

## Faux Vows True Desires Chapter 11 - 20

### Chapter 11

Honestly, she dated George for four years, and all they ever did was hold hands and hug. As for kissing? Only pecks on the cheeks.

Yeah lip to bp kissing kinda... made her feel uneasy.

So, she never really kissed George.

Her college roommates were convinced she had some intimate issues.

Stefan laughed. "With what you've got going for you, and still being pushed to marry by your family to the point where you're scared to go home, that's something you don't see every day."

Lucinda complained, "Tell me about it. But maybe, just maybe, I haven't met the right person yet. I dated George for four years, there were feelings there. I thought I was going to marry him, but he picked another woman over me for his future."

Her mom thought she didn't want to get married because George hurt her, which made sense.

"Once you're hurt, you're more hesitant to take a chance."

When she thought of George, Lucinda naturally remembered their four years of dating, and felt George had been acting weird when they were together, that was something she didn't notice before. But after they broke up, it hit her.

He must have started flirting with other girls, that's why he was a bit weird when they were together.

That heartless man, he even had the nerve to come back to her!

There's no way she can forgive someone who betrayed her. Even if she can't get married, she won't get back together with George.

"Stefan, let's not talk about this, as long as my mom stops pushing me, I can live in peace."

Stefan laughed, “With me around, I guarantee your mom won’t arrange any more blind dates for you. Don’t worry. We’ve known each other for eleven years, we understand each other, I think, your mom will be very satisfied with me.”

His only worry was that Ike would badmouth him in front of his future mother-in-law.

Ike considered him a friend, but he married Ike’s sister...

Ike always talked about his sister, and out of curiosity, he went to school with Ike.

The first time he saw Lucinda, she was a shy 13-year-old girl, very polite, with a sweet smile, indeed a very cute girl.

The more they met, the more he gradually liked her... This was his secret, something he couldn’t tell anyone, **at** least not at the time.

“Hehe.” Lucinda chuckled.

They understand each other?

All she knew was his name, and that he was her brother’s college classmate. She didn’t know anything else.

His bike was still there, Lucinda sighed in relief, “Thank God the bike’s still there. You’ll have to put it in first floor when we get back, otherwise, your bike might be gone by tomorrow morning.”

“Are thieves that rampant?”

There’s always someone ready to snatch and grab.”

Stefan unlocked the bike, hopped on, and Lucinda naturally sat on the rear rack.

“Hug me!” Stefan requested.

Lucinda was stunned.

‘Practice.

Lucinda suddenly realized, and gently wrapped her arms around his waist.

“Lucinda, you’re going to fall easily like this, hug me tighter.”

“I can just hold onto your clothes.”

Stefan turned his head, smiled and said, “If we accidentally fall, I might damage my clothes, I only have two suits, I wear them for work.”

Lucinda closed her mouth gently and helplessly hugged his waist tighter.

Stefan, having achieved his goal, happily rode his bike, taking his wife for a ride, **no, out** for dinner, to celebrate the end of their single lives.

The Moore family

“Mom, mom.”

**As soon** as Ike **got out** of the taxi, he ran inside the house, calling out for his mother.

The taxi driver laughed and mumbled to himself, “This is the first time I’ve seen a grown man in such a hurry to get home, calling out for his mom before even entering the house.”

The driver thought this man was a mama’s boy, overly dependent on his mom.

Ike, being suspected of being overly dependent on his mother by the **taxi** driver, didn’t care at all.

He was away on **a** business trip, his work wasn’t finished yet, and he found out his sister was marrying Stefan, but his sister wouldn’t explain clearly on

the phone, so he was anxious.

He immediately handed over his work to his colleagues, bought a plane ticket, and flew back after few hours.

“Mom, mom, mom, are you home? Mom!”

Ike rushed into the house, calling out loudly.

Fiona Lewis Moore, wearing an apron, holding a spatula in her hand, came out from the kitchen. When she saw her son, she scolded, “Why are you in such a hurry? Is there a

ghost chasing you? Stop shouting. Weren't you on a business trip? Is your work finished? You've been away for so long, and you didn't even bring back a girlfriend. Do you still think you're young? You'll be thirty next year."

In the living room watching TV, Vincent Moore, just glanced at his wife and son, then continued watching his TV.

He was used to it.

As for Ike's grandparents, they pretended not to hear anything, didn't even look at their grandson.

