this social function of high society, where almost all the children of notable families got together.

At this moment, a butler-like man from the Cole family suddenly walked up to Lucas and said, "Mr. Gray, Mr. Cole would like to speak to you."

Lucas raised his eyebrows in surprise.

He reckoned that the butler should be referring to Alexis's father, Clement.

He had never spoken to Clement, and he didn't even know him, so he was puzzled as to why Clement wanted to speak to him.

Despite feeling doubtful, he knew that Clement was the only son of Edmund and Alexis's father, and he was now in their home, so he naturally had to be courteous and agree to the request.

"Alright, please lead the way," Lucas agreed readily.

Under the lead of this butler, he arrived at a room in a villa next to the hall where the party was being held.

Clement was dressed in a neat suit and frowning, seemingly in a bad mood.

"Mr. Cole, Mr. Gray is here," the butler informed quietly and then retreated.

Lucas and Clement were the only ones in the luxuriously decorated room.

"Nice to meet you, Clement." Lucas took the initiative to greet him.

Clement raised his head and looked at Lucas, staring at him quietly.

If an ordinary young man saw this, he would probably be at a loss for what to do and even wonder if he had done something wrong.

But Lucas merely blinked and stood calmly in place, allowing Clement to stare at him somewhat hostilely.

It wasn't until nearly ten seconds later that Clement stopped looking at him and said slowly, "Lucas Gray, it's not the first time I've heard your name."

Hearing Clement's slightly contemptuous tone, Lucas was finally certain that he had some animosity toward him.

In that case, Lucas decided not to be a respectful junior.

He stood in place and said lightly, "Clement, is there a reason you suddenly asked me to come here?"

Chapter 658: Extremely Stupid

"Lucas Gray, twenty-eight years old, abandoned by the Huttons and kicked out of his home in DC more than twenty years ago. Afterward, he lived with his mother in Orange County. Six years ago, his mother died of illness, and he married Cheyenne Carter before soon disappearing for many years. A little over four months ago, he returned to Orange County and formed a feud with the Taylors, the Wallaces, the Kingstons..."

Clement looked into Lucas's eyes and read out the information about Lucas that he had obtained.

Lucas frowned.

Lucas could understand his rationale if he had just sent someone to investigate him.

But there was clearly another meaning by reading out his information right in front of him.

"Clement, what are you trying to say by reading this to me?" Lucas asked indifferently.

Clement glanced at Lucas and said sneeringly, "You and I aren't close. Don't try to act like we're close by addressing me by my first name. You'd better address me as Mr. Cole."

Since Clement didn't show him any respect, Lucas decided that he didn't have to treat Clement like an elder on account of Edmund and Alexis.

“Lucas, let me give you a piece of advice. Young people ought to be more grounded instead of being overly ambitious and coveting things that don’t belong to you,” Clement drawled with a smirk.

Lucas frowned. “Mr. Cole, if you have something to say to me, just say it directly.”

Clement narrowed his eyes. “Do you really not understand, or are you just feigning ignorance? I’ll cut to the chase then. I don’t care what you’re thinking, but my daughter isn’t someone you can covet. I hope you can have some self-awareness and stay away from Alexis.”

Hearing his relentless warning, Lucas didn’t get really angry but instead found his words ridiculous and absurd.

It turned out that Clement had called him over just to warn him not to have any intentions about Alexis.

He reckoned that Clement must have seen how Alexis used him as a shield by saying that she was in love with him just now. Thus, Clement got the wrong idea about him and began to feel hostile toward him.

But Lucas felt that he needed to explain to Clement that he didn’t have any ideas about Alexis, and everything that happened just now was merely an act.

“Mr. Cole, you’ve misunderstood. There’s nothing between me and Alexis. Ask her yourself if you don’t believe me. I already have a wife and daughter, and I have no intention of being unfaithful to my wife, so you can rest assured, Mr. Cole,” Lucas said without lowering himself.

But Clement refused to believe Lucas.

He pointed to the stack of documents about Lucas on the table and said with certainty in an extremely firm tone, “You were just a penniless boy six years ago, but you suddenly married Cheyenne Carter. Didn’t you do it for the sake of the Carters’ wealth and power so that you would struggle less?”

“Now, the Carters, which used to be a second-tier family in Orange County, have been reduced to a lowly family. Meanwhile, the Coles are one of the top families in the state. If you can find a way to marry my daughter, you’ll be able to gain control over the entire Cole family. That’s a goal that you can’t achieve even after struggling for ten lifetimes. Are you really not tempted? I don’t believe it.”

Clement stood up from the desk and walked to Lucas. “I also hope that you stay away from my father!”

"I know that you saved my father's life by chance. My father was a soldier when he was young, and he's very righteous. That's why he takes such good care of you and has always called you his benefactor.

"I think you know very well that all you did to save my father was to take out the pills from his pocket and feed one to him. It was a simple task. Moreover, my father has already given you enough in return, hasn't he?

"Of course, I can't deny that you've indeed saved my father's life, and I don't want others to think that the Coles are ingrates who are harsh to their benefactors.

He took out a bank card from his pocket, put it on the table next to him, and said in a condescending tone, "Here's ten million dollars, an amount that you'll never be able to earn in several lifetimes. If you listen to me, take this card and leave. Don't ever get involved with my father and daughter in the future, do you understand?"

Clement had said a lot of things to Lucas. From his tone, it was obvious that he was full of contempt toward Lucas and felt that he was greedy and pushing his luck.

Lucas almost burst out laughing at Clement's words.

At this point, he finally realized why Connor and Kenneth had told him that Clement was so incompetent that even Edmund wanted to give up on him and hadn't handed the position of family head to him.

The fact that Clement said such absurd things to him based on his own prejudices and preferences showed that he was indeed not a capable person.

Without even looking at the bank card that Clement threw on the table, Lucas said sneeringly, "So, Mr. Cole Sr's life is worth only ten million dollars in your eyes."

Clement frowned in displeasure. "You think it's too little? Given your abilities, let alone ten million, even earning one million must be difficult for you.

"Although I don't know how you got the set of jewelry you gave to Alexis, the Coles won't take advantage of you. Send the invoice for the jewelry to me, and I'll reimburse you for every penny you've spent. Just take it that the Coles bought it from you.

"As for other matters, don't have any delusions!" Clement once again warned Lucas.

Lucas looked at the austere expression on Clement's face and suddenly burst into laughter.

Clement's behavior was simply more foolish than he had expected.

Clement was conceited, arrogant, superficial, short-sighted, foolish, liked jumping to conclusions, and often projected his shortcomings onto others. He had an incredibly flawed personality.

If he had bothered to think a bit more when investigating Lucas, he wouldn't have reached this conclusion today.

At this moment, Lucas really took pity on Edmund.

He indeed couldn't hand over the Cole family to his son. Otherwise, he would probably lose the entire family in no time.

Clement merely mentioned the families Lucas had offended but didn't mention a thing about the families close to Lucas.

He had either deliberately chosen not to bring it up, or...

"Do you think that I befriended the Hale family from Orange County, the Parkers from LA, and the others all because of the Coles?" Lucas suddenly asked.

Chapter 659: Resolute Rejection

Clement frowned and asked rhetorically, "Isn't it?"

"It's really true." Lucas raised his eyebrows and smiled faintly. "In that case, Mr. Cole, why don't you call Bruce Hale and Damon Parker to ask if they're friends with me because of the Coles?!"

He had a look of mockery on his face.

He had long guessed it. Clement indeed thought that Lucas had borrowed the Coles' power in order to establish a relationship with the Hales and the Parkers. Just now, he even accused Lucas of taking advantage of the Coles, which was simply hilarious.

"Also, I hope that you won't casually speculate on my intentions. I'm not interested in being your son-in-law, nor am I interested in the Coles' assets. I only treat Alexis as my younger sister.

"As for my friendship with Mr. Cole Sr., this is a matter between us. You don't seem to have any right to interfere, do you?"

"Mr. Cole, like you said, you and I aren't related to each other at all, so there's no need for you to poke your nose into my business, right?"

Lucas finally understood that if he was polite with Clement, the latter would just think that he was afraid of the Coles' power. In that case, he might as well not be polite and make things clear.

Indeed, as soon as Lucas said this, his words immediately angered Clement, who thought highly of himself.

“Bastard, how dare you speak to me with such a tone? As long as I make a call now and tell them to sever ties with you, I’ll see how you can still be arrogant in front of me!”

Lucas shrugged his shoulders indifferently. “Oh, go ahead and call then.”

Before Clement even reacted, Lucas walked directly toward the door of the room. “If you asked me to come here just to hear you utter nonsense, I think there’s no need for us to continue talking anymore.”

“You... you stop right there!” Clement hollered in exasperation.

Lucas turned a deaf ear to him and suddenly stopped when he reached the door. He looked at Clement with an almost sympathetic gaze. “To be honest, I really pity Mr. Cole Sr. for having a son like you despite having been respected all his life. Even though he’s sick, he doesn’t dare to hand the family to you. How pitiful.”

With that, Lucas pulled open the door and walked out.

Bang!

The door closed, but Clement was so angered by Lucas’s words that his body was trembling.

“Bastard! Brat! How dare you say that about me?! Who the hell do you think you are?”

“Ah! This is so infuriating!”

Clement caught a glimpse of the bank card on the table that Lucas hadn’t even touched and snapped it in half to vent his anger.

Snap!

Clement slammed the broken halves onto the floor.

“Bastard, do you really think I can’t do anything to you? I’ll see what else you can do once I stop letting you leverage on the Coles’ reputation and status.”

Clement picked up his phone and called Bruce, who was in Orange County.

“Bruce Hale? I’m Clement Cole from San Francisco.” He reported his name immediately.

On the other end, Bruce was a bit surprised to hear Clement’s voice.

He had never interacted with Clement before, so he found the sudden call surprising.

“Hello, Mr. Cole! What made you call me all of a sudden today?” Bruce asked in a kind and gentle tone.

Strictly speaking, although Clement was a generation younger than Bruce, he was Edmund’s only son after all. So Bruce was rather accommodating toward him.

“I heard that the Hales have been very close to Lucas Gray lately, right? From now on, I want you to sever all ties with him and never provide him any help!” Clement ordered coldly.

“...” Bruce fell silent.

Clement waited for several seconds, but Bruce still didn’t reply, so he couldn’t help snapping at him angrily, “Bruce Hale, didn’t you hear what I just said? Why aren’t you saying anything?”

Bruce sighed and said slowly, “Mr. Cole, I can’t promise you that. Mr. Gray is an honored friend of ours, and no matter what, we can’t sever ties with him. May I ask the reason for your sudden decision?”

The Hales already belonged to Lucas now, so how could they sever ties with him?

Clement’s request was extremely abrupt as well. Lucas was clearly on good terms with Edmund and Alexis, plus he was Edmund’s life savior. The Coles shouldn’t be going against Lucas all of a sudden.

Bruce thought about it for a long time and felt that it was Clement’s personal request, which was rather ridiculous.

Clement was shocked because he didn’t expect Bruce to reject him without hesitation!

“Do you know what you’re saying, Mr. Hale? You don’t have to be friendly with Lucas Gray for the sake of our family. I don’t mind telling you that Lucas Gray has offended me, which is akin to offending the Coles. You’re a smart person. You should know what to do, right?”

“Also, if the Hales sever ties with Lucas, I can allow you to start cooperating with us and provide you help. How does that sound?”

Clement clearly stated his displeasure toward Lucas. In his opinion, Lucas managed to befriend the Hales entirely because he leveraged on the power of the Coles. As long as he made it clear to the Hales what the Coles' attitude toward Lucas was, he believed that Bruce would draw a clear line with Lucas immediately.

He reckoned that Bruce would agree, especially since he had promised some benefits and extended an olive branch. Those wealthy families would eagerly agree immediately.

"Mr. Cole, I've already told you that it's impossible!" Bruce's tone became cold and harsh, with extreme determination and some anger.

"Regardless of what yours and the Coles' attitude toward Mr. Gray is, the Hales will never sever ties with Mr. Gray!

"Mr. Cole, if you called me today just to talk about this matter, then we don't need to talk anymore. I still have something important to do, so I'll hang up now. I'll visit Mr. Cole Sr. another time."

With that, Bruce hung up immediately.

Seeing the 'call ended' words on the screen, Clement couldn't come back to his senses for a long time.

"How dare Bruce Hale hang up on me?!

"How infuriating!"

What was even more annoying was that Bruce had adamantly refused his request.

Bruce seemed to mean that the Hales hadn't befriended Lucas only because of the Coles. In fact, they even seemed to be stating that the Hales would never sever ties with Lucas even if the Coles made an enemy of Lucas.

"Is Bruce Hale out of his mind?"

"Damn it!"

Clement cursed viciously. But he thought that there was another person, so he ignored the Hales for now.

He took two deep breaths to suppress his anger before calling Damon, the head of the Parkers.

"Mr. Parker? I'm Clement Cole from San Francisco, and I looked for you to discuss something."

This time, Clement's attitude was a little more mellow.. At the very least, he didn't call Damon by his full name.

Chapter 660: Another Refusal

Like Bruce, Damon was also surprised to receive a sudden call from Clement.

"So it's you, Mr. Cole. What's the matter?" Damon's tone was extremely calm and indifferent.

Currently, the Parkers had already become the largest and supreme family in the whole of LA with Lucas's help. They had even taken over many businesses, so their overall power and strength were on par with the three giants of San Francisco—the Coles, the Kingstons, and the Walkers.

From a certain perspective, Damon's current status was actually comparable to Edmund's, while Clement was just a junior. Thus, Damon didn't need to have any scruples and respect for him.

Clement was aware of this too, so he spoke much more politely in front of Damon.

"Mr. Parker, here's the thing. I have something to ask of you," Clement said politely.

"Haha, Mr. Cole, you must be joking. You are a member of the Cole family. If there's anything, you can just say so directly. If I can provide any help, I will definitely help." Damon chuckled.

He had dealt with Clement twice before. But on those two occasions, Clement had behaved haughtily and ordered Damon around without any respect even though Damon was as old as his father.

Clement's polite attitude today was a stark contrast to before.

Damon felt proud because of this.

But Damon was well aware that all of this was given to him by Lucas. Otherwise, the Parkers would still be competing against other families in LA today, and Clement wouldn't be taking him seriously at all.

"Okay, since you're so straightforward, I'll cut to the chase. Mr. Parker, I hope that the Parkers will sever all ties with Lucas Gray and not provide him with any help in the future!" Clement said.

"What?!" Damon rubbed his ears, wondering if he heard wrong.

“Mr. Cole, what did you just say? Who do you want the Parkers to sever ties with?” Damon asked again with his brows furrowed.

“Lucas Gray, that penniless orphan who managed to climb his way up after marrying Cheyenne Carter as a live-in husband. You should know him right, Mr. Parker?” Edmund asked through gritted teeth.

Damon frowned, the furrow between his brows so deep that a fly would be clamped to death between them. He corrected in a strange tone, “Mr. Gray isn’t an orphan. He’s a Hutton from DC.”

Clement snorted with laughter. “How is he considered a Hutton? According to my information, he was disowned and kicked out by the Huttons twenty years ago, and the Huttons don’t even acknowledge him! Mr. Parker, you’ve probably been deceived by him.

“But that’s understandable. Lucas is very cunning, and he’s really good at leveraging on the power of others. It’s no wonder that he’s still doing well now.

“But this young man is way too arrogant and conceited. Relying on the power he borrowed, he goes around causing trouble everywhere. Not only has he offended the Taylors and the Wallaces of the four top families in Orange County, but he even had the guts to go to the Kingston residence to cause trouble. In the end, the Kingstons spared him only because of the power of the Parkers and the Coles.

“He’s just a nobody wreaking havoc everywhere. I don’t think there’s a need for you to befriend him, right, Mr. Parker?”

Due to his dissatisfaction with Lucas, Clement made Lucas sound incorrigible and even belittled him greatly.

But every time Clement belittled Lucas, Damon’s face became even darker. Toward the end, he looked absolutely gloomy.

“Mr. Cole, so you want the Parkers to sever all ties with Lucas Gray?” Damon said through clenched teeth.

But Clement failed to notice the suppressed burning fury in Damon’s tone, and he even thought that Damon was seriously considering his suggestion. He quickly said, “That’s right! To be honest, my family and I are already extremely dissatisfied with that punk Lucas Gray. Yet he’s still behaving arrogantly by relying on these relations. So I really hope that your family can sever ties with him and teach him a good lesson!

“Also, I won’t let the Parkers play the bad guy for nothing. In the future, as long as the Parkers need help, the Coles will definitely support you! If you intend to develop in San

Francisco, the Coles can also serve as a solid backer for your family!” Clement once again offered a tempting condition.

