



Chapter 9 Scumbag

"You want a lab? Are you out of your mind?" Bradley blurted out without thinking.

He had assumed Sierra would ask for clothes, bags—something normal. But no, she had to open her mouth and demand a lab.

A lab that had cost The Xander Group hundreds of millions to build. A lab that was crucial to their pharmaceutical business.

How could he possibly give it to her?

He was about to say more, but then he saw the mocking smile on Sierra's face. Remembering what he had just said moments ago, he forced himself to adjust his tone.

"The lab isn't something I can decide on my own," he said. "And even if you had it, you wouldn't know how to use it."

Then, as if trying to pacify her, he added, "How about I buy you some clothes? You didn't like the ones Denny picked yesterday, right? I'll get you new ones. Be good, okay?"

Be good.

Sierra let out a laugh.

What she wanted, they refused to give. What she didn't want, they shoved into her hands, acting as if it were some grand act of kindness.



And she was supposed to be grateful for it? To obediently go along with whatever they decided?

Why?

Suppressing the coldness in her eyes, Sierra spoke icily, "No need to trouble yourself, Mr. Xander. I'll handle my own affairs. And my grandmother's situation? No need to trouble yourself with that either."

Bradley's irritation flared.

"Enough already!" he snapped. "Your grandmother's situation is your greedy parents' fault. What does that have to do with me? I've already done more than enough. What more do you want?"

Then, as if something inside him cracked, he growled, "And I'm your brother! Stop calling me Mr. Xander!"

Bradley was the kind of person who rarely lost his temper, but now? He was furious.

Furious at Sierra's ingratitude.

Furious that she refused to listen.

Hadn't things been fine before? Why did she have to turn so sharp and unyielding now?

Sierra lifted her gaze to him, the corners of her lips curving in a slight smirk.

"Greedy parents?" she repeated. "Mine?"



Bradley stiffened.

Only then did he remember—James and Yulia weren't her parents.

They were Denny's.

Before he could speak, Sierra's voice rang in his ears again.

"You see?" she said, her tone almost casual. "You never thought of me as family in the first place. So tell me, what's wrong with me calling you Mr. Xander?"

She turned and left, but her words stayed with him, cutting deeper than he wanted to admit.

His lips pressed into a thin line, irritation twisting into something heavier—something closer to regret.

He had come today to apologize, to make things right.

How had it ended up like this instead?

And then there was Denny.

Bradley frowned and dialed a number.

Thirty minutes later, he arrived at Northwind University.

Evan was already waiting for him. Bradley got into the car.

"What is it?" Evan asked.

"In school, keep an eye on Sierra."



Evan glanced at him, raising an eyebrow. "Why?"

"Something happened."

Bradley quickly explained Sierra's situation—her grandmother's suffering, the years of torment she endured in prison.

Evan's expression darkened.

"The hell was the prison doing? Just standing around while she got beaten?"

Bradley didn't answer.

Evan had spent his life buried in academics. He didn't understand places like that.

Prison was a place where people got eaten alive.

Bradley had thought he had taken care of things. But somehow, through some twisted turn of fate, Sierra had received no protection at all.

Evan exhaled sharply, gathering his thoughts. "I messaged Denny. She's coming after class. We'll ask her what happened."

Bradley nodded.

He didn't believe Denny had done anything to hurt Sierra.

Denny was soft-hearted, always so sweet and obedient.

She adored Sierra. She shared everything with her.



How could she possibly stand by and let Sierra suffer?

There had to be something else going on. Something they didn't know yet.

Then, as if remembering something, Bradley added, "By the way, you're in charge of the lab. Can you section off a part of it? Or set up a smaller one—something that looks real?"

Evan shot him a look. "Why?"

"Sierra wants a lab."

Bradley had no idea where she got the idea, but he figured she was either trying to compete with someone or testing to see if they still cared about her.

After everything she had been through, it wouldn't be surprising if she had doubts.

So after thinking it through, Bradley decided to give her a "lab"—something to appease her.

At least then, he'd feel a little better.

Evan frowned, clearly annoyed, but after a moment of hesitation, he nodded.

"Fine. Leave it to me."

Setting up a fake lab wasn't hard. Just a couple million dollars, and it'd be done. Consider it compensation for everything Sierra had been through.

Honestly, what was with her obsession with a lab? Did she



think it was fun?

Evan even made a note to keep dangerous materials out of it.

And yet, despite all this effort, she still had the nerve to say they didn't care about her?

People were just so ungrateful.

Meanwhile, Sierra had no idea what the Xander brothers were scheming.

She had just returned to Northwind University after receiving a message from Misty, asking her to meet him there.

She was surprised.

Misty was at Northwind University?

Was he a student? A professor?

Before prison, the two of them had only ever talked about academics. They had never shared personal details.

She had once casually mentioned she was at Northwind, but Misty hadn't said anything about being there too.

Maybe something had changed in the past three years.

Following the address Misty sent, Sierra was making her way across campus when—

"Sierra?"

A voice she hadn't expected.



She turned.

And there he was—Yaron Tucker.

The surprise in his eyes quickly shifted into something warmer. "It is you!"

Sierra's expression remained blank, though her fingers twitched slightly at the sight of him.

Yaron Tucker.

The senior she had once secretly loved.

When she first arrived at Northwind, Yaron had been a student representative. He had welcomed the new students, been kind, warm, attentive—always looking out for her.

She had fallen for him so easily.

She thought he liked her, too.

Then, when she had finally gathered the courage to confess—

He had looked surprised.

And then he had smiled gently and said—

"Sierra, I'm sorry if I made you misunderstand. I was only nice to you because you're Denny's sister. I like Denny."

She had never felt so humiliated in her life.

After that, she avoided him as much as she could.



But he never seemed to notice.

He just kept showing up.

Kept being nice.

And every time she tried to push him away, he would frown and say, "Can't we at least be friends? Sierra, don't be so cruel. We can be friends, right?"

For a long time, she had suffered through it.

She had listened as he chased Denise.

Listened as he talked about how hard Denise was to get.

Even given him advice.

All while forcing herself to smile.

That all ended when she went to prison.

Thinking about it now, she couldn't believe how stupid she had been.

Just because someone was a little kind to her, she had deluded herself.

She took a step back, her voice filled with disgust.

"Stay away from me," she said coldly. "I don't like scumbags near me."