He can't even bring back a wife, so what's there to look at?

They've been looking at their grandson's face for twenty-nine years.

Ike was probably used to being scolded, he put his travel bag on the sofa, went to get a glass of water for himself first.

After drinking water, he said to his mother, "Mom, you're always pushing for me to get married, I'm not even thirty yet, right? You think I don't want to find a wife to shut you up, but the problem is, I haven't met the woman I like, how am I supposed to get married? Because you're always pushing, you pushed Lucinda into trouble."

Fiona dropped her spatula on the floor.

The three people sitting in front of the TV, all stood up, and looked at Ike, anxiously asking, "What happened to Lucinda?"

Fiona, even more impulsively grabbed her son's tie, pulling him closer, anxiously asked, "Ike, speak up, what happened to your sister? Did you rush back because you heard something happened to your sister?"

Ike, "...Mom, can you let me go first? I'm almost choked by you."

The whole family, all treated Lucinda like a treasure.

When he was a kid, if he fell, no one would help him up, they would let him get up by himself.

His father had always told him, you have to get up where you fell.

But when his sister fell, everyone in the family was heartbroken, rushing to help her up, to hold her. The treatment he received was really different from his sister's.

He also liked taking care of his sister.

“What I meant by Lucinda getting into trouble, was actually Lucinda getting married.”

His mom let him go, bent down to pick up the spatula that had fallen on the floor, and then gently tapped it on his shoulder.

“You little rascal!”

Fiona scolded her son, then turned around and went back to the kitchen to continue preparing dinner for the whole family.

The three people who had been watching TV also let out a sigh of relief, sat back down, and continued watching TV with rapt attention.

As if the person who had been anxious and worried a moment ago wasn't them.

“Dad, mom, grandpa, grandma, I'm telling you, Lucinda is really getting married.”

Not being trusted sucks!

While watching TV, Vincent said something indifferent, “Your sister just failed a blind date today, and was even complained about on the phone. They said your sister's standards are too high, she might never get married in this lifetime, and we should be prepared to support her for the rest of her life.”

Hearing Ike say that Lucinda was getting married, everyone was skeptical. Who would she marry?

## **Chapter 12**

Ike was totally floored.

He turned and went into the kitchen.

His mom was the boss of the house.

“Mom, I'm telling the truth.”

Hot on his mom's heels, Ike said anxiously, "Why won't you guys believe me?"

Fiona pointed at her son and said, "These veggies aren't washed yet. Go wash them for me. Then chop them up for the salad. Ike looked at the vegetables in the basket, quickly took them to the sink, filled a basin with water, and started washing them.

While washing, he continued, "Mom, I'm not making any of this up. Do you remember my classmate from Silverbrook University, Stefan? He and I have a mutual junior, Gabriel, who works in the registration office. It was Gabriel who told me. He said Stefan got married today. I wanted to confirm it, so I called Stefan. Guess who answered his phone? It was my sister Lucinda. She told me herself that she was the one who registered marriage with Stefan." "This scared the crap out of me. I dropped everything, rushed back to tell you guys."

Fiona seemed to not hear him, continuing her chores.

Ike finished washing the veggies, chopped them up, put them in a dish, and handed it to his mother.

"Mom, are you listening?"

"I'm listening."

"Then why aren't you reacting?"

"Talk is cheap. Unless Lucinda brings your classmate home and shows me some evidences of their marriage, I won't believe she's married."

Ike replied, "They'll definitely be back tomorrow. Stefan said he wanted to meet you guys."

Ike's words sounded reasonable. Fiona had just finished cooking a dish when she asked her son, "Is everything you've said true?"

"Mom, would I joke about something like this? It's about my sister's marriage."

Ike continued to stress that he was telling the truth.

"I dropped everything and rushed back. Would I be this urgent if it **wasn't** true?"

Fiona was half-skeptical, “Lucinda was heartbroken after breaking up with George, and she hasn’t started a new relationship since then. I know that she knows your classmate, but I didn’t hear about them dating, how could they get married?”

“Isn’t this the result of your constant nagging? Lucinda was scared by your nagging, so she just found a guy to marry.”

Ike was complaining about his mother’s nagging.

If his sister was married, then his mother would start nagging him to get married soon.

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Ike thought, “Oh god! To keep the peace, I decided to apply for a business trip to the farthest place possible. If possible, I even wanted to stay away for a year or two.”