The caller on the other end stayed silent for two seconds before Damon suddenly roared furiously, “Clement Cole, is there something wrong with you? Who are you to decide who the Parkers befriend?”

“Don’t think that everyone is as stupid as you! You’re not qualified to judge what kind of a person Mr. Gray is! Let me tell you, Mr. Gray is the most honored guest of our family. Even if the Coles fall out with us, I will definitely not agree to sever ties with Mr. Gray. Do you understand?”

After lashing out at Clement, Damon immediately hung up without giving Clement the chance to respond.

“...” Holding his phone tightly in hand, Clement stood dumbfounded in place without reacting for a long time.

Damon’s words were still ringing in his ears.

As the only son of Edmund, the head of the Cole family, it had been a long time since Clement got reprimanded badly and had someone hang up on him.

If it was someone else, Clement would have used the power of the Coles to kill them.

But since he was facing Damon, the helmsman of the Parkers, who had recently risen in strength and was almost on par with the Coles, Clement had no choice but to bear with it.

If this matter spread to his father’s ears, he would probably say that Damon had done a good job reprimanding him. He might even force him to apologize to Damon.

Thus, he could only grit his teeth and tolerate it for now.

But Damon’s attitude clearly showed that the Parkers would rather go to war with the Coles than sever ties with Lucas.

“Damn it! What the hell is this?”

“Lucas Gray is just an abandoned son of the Huttons. He doesn’t have any family protection and is merely a live-in son-in-law. Why are these two old fogies acting so strangely and going all out to defend him?”

“Do I really have to watch that punk act all arrogant in front of me while being unable to do anything to him? Damn it!”

Clement was so furious that he started cursing before slamming his phone onto the floor.

Smack!

The screen of the latest Apple iPhone instantly cracked.

At this moment, Bruce and Damon were telling Lucas about Clement's phone calls to them..

Chapter 661: Happy Chat

Lucas had long expected Clement to call Bruce and Damon to tell them to sever ties with him.

Of course, Clement's impatience worsened Lucas's impression of him.

"Got it. Ignore him," Lucas said indifferently on the phone.

He returned to the party hall and said to Alexis, "Is your grandfather available at the moment? I'd like to pay him a visit and then return to Orange County."

Alexis looked at Lucas, reluctant to part ways with him. "Lucas, are you leaving so soon? We have a ball later and some other activities lined up. Are you not going to stay and join us?"

She really couldn't bear to see Lucas leave so soon. Despite knowing that nothing romantic would come of her interaction with Lucas, she just wanted to look at Lucas for a little longer.

Lucas shook his head. "No, I came here today to wish you a happy birthday. I'm not interested in other activities. You can go ahead and have fun with your friends later."

Hearing this, Alexis couldn't continue trying to make Lucas stay any longer, so she brought him to where Edmund was.

It was an ancient-style building that revealed simplicity and elegance.

After pushing open the door, Lucas was surprised to find that there were no trees and flowers in the garden. Instead, there were neat rows of all kinds of vegetable and fruit plants.

"Grandpa, look who's here?" Alexis said to the elderly man squatting in front of a vegetable patch.

Only after the figure stood up and turned his face around did Lucas realize that the farmer-looking man covered in dirt with mud spots all over his pants was Edmund, the esteemed helmsman of the Cole family. Lucas was very surprised.

“Lucas? You came too?” Edmund was just as surprised to see Lucas.

“Mr. Cole.” Lucas walked up to him and smiled. “I came today to attend Alexis’s birthday party and also visit you.”

“Hahaha, yes, Alexis finally turned twenty today. I saw those youngsters having fun together, so I didn’t join in. I didn’t expect you to still remember me, Lucas! Haha!” Edmund laughed heartily and rubbed his mud-stained fingers on his clothes.

“In that case, give me a moment. I’ll pick some fruits for you to taste the things I planted with my own hands.”

Edmund picked up a small bamboo basket and filled them with a lot of seasonal fruits from his garden.

Seeing how relaxed and happy Edmund was while gardening, Lucas couldn’t help feeling a trace of envy.

Enjoying peace and tranquility in a garden was the most holy and ordinary idealistic lifestyle for many people.

Perhaps one day, he and Cheyenne would be able to enjoy a peaceful life like Edmund. They would tend to the fruits and vegetables in their garden comfortably or bask under the sun on rocking chairs. To him, this was ultimate bliss.

When Edmund walked out from the garden with a basket full of fruits, Lucas reached out to help him carry the basket and walked to the center of the yard with him and Alexis.

“Alexis, you are the protagonist of today’s party. Quickly go back. Lucas and I will just talk here,” Edmund said to Alexis.

Alexis pursed her lips. Although she was slightly reluctant to part with Lucas, she was no longer a child who could behave willfully and presumptuously anymore. She would indeed be a poor host if she left her guests and friends at her birthday party without entertaining them.

“Okay, I’ll go back now. Lucas, you must drop by our house often in the future! Grandpa and I both like you a lot!” Alexis smiled playfully and winked before leaving.

“Hah, indeed, she’s still a child at heart,” Edmund said dotingly while looking at the back of his beautifully dressed granddaughter.

After rinsing the basket of fruits under a tap, a servant placed them on a fruit tray, brought it over to the courtyard, and placed it on a stone table under a tree.

This resting corner was decorated in an idyllic style, with a small stone table and three antique round tree stumps around it.

Edmund warmly asked Lucas to sit down on a tree stump. "Quickly take a seat and try the fruits I planted myself. They are definitely better than what you can get elsewhere!"

Lucas smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Cole. I'm in for a treat today then."

At the same time, in the villa where Clement was...

Clement had lost his temper just now from his failed attempts to convince Bruce and Damon to sever ties with Lucas. He had even smashed his phone. He had to down several mouthfuls of tea to calm down.

At this moment, the butler-like man who had previously invited Lucas hurriedly came in from outside and reported, "Mr. Cole, that punk named Lucas Gray didn't leave but was taken by Miss Cole to Mr. Cole Sr's garden!"

Clement suddenly stood up, and the anger he had just suppressed surged in his heart again. "What did you say? How dare he go to my father? It seems that he didn't take my warning and me seriously!"

He suddenly pounded the table and yelled angrily, "Let's go to the garden now. I want to see how that punk managed to get into my father's good books! Punk, aren't you really good at pretending? Just you wait. I'm going to remove your facade and reveal your true colors. Let's see what else you can do!"

Clement furiously brought his subordinate with him to Edmund's residence.

At this moment, Lucas and Edmund were talking while eating the fruits Edmund had grown.

Just as Edmund boasted, these fruits he had grown with his own hands were extremely juicy and sweet, much tastier than those bought in markets.

"They're really delicious! Mr. Cole, I'm surprised that you not only know how to fight on the battlefield and do business, but you're even really good at growing fruits and vegetables. I truly take my hat off to you!" Lucas praised from the bottom of his heart.

If these words came out of anyone else's mouth, Edmund might think that the other party was flattering him on purpose in order to curry favor with him.

But Lucas was definitely not the kind of person who would deliberately suck up to him. Since Lucas said they were good, they definitely were. So Edmund was even more pleased and overjoyed to hear Lucas's compliment.

"Haha, it's just a little hobby of mine that isn't worth mentioning! If you like them, I'll have someone pick some for you later, and you can bring them home for your wife and child to try," Edmund said in high spirits.

"Let me thank you on behalf of my wife and daughter then, Mr. Cole!" Lucas didn't decline and gladly accepted Edmund's kind gesture.

"Speaking of which, it's my first time visiting the Coles today, so I've brought you a gift too. I hope you don't mind it."

Then Lucas took out the gift he had brought for Edmund..

Chapter 662: Disciplining His Son

Seeing the gift box with the words 'Heavenly Pavilion' on it, Edmund revealed a trace of surprise.

He didn't expect Lucas's gift to be from the Heavenly Pavilion. Moreover, the box was labeled as a top-grade good, meaning that it was worth at least a few million dollars.

When he opened the gift box and saw the bodhi bead bracelet exuding a faint herbal fragrance, his eyes immediately lit up.

The Coles ran an antique business as well, so Edmund definitely had sharp judgment. When he smelled it, he immediately concluded it was definitely an extremely rare bodhi bead bracelet!

"This... bracelet seems different!" Edmund excitedly held the bracelet in his hand and began scrutinizing it.

"This material and naturally-formed pattern, as well as the soothing medicinal fragrance... It's indeed a top-grade product! I didn't expect there to be such a treasure in the Heavenly Pavilion that my people hadn't discovered before!"

The more Edmund looked at it, the more he liked it, and he began rubbing it back and forth in excitement.

Lucas smiled lightly. "This bodhi bead bracelet does have some amazing properties. Not only can it help the wearer calm their mind, but the medicinal properties infused in it

over the years will also provide great benefits for the wearer. I bought this bracelet because I think it especially suits you.”

“Hahaha, good, you indeed have excellent judgment, Lucas! Since you bought this good item for me, I won’t stand on ceremony. Thank you!”

Edmund was not a wishy-washy person, so he accepted the bodhi bead bracelet from Lucas and immediately put it on his wrist.

The bracelet was from the Heavenly Pavilion, so it had to be extremely expensive. But since Lucas could give it away, Edmund didn’t bother about whether it was too expensive for Lucas.

Lucas was not the kind who would puff himself up, and the friendship between the Coles and Lucas was more than that. There was no need for Edmund to dwell on such a trivial matter.

Edmund and Lucas were sitting on the plain tree stump chairs and ate the sweet fruits while chatting and enjoying the night view harmoniously.

Bang. Bang. Suddenly, there was knocking on the wooden door outside the idyllic residence.

“Come in!” Edmund said casually.

The wooden door was opened with a creak, and Clement entered from outside.

Edmund subconsciously frowned upon seeing his son. “Why are you here? Shouldn’t you be helping Alexis with the party?”

Clement didn’t say anything. Right from the beginning, he was staring at Lucas, who was sitting beside Edmund.

When Clement saw that a significant portion of the fruit platter in front of Lucas had been eaten, his face became even more sullen.

Although Edmund planted some vegetables and fruits in this garden, the output was small after all. He cherished them like treasures and would usually only share them with Alexis. Even Clement, his own son, didn’t get to eat the fruit and vegetables grown by his father.

But this outsider Lucas was actually able to gain Edmund’s favor and eat so many of his fruits.

Why?!

“Dad, how could you let this punk come to your residence? You even... shared the fruits you grew with him!” Clement exclaimed furiously.

Edmund was bewildered, but he could tell that Clement was very prejudiced against Lucas.

His face darkened. “This place belongs to me. I can let anyone I want in and feed my fruits to anyone I want. How dare you interfere in my business?”

“Dad, it’s not that I want to interfere with your matters, but this punk can’t be trusted at all. Do you know that he’s just an illegitimate son kicked out by the Huttons in DC? He has nothing to his name, and he relied on joining a second-tier family as a live-in husband to make connections everywhere in order to get to where he is now!

“He’s not someone you should befriend at all. He’s now trying to please you because he wants to rely on the Coles’ power and status to expand his connections!

“Yes, I know that he saved your life before, but so what? The Coles have long repaid him for his kindness, so why is he still clinging to you? I clearly already warned him not to get close to you and Alexis anymore, but he didn’t take it seriously at all. He even came here right after to pretend to be nice to you!

“Dad, you’d better sever ties with such a scheming person who’s good at nothing except plotting against others. Otherwise, the Coles will really become his springboard!”

Due to his anger and resentment toward Lucas, Clement was venting his anger and revealing all the information he had found out, as well as his assumptions.

“Shut up!” Edmund was so furious that his face turned pale. He glowered at Clement with his eyes wide open. “What kind of nonsense are you saying about Lucas? I’ve lived so long, and I’ve seen more people than you. Yet you’re now accusing me of being muddled and not knowing how to judge people. Do you think you’re the only one who can read the hearts of others?

“Hah, why don’t you look at what you’re worth yourself?! Do you need me to remind you of the stupid things you did in the past? If I had another son, I would have long kicked you out of the Coles!

“Although Lucas is a generation younger than you, he’s much better than you in all aspects, and he carries himself so much better than you! Trust you to have the cheek to badmouth him here!

“Also, who gave you the permission to investigate Lucas’s identity and background? Didn’t I tell you that he’s my life savior, so you must all respect him and never investigate him in private? How dare you disobey me behind my back?!

“Besides, you just said you warned Lucas not to interact with me and Alexis anymore. When did you do it? Who gave you permission? He saved my life, and I approve of him! Are you treating me like I’m dead now, so you can turn a deaf ear to all my instructions?”

In the face of Edmund’s wrath, Clement was berated so severely that his face paled.

Although Edmund would chide him for his wrongdoings in the past, he had never lashed out at him to the point of him being unable to raise his head like today.

His father actually reprimanded him so mercilessly because of Lucas, an outsider. Clement, who was almost fifty years old, was so embarrassed that he almost couldn’t face anyone.

At the same time, Clement’s anger toward Lucas intensified.

If not for Lucas, why would his own father treat him like this?

His face red, Edmund pointed at the door and barked at Clement, “I don’t want to see you now. Get lost immediately. You’d better think carefully and reflect on your mistakes!”

Clement raised his head and fixed his eyes on Lucas. “Punk, don’t get too smug! You may have bewitched my father with your schemes and tricks, but I won’t let you continue being complacent! One day, I will definitely expose you and leave you with nowhere to escape!”

With that, he swung his hand and kicked open the wooden door to leave without turning around..

Chapter 663: Link Together

“Bastard!”

Even after Clement’s figure disappeared into the night, Edmund’s chest was still heaving up and down vigorously. He was clearly still livid.

“How on earth did I give birth to such a dimwit? What a great misfortune for my family!” Edmund rattled on, his face full of disappointment about Clement.

Lucas wanted to comfort Edmund, but he didn’t know how to start.

After all, Clement was really foolish beyond Lucas’s expectations, and he could fully imagine how frustrated Edmund was now.

He knew that Clement was prejudiced against him and would definitely try to find trouble with him. But he didn't expect that Clement would actually barge into Edmund's residence and criticize him right in front of Edmund.

Lucas didn't know what to say about his behavior.

"Lucas, I'm really sorry. It's my lack of proper discipline that resulted in my son saying such unpleasant things to you. Please don't take it to heart!" Edmund said to Lucas apologetically.

Lucas shook his head. "It's fine. I don't care about it. Don't take it to heart, Mr. Cole, lest your health gets affected."

Edmund took two deep breaths, and together with the burst of calming herbal fragrance emanating from the bodhi bead bracelet on his wrist, he finally gained control of his emotions.

"Ah, God knows what sins I committed in my past life to end up with a son like him. If he had some brains, I would have left the Coles in his hands long ago and stayed in this place or gone to the countryside to spend the rest of my retirement in peace." Edmund's tone was full of dejection and somberness.

Lucas couldn't make a judgment about this matter, so he could only stand at the side silently and hand a cup of tea to Edmund.

Edmund took the cup of tea, drank it slowly, and let out a long sigh before changing the subject. "Speaking of which, tomorrow is the day the California Elite Business Exchange will be held. I heard that you also received an invitation. What do you think about this matter?"

Lucas's gaze was focused. "I also just learned about the existence of this Elite Business Exchange. It's said that it's only held once every three years, and the organizer this time should be the Watsons and not the Kingstons. It should have been held in a month too, but it was suddenly brought forward."

Edmund nodded with a solemn expression. "You're right. That's why I have a feeling that the Elite Business Exchange this time isn't that simple. Moreover, I have an ominous premonition that something will happen."

In fact, Lucas also sensed the peculiarity about this Elite Business Exchange.

Lucas had to keep his guard up, especially since the organizer of the exchange this time was the Kingstons, who had just formed a feud with him and obtained the hosting rights from another family.

“My network of connections may be a bit wider than yours. According to the information I received, figures among the eight giants of DC may be here at the Elite Business Exchange this time. Their agenda is very likely to be all of California,” Edmund suddenly said.

Lucas was a little surprised. “The eight giants of DC? Are some of them planning to take action in California?”

“That’s very possible,” Edmund said with a grim expression. “In the past few years, there has been lots of competition going on among the eight giants of DC, especially in the areas around it. Many of them have been divided up between the forces of the eight giants, who are also secretly supporting many other families.

“But California had been a neutral area over the years. It became an area that no one dared to touch because everyone wanted a share of it, so they restrained each other. Although there are some families in contact with the eight giants, California doesn’t belong to any family.

“However, I’m afraid this situation is going to change soon.” Edmund’s eyes were worried.

The development of California in recent years had been relatively peaceful, and the Coles had also reached a tripartite balance with the Kingstons and the Walkers. Although they had minor conflicts every now and then, they were all getting along relatively peacefully.

But if the eight giants of DC suddenly intervened, the calm and peace of California would definitely be broken. In fact, there was a high probability of another power reshuffle.

When the time came, it would be difficult to say what would become of the various families.

“I heard that the rules of the Elite Business Exchange stipulate that the invitees are limited to the top-tier families in California, so I was surprised to be invited this year. Can people from the eight top families in DC participate directly?” Lucas asked in confusion.

Edmund smiled and explained, “It’s not surprising that you were invited. Although you haven’t established a top-tier family yet, the power you have in your hands has long been enough to qualify to get an invitation. So it’s not truly a violation of the rules.

“But the people from the eight top families of DC probably won’t resort to any extreme means to intervene. I’m guessing that they’re probably going to find a suitable family within California and support it in order to gain control over the state. The people from the eight top families will just need to control the family and tell them what to do.

“Therefore, I think that this time’s Elite Business Exchange is precisely for this purpose. The family whom that family wants to support is most likely the Kingstons, who snatched the hosting rights from another family.”

After all, Edmund was an experienced businessman who not only had broad horizons but also sharp judgment. So he quickly managed to find the crux to this.

Through the information given by Edmund, Lucas silently combed through the information in his mind.

In the beginning, there was no feud between him and the Kingstons. But the Kingstons had instigated the Taylors of Orange County to abduct Karen and then make her do the live stream with the intention of destroying the reputations of Lucas and the Stardust Corporation.

In order to bring back Karen, Lucas broke into the Kingston residence in San Francisco, killed two of the Kingstons’ elite bodyguards, and crushed Marc’s legs.

Later, Marc jumped to his death. His father, Moses, hated Lucas for it, so he threatened Karen and tried to abduct Amelia in order to use her as a bargaining chip. But his plan fell through, so Moses ended up shooting himself dead.

Immediately afterward, the Smiths, one of the eight top families in DC, suddenly appeared. After Lucas had some conflict with Roy, a scion of the Smiths, because of Maddy, a person who claimed to be Mrs. Smith’s bodyguard suddenly appeared in front of Lucas and tried to kill him. But Lucas crippled his limbs in the end.

But Lucas did find out from the bodyguard that Mrs. Smith was Marc’s biological mother and Moses’ former lover. Thus, the reason she sent someone to assassinate Lucas was to take revenge for her ex-husband and son.

Afterward, Roy suddenly died, and Lucas subsequently received an invitation to the Elite Business Exchange.

All these matters wouldn’t mean anything alone. But after Lucas pieced everything together, it was obvious that there was an issue.

The Kingstons and the Smiths! A cold glint flashed in Lucas’s eyes!

Edmund had been watching Lucas’s expression. Seeing this, he asked, “Lucas, what did you think of?”

Lucas looked at him. “Mr. Cole, do you know a person called Mrs.. Smith from DC?”

Chapter 664: Situation Analysis

“Mrs. Smith?” Edmund murmured doubtfully. Suddenly, his eyes lit up. “I remember. I’ve heard of her before. She should be from the Smiths, one of the eight top families in DC. Why did you suddenly mention her?”

Lucas said, “Just two days ago, Wendy Smith arrived in San Francisco, and she’s been staying with the Kingstons. This is enough to show that the Smiths and the Kingstons share an extraordinary relationship. Besides, there are definitely a lot of other matters in between.”

After thinking about it, he told Edmund about Wendy’s actual relationship with Moses and that Marc was their son. He also added that Wendy had sent someone to kill him to avenge Moses and Marc.

Just as Eli, the assassin Wendy sent, had said, this matter should be very confidential. If the assassin didn’t think that Lucas would definitely die, he wouldn’t have told him about it.

Lucas guessed that there must be very few people who knew about this matter. Even Lance, the helmsman of the Kingston family, might not necessarily know about it. Otherwise, when Lucas and his people went to the Kingston residence, the Kingstons could have suppressed him with the name of the Smiths. But they didn’t do so.

Thus, Lucas thought that Edmund probably wouldn’t know this secret.

“What? Is there such a thing? Marc is the son of Moses Kingston and Wendy Smith? This... is really surprising!” Indeed, after Edmund heard what Lucas said, shock appeared on his face.

He had always known that the Kingstons had some dealings with the Huttons of DC. But he didn’t expect the Kingstons to have an even closer relationship with the Smiths of DC!

Moreover, Edmund also thought that although Marc and Moses had both committed suicide, Wendy would definitely take revenge on Lucas, especially since she had already sent her subordinate to assassinate him. He knew that she definitely wouldn’t just give up.

The Kingstons already bore a grudge against Lucas, and now that the Smiths had joined in, it seemed that they were hosting this Elite Business Exchange to target Lucas.

“Lucas, you must be very careful! The Smiths are very powerful in DC, and Wendy Smith isn’t a kindhearted person. They definitely wouldn’t let you off!

“Furthermore, I suspect that the sudden death of Wendy’s nephew was caused by Wendy herself!

“Because the most powerful assassin around her was no match for you, and you even crippled his limbs. So if she wants to continue killing you, she has to go back to the Smiths and ask them to send more powerful people to deal with you. But since the matter between her and Moses is a secret of hers, she won’t reveal it herself. Hence, the best reason she can use to draw more of the Smiths’ experts to deal with you is the death of her nephew Roy!

“Only then can she possibly use the power of the Smiths to deal with you while keeping her secret!”

Indeed, Edmund was old and experienced. After hearing some key points from Lucas, he immediately deduced Wendy’s plan.

Lucas was naturally very impressed by this. Edmund was truly experienced and wise!

But this wasn’t the end of Edmund’s analysis.

“If I guess correctly, the Smiths will probably send a heavyweight figure to this Elite Business Exchange too, and this figure is very likely to be Roy’s father, Vince Smith!”

“Vince Smith? What is this person like?” Lucas wasn’t very worried and was merely just curious.

There was a trace of reminiscence in Edmund’s eyes. “I’ve never had any dealings with Vince. But he’s indeed someone most people don’t dare to offend.

“The current helmsman of the Smith family is Wendy’s father. But because Wendy is a married woman, she naturally can’t inherit his position and become the head of the Smiths. On the other hand, Vince’s father is the brother of the current family head, so Vince has a very high status and holds great power in the family. He’s considered a strong contender for the position of the next helmsman.

“The rule of the Smiths is that the most competent descendant will become the next helmsman. Vince is the most promising one. He holds great power and has numerous experts around him. I’m afraid that’s why Wendy wants to use Vince to deal with you.

“Moreover, the one who died this time is Vince’s son, Roy. Given his character, he will definitely come to deal with it personally. I’m almost one hundred percent sure that Vince will definitely come to San Francisco!”

Lucas pondered. “In that case, it seems that Vince should have arrived in San Francisco by now. But he hasn’t made a move against me yet.”

Edmund narrowed his eyes in thought.

After a while, he said, "Since Vince has arrived in San Francisco but hasn't taken action against you yet, it can only mean that he's still planning something more important.

"For example, the Elite Business Exchange!"

"I'm guessing that he must want to support a powerful family at the Elite Business Exchange to help him gain control of California while also targeting you at the exchange!"

Thus, all the conjectures he had made previously added up.

The Smiths were the ones who wanted to take over all of California, and the Kingstons were most likely the ones receiving their support!

"Now, there's a feud between you and the Kingstons and the Smiths. It seems that the Elite Business Exchange tomorrow will be extremely dangerous for you!" Edmund looked at Lucas worriedly.

Lucas sighed in his heart.

He didn't want to confront the eight giants of DC so soon. But he hadn't expected things to escalate to this point, where a confrontation between him and the Smiths was inevitable.

So what if they were one of the top eight families in DC? Lucas wasn't afraid of them at all.

He would just take it as training before dealing with the Huttons.

"If the Smiths insist on dealing with me tomorrow, I'll show them what real danger is!" Lucas said with a menacing gaze as an unstoppable domineering aura instantly emerged from his body!

Chapter 665: Collision By The Road

Edmund looked at Lucas, who was like the sharpest blade in the world that had just been unsheathed. He was emitting a murderous aura that made Edmund's heart skip a beat, even though he had already gotten used to witnessing countless deaths on the battlefield.

Because Lucas had saved his life, Edmund respected him enough not to investigate his identity and background. He had just found out from his son, Clement, that Lucas had been abandoned by the Huttons.

But a person like him who didn't enjoy the protection of his family actually had such a terrifying aura, making Edmund certain that Lucas was definitely not an ordinary person and that he had definitely been through countless unimaginable situations!

"Lucas, I don't care what your identity is. In any case, you've gained my recognition, and you're my life savior. The Coles will forever value your friendship!" Edmund said firmly.

"Even if the Kingstons and the Smiths both want to deal with you, I will stand by your side and protect you even if I have to fight with everything the Coles have to offer!"

Edmund was righteous and knew to repay kindness where it was due. Lucas was not only his life savior but also an approved friend of his, he would never watch Lucas get bullied by others.

Although Lucas didn't fear the Kingstons and the Smiths, he was still touched to see how protective Edmund was of him.

"Thank you, Mr. Cole. However, neither the Smiths nor the Kingstons can do anything to me, so you can rest assured!" Lucas didn't say anything more because everything he wanted to express was done so in these words.

Soon, Lucas got up and bade goodbye to Edmund, who specially sent one of his butlers to walk Lucas to the parking lot outside the Coles' manor.

But Lucas soon saw his terribly smashed and deformed Jaguar.

His face immediately became gloomy, and soon, a figure surfaced in his mind.

Nate Walker.

When Lucas arrived at the Coles' manor and parked his car, Nate had suddenly called out to him and ordered him to move his Jaguar to make space for his car.

Lucas didn't pay attention to him, so Nate must have been furious and thus smashed his car to give him a warning.

When the Coles' butler saw the car, which was damaged beyond recognition, he immediately understood what had happened and inhaled sharply.

Although he had been standing a distance away and didn't hear Edmund's conversation with Lucas earlier, he had clearly seen the heartened and joyful smile on Edmund's face.

Now that Lucas had come to attend the Coles' party but ended up having his car smashed in their parking lot, it was... a serious negligence of duty on the Coles' part.

“Mr. Gray, I’m very sorry. This is negligence on our part. I’ll have someone prepare another car for you. Once your car has been repaired, I’ll have it sent back to Orange County for you,” said the butler in his fifties.

Lucas checked the car slightly and shook his head. “That’s not necessary.”

Although his car looked like an extremely ordinary Jaguar on the surface, the various internal parts had actually been modified and strengthened.

The front windshield and hood might have been smashed, but it didn’t affect the car’s performance in the slightest.

But even so, Lucas was still in a terrible mood.

In particular, while he was driving his smashed car back to Orange County, he saw a Land Rover tailing him, and his mood worsened further.

The tall Land Rover wasn’t far behind Lucas’s car, and it began getting closer and closer when they reached a less-populated area.

Then at an intersection where Lucas had to turn, the Land Rover suddenly accelerated violently. The engine roared loudly, and the Land Rover started speeding straight at Lucas’s car.

Lucas had already noticed the Land Rover, so how could he let it catch him off guard and hit him?

Screech!

At the most critical moment, Lucas turned the steering wheel with all his might and then slammed on the brake pedal. The tires of his Jaguar rubbed against the road with an ear-piercing screech, and the Jaguar drifted away, narrowly avoiding the Land Rover from crashing into him.

The Land Rover couldn’t brake in time and crashed into the concrete pillar and guardrail by the roadside. An enormous dent formed in the hard front hood.

“Damn it. How are you so useless? You couldn’t even hit his car. You really deserve to die!”

At this moment, a young man was cursing incessantly as he got out of the backseat of the Land Rover with his hand on his head.

Clearly, during the impact just now, the man in the backseat had accidentally hit his head against the seat in front of him.

This young man was none other than Dallas, Nate's top lackey, who had targeted Lucas at every turn at the Coles' party.

He looked at Lucas with a sinister expression. "Lucas Gray, you're really scheming!"

Lucas suddenly found it hilarious. "You're the one who wanted to hit me with your car. I merely avoided you, yet you called me scheming. What does that make you, the person who tried to crash your car into mine? A vicious scumbag?"

"Damn it, punk, how dare you insult me?! Do you have a death wish?" Dallas flew into a rage and roared. With his roar, three burly men who looked like bodyguards got out of the Land Rover and lined up behind him.

"Aren't you the one who has a death wish?" Lucas smiled and looked at the people in front of him as if he was looking at dead people.

At Alexis's birthday party earlier, Dallas had repeatedly found trouble with Lucas. He eventually put himself to shame and even got chased out of the house by the furious Alexis.

First, Nate had smashed Lucas's car. Then this idiot Dallas had followed him and tried to kill him with his car. These repeated provocations made Lucas feel an urge to kill Dallas.

"Hah, punk, you sure are used to pretending! There are only a few of us here, so save your breath. Do you think you can still fool me by claiming that you're a scion of a powerful family? I've already investigated that you're a penniless live-in husband sponging off your wife! What are you pretending for?"

"I have three bodyguards with me, and I can obviously beat you into a pulp. You're already on the brink of death, yet you still dare to be so arrogant in front of me. I'll show you what I'm made of!" Dallas said smugly.

Dallas was the one who had requested to deal with Lucas.

From Dallas's point of view, Lucas was just a swindler and completely no match for his burly bodyguards. Although Lucas was tall, he felt that Lucas couldn't take a beating at all and that his bodyguards could easily kill Lucas.

"Have you finished spouting nonsense?" Lucas looked at Dallas coldly with a trace of impatience on his face.

"Hah.. Bastard, since you want to die so soon, I'll fulfill your wish now!" Dallas laughed hysterically and ordered the bodyguards, "Go kill him!"

Chapter 666: Completely Spineless

With Dallas's command, the three bodyguards behind him immediately rushed toward Lucas.

Dallas smirked smugly.

Seeing how thin and weak Lucas looked, he assumed that his competent bodyguards would be able to beat Lucas into a pulp in less than a minute.

Suddenly, Dallas's phone in his pocket rang.

He took it out and saw that it was Nate calling.

Dallas hurriedly picked it up and said respectfully, "Hey, Nate."

"How's your business going? How's that kid now? Did you manage to catch him?"

Dallas laughed out loud twice. "Nate, you called at the right time. That punk is getting beaten up by my bodyguards right now, and he's going to die soon. Hear that? He's already screaming..."

"Ah!"

"Waahhh!"

"Argh!"

There were three successive screams of misery.

While smugly reporting the situation to Nate, Dallas suddenly realized that something was wrong.

These screams... didn't seem to be from Lucas but his bodyguards...

Dallas raised his head and looked over. His eyes immediately widened in utter shock.

The scene in front of him was a one-sided beating.

However, the person being beaten up was not Lucas but his three bodyguards!

Lucas was singlehandedly beating up these three strong and burly bodyguards, and they were utterly powerless to resist!

In just a few moments, Dallas's bodyguards were thrown toward him like sandbags. They were vomiting blood, and the bones of their limbs were all distorted to the point that they couldn't even stand up.

Dallas stared blankly at everything in front of him while Nate's voice was still coming from his phone. "Seems like that punk is dead meat, huh? Dallas, get your people to hit him harder. You must beat the living daylights out of him and then drag him back so that I can finish him off personally! How dare he snatch my woman? He must be tired of living!"

Nate's voice was full of excitement and a twisted mania.

He, the scion of the Walkers, had been completely humiliated at Alexis's birthday party just now. Not only had he been rejected by Alexis on the spot, but he had also been defeated by Lucas, whom he saw as a penniless swindler. He would never tolerate this humiliation!

In fact, two years ago, Nate had received instructions from his family to woo Alexis soon after she turned eighteen.

Alexis was Clement's only daughter, and she would inherit all of the Coles' empire in the future. Regardless of who she married, her husband would also get to take over the businesses of the Coles. As the most favored scion of the Walkers, Nate thus became the first candidate his family considered.

Nate naturally accepted this task, which could be considered an enjoyable one, with great pleasure.

The Coles were rich and powerful. As long as Nate married Alexis, he would become the future successor and next head of his family. Besides, Alexis was gorgeous and young, so he didn't think he would lose out at all by marrying her.

Unfortunately, despite his wonderful plan, Nate failed to consider the fact that Alexis wasn't a tacky and gullible girl. Even though he had exhausted all his means, he couldn't get Alexis to notice him, let alone fall in love with him.

After having been rejected by Alexis repeatedly, he decided to go all out and force himself on her. Once the deed was done, the Coles would have no choice but to marry her to him for the sake of covering up the scandal.