Fiona was about to whack him with the spatula, Ike quickly backed off.

“Mom, I’m talking about my sister. When Lucinda comes back, tell her to leave Stefan immediately and get a divorce.”

Stefan’s worry was not unfounded.

Ike was really badmouthing him in front of his future mother-**in**-law.

“Why? Is there something wrong with Stefan?”

Fiona was always pushing her daughter to get married and arranging blind dates for her. Partly because her daughter was of marriageable age, partly because she wanted her daughter to forget the pain caused by George, a man who only cared about status and wealth.

However, she would never let her daughter marry a man she **didn’t** know.

“Stefan is a very cunning person. He seems gentle and polite on the surface, his smile makes people feel comfortable, but in reality, he’s a hidden beast, he can trap people in a dilemma during casual chats.”

Ike told his mother what he knew about Stefan, “In school, he never dated any girls, but he didn’t have a good relationship with the guys either. There were countless girls

chasing him, but he wasn't interested in any of them. Mom, I suspect Stefan has some kind of problem."

Fiona recalled the polite young man. Each time they met, he greeted them with a smile. He was tall, good-looking, and seemed healthy. Could he be as her son said?

"Maybe Stefan was focused on his studies and didn't want to date. You're saying he has a problem, Ike, is it right **for** you to badmouth your classmate?"

"Mom, I'm not badmouthing him, it's our classmates who say this behind his back. A normal man, faced with so many pursuers, how could he be indifferent? He must have a physical or psychological problem."

Ike was telling the truth.

**During** university, everyone discussed Stefan's behavior, thinking he had a problem, **not** that he was really indifferent.

Ike had a relationship in high school, but it didn't last. After college, he broke up with his girlfriend.

Although he doesn't have a formal girlfriend **now**, **it** doesn't mean that he was single throughout university.

Everyone around him had dating experiences, except for Stefan.

"Some people develop late in terms of relationships, that's normal too."

Fiona didn't quite believe that Stefan had a physical problem.

"Gabriel said, Stefan had a female friend he'd known since childhood, they grew up together and were always close. But ten years ago, that friend suddenly went abroad. Since then, Stefan became indifferent. I suspect that his female friend wanted to take their relationship further, found out that Stefan was not suitable, and left him heartbroken. Because of his own problems, Stefan appeared indifferent on the surface, but he was actually inferior. So, in university, he never dated women, no matter who pursued him, no one could get him."

Fiona stayed silent.



“Mom, if Lucinda marries Stefan, she’s asking for trouble. She must have been scared by your nagging, so she thought about finding a man to marry, to stop you from worrying about her future.”

Fiona said incredulously, “Marriage is not a game, Lucinda is not the type to compromise. If she was willing to compromise, would she need to go on dozens of blind dates? You said she’s already registered **for** marriage, but I haven’t seen her prepare any materials needed for registration. How could they be married?”

“They got a certificate. Gabriel was there, their registration process went very smoothly.”

Fiona went silent.

“Mom, can you just call Lucinda right now, tell her to get her ass back here, and bring Stefan with her? We can grill them until they spill the beans!”

Fiona stayed silent for a moment, then actually pulled out her cell and dialed her daughter.

At that moment, Lucinda and Stefan were holed up in a fancy room at the Anderson Hotel, getting ready for dinner.

Stefan said he wanted to celebrate, so he invited her out. She figured he’d just pick some fast food joint, order a couple of dishes, have a few drinks and call it a night.

But she didn’t expect him to take her to the Anderson Hotel.

Even though she was a local from Pinehurst, even a small-town girl like Lucinda knew about the Anderson Hotel.

This was the hotel of Ascend Global, also one of the most luxurious and upscale hotels in Pinehurst.

Due to its expensive price, Lucinda ha never set foot in the Anderson Hotel.

After all, she was still burdened with debt.

## **Chapter 13**

“Lucinda, just order whatever you want,” Stefan whispered in her ear, leaning in close. “Don’t worry, I can cover the bill.” He even gave a playful puff of breath.

Lucinda instinctively edged away, looking at him. He seemed serious, so she didn't realize he was flirting with her.

"Stefan, I can't decide what to eat. You pick," Lucinda handed the menu to Stefan.

Stefan knew she was intimidated by the prices, so he dropped the gentleman act and ordered a few signature dishes from the Anderson Hotel.