Unfortunately, after Nate secretly drugged Alexis's drink and was about to succeed in his plan, an expert secretly protecting her foiled his plan.

Since then, Alexis absolutely abhorred Nate. Edmund flew into a rage because of this matter, and the Coles and the Walkers almost fell out and went to war.

Afterward, the Walkers paid a tremendous price and even severely punished Nate by stripping him of his position and power as a core descendant. Since then, he had become an alienated figure in the family.

At that time, if Nate's father, the successor of the family, hadn't begged for mercy from the helmsman, Nate would have probably been kicked out of the family.

Now, Nate had finally gotten his grandfather's permission to woo Alexis again. As long as he was successful, the Walkers would value him again and make him a core member. He would also regain his status and power.

But the confession he had meticulously prepared today was once again ruthlessly rejected by Alexis, while the damn Lucas became the person she admitted to liking. It made Nate hysterical with jealousy!

Thus, he was bent on killing Lucas!

After waiting for several seconds and not getting a response, Nate urged impatiently, "Hey, what are you doing? Say something!"

"I... I..." Dallas stammered, unable to speak a complete word.

Lucas was walking toward him one step at a time while exuding a terrifying aura.

"What's wrong? Are you mute? Why are you stuttering? I'm asking you how that punk Lucas Gray is now? Have your people beaten him half to death yet? Remember, don't kill him right away. Keep him at his very last breath, and let me finish him off. Do you hear me?" Nate's voice continued to come out of the phone.

Lucas suddenly took the phone from Dallas's hand and said with a smile, "Oh, I'm sorry. It seems that you can't achieve this goal anymore!"

"You... Lucas Gray? Why are you the one speaking? Where's Dallas?" Nate immediately bellowed angrily. But he couldn't get any response because Lucas hung up right away.

"F*ck!" Nate cursed angrily. He tried calling Dallas again, but he could no longer reach him.

...

Meanwhile, Dallas watched as Lucas hung up on Nate and then threw his phone into a nearby puddle. He couldn't even say anything to stop him.

As the scion of the Watson family of San Jose, who managed to get close to Nate, Dallas was used to throwing his weight around.

But this was the first time he felt fear, which he hadn't experienced for a long time.

Lucas had effortlessly defeated his three strong bodyguards and even crippled them. If Lucas acted against him, there was no way he'd be able to escape!

At this moment, Dallas was full of remorse.

In order to kill Lucas, he had deliberately chosen this remote and deserted location in hopes that few people would pass by. But now, Dallas was the one in this terrifyingly dire situation where his efforts to call out for help were futile!

"Lu-Lucas, I'm sorry! I was wrong! I... I shouldn't have targeted you and tried to harm you. This... Nate Walker forced me! As long as you let me off, I'll give you two... no, five million dollars. How about that?" Dallas was no longer as arrogant as earlier. He knelt in front of Lucas and begged spinelessly..

Chapter 667: Corpse In The Car

At this moment, Dallas was truly terrified of Lucas. He saw the obvious killing intent in Lucas's eyes. If Lucas wanted to kill him here, he wouldn't be able to resist at all.

His heart full of contempt, Lucas stared coldly at Dallas, who was crying miserably and begging him without any concern for his image.

"If you had known this would happen, why did you do it in the first place? It's too late to regret now."

After speaking indifferently, Lucas kicked Dallas in the throat. Dallas's cervical vertebrae snapped with a loud crack, and he immediately stopped breathing.

Lucas wasn't being ruthless, but rather, he knew very well that Dallas didn't deserve to be spared.

Even though Lucas hadn't provoked him in any way, Dallas had repeatedly provoked him and targeted him. He had even made his driver try to crash his car into Lucas's and instructed his bodyguards to beat Lucas into a pulp. Afterward, he would have sent him to Nate and let Nate kill him.

Lucas was no saint, and he wouldn't spare the life of someone who repeatedly tried to kill him, let alone believe the nonsense about Dallas wanting to turn over a new leaf.

If Lucas really spared him, the first thing Dallas would do after getting out of danger would probably be to gather the experts of his family and the Walkers to kill him.

In that case, Lucas obviously wouldn't be so stupid as to let him go home and then return to cause him trouble.

After taking one last look at Dallas's corpse on the ground, Lucas returned to his car and drove toward Orange County without looking back.

The three seriously injured bodyguards lying unconscious on the ground and the corpse whose eyes were staring at the sky were the only ones remaining to describe what had happened here.

In a villa of the Walker in San Francisco...

Nate's expression was extremely ugly. Just now, he had tried to call Dallas several times, but no one answered.

After associating it with Dallas's bizarre silence and stammering, as well as Lucas's clear sentence, Nate had an ominous premonition.

Generally speaking, Dallas, his shameless lackey, would never have the guts to ignore his calls. And logically speaking, his phone shouldn't have ended up with Lucas unless...

Something had happened to Dallas!

The moment he thought of this possibility, Nate found it really hard to accept.

He understood that Dallas was terrified of death. And since he was dealing with Lucas for him, he had definitely brought several bodyguards with him, which was exactly what Dallas had done.

Now, the issue was, how could Lucas force Dallas to stay silent and even snatch away his phone under the protection of so many bodyguards?

The only possibility was that... Lucas managed to subdue all of Dallas's bodyguards in that short period of time!

Nate thought that it should be impossible because the Watsons were a top-tier family in San Jose after all. The bodyguards they sent to protect Dallas, their direct descendant, had to be very competent. How could Lucas defeat them so easily?

He reckoned that there were some other variables. But he couldn't get through to Dallas's phone, so it was impossible to ask him about the situation!

While Nate was feeling extremely irritated, his phone suddenly rang.

He felt a surge of excitement in his heart, thinking that Dallas was finally calling. But he was soon disappointed because the phone number on the caller ID was one he didn't recognize.

He wanted to decline the call. But for some reason, he suddenly felt that he shouldn't miss the call. So he subconsciously pressed the answer button. "Hello, who is it?"

"Hello, Mr. Walker! Sorry for taking the liberty to call and disturb you. I'm Dallas's father, Reynold Watson. May I ask if my son... is okay now? Is he with you?" The voice of a middle-aged man came. His voice was obviously trembling, and he seemed extremely nervous.

Nate frowned and snapped in displeasure, "I don't know where he is now. I can't get through to him either. Besides, why are you calling me to look for your son? I'm not his father!"

"Mr. Walker... Here's the thing, I... I just received a phone call from a stranger who... who told me that Dallas failed to complete the task you gave him, so... so you got someone to kill him. Is that true?" Reynold's voice trembled more and more, and it was even full of suppressed anger and panic.

"What did you say?!" Nate was astonished. He sprung up from the couch and roared angrily, "What did you say? Dallas has always been with me. How could I send someone to kill him? Who the hell told you that?"

Hearing that Nate had lost his temper, Reynold hurriedly said, "Mr. Walker, I... I just got flustered and muddled because I haven't been able to contact my son, and I even received that phone call just now. That's why I panicked and called you to confirm the truth... I-I never intended to offend or accuse you!"

"As for that phone call, it was an anonymous number. When I called back, I was told it was an unregistered number. There's no way for me to find out who the caller was. If you have any news about my son, please inform me. Thank you very much!"

"Okay, I'll let you know if I have any news about him." Nate hung up the phone ruthlessly.

But he was increasingly certain that something was amiss.

Initially, he was concerned about what had happened between Lucas and Dallas. But he didn't believe that Lucas could defeat Dallas's bodyguards and snatch Dallas's phone.

But now that Reynold said someone had informed him that Dallas was killed by Nate, the matter seemed even fishier.

Of course, Nate knew very well that he didn't get anyone to kill Dallas, but he wondered how Dallas was doing now.

Is he safe and sound, or has he really died, just as that stranger said on the phone?

At this moment, Nate's personal assistant suddenly rushed in in a hurry. Without even knocking on the door, he reported with panic written all over his face, "Bad news, Mr. Walker! The chauffeur just found... a corpse in the trunk of your car!"

"What?!" Nate didn't have time to bother with the assistant rudely barging because he was instantly stunned by the flabbergasting news.

He strode forward and grabbed the assistant's collar. "Whose corpse is it?! Tell me!"

"It's... Dallas Watson's corpse!"

Chapter 668: Destroying the Corpse and Wiping Out the Traces

Nate was thunderstruck, and his mind was exploding because of this news.

Only after several seconds did he return to his senses and bellow angrily, "Where is it? Where are the car and the corpse now?"

"Outside in the garage!"

After the assistant finished stammering this, Nate pushed him away and rushed toward the garage outside the villa as quickly as he could.

There was a fiery red Maserati parked right at the door of the luxurious and spacious garage.

It was the latest Maserati model. It was incredibly cool and stylish, so Nate had been driving it around lately.

Several panic-stricken servants were standing nervously beside the Maserati with cloths and tools in their hands. They had obviously been preparing to wash Nate's car when they suddenly discovered the corpse in the trunk.

"Get out of my way!" Nate hollered.

The servants, already terrified by the sight of the corpse, immediately scattered and vanished out of sight.

Nate walked toward his Maserati, looked into the trunk, and immediately recognized the man stuffed inside to be his loyal follower Dallas.

At this moment, Dallas's eyes, which had long lost their luster, were fixed on Nate. Coupled with his ashen face, he looked extremely terrifying.

A sudden chill surged from the bottom of Nate's feet.

He took several steps back, his heart pounding wildly.

This man, who had been alive and kicking an hour ago, had turned into a corpse that seemed to have died with indignation in just the blink of an eye. It utterly frightened Nate.

It was definitely the closest he had been to death!

Dallas... was actually dead!

His corpse was even stuffed into the trunk of his car!

Who... who did it? Nate's mind was a mess, but Lucas's face was the first to pop into his mind.

Could Lucas Gray have really dared to kill Dallas?

"Mr. Walker, what should we do now? Should... we inform the Watsons?" The assistant who came to report the news to Nate just now asked with great caution.

As Nate's personal assistant, he was naturally very clear about the relationship between Dallas and Nate.

Although to them, Dallas was just Nate's lackey, they had to admit that Dallas's status wasn't low.

The Watsons were a top-tier family in San Jose, and Dallas's father, Reynold, was the current helmsman of the Watson family. Since Dallas was his only son, he would definitely have become the next helmsman.

Although the Watsons were almost attached to the Walkers, the Watson had been developing well in recent years thanks to the power of the Walkers. Thus, they were no longer as subservient to the Walkers as before.

In particular, the Watsons and the Kingstons, another top family in San Francisco, had gotten acquainted some time ago. The Watsons had even given the hosting rights of the Elite Business Exchange to the Kingstons.

Therefore, the Walkers' control over the Watsons was no longer as secure as before. If Reynold found out that his son had died and the corpse was in Nate's car, he would have a hard time explaining.

Nate was not a complete fool.

He frowned and pondered for a long time before suddenly saying, "Immediately drive to the woods in the south of San Francisco and burn Dallas's corpse! Remember to do it without anyone noticing and leaving any traces behind. Do you hear me?"

"As for this car, I never want to see it again. Destroy it somewhere. Push it off a cliff or drive it into the river, just get rid of it for me. Got it?"

Although he had spent a hefty amount to buy his beloved Maserati not long ago, Dallas's corpse was in the trunk after all, and Nate definitely wouldn't touch it again.

Besides, who knew what traces were left in the car?

While giving instructions to his assistant coldly, Nate stared straight into his eyes and warned, "You must keep your lips sealed about this. No one is to breathe a word about this! If I find out that someone has heard about it, I won't spare you!"

The assistant complained inwardly, *This is definitely a thankless task. In case anything goes wrong, I'll probably be the first person held accountable.*

But as Nate's personal assistant, he had no choice but to bite the bullet and accept the task. "Yes, Mr. Walker. I won't spout any nonsense about this. I will definitely complete the task!"

"Go. Remember, the faster you settle it, the better. Make sure not to leave any traces!" Nate instructed again.

Only after watching the assistant close the trunk and drive the Maserati away warily did Nate turn around sullenly.

In fact, he should have told the Watsons about Dallas' death and all of his conjectures about Lucas.

But they were just his speculations. Without any evidence to prove that Dallas had died at the hands of Lucas, Nate would instead arouse the suspicion of the Watsons because Dallas's corpse appeared in the trunk of his car.

After all, Lucas was just the live-in son-in-law of a run-down family in Orange County, so no one would believe that he had the ability and the guts to kill the future successor of the Watsons.

Besides, with the mysterious stranger's anonymous phone call to Reynold, he reckoned that Reynold would definitely think that he had killed Dallas and then framed Lucas for it.

After all, almost all the guests of Alexis's birthday party were aware that Nate and Lucas had gotten into a conflict at the party.

So after thinking about it, Nate decided not to let the Watsons know that he had found Dallas's corpse in the trunk of his car.

The best solution at hand was to first destroy the corpse and let everyone think that Dallas was missing. This way, no one would suspect him.

As for Lucas, the likely culprit, it wouldn't be too late to deal with him later!

The Watsons' home in San Jose...

Reynold Watson, the head of the Watson family, was sitting in his study uneasily. Although the secretary next to him was still reporting to him the information regarding the preparation for the Elite Business Exchange taking place tomorrow, Reynold didn't process anything he said.

Just a short while ago, he had received a call out of the blue, saying that his son had died at the hands of Nate Walker. Since then, Reynold's heart had been in his throat.

Afterward, he had made numerous calls to Dallas, but they all went unanswered. He had even called Nate, but the latter had denied it outright.

He was now at a loss for what to do. Most importantly, he had to find his son as soon as possible to determine if he had gotten into a mishap.

"Okay, stop talking to me about the exchange. I'm not in the mood to listen to it now. Has there been any news from the people sent out? Has Dallas been found?" Reynold unceremoniously interrupted the secretary's report and asked about the matter that concerned him the most.

"Uh, not yet..."

As soon as the secretary answered, Reynold's phone on the table suddenly started ringing. But it was actually a text message.

"Nate Walker's people are preparing to burn Dallas's corpse in the woods 30 kilometers southeast of San Francisco. It'll be too late if you don't head there right now."

Reynold's pupils suddenly shook.

"What? Burning my son's corpse? Are they planning to destroy his corpse and wipe out the traces?!"

Reynold suddenly sprung up and punched the table..

Chapter 669: Intercepting the Corpse

This sudden message was like a shocking thunderbolt striking the top of Reynold's head. A chill ran down his spine all the way to his feet, making him feel as though he had plunged into an ice cellar.

"No, this is impossible. My son is definitely not dead. This... text is definitely some made-up nonsense!" Reynold shook his head profusely, in complete disbelief of this bad news.

However, at this moment, his phone received another message. But this time, it was a short video only about ten seconds long.

Reynold pushed on the play button with trembling fingers.

"Immediately drive to the woods in the southeast of San Francisco and burn Dallas's corpse! Remember to do it without anyone noticing and leaving any traces behind. Do you hear me?"

"As for this car, I never want to see it again. Destroy it somewhere. Push it off a cliff or drive it into the river, just get rid of it for me. Got it?"

Nate's familiar yet cold voice sounded when the video played. The person in the video was clearly Nate. Reynold had seen him countless times and would never mistake him for someone else, so it was impossible for someone to pretend to be Nate and doctor the video.

The latest red Maserati sports car beside him and the license plate number on it were extremely familiar to Reynold.

The corpse in the open trunk of this Maserati was revealed.

Although the resolution of the video was low, Reynold could tell at a glance that the corpse in the trunk of Nate's Maserati was none other than his precious son, Dallas!

"Dallas!" the grief-stricken Reynold howled furiously while gripping his phone tightly as tears gushed out of his eyes.

He actually had two sons. But when his eldest son was only five years old, he had accidentally fallen down the stairs and hit his head due to the negligence of the servants. As a result, his eldest son had died on the spot.

Later, Reynold became infertile because of an accident.

Therefore, Reynold doted on his only son, Dallas, greatly. He cherished him so much that he spoiled him as much as possible.

Later, the Walkers and the Watsons became rather close, so Reynold simply asked Dallas to befriend Nate.

In Reynold's opinion, Nate had an extremely high status in California, and no one in the state would dare to offend him.

He thought that if his son became close to Nate, no one would be so ignorant as to bully Dallas.

But Reynold never thought that his precious son would suddenly die, and his corpse was even in Nate's car!

After receiving the text message, Reynold didn't believe that Nate had murdered Dallas.

But he had now seen his son's corpse in the video with his own eyes and heard with his own ears Nate instructing his subordinates to destroy his son's corpse!

If Nate didn't murder Dallas, why didn't he tell Reynold? There was no reason for him to hide it from him and even order his men to get rid of Dallas's corpse quietly without leaving any traces.

"Gather all the people still in the Watson residence right away. Come with me to the woods near San Francisco immediately!"

San Jose was southeast of San Francisco, and the woods were between the two cities. Because it was remote and left undeveloped, the grass and trees had all overgrown, making it a good place for hiding the evidence of crimes and destroying corpses.

Since Reynold had already found out about it, there was no way he could just watch them burn his son's corpse without an explanation and destroy the evidence for him to avenge his son.

Reynold gritted his teeth and roared furiously, "No matter what, we must rush ahead of the Walkers and bring Dallas's corpse back!"

The secretary, who had heard the whole thing at the side, was already drenched in cold sweat. "Yes! Mr. Watson, I'll get to it immediately!"

Fifteen minutes later, the Watsons' convoy sped all the way and overtook numerous cars to arrive in the woods. They pulled over at a mountain road junction that automobiles inevitably had to pass.

San Jose was geographically closer to the woods, and since the Walkers were coming from San Francisco, they had to go around a steep mountain. Thus, Reynold was confident of catching up with the Walkers before they arrived here.

Just as he expected, after waiting for around six minutes, a pair of headlights appeared, and a bright red Maserati drove over at a moderate speed.

As soon as Reynold saw the striking color of the car, a terrifyingly cold glint of hatred appeared in his eyes.

The corpse of his son, Dallas, was lying in the trunk of this car!

Nate's assistant, driving the Maserati, was already covered in goosebumps because he had to drive in the middle of the night with a corpse in the trunk.

As soon as the car turned into the mountain road leading to the woods, it was suddenly blocked by several black Mercedes-Benz on the narrow mountain road, making it impossible for him to pass.

The assistant panicked a little. But at the thought that he was Nate's valued assistant, he felt a great sense of pride again.

There were very few people in California who dared not to respect the Walkers.

Nate's assistant slammed on the brakes and honked several times. But the convoy in front of him didn't move an inch. Not only did they not make way for him, but a few burly men even walked out.

The assistant rolled down the window and yelled, "Get out of the way! Didn't you hear me honking? I work for the Walkers of San Francisco, and I'm Nate Walker's assistant. If you don't hurry up and get out of the way, you'll be making an enemy of the Walkers. Can you afford to bear the consequences?"

After working for Nate for a long time, the assistant had gotten used to bossing others around and being all arrogant.

"Hah, get out the way, my foot! You're just a dog of the Walkers. How dare you throw your weight around in front of me!?" Reynold's eyes were bloodshot as he hollered lividly, "Go kill him!"

"Yes, Mr. Walker!" Six tall and strong bodyguards in black suits came out from behind Reynold and rushed straight toward the red Maserati.

Only then did Nate's assistant realize that things were amiss. Flustered, he wanted to roll up the windows and turn around to flee, but how could he have the time to do so?

Before he could start the car, a toned and muscular arm reached into the car through the window to grab his neck and pulled him out of the Maserati..

Chapter 670: Dog Eat Dog

"Help! Who... who the hell are you? I'm the assistant of Nate Walker. If you dare to lay a finger on me, the Walkers won't spare you!" After being dragged out of the car, the assistant was still issuing a threat while struggling.

Eyes full of hatred, Reynold slowly walked up to the assistant. "Won't spare me? Let me ask you. Where is my son, Dallas Watson?!"

"You... you're the helmsman of the Watsons?!" Nate's assistant's eyes widened as he looked at Reynold in disbelief. After hearing that Reynold was looking for Dallas, he instantly froze in place, and his body turned clammy all over.

Oh my god! The Watsons already found out about Dallas's death!

"Kill him!" Reynold commanded coldly.

Before the assistant could even react, the hand gripping his neck tightened and twisted. With a loud crack, Reynold's bodyguard broke the assistant's neck.

The assistant instantly died. His body turned limp and fell to the ground with a thud.

Reynold took a deep breath, stood next to the trunk of the Maserati, and opened it with shaky fingers.

A curled up corpse whose eyes were still wide open and staring out of the trunk appeared in front of Reynold. His son had died clearly with indignation.

"Son..." Reynold looked at the corpse of his beloved son and could no longer hold back from crying as tears fell on the cold and stiff corpse.

At this moment, he was no longer the powerful helmsman who controlled the entire Watson family but a father who had lost his only son.

The bodyguards standing beside Reynold also had a drastic change in expression. Only at this moment did they finally understand why the helmsman had suddenly summoned them and rushed to this deserted woods. They also understood why he had mercilessly instructed them to kill Nate's assistant.

It turned out that the only scion of the Watson family had already died, and his corpse had been stuffed into the trunk of the car of the Walkers' scion!

The bodyguards didn't dare to think or even ask about the exact situation.

At this moment, it was already late at night.

In the Walkers' villa...

Nate was in his bedroom, but he wasn't the least bit sleepy.

He wasn't in the mood to sleep, and he was even incredibly vexed and frustrated.

It was almost midnight, but the assistant he had sent to get rid of Dallas's corpse had yet to return with good news.

It had been more than two hours since he left for the woods. No matter what, a long time had passed, so he should have finished.

Could something have happened to this kid along the way?

Or did he flee?

Or did he get greedy and secretly sell my new Maserati before absconding with the money?

While Nate was thinking about all sorts of possibilities, his mood worsened.

Finally, after midnight passed, he couldn't wait any longer. He took out his phone and called his assistant.

But to his anger, no one answered.

Refusing to give up, Nate made several calls, but no one answered.

Damn it! What the hell is going on? Where is this bastard now? Could he have really run away?

Nate was exasperated. He picked up the lamp on the bedside table and smashed it on the floor.

But no matter how furious and loud Nate was, his assistant was already dead and would never answer his phone call again.

At this moment, in the woods, Reynold wept in front of Dallas for a long time before bringing his corpse back home.

He instructed his servants to store Dallas's corpse in a cold storage room in the Watson residence to freeze it.

Reynold didn't disclose the news of Dallas's death to the rest of the Watsons, and he even ordered his secretary and bodyguards who had witnessed the incident today to keep their lips sealed.

If anyone present today dared to breathe a word about what had happened, they would definitely be killed!

It wasn't that Reynold didn't want to avenge his son, but rather, the Watsons' status and power were far lower than the Walkers'. If the matter blew out of proportion now, he couldn't count on the Walkers to hand Nate over to pay for his son's life. They probably wouldn't even punish Nate!

After all, in the Walkers' opinion, they had helped the Watsons get everything they owned today, so the Watsons should be loyal to the Walkers. They felt that they could demand anything from the Watsons, but the Watsons couldn't ask them for justice.

Reynold was clenching his jaw so hard that his gums were almost bleeding. But at this moment, he had to force himself to bear with it regardless of how angry and full of hate he was.

Reynold could only wait for the right opportunity to deal with the Walkers and make Nate pay for the death of his son.

In Reynold's mind, the scale was gradually tipping toward the Kingstons.

Like the Walkers, the Kingstons were one of the top three families in San Francisco and an even match for them.

Just a short while ago, the Watsons had transferred the hosting rights of the Elite Business Exchange to the Kingstons, thus forming a close connection with them.

Lance, the helmsman of the Kingstons, had informed Reynold that the Kingstons would be making a great move at the upcoming Elite Business Exchange. If nothing unexpected happened, the Kingstons would become the new overlord of California.

Once the Kingstons dominated California, the Watsons, as their allies, would also gain tremendous benefits. At that time, the Watsons wouldn't be afraid of the Walkers and could even trample on them.

When the time came, Reynold decided that he had to tie the murderer Nate to his son's corpse and then use his blood as a sacrifice to his son, who had been killed unjustifiably!

Reynold's eyes flashed with hatred. Finally, he gave his son's corpse in the cold storage room one last look before leaving with gritted teeth.

At this moment, Lucas had already returned to his villa in Orange County.

After he washed up and lay in bed, his phone suddenly vibrated with a text message.

"Everything has been settled according to plan."

Lucas didn't seem surprised. He calmly put his phone down and gently held Cheyenne, who was already asleep, in his arms.

Neither Nate nor Reynold knew that Lucas was the culprit behind everything that had happened tonight.

Since Nate and Dallas wanted to kill him, he decided to turn them against each other. They had brought it upon themselves..

Chapter 671: Venue of the Exchange

When Lucas and Cheyenne headed downstairs after getting up the next morning, they discovered that Charlotte had already left in a hurry.

After breakfast, Lucas asked, "Cheyenne, I'm going to San Francisco today to attend the Elite Business Exchange. If you're free today, do you want to come with me?"

Cheyenne thought about it but eventually declined. "No, I'll give it a pass. I heard that the Elite Business Exchange will be held until very late. Charlotte is especially busy these days, and Dad is still hospitalized. If I go with you, there won't be anyone to look after Amelia when she comes home from school. I'll just stay home and wait for you to come back to tell me about the exchange."

She smiled warmly.

"Okay, I'll tell you about it when I come back." Lucas smiled gently and kissed the adorable and delicate Amelia beside him before walking out of the villa.

Lucas's Jaguar had been smashed by Nate last night and couldn't be repaired within a short time.

He originally intended to drive another car in the garage to San Francisco, but he discovered that two of the Hales' cars were already parked outside the gate.

Bruce and his grandson Connor were standing beside a low-profile black Porsche, waiting for Lucas.

Lucas immediately walked straight toward them and got inside the Hales' car.

"Lucas, I'm afraid this Elite Business Exchange will be extremely unfavorable to you. Do you really still want to go?" Bruce Hale asked worriedly.

He had already mentioned this issue about the Elite Business Exchange before. This time, the Elite Business Exchange was suddenly brought forward by a month, and the hosting rights were even given to the Kingstons, who had a feud with Lucas. Regardless of how he looked at it, the exchange seemed unfavorable to Lucas.

Lucas smiled. "Are you afraid?"

Bruce shook his head. "I don't care. I'm already old, and I've seen enough of the world, so I'm brave enough. But I'm worried about you. After all, the Kingstons are joining forces with the Smiths, one of the eight most powerful families in DC. I'm afraid it won't be easy to deal with them!"

Just now, Lucas had already told Bruce about the conjectures he and Edmund had made yesterday. Since Lucas and the Hales were now no longer in an ordinary relationship, he wouldn't hide this important information from the Hales.

Therefore, Bruce became even more worried than before.

But Connor, sitting in the passenger seat, wasn't as worried as his grandfather after he saw how calm and confident Lucas was in the rearview mirror.

"Grandpa, Mr. Gray isn't an ordinary person. Even if the Kingstons and the Smiths join forces, I'm afraid that they won't be a match for Mr. Gray. Mr. Gray will never do anything that he's not sure about, so what's the point of worrying about these unnecessary things, Grandpa?"

After witnessing Lucas's ability numerous times, Connor had already developed incomparable trust in Lucas. He knew that he wasn't the type who would put on a brave front and fight recklessly. If he seemed confident without showing the slightest trace of panic, then he truly had the absolute strength to obtain victory.

Hearing his grandson's words, Bruce was stunned for a moment before shaking his head and laughing. "Look at me. I'm really getting old. Connor is right. With Lucas's strength, there is no need for me to worry at all even if the other party is the powerful Smith family!"

Lucas smiled. "Don't worry. The Smiths can't do anything to me. Not to mention the Smiths, even in the entire country, there's probably no one who can defeat me!"

Lucas's words were full of a domineering aura that carried condescension for the world.

If someone else said this, they would definitely come off as hopelessly arrogant.

But the amazing thing was that there seemed to be nothing wrong with this sentence when Lucas said it. Instead, it made others feel heartfelt admiration.

For example, Bruce and Connor were both full of endless confidence in Lucas and had a strong motivation to fight, their previous worries gone without a trace.

Due to the upcoming Elite Business Exchange, there were a lot of vehicles from various cities gathered in San Francisco, causing huge traffic jams.

When they arrived in San Francisco, the city was much livelier than usual, with countless vehicles and pedestrians everywhere.

When they arrived at the Walton Hotel in San Francisco, the official venue of the Elite Business Exchange, the traffic outside was even more congested.

"Because the Elite Business Exchange is held only once every three years, and the invitees are all the top-tier families and forces in various cities in California, many uninvited second and third-tier families aren't willing to let go of this opportunity to exchange. So there will also be another business exchange with lower entry requirements, specially open to those second and third-tier families."

Knowing that it was Lucas's first time attending the Elite Business Exchange, Bruce took the initiative to explain to him.

"The second business exchange is being held in the stadium opposite Walton Hotel, so there's a huge flow of human traffic here."

Lucas nodded.

Bruce added, "When we arrive at the Walton Hotel in a bit, we'll be able to enter directly as long as we show our invitation cards. There are all sorts of services inside, so we basically don't have to go out."

“Also, some small gatherings and sales events will be held in the exhibition hall on the top floor of the Walton Hotel. People with fine items they’d like to sell and people who want to purchase antiques, luxurious houses and cars, manor and real estate, and so on may go there to take a look.

“Of course, correspondingly, the ordinary business exchange has this segment too. There are countless vendors with all kinds of things to sell. There’s plenty of good stuff, but it’s also common for people to spend a lot of money on counterfeits.

“But all of this depends on the judgment of each individual. Lucas, do you want to browse the stalls outside or go to the hotel to get some rest? After all, the Elite Business Exchange won’t officially start until seven in the evening. Until then, you have ample time to do what you want.”

Bruce informed Lucas of all the details and other things he knew about the Elite Business Exchange.

Lucas wasn’t very interested in resting in the hotel. Instead, he was somewhat interested in visiting the markets affiliated with these exchanges.

“I’ll just walk outside and show up at the exchange when it’s almost time. You don’t have to worry about me. Go ahead and do your own thing,” Lucas said with a faint smile.

He knew that the Hales, with their current status, definitely had to do all kinds of networking, especially since they were at a grand event like the Elite Business Exchange.

So he sent Bruce and Connor off and got out of the car to stroll leisurely outside the hotel.

Before he could take a few steps, Lucas suddenly heard a voice of surprise coming from behind him.

“Lucas? You’re here too! What a coincidence!” Lena appeared in front of Lucas with a bright smile..

Chapter 672: Accompany Me To Shop

Seeing Lena, Lucas raised his brows in surprise. “Are you also here for the Elite Business Exchange?”

Lena nodded with a smile. “Yes, the Elite Business Exchange is only held once every three years, so it’s a rare opportunity for me to come. During the last exchange, I was

still abroad and couldn't come back. This time, I decided I had to witness its splendor. Otherwise, I'll have to wait another three years."

While she spoke, another familiar figure appeared in front of Lucas and greeted him, "Mr. Gray, you're here to attend the Elite Business Exchange too. That's wonderful!"

This person was none other than Ethan Sawyer, who hadn't shown up in front of Lucas for a long time.

Beside him was a young woman of about 23 years old who somewhat resembled Lena.

She was a few years younger than Lena and still had some baby fat on her face. But she was currently frowning petulantly, seemingly in a bad mood.

Lucas reckoned that she was Lena's younger sister, whom he hadn't met before.

Lucas glanced at Ethan but didn't respond to his words. Instead, he nodded with an indifferent expression.

When Karen's matter was getting out of hand, and the reputations of Lucas and the Stardust Corporation were thoroughly tarnished, Lucas had gone to the Kingstons in San Francisco to get Karen back. At the time, the Parkers, the Hales, and Joe of Little Atlantis City had all rushed to the Kingston residence unanimously and stood firmly on Lucas's side despite the risk of becoming enemies with the Kingstons.

On the other hand, Ethan never once showed up or even gave Lucas a phone call.

Only after there was a twist in events in the matter between Karen and Lucas and a complete turnaround for Lucas and the Stardust Corporation did Ethan call him to show him concern, as if he had just learned about the matter.

This incident alone was enough to clearly show everyone's true colors.

Lucas was already disappointed in Ethan. So now that they met again, although Lucas didn't face him with a hostile attitude on Lena's account, it was impossible for them to return to the way they used to be.

Noticing Lucas's indifference toward him, Ethan knew what was going on and couldn't help looking a little ashamed.

But as an experienced businessman who managed to become the wealthiest man in Orange County, he was naturally very thick-skinned. He turned around and said to the young lady beside him, "Yvette, this is Mr. Lucas Gray, whom I've mentioned to you many times. Hurry up and greet him."

The young lady glanced at Lucas and said in a withdrawn manner that made it seem as if she was just completing a task, "Hello, Mr. Gray. I am Yvette Sawyer. Nice to meet you."

Lucas was somewhat amused because she was clearly being forced by her father to introduce herself to a stranger.

"Hello." He returned the greeting with a faint smile.

Lena laughed. "She's my sister, and she just returned from abroad recently. She doesn't know many people yet! By the way, Lucas, are you going to the Walton Hotel now?"