Lucinda was the future lady of the Anderson Hotel, so naturally, she should sample their star dishes.

Suddenly, Lucinda's phone rang.

Pulling it out of her pocket, she saw the caller ID and couldn't help but gripe to her husband, "It's my mom again. She's definitely reminding me about the blind date tomorrow. I've been on blind dates every day, I've practically met all the young guys around here! My mom won't give me a break!"

Despite her grumbling, Lucinda picked up the call.

"Moin," Lucinda sweetly said before her mom could even speak, "I'll definitely come home tomorrow, you don't need to remind me."

"Well, at least you know your own situation."

"But mom, could you tell the matchmaker to call off the date tomorrow? I don't want to go on a date with him!"

After hearing her daughter out, Fiona asked directly, "Lucinda, your brother is back. He says you're already married. Is **that** true? To that young man who's your brother's classmate, Stefan?"

Lucinda was unsurprised by her brother spilling the beans early to their parents.

Earlier today, she was still on a blind date, and now she's suddenly saying she's married. Such shocking news, of course her brother would tell their parents.

"Yeah," Lucinda admitted honestly.

She thought to herself: If it wasn't for my mom setting up dozens of blind dates for me each month, driving me mad, I wouldn't have paid Stefan to pretend to be my husband.

“What are you doing now?”

“About to have dinner.”

“In a restaurant **or** at home?”

“Stefan’s treating me to dinner. We’re at the hotel.”

Fiona went quiet for a moment, then commanded, “Come home as soon as you finish eating!”

“Do I bring **Stefan** along?”

“Of course!”

With that, Fiona hung up.

Lucinda breathed a sigh of relief and cheekily stuck out her tongue.

Even over the phone, she could feel her mom’s suppressed anger.

She was really afraid her mom might explode in anger.

“Stefan, my mom wants us to come home after dinner. *My* brother is back and told my parents about us getting married. We might be interrogated. tonight. You need to stick to the story and not spill the beans, otherwise, my mom will give me hell.”

Her family doted on her, but when she did something wrong, her mom would unleash her argumentative side and wouldn’t leave her alone.

Stefan smiled slightly and said, “Whether we go home tonight or tomorrow, it’s inevitable. Don’t worry, I’ll keep the secret. Won’t spill the beans that I’m a fake husband.”

Lucinda reminded him of a few things, and only when he agreed did she feel at ease.

“There’s probably no buses now. I’ll call a cab in advance.”

Stefan said and picked up his phone from the table, sending a message to his chauffeur to bring a cheaper car and wait at the entrance of the Anderson Hotel.

After arranging for the car, Stefan said, “I’m going to meet your **parents**, and I can’t **come** empty-handed, I’ll message my friend now to buy some gifts. Once we finish dinner, we can just grab the stuff and go.”

This way, they wouldn’t waste more time.

Lucinda quickly said, “Stefan, I’ll pay for the gifts.”

He was rented by her, and only charged her \$500 a month. Given his status, this price was far too low.

Lucinda knew this.

Stefan was willing to be rented by her mainly because her brother and him were college classmates.

With all the help he had given her, she couldn’t let him bear the cost of the gifts too.

Stefan looked at her deeply for a moment. When she looked puzzled, he laughed, a comforting laughter. Lucinda thought to herself: A one-year contract

might be too long. Perhaps it should be shortened to three months.

Because Stefan was doing too well, she was afraid she might fall in love with him after a year.

“Okay, you can pay me back when you have the money,” he messaged Emma.

Instructing Emma to follow his requests and no need to reply.

He was to meet Lucinda’s parents in an hour, so he asked Emma to prepare the gifts for the parents as soon as possible. They couldn’t be too expensive or too cheap.

If the gifts were too pricey, he worried Lucinda’s mother would return them.

If the gifts were too cheap, he feared Lucinda’s mother would think him stingy.

Upon receiving Stefan’s message, Emma immediately drove to prepare the gifts.

As Stefan’s housekeeper, Emma was incredibly efficient.

By the time Stefan and Lucinda finished dinner and exited the hotel, Emma was already waiting at the entrance.

She was laden with various bags, looking eye-catching and drawing a lot of attention.

When Stefan saw Emma carrying a bunch of stuff, he couldn't help but rub his forehead, almost wanting to pretend he didn't recognize her.