Lucas shook his head and looked across the wide road at the lively stalls in front of the stadium. "No, I'm planning to stroll around and browse the stalls outside for a while before going in later."

Lena immediately smiled radiantly and said with surprise, "Wow, what a coincidence! I'm also planning to look at the stalls. We can go together!"

Before Lucas could say anything, Ethan said smilingly, "That's really a coincidence. Lena, how about you stroll around with Mr. Gray. If you see anything you like, go ahead and buy it. I'll take your sister inside. I happen to have some old friends I'd like to meet."

After saying goodbye to Lucas, Ethan took Yvette into the Walton Hotel.

Now, only Lucas and Lena were standing here.

Lena looked behind Lucas and asked curiously, "Lucas, are you here alone today? Didn't Cheyenne come with you?"

"Well, she's busy and has to pick up Amelia from school in the evening, so she didn't come," Lucas answered.

"I see." Lena wanted to pretend to find it a shame, but she couldn't help sounding somewhat glad as she beamed with joy.

"Come on. Let's go over there together. I heard that there's some good stuff for sale in the markets every year!" Lena said happily while suddenly reaching out to hold Lucas's arm.

Lucas was surprised and immediately wanted to retract his arm.

Cheyenne was the only woman he had ever had such intimate interactions with.

"Hey, Lucas, I'm not taking advantage of you. It's just that I'm in heels today, and I can barely keep my balance while walking. Just do me a favor and lend me your arm for a

while, okay?" Lena lifted her head and looked at Lucas with a playful expression on her face.

She was indeed walking shakily in a pair of stilettos with thin, ten-centimeter long heels.

Since Lena had already asked him to do her a favor, Lucas couldn't just push her aside.

"Since your shoes are making walking inconvenient for you, I think you'd better go to the hotel to rest," Lucas said somewhat helplessly.

"No, what's the point of staying in the hotel? My dad will surely take me to meet his business partners again. In addition to socializing, I have to maintain a ladylike smile the whole time. My face is going to be stiff. I don't want to go!" Lena pouted and complained coquettishly, then she suddenly smiled. "Come on. Let's go over there and see what good things there are!"

She excitedly held onto Lucas's arm tightly and took the lead to walk toward the stalls across the road.

Lucas naturally had to follow Lena, allowing her to rest a small part of her weight on him as she walked across the street toward the entrance of the stadium.

Just across the road, Lucas bumped into another familiar face.

It was none other than Alexis's father, Clement Cole.

Yesterday at the Coles', Lucas got into a conflict with Clement twice.

The first time, Clement had taken the initiative to call Lucas to his study and warned him to stay away from his daughter, Alexis, and his father, Edmund. He had even offered Lucas three million dollars to repay Lucas for his kindness to Edmund. But Lucas had left without paying attention to him.

The second time, Clement ran to Edmund's garden and complained to Edmund about Lucas in an attempt to get Edmund to drive Lucas away from the Coles completely. But Clement ended up getting reprimanded by Edmund and left in exasperation.

Both times, Clement failed to get rid of Lucas and even suffered losses. So he was full of displeasure when he saw Lucas.

"Hey, I was wondering who you were. Aren't you Lucas Gray, the man who stole the limelight at my daughter's party yesterday? You're really despicable. You seduced my daughter, and now, you're behaving intimately with another woman. You're a scumbag indeed!" Clement lashed out hostilely without hiding his disgust and abhorrence for Lucas at all..

Chapter 673: Charlotte Gets The Wrong Idea

“...” Lucas was speechless.

He had already told Clement that he treated Alexis as a sister and merely acted as her shield at her party yesterday. Yet Clement made him out to be a villain who seduced his daughter with ill intentions.

Now, Clement had gotten the wrong idea about him and Lena too.

“Mr. Cole, you’ve misunderstood,” Lucas said with a frown.

“Hah, whether I’ve misunderstood or not doesn’t change the fact that you’re a scumbag! I’m warning you. You’d better stay away from my daughter in the future. Otherwise, I definitely won’t let you off!” Clement glowered at Lucas and then left arrogantly with his bodyguards.

Lucas felt helpless. There was no way to use common sense to reason with Clement. Moreover, he was way too prejudiced against Lucas, so they couldn’t communicate properly at all.

Holding onto Lucas’s arm, Lena said with an apologetic expression, “I’m sorry, Lucas. It seems I’ve caused you to be misunderstood!”

“Lucas?! You... you guys...”

Suddenly, another extremely familiar figure appeared in front of Lucas and Lena. She was staring at them in shock, especially at the way Lena was holding onto Lucas’s arm.

Lucas immediately retracted his arm from Lena’s grip almost with a whoosh. He looked a little awkward and felt slightly panicked.

The person standing in front of them was none other than Charlotte.

“Charlotte, why are you here in San Francisco too? How come I didn’t hear you mention it before?” Lucas frantically asked, somehow feeling guilty.

Charlotte looked at Lucas with disappointment and a complicated gaze in her eyes.

“Lucas, if I hadn’t come, I wouldn’t have seen what you were doing. How can you do this to Cheyenne?”

She stared closely at Lucas, her eyes full of emotions like disappointment, resentment, anger, and so on.

After finally clearing the misunderstanding she had about Lucas at the beginning, her impression of Lucas had been getting better and better. In her opinion, he was strong, tall, handsome, domineering yet gentle, and extremely nice to her, Cheyenne, and her family.

So Charlotte had always felt that Cheyenne was very lucky to have married Lucas.

But she never thought that she would witness her brother-in-law linking arms with another woman here. To make matters worse, the woman was her sister's best friend!

At this moment, Charlotte strongly felt the anger of being betrayed and extremely unjust for Cheyenne.

"Charlotte, you've misunderstood. There is nothing between me and Lena. We just happened to run into each other here, and she was having a hard time walking in heels, so I was giving her a hand. There's definitely no other meaning!" Lucas explained anxiously.

If it were an irrelevant outsider like Clement, Lucas wouldn't bother to explain anything even after they had misunderstood his relationship with Lena. But since it was Charlotte, he panicked because he didn't want her to misunderstand him at all.

The only woman he had ever loved in his life was Cheyenne.

If Cheyenne heard about the misunderstanding, he would never be able to explain himself clearly.

Seeing how unconvinced Charlotte was, he hurriedly urged Lena, "Lena, quickly explain to Charlotte that we're just ordinary friends and nothing like what she thinks!"

The moment Lena saw Charlotte, she felt a pang of panic. But she began to feel extraordinarily uncomfortable after hearing how desperate Lucas was to prove that there was no other relationship between them.

"Uh, yes, Lucas is right. He and I are just ordinary friends. I wanted to visit the stalls here, but I'm wearing heels, making it inconvenient to walk properly. So I asked Lucas to let me hold onto his arm while I walked! There's really nothing... between us! Also, you mustn't tell your sister about this. Just take it that I'm begging you, okay?" Lena hurriedly explained.

Perhaps because she was too nervous, she looked panic-stricken and flustered when she explained, just like someone caught red-handed doing a misdeed. It made Charlotte feel that she was deliberately hiding something.

“Is it really a misunderstanding? Or did you do something immoral, so you have a guilty conscience facing me? If you’re really innocent, why are you afraid that I’ll tell my sister about it? Tell me!” Charlotte hollered at Lena furiously.

Although she hadn’t interacted much with Lena, she knew that Cheyenne cherished her friendship with Lena and would often mention the latter in front of her. During holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving, she would specially send some gifts and food to Lena, who was far away from home.

Thus, Charlotte was even more enraged when she saw that the woman holding onto Lucas’s arm was her sister’s best friend.

Hearing Charlotte’s overbearing questions, Lena looked even more helpless and flustered. She seemed to be at a loss for how to explain what happened today and could only plead over and over again, “Charlotte, your sister and I have been best friends for so many years. I... How could I ever betray her? This is really just a misunderstanding. You must believe me!

“I beg you not to tell your sister about this. I don’t want her to overthink. If she misunderstands me and takes me for that kind of woman, how can I still have the cheek to see her?

“I... I really don’t want to lose my friendship with Cheyenne, so Charlotte, please promise me not to tell her about this!”

The more Lena explained in such a manner and repeatedly asked Charlotte not to tell Cheyenne, the more it made Charlotte feel that she and Lucas had really done something they shouldn’t have done.

Charlotte couldn’t stand it anymore and snapped, “Enough! You know best whether you’ve done anything or not! Trust you to still claim to be best friends with my sister. You don’t deserve to be my sister’s friend, nor do you deserve the care she’s given you over the years!

“You... you really disgust me!

“And you, Lucas, so much for treating you as my good brother-in-law. I even saw you as my brother. You’ve really disappointed me! I’ll definitely tell Cheyenne about this. None of you try to take Cheyenne and my family as fools!”

With that, Charlotte glowered at them before turning around to storm off.

“Charlotte...” Lucas wanted to explain some more, but Charlotte had already left.

He stood rooted to the ground with his mouth wide open, at a complete loss for words.

Although it was obviously just a misunderstanding, and Lucas felt that he only needed to explain it clearly, Charlotte somehow got angrier after hearing the explanation. In the end, she seemed to believe that there was an illicit relationship between him and Lena.

Lucas was helpless and troubled.

Chapter 674: The Heartbroken Person

More seriously, if Charlotte really went home to tell Cheyenne about it, causing her to misunderstand too, Lucas simply couldn't imagine what kind of scene would happen then.

"Lucas, I'm sorry, it's all my fault. If I hadn't asked you to help, things wouldn't have turned out this way. I think I'd better go to Charlotte..." Lena looked at Lucas with an apologetic expression.

But before she could finish speaking, Lucas interrupted her, "No need. I'll explain to Charlotte and also tell Cheyenne clearly what happened today."

"No, you mustn't tell Cheyenne!" Lena immediately said anxiously. "Cheyenne... I'm afraid she'll overthink if she finds out. Besides, even if you clarify that it's a misunderstanding, I think she'll bear a grudge against me from now on. Lucas, please don't tell her!"

She looked at Lucas with a pleading look.

After hearing what Lena said, Lucas felt an uncomfortable feeling in his heart.

He and Lena were completely innocent to begin with, and even if they were misunderstood, there wouldn't be any more problems as long as they explained things clearly.

Lucas understood Cheyenne's character very well, so he knew that she definitely wouldn't hold a grudge or get into a conflict with Lena because of it.

On the contrary, Lena seemed to have no trust in Cheyenne at all, and she also seemed to make Cheyenne sound like a narrow-minded person who liked to overthink, which made Lucas very uncomfortable.

"You don't have to say anymore. Cheyenne is not that kind of person at all," Lucas said coldly and stopped talking to her. He chased after Charlotte.

No matter what, he had to explain the matter clearly to Charlotte, the person who witnessed it, to clear up her misunderstanding.

“Hey, Luc...” Lena tried to call out to Lucas to make him stop, but he was so fast that his figure had already vanished into the bustling crowd in just a few seconds.

As Lena watched Lucas disappear among the sea of people, her face gradually dimmed, and she felt utterly dejected.

After a while, she hung her head low. *Lucas, am I really just an ordinary friend to you? You refuse to say even one more word to me, yet you're afraid that she will misunderstand you. Is Cheyenne so important to you... I'm really... so unwilling!*

Lena clenched her fingers tightly, and her long fingernails dug into the flesh of her palm. But she seemed unaware of it as her heart was full of bitterness and frustration.

The first time she had met Lucas in the Opulence Club, she had been very unimpressed with him, the man Cheyenne had married, because she felt that apart from his handsome face, he was good for nothing.

But when a roaring motorbike suddenly appeared in front of the Sawyers' villa shortly after their first meeting, Lucas appeared as if he had descended from Heaven and rescued her from her crisis in the nick of time.

From this moment on, Lena discovered that her heart, which had never beaten for anyone, suddenly pounded vigorously.

So afterward, she couldn't help becoming more and more concerned about Lucas, desperately wanting to know everything about him and get closer to him.

Afterward, when she was once again almost assassinated in LA, Lucas once again suddenly appeared and saved her again.

She thought that it had to be God's will and arrangement to let her true love rescue her from danger twice.

Lena always thought so.

Thus, even after she tried to seduce Lucas at the pool on the top floor of LA's Intercontinental Hotel by wearing a bikini and pretending to sprain her ankle but was ultimately rejected by him, Lena still didn't want to give up.

When she ran into Lucas outside the Walton Hotel just now, she was extremely surprised and stopped behaving restrainedly. She even used her high heels as an excuse to get the opportunity to hold onto his arm. God knows how blissful she felt just now.

Lena hoped that time would stop at this moment forever and never flow forward again.

Even when Clement got the wrong idea about her relationship with Lucas, she didn't think about explaining at all and instead felt a burst of joy.

But the wonderful moment was short-lived, lasting only two short minutes before Charlotte's sudden appearance interrupted it.

When she saw Lucas's somewhat panicky explanation and heard him clarify that she and he were just ordinary friends, Lena felt that her heart was about to shatter into pieces.

Now, Lucas left her behind and ran after Cheyenne's sister without looking back for fear that she would misunderstand and eventually upset Cheyenne.

What about me then?

I'm so miserable now. Will anyone care if I'm sad or not?

Bitter tears streamed down Lena's cheeks quietly.

...

Meanwhile, the tall and long-legged Lucas quickly caught up with Charlotte and tried to explain to her that it was a misunderstanding.

"Charlotte, what just happened was really just a misunderstanding. I only gave Lena a hand because she's Cheyenne's friend. I really don't mean anything else!

"Don't you know what kind of a person I am? You should be very clear that Cheyenne is the only woman I love.

"I... Ah, I don't even know what to say. Anyway, this is definitely a misunderstanding, and I swear that there definitely isn't anything between me and her!"

...

Lucas kept chasing after Charlotte to explain to her. She was extremely furious and annoyed at first and wanted to ignore him, but when she saw how anxiously he was explaining, she slowly began to calm down.

In fact, in hindsight, she recalled that although Lena had indeed been holding onto Lucas's arm, he had actually stretched his arm out rather far, so he didn't really have any intimate contact with her.

If he was really cheating on Cheyenne with Lena, their actions should have been more intimate.

Besides, they were right in the middle of the Elite Business Exchange and the ordinary business exchange, where large crowds were coming and going. Many of them were definitely people of the major families of Orange County, as well as people who knew either Lucas or Lena.

Even if they were in an affair, they shouldn't have openly shown their affection for each other in public because they couldn't possibly want everyone to find out.

Thus, it was very likely that it was indeed a misunderstanding, as Lucas said.

Actually, Charlotte knew how well Lucas treated Cheyenne, so she reckoned that he wouldn't betray Cheyenne.

After Charlotte figured everything out, her angry face eased up slightly, and she slowed down a little.

But the thought of the expression on Lena's face when she was holding Lucas's arm just now still made Charlotte uncomfortable.

Indeed, it was possible that Lucas was honest and aboveboard and didn't have any other feelings for Lena, but there was definitely something wrong with Lena!

Thinking of this, Charlotte puffed up her cheeks again.

She turned around and stared at Lucas angrily. "Fine, on account that you've explained so much, I'll believe you this time!

"But you must stay away from Lena, that pretentious and scheming bitch, in the future. And even more so, you are not allowed to be alone with her again! Otherwise, I'll tell Cheyenne about it right away!" Charlotte said unyieldingly..

Chapter 675: Meeting An Old Friend

Although the corners of Lucas's mouth twitched involuntarily after he heard Charlotte calling Lena a pretentious and scheming bitch, he agreed to her request immediately.

He only got to know Lena because she was Cheyenne's best friend, and there was no strong friendship between them, so it didn't matter to him that they couldn't spend any time alone.

As for Charlotte's threat of telling Cheyenne about it, Lucas didn't take it to heart.

He had a clear conscience, so he wasn't afraid of what Charlotte would say.

“Hmph, your attitude is good.”

Seeing that Lucas agreed without hesitation, Charlotte’s face eased up, but she quickly added, “Oh yes, apart from that pretentious bitch Lena, you’re not allowed to spend any time alone together with other women. No intimate contact either!

“Also, if there are other women, especially those with ulterior motives, who want to approach you in the future, you must be smart enough not to let yourself get taken advantage of, got it?”

“And you have to be wary and careful when attending gatherings, cocktail parties, and social functions in the future, especially when you eat and drink. Don’t let others spike your drinks or food and then end up waking up beside some strange woman. If you bring a pregnant woman home one day, Cheyenne and I won’t allow it. Do you understand?”

“And...”

Charlotte was talking about some ordinary things at first. But toward the end, she got more and more absurd, leaving Lucas being caught between laughter and tears.

He reckoned that Charlotte must have read lots of strange novels, hence her... rich imagination.

“Okay, I promise! I’ll definitely keep an appropriate distance from all other women and respect myself. I will also pay attention to my food and drinks and not let women with ulterior motives have the possibility of getting close to me. Will this do?” Lucas said helplessly with a bitter smile.

“Hmph, you have to keep to your word!” Charlotte playfully crinkled her nose and finally forgave Lucas this time.

“Let’s go to the stalls over there and stroll around again! Just now, I set my sights on something, but I haven’t even had time to buy it yet! Lucas, you have to buy it for me!” Charlotte said coquettishly as he held onto Lucas’s arm.

“...” Lucas pointed to his arm Charlotte was holding and said speechlessly, “Didn’t you just say that I’m not allowed to have physical contact with any other woman?”

“Am I any other woman? I’m your sister!” Feeling a little ashamed and furious, Charlotte pinched Lucas’s arm.

Seeing Charlotte’s appearance, Lucas couldn’t help laughing.

But it was true that he had always treated Charlotte as his sister, and now that she really took herself as his sister, he felt elated.

“By the way, why did you suddenly come to San Francisco today? I haven’t heard you mention anything about coming here before. Do you have something to handle here in San Francisco?” Lucas asked curiously.

When he went out this morning, Charlotte had already left home early. If he had known that she was also coming to San Francisco, they could have traveled together.

“Of course I’m also here to attend the exchange!” Charlotte answered.

“You too...?” Lucas was a bit surprised.

After all, he had learned from the helmsmen Damon and Bruce that there were strict entry requirements for the Elite Business Exchange, and only the top-tier families and forces within California would receive an invitation.

He was surprised to hear that Charlotte had received an invitation to the exchange too.

Seeing how surprised Lucas was, Charlotte said with some displeasure, “Don’t be mistaken. The exchange I’m attending isn’t the Elite Business Exchange you’re attending. It’s just an ordinary one that the second and third-tier families and businesses are attending. It’s going to be held in the stadium.”

Only then did Lucas recall that Bruce had indeed mentioned this to him. The stadium where the ordinary business exchange was held was opposite the Walton Hotel, where the Elite Business Exchange was held, which was the reason for the large human traffic.

Charlotte was now the general manager of the Stardust Corporation’s Orange County branch and rather influential. It made sense for her to attend the ordinary business exchange.

Just as the two were about to reach the stalls at the entrance of the stadium, someone at the side called out in surprise.

“Charlotte?” It was the voice of a young woman.

Lucas and Charlotte turned around and saw a woman wearing brown aviator shades next to them, looking at Cheyenne in surprise.

Her arm was wrapped around a young man who looked like a wealthy scion beside her.

Both of them were wearing expensive clothes, almost all from designer brands.

Charlotte looked at the woman and asked in confusion, “Excuse me, do you know me?”

She felt that the woman's voice sounded familiar, but the large aviator shades were covering almost half of her face, revealing only her wavy hair and bright red lips. Charlotte really couldn't recognize her.

"It's me! I'm Vanessa Jensen. Charlotte, can't you even recognize me?" The woman laughed while taking off her aviator shades, revealing her face covered in exquisite makeup.

"Ah, it's you, Vanessa!" Charlotte immediately recognized the woman, and she exclaimed in surprise, "I didn't expect to run into you here today! What a coincidence!"

She initially wanted to immediately go up and hug Vanessa, her long-lost friend. But she decided not to do so after seeing Vanessa holding onto the arm of the man beside her, who was obviously her boyfriend.

But she was still beaming with joy as she quickly introduced her to Lucas. "Lucas, this is Vanessa, my best friend in high school! We haven't even seen each other for years."

Lucas nodded politely. "Hello."

At this moment, Vanessa finally realized that there was a man standing beside Charlotte, whose arm she was holding.

It seemed that Charlotte's relationship with this man should be similar to her own.

However...

Vanessa's eyes quickly swept over Lucas. He was wearing extraordinarily shabby clothes, which were not of any proper brands, let alone luxury brands like Armani, Versace, Zegna, etc. They seem like clothes from random brands.

Oh, it turns out that Charlotte has a penniless boyfriend. What a waste of her beauty.. A wave of contempt surged in her heart as she arrogantly shifted her gaze away from Lucas.

Chapter 676: Best Friends on the Surface

Vanessa and Charlotte began laughing and reminiscing about the past. But the man beside Vanessa suddenly said, "Vanessa, you haven't introduced this beautiful lady to me yet."

Only then did Vanessa remember that she forgot to introduce her and quickly said, "Honey, this is Charlotte Carter, my best friend back in high school. We were like sisters back then!" She covered her mouth and laughed.

“Nice to meet you, Miss Carter. I’m Vanessa’s boyfriend, Brian Klein.” Brian immediately extended his hand to give her a handshake.

Lucas narrowed his eyes slightly.

From the first moment he saw Charlotte, he had been keeping his eyes glued to her. Moreover, the look in his eyes didn’t contain the pure admiration for a beauty, but rather, it was repulsively lewd.

It was the same now. He extended his hand in a seemingly gentlemanly manner, but the way he looked at Charlotte was even more unrestrained and unpleasant.

After being stared at for a long time, Charlotte naturally felt something.

In particular, when she raised her head and saw the lecherous gaze in Brian’s eyes, her impression of this man became terrible.

If not for the fact that he was Vanessa’s boyfriend, Charlotte would have long cursed at him.

“Hello,” Charlotte, suppressing her anger, replied indifferently without any intentions to shake his hand.

Brian’s facial expression immediately stiffened.

He had planned to take liberties with Charlotte during the handshake and see just how soft the hands of the woman who was prettier than his girlfriend was.

A trace of disappointment and anger appeared on his face, but he could only awkwardly retract his hand while striking up a conversation on his own. “You two are high school classmates. It should have been a long time since you’ve met, huh?”

Vanessa said, “Yeah. After graduating, we went to college in different cities. It’s been more than five years since we last met! It’s a rare opportunity for us to meet here today, so we have to catch up and chat more!”

Although Charlotte was displeased with the way Brian was gawking at her, she was still glad to meet her best friend from high school.

Charlotte had been shopping together with Lucas, and now that Vanessa and her boyfriend were coming along, she should still ask for Lucas’s opinion. Seeing him nod slightly, she agreed, “Sure. It happens that we’re shopping here too. Let’s go together!”

Vanessa saw the subtle action.

She was shocked, and at the same time, she couldn’t help feeling some disdain.

Lucas was dressed like an ordinary penniless man. Vanessa was surprised that Charlotte had gotten such a boyfriend. Worse still, she had to seek his opinion before making a decision, an act of stooping too low in Vanessa's opinion. She felt that she was no longer the cold and aloof school belle she used to be.

Back then, although Vanessa was close friends with Charlotte, Charlotte was much prettier than her and thus became the school belle early on. Wherever she went, she would receive love letters and confessions from countless boys.

On the other hand, although Vanessa was easy on the eyes too, she paled in comparison to Charlotte. Compared to girls with average looks, she would definitely be considered pretty, but she was no match for Charlotte. So almost no one noticed her when she was next to the school belle.

At the time, Vanessa was once envious and wanted to sever her friendship with Charlotte and never hang out with her again. But Charlotte came from an affluent family and would bring snacks and little gifts for Vanessa every now and then.

Besides, many boys who wanted to get into Charlotte's good books were also smart enough to bribe Vanessa with all sorts of food and gifts after knowing that she was Charlotte's best friend.

So for the sake of the many benefits Vanessa obtained without any effort, she reluctantly continued to stay by Charlotte's side as her best friend for three years.

But she had to admit that the deep-rooted envy and hatred buried deep within her had always been a thorn in her flesh.

Now that she had met Charlotte again and saw that she had found such a mediocre boyfriend, she was truly thrilled.

Hah, so what if Charlotte was the school belle that everyone pursued back then?

She has a poor loser for a boyfriend now, and she's going to suffer for the rest of her life.

Unlike her, I've found a young and promising boyfriend like Brian. From now on, I can definitely trample on Charlotte Carter and defeat her!

The thought of it made Vanessa feel a proud sense of superiority and confidence.

"By the way, Charlotte, did you also rush here from Orange County to join the fun because you know that the exchange here happens only once in three years and that there's lots of good stuff to pick up at the entrance?"

"Uh, no..."

Before Charlotte could finish speaking, Vanessa interrupted her immediately, “Hey, those are just rumors. The really good stuff has long been bought at high prices by others. There’s no way we’d be able to get a good deal. We might even lose out and be deceived!

“If you really want to buy something good, just ask your boyfriend to get it for you! Oh, sorry, I almost forgot that your boyfriend probably can’t afford anything good. Look how shabbily dressed he is.

“Charlotte, it’s not that I’m trying to criticize you, but you used to be the school belle, and you’re still young and pretty now. You can get any guy you want. Why did you get together with such a... Ah, I don’t even know what to say to you.”

While speaking, Vanessa didn’t bother to keep her volume down or avoid anything. Instead, she looked at Lucas and almost pointed at his nose.

“Vanessa, he’s not...”

Charlotte knew that Vanessa must have misunderstood her relationship with Lucas and wanted to explain that Lucas was just her brother-in-law. But Vanessa interrupted her as soon as she spoke.

“Charlotte, it’s not that I’m deliberately trying to show off in front of you, but do you know about the Solar Corporation in LA?”

When trying to speak, Charlotte was interrupted by Vanessa twice in a row. And the latter didn’t seem to want to listen to her at all because she was focusing only on what she wanted to say. Besides, the remarks she made were a blatant expression of her disdain toward Lucas, which made Charlotte feel extremely uncomfortable.

The enthusiasm she felt upon seeing her old friend after years gradually faded.

But Charlotte definitely knew about the Solar Corporation. She was very familiar with it because it belonged to Lucas.

What does Vanessa mean by mentioning the Solar Corporation out of nowhere?

After noticing the bewilderment in Charlotte’s eyes, Vanessa held onto her boyfriend’s arm and said smugly, “Brian has become the deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation at such a young age. Impressive, huh?”

“He’s here to attend the exchange on behalf of the Solar Corporation today! Let me tell you. If you want to get a boyfriend, you have to get one like mine, right?”

As soon as she said that, Lucas immediately had an extremely strange expression on his face. The man with the lewd gaze turned out to be the deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation?

Chapter 677: You're Mocking Me

In fact, Lucas really wasn't sure who the current deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation was.

Previously, Lucas had left the entire Solar Corporation in Flynn's hands. But just a short while ago, he sent Flynn to the Stardust Corporation Headquarters in DC. Thus, Flynn left the Solar Corporation to a subordinate he trusted.

But if the deputy general manager of Solar Corporation was Brian, Lucas felt that he really had to consider thoroughly and carefully review the organizational structure of the current Solar Corporation.

After hearing what Vanessa said, Charlotte had a trace of surprise appear on her face. She turned to look at Lucas with a tinge of doubt in her eyes, but she was smart enough not to voice her question out loud at this moment.

"So... he's the deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation. That's very impressive." Charlotte could only give a perfunctory compliment.

But after hearing the compliment, Brian immediately puffed his chest up and said confidently and smugly, "It's not too bad. It's mainly because I'm quite outstanding and driven. Although I can only represent the Solar Corporation to attend the ordinary business exchange, I believe that in a few more years, I can definitely qualify with my own abilities to be invited to the Elite Business Exchange, a top event in the whole of California!"

"Wow, Honey, you're really impressive! I'm sure you can do it! You're still so young, and you're already the deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation. Maybe you'll be promoted to general manager soon. Afterward, you'll continue growing step by step and eventually be invited to the Elite Business Exchange!" Vanessa hugged Brian's arm and praised with admiration and joy written all over her face.

"..." Charlotte looked at their expressions and then at the silent Lucas. She was suddenly full of complicated emotions, and she even felt some sympathy for Vanessa and Brian.

If they found out that Lucas, standing right in front of them, was the chairman and true owner of the Solar Corporation, who could single-handedly decide Brian's future career

path and had already received an invitation to the Elite Business Exchange they longed for, she wondered how they would feel.

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But seeing how elated and proud they were, Charlotte decided not to tell them the cruel truth.

“Oh, I guess you two probably still don’t know what the Elite Business Exchange is, right? It’s okay. Let me explain it to you!” Brian suddenly said, perhaps because he noticed the lack of awe in their reactions to his great ambitions.

Before Charlotte could decline, he had already started babbling non-stop.

“Generally speaking, only the top-tier families and forces in each city of California, such as the Coles, the Kingstons, and the Walkers of San Francisco, are invited to the Elite Business Exchange. These three are the top families in California, and they’re bound to participate in the Elite Business Exchange every year.

“Then you have the four major families that you people in Orange County are familiar with. They’re all powerful top-tier families, so they’re invited too.

“Of course, the Parkers of LA are even more outstanding this year. Initially, the Parkers and the Owens were the two major families of LA. But not long ago, the Owens were destroyed, leaving the Parkers alone to dominate. Now, their power has far surpassed that of most first-tier families and can almost compare to the top three giants of San Francisco.

“The Solar Corporation now belongs to the Parkers, who should be able to go further during this Elite Business Exchange. Hence, the Solar Corporation will definitely get a larger space for development, and we may even be able to expand to the San Francisco market in full swing!”

Brian was behaving like an experienced person as he rattled on and on about the matters of the top families in California.

But at the end, he shifted the topic back to himself because his main intention was to praise himself and brag about how impressive he was.

Unfortunately, the expression on Charlotte’s face remained indifferent, and she seemed to be completely uninterested, making Brian, who was determined to impress her, feel dejected and frustrated.

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But what made him even angrier was that Lucas, next to Charlotte, didn't show any envy or awe at his achievements either, and he even seemed to be smirking.

It was obviously just a very faint smirk, but Brian found it an eyesore and thought that Lucas was clearly mocking him.

"Why are you laughing? Do you think that what I said is ridiculous?" Brian suddenly snapped at Lucas angrily.

"Did I laugh at you?" Lucas asked innocently.

Although he really felt that Brian's behavior was ridiculous and amusing, he had, in all fairness, shown Brian due courtesy by holding his laughter back and refraining from making any remarks.

"You're still denying it, huh? You were clearly mocking me by smirking. What right do you have to mock me?" Brian hollered in exasperation.

He had just spoken to show off in front of Charlotte to make her realize how high his status was. But she was completely unfazed, and Lucas was even smirking, so he started venting all his anger on Lucas.

"I'm in a good mood now. Why can't I smile?" Lucas raised his eyebrows, surprised by Brian's reason.

"You weren't smirking at any other time. But when I talked, you smirked. You clearly did it on purpose! Don't think I don't know what you're really thinking!" Brian looked indignant. Those who didn't know would probably think that Lucas had done something to him.

Of course, Vanessa stood on her boyfriend's side, and she shouted at Lucas, "What are you?! How dare you mock my boyfriend? I'm afraid you haven't even heard of the things he just said. He was kind enough to explain things in layman terms, but you mocked him. You've really gone overboard!"

"Now, you must apologize to my boyfriend immediately!"

Charlotte instantly frowned.

She was initially in a good mood to suddenly meet Vanessa, her best friend from her high school.

But Lucas merely smiled and was rebuked by both Brian and Vanessa as if he had committed a heinous crime.

Why?

“Vanessa, when did Lucas ever mock your boyfriend? You’re saying that he mocked your boyfriend just because he smiled. That’s absurd! If you’re forcing him to apologize just because of such a ridiculous reason, I won’t allow it!” Charlotte said extremely sternly.

An aura of a superior emerged from her body, instantly making Vanessa feel overwhelmed by a domineering might.

Chapter 678: Showing Off

After all, Charlotte had been the general manager of a large company like the Stardust Corporation for nearly two months, so her aura and austerity had definitely developed after some honing. If this wasn’t the case, how could she possibly manage a large company with more than a thousand people in such an orderly manner?

But she would generally only release her aura at work. When in front of her family and friends, she would generally behave like an ordinary young and lively woman in her twenties.

But Vanessa and Brian’s behavior had really angered her.

Noticing that Charlotte suddenly seemed to have become a different person and was releasing a domineering aura, Vanessa immediately felt terrified as if she had seen her boss.

She found this Charlotte unfamiliar, so she felt she shouldn’t insult her and Lucas as she pleased.

Vanessa was good at reading people from their body language. As soon as she saw that Charlotte was displeased, she took the initiative to walk forward, swing Charlotte’s arm, and say affectionately, “We’re just joking, Charlotte. I’m not really demanding an apology from him!

“Look, you actually took it seriously and got mad at me! We’ve been bosom friends for so many years! Okay, calm down. It’s my fault, so I’ll apologize to you, okay?” Vanessa said coquettishly, using the same trick she used to pull on Charlotte back in high school.