“Stefan, I bought all the stuff you asked me to,” Emma almost called Stefan ‘young master’.

After being glared at by Stefan, she quickly corrected her address.

She thought to herself, “So this lady doesn't know Mr. Coleman's real identity. No wonder this lady dared to rent Mr. Coleman!”

Mr. Coleman was truly cunning, quietly winning over the girl he had been eyeing for so long.

Stefan calmly introduced Emma to Lucinda, “Lucinda, this is my mom's friend. Her house is nearby, so I asked her to buy some gifts for me.” Lucinda flashed a friendly grin at Emma, “Hey there, nice to meet you. Thank you so much.”

Stefan claimed he only bought a few little gifts, but does this look like a few?

The lady here has a ton of shopping bags.

Emma responded with a smile, “nice to meet you too, miss.”

“Ma'am, my name is Lucinda, you can call me Lucy.”

Emma took a quick glance at her boss, seeing no reaction, she mustered the courage to address Mr. Coleman by his name.

She had just called Mr. Coleman by his name, didn't seem to be a problem at all.

She did all this just **to** play along with Mr. Coleman.

Thinking so, Emma felt the pressure lifted.

Stefan's chauffeur rolled up in a BMW, which was his personal ride, not one from Stefan's garage.

In their boss's garage, even the cheapest car costs a small fortune.

This isn't suitable for the boss to pretend to be poor!

## Chapter 14

Driver Noah almost called Stefan "young master" as he got out of the car. He was about to slip, but a gentle nudge from Emma reminded him of Stefan's previous warning, and he quickly corrected himself.

"Sir, can we get going now?"

Noah tried his best to sound like an ordinary driver, devoid of any formal reverence, fearing that Lucinda might notice something.

"Sure thing."

Stefan was quite pleased with Emma and the driver's cooperation. He planned to give them a raise after meeting Lucinda's parents.

As Stefan tried to take the gifts from Emma, she and the driver quickly loaded all the presents into the car, filling the vehicle with all sorts of gifts. Lucinda thought Emma had bought too many things but did not voice it out in front of Stefan to save Emma from embarrassment.

After all, Emma was the one who had done the shopping on their behalf.

"Stefan, Lucy, it's getting late. You guys should head out. Drop me a text when you get there."

After sorting out the stuff, Emma turned to the couple and said.

“Emma, could you look after my bike?”

“Sure thing.”

This was the Anderson Hotel, no one would dare lay a finger on Stefan’s bike even if it was left here.

Stefan said this to avoid any suspicion from Lucinda.

He helped Lucinda into the car. Lucinda waved goodbye to Emma.

Once the car was on the move, Lucinda turned to Stefan, “Emma is so sweet, she must be really close with your mom, right? She treats you like her own nephew.”

Emma had worked for the Anderson family for over a decade, taking care of Stefan since he was small.

“Yep, we’re pretty close.”

Stefan replied smoothly without exposing any flaws.

Whatever he said, even if it was a lie, was convincing.

“You let Emma buy too much stuff.”

Stefan smiled slightly, “I’m meeting your parents for the first time, I want to make a good impression.”

Looking at him, Lucinda praised, “Stefan, with your hardworking attitude, you’ll surely make it big in the company.”

Noah almost burst into laughter at Lucinda’s words.

Mr. Coleman was already the CEO of Ascend Global, how much higher could he possibly go?

“As long as I’m getting your money, I’m gonna do my job. That’s the principle.”

Lucinda nodded in agreement.

“Lucinda, if you’re tired, you can rest on my shoulder. I’ll wake you up when we get there.”

“Do you know where my house is?”

“Have you forgotten that I was classmates with your brother for four years. Even though we were just classmates, I obviously know where you guys live.” Stefan had thought about establishing a good relationship with Ike.

But their personalities were too different, they could only be ordinary classmates.

However, Stefan was very clear about the Moore family’s situation.

All these years, he never actively disturbed Lucinda, but everything about her was in his control...

Lucinda laughed, “I totally forgot about that.”

Stefan noticed her hair was scattered and gently used his fingers to tidy it up, then placed it lightly behind her ear.

His actions were natural and gentle, his eyes never leaving Lucinda.

At such close proximity, face to face, Lucinda once again sighed, “Stefan, you’re really handsome.”



A man like Stefan was the real deal. The blind date her mom chose for her was nowhere close to Stefan.

Stefan lowered his