Although she was full of disdain, she had just met Charlotte again after years, and there were still many things she had yet to show off to her. How could she fall out with her at this time?

Seeing her best friend acting this way and Lucas shaking his head to indicate to her not to mind, Charlotte decided not to be bothered about Vanessa’s actions.

Brian pursed his lips in displeasure, but he didn't say anything.

"Charlotte, there's really nothing good in the small stalls here. Why don't we go to Union Street to take a look? There's all sorts of good stuff there. Even if you don't intend to buy anything, it's good to go there for an eye-opener. Let's go!"

Vanessa didn't care whether Charlotte agreed or not as she simply grabbed her hand and walked toward Union Street nearby. While walking, she said, "Charlotte, do you know that the best store around here is called the Heavenly Pavilion? There are all sorts of treasures, antiques, and precious stones and jewelry. The high-end jewelry is incredibly beautiful! As women, we have to go there and take a look!"

"Look at this diamond bracelet that my boyfriend got for me from the Heavenly Pavilion. It costs more than three hundred grand!"

"Look at my earrings too. They're emeralds! This tiny pair cost over a hundred and fifty grand!"

"Also, this diamond ring on my hand is a top-quality twenty-carat South African diamond that my boyfriend bought from the Heavenly Pavilion. It also costs more than a hundred and fifty grand!"

"Hehe, I always tell Brian not to spend so much money on gifts for me, but guess what he said? He said that men work hard to make money precisely for the sake of buying nice things for their women. Hehe, he makes me feel so blissful!"

While pulling Charlotte along, Vanessa kept showing off the expensive gifts her boyfriend had bought her and how good her boyfriend was to her.

Charlotte was indeed quite put off by Vanessa's blatant flaunting of her boyfriend's wealth. But seeing how happy and proud Vanessa was, she really couldn't bring herself to be a wet blanket, so she merely chimed in occasionally.

After all, Vanessa was her best friend in high school, and Charlotte didn't want to quarrel with her over such a trivial matter.

The two of them were holding hands like a pair of extremely close sisters.

As for their male companions, Lucas and Brian, they were trailing a few steps behind.

"Punk, you're really lucky to have managed to get your hands on a beautiful woman like Charlotte," Brian suddenly said softly to Lucas, guessing that the two ladies probably couldn't hear them.

As a man himself, Lucas immediately heard a trace of envy and jealousy in his tone.

This made Lucas's impression of Brian become even worse.

He clearly had a girlfriend, yet he was coveting his girlfriend's best friend on their first meeting. It was really vulgar of him.

Lucas didn't bother to explain his true relationship with Charlotte to Brian and instead went along with it. "Yes, but you're wrong about one thing. I didn't woo her at all. She wooed me. She probably likes me the way I am!

"Hah, look at you lying through your teeth. You're so shabby. What's so good about you that you can attract her and make her take the initiative to court you?" Brian sneered at Lucas's words.

"Not every woman is materialistic, and I just happened to meet such a good woman. Based on this alone, I'm indeed luckier than you," Lucas said indifferently.

Lucas had a sharp sense of hearing, so he had heard everything Vanessa said to brag to Charlotte.

He reckoned that Brian wasn't that thrilled to have gotten together with such a superficial and materialistic woman.

But Vanessa was indeed a little stupid because she hadn't actually taken advantage of Brian.

Brian's face became even more gloomy. *Could that gorgeous woman Charlotte really not be a materialistic woman who only cares about money? Otherwise, she shouldn't be dating a man like Lucas who looks penniless!*

At this thought, Brian became even more envious and jealous of Lucas.

Soon, the four of them arrived at the entrance of Union Street.

Union Street has always been a prestigious place in San Francisco. Especially since the two business exchanges were held today, it was even more crowded than usual, and there were people everywhere.

"Wow, there are so many people here!" Charlotte exclaimed.

She had been to Union Street before, but she had never seen such a crowded situation. It was almost like a New Year's celebration.

"Haha, today is a special day after all! Let's go directly to the Heavenly Pavilion. The things there are high-end, and most people can't afford to go there, so there will probably be fewer people. We can go straight to the fourth floor to take a look. All the good stuff is there!"

Vanessa pulled Charlotte and walked straight toward the Heavenly Pavilion, appearing very familiar with it..

Chapter 679: I Want A New One

But after taking a few steps, Vanessa seemed to suddenly remember something and turned around to look at Brian. She said coquettishly, “Honey, I accidentally chipped the more than two-hundred-thousand-dollar emerald pendant you bought for me from here...”

“Ahem, is that so?” Brian coughed twice, and his eyes flickered slightly, but he still said generously, “Isn’t it just a two-hundred-thousand-dollar pendant? I’ll get you a new one later!”

“Wow, Honey, you’re great!” Vanessa immediately let go of Charlotte’s arm, scurried toward Brian, put her arms around his neck, and kissed his cheek.

Muacks!

The public display of affection attracted the attention of quite a few people, making Charlotte feel embarrassed for them.

But the parties involved didn’t seem to care.

Vanessa was still hugging Brian’s neck as she said to Charlotte with a proud look, “See, Charlotte? My boyfriend is so good to me! I’m not trying to put you down, but you should get a boyfriend like mine who’s not only wealthy but also willing to spend on me. Only men like him are good men!

“Otherwise, you’ll have to suffer for the rest of your life!”

Charlotte’s face suddenly stiffened, and for a moment, she was at a loss for words for how to respond to her former best friend.

But Vanessa noticed that Charlotte seemed upset, so she quickly rushed forward again to hold onto her arm, for fear that her ‘best friend’ would be provoked into leaving. “Charlotte, I didn’t mean it! Okay, let’s not talk about this anymore and go inside Heavenly Pavilion to have a look!”

With that, she pulled Charlotte into the wide and luxurious entrance of the Heavenly Pavilion.

Lucas silently followed behind them.

The Heavenly Pavilion was indeed much livelier today than it was when Lucas dropped by yesterday. There were numerous people browsing the ordinary products on the first

floor. But even the cheapest items here cost at least \$5,000, and most cost more than \$15,000. So there were very few people actually here to buy something.

“Charlotte, the things on the first floor are mediocre. They’re just some cheap stuff that costs thousands to tens of thousands. We have to go upstairs to look at the good stuff!

“But the items upstairs cost at least a hundred and fifty thousand. Ordinary people can’t afford them at all, and they don’t even have the opportunity to look at them!

“If I hadn’t found a rich boyfriend who loves me, I wouldn’t be able to come here to shop or have so many pieces of jewelry from the Heavenly Pavilion! Seriously, my boyfriend is so good to me!”

Vanessa was really busy at this time. She would extend her arms and fingers to show off to Charlotte the expensive things that her boyfriend had bought for her from the Heavenly Pavilion while rattling on incessantly about her boyfriend. She was just out to make Charlotte green with envy.

Right from the beginning, Charlotte had wanted to tell Vanessa clearly about her exact situation. But Vanessa kept acting as if she had brought her here for an eye-opener to broaden her horizons. She even talked non-stop about her boyfriend and flaunted his wealth. So toward the end, Charlotte lost her urge to speak.

A woman dressed in the sales assistant uniform of the Heavenly Pavilion walked over to greet them. “Hello, dear customers, may I ask which kind of goods you would like to see today?”

“The items on the first floor are all too ordinary. We want to look at the things on the fourth floor. Please show us the way!” Vanessa raised her head and proudly instructed.

“Okay, this way, please.”

Seeing that Vanessa and Brian were well dressed and aware that the goods on the fourth floor were of a higher grade, the sales assistant ushered them to the VIP elevator with a smile on her face.

The moment the doors of the elevator were about to close, the sales assistant suddenly recognized Lucas, and her eyes widened in shock.

But before she could greet Lucas, a distinguished guest of the store, the elevator doors closed with a ding and rose to the fourth floor.

When the few of them got out of the elevator and entered the fourth floor, they immediately found that it was indeed much cleaner than the space downstairs. After all, the items on this floor were all high-end, and not everyone was qualified to come here.

“Dear customers, welcome.” A soft and tender female voice sounded, and a young woman dressed in the Heavenly Pavilion’s standard uniform with a ‘general manager’ nameplate pinned to her chest walked over.

When she saw Lucas among the four of them, she immediately beamed with joy and surprise. “Mr. Gr…”

Before she could greet Lucas, she stopped because she had already noticed him shaking his head slightly at her, indicating for her not to reveal his identity.

This woman was Jane, whom Lucas had met in the Heavenly Pavilion yesterday.

She was initially only a trainee sales assistant. But due to her excellent performance and Lucas’s request yesterday, she was promoted to the general manager of the Heavenly Pavilion. Thus, Lucas naturally became her benefactor.

Jane was a smart person to begin with. As soon as she saw Lucas’s gesture, she knew what his intentions were and immediately pretended not to know him. Instead, she started serving Vanessa and the others.

“Do you have anything you’re interested in? I can introduce and recommend some things to you,” Jane said with a smile.

Vanessa said, “My boyfriend bought me an emerald pendant worth more than two hundred thousand dollars from here. But unfortunately, I accidentally chipped a corner, so we’re planning to get a new one.”

Jane thought about it and kindly made a suggestion. “Did you bring the pendant here? We have a team of professional antique restoration masters in the Heavenly Pavilion, so if the damage is not serious, we can help minimize the loss through various craft techniques and re-carving.”

“Huh? You provide such services here too? But that’s not necessary. I don’t want it anymore since it’s already broken. My boyfriend has already promised to get me a brand new one.” Vanessa condescendingly declined the restoration service and held onto Brian’s arm.

She said with a sweet smile, “Right, Honey? You just said you were going to get me a new pendant. Can I get a better one?”

An unnatural look appeared on Brian’s face, but he still seemed indifferent and nonchalant. “Yes! Since you’ve said so, I will buy you whichever one you fancy!”

“Wow, Honey, you’re so nice!” This time, Vanessa planted a kiss on Brian’s lips.

Charlotte and Jane turned their faces away in unison, feeling rather awkward.

“Ahem... So, Sir, Ma’am, may I ask what your approximate budget is? I can recommend some items for you.”

After all, Jane was an employee of the Heavenly Pavilion. She quickly turned around and pretended that nothing had happened.

“Five hundred thousand... No, make it a million dollars! As long as it’s within a million dollars, it’s fine! Even if it costs a little bit more, it doesn’t matter!” Vanessa immediately said with excitement.

“Uh...” Brian opened his mouth, suddenly at a loss for words..

Chapter 680: Nitpicking

“Honey, do you think a million is too cheap? It seems to the case. After all, you’re worth hundreds of millions now, and a million really means nothing to you. How about I pick two... or three items today? We’ll set the budget at between 1 to 1.5 million dollars. Apart from a pendant, I’d also like a pair of emerald bracelets and some other good jewelry. May I, Honey?” She blinked at Brian coquettishly.

“Let’s... let’s just take a look. If there’s anything good, we’ll buy it,” Brian said with a stiff smile and a stiff voice.

“Please come with me.”

Jane brought them to a special display cabinet full of emerald products and introduced, “The price of the items in this cabinet happens to be all between 1 to 1.5 million. Please take a look. If there’s anything you take a liking to, I can give you a 20% discount.”

The items of the Heavenly Pavilion would never be on discount. Jane had offered a discount entirely because of Lucas.

After Lucas left yesterday, Kenneth had specially instructed her to give Lucas anything he wanted from the Heavenly Pavilion for free, regardless of its value. She just had to report it to Kenneth.

If Lucas brought his friends over to the store, they would enjoy a flat 20% discount, which was considered a favor from the Heavenly Pavilion to Lucas. They wouldn’t make any money off of Lucas’s friends.

Coincidentally, Lucas happened to bring a few friends here today.

As soon as she heard what Jane said, Vanessa was a little surprised. "Huh? The Heavenly Pavilion offers discounts too? I've never heard about this before! But it's okay. My boyfriend is rich, so we don't need the discount!"

She declined domineeringly.

At this moment, Brian really felt like vomiting blood.

This silly woman Vanessa actually asked for three items worth between 1 to 1.5 million dollars each, which meant that he would have to spend 3 to 4.5 million dollars. With the 20% discount, he would be able to save about 600,000 to 900,000 dollars!

Yet she turned it down without hesitating at all!

According to the information he had found, the items in the Heavenly Pavilion would never be on discount!

Now, there was such a rare opportunity, but Vanessa turned it down just like that. He was at a complete loss for words.

Does she really think I'm a fool who will never run out of money?

Hah, he couldn't even afford to buy an item that cost \$500,000 from the Heavenly Pavilion, let alone \$5 million!

Seeing Vanessa already choosing items from the display case with great excitement, Brian really wanted to drag her out immediately.

Does she really think I'm so rich that I'd just casually give her jewelry that costs several hundred thousand every now and then?

She should take a look at her face and ask herself if she's worth that much!

Brian cursed his heart out at Vanessa in his head, wondering what kind of reason he should use later to refuse to buy the things she picked. But he happened to hear her exclaiming happily.

"Honey, look at this emerald pendant. The quality of the emerald is so much better than the one you gave me before! It's so beautiful! I want it. It costs only around 1.4 million!"

Vanessa pointed at an extremely lustrous and translucent pendant, which was obviously made of top-quality emerald, in the middle of the display case. Her face was full of excitement.

"Uh... this isn't that nice. It doesn't suit your skin tone at all," Brian said with a frown.

“Is that so? Honey, do you think it’s unsuitable because my skin is nicer than this piece of emerald? Hehehe. I know you like my fair and tender skin the most! Okay, since this pendant doesn’t suit me, I’ll get another one!”

With a shy smile, Vanessa pointed at a pair of emerald bracelets in the display case. “These bracelets are beautiful! They’re made of the finest quality emerald, and the pattern is gorgeous too! It looks like a fantasy world of snow in the bracelets! I want these bracelets!”

When Brian glanced at the series of zeros on the price tag under the pair of bracelets, which was 2 million dollars, his heart skipped a beat, and he gritted his teeth. “This isn’t great. Don’t buy it.”

“Oh, okay then! What about this pair of bracelets? It’s very translucent.”

“It looks too tacky. It doesn’t suit you either.”

“Well, what about this pair?”

“It’s too old-fashioned. It’s not nice either.”

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Vanessa pointed at seven or eight pendants and bracelets in a row, but Brian rejected all of them for various reasons.

“Oh, it seems that the items below 1.5 million aren’t that good.” Vanessa pouted and suddenly said to Jane, “In that case, take us to see the ones between two to three million. I don’t believe that I can’t pick a decent bracelet today!”

She spoke as if she was accepting a challenge.

In fact, Jane had already realized something from Brian’s expression. He didn’t seem to be planning to buy anything from the Heavenly Pavilion.

But these two had entered together with Lucas after all, so she kept mum and pretended not to know.

Now that Vanessa was requesting to look at the more expensive items, Jade still agreed with a presentable smile. “Okay, please come with me.”

“Wait!” Brian suddenly said and stopped Vanessa, who was about to follow Jane. His facial expression changed twice, and he suddenly said with a smile, “Vanessa, I think we should just forget it. The things here are all so-so. There’s nothing too special or outstanding.”

“How about this? I heard that there will be a high-end auction after the exchanges today, and there will be all kinds of top-grade goods worth over ten million for sale. I’ll get you the best pair of bracelets at the auction! These mediocre items only worth a few million aren’t good enough for you at all!”

Vanessa was touched and incredibly excited. Even her breathing became much more rapid. “Honey, are you really going to buy me top-grade jewelry worth over ten million? Wouldn’t... wouldn’t that be too expensive?”

“Hah, you’re my woman. How can it be a waste when I’m spending money on my beloved woman?” Brian said affectionately with a tender look on his face.

“Honey, you’re too good to me! I’m so happy I met you!” Vanessa immediately looked at him blissfully and snuggled into his embrace.

Of course, she naturally didn’t forget to glance at Charlotte flauntingly. Although she didn’t say a single word, it was obvious from her gaze that she was saying, “See? This is my man! He’s willing to buy me jewelry worth ten million dollars without batting an eyelid. Do you have a boyfriend like him? I’m afraid your boyfriend can’t even afford something that costs a hundred thousand!”

Charlotte didn’t even look at the two of them hugging each other, so she naturally failed to see what Vanessa was trying to convey with her gaze.

Jane hesitated for a moment before reminding out of kindness, “Uh, I’m sorry. Although it may not be appropriate for me to say this, I still want to remind you that there won’t be an auction after the business exchanges today, be it the Elite Business Exchange or the ordinary business exchange. The information this gentleman got is probably wrong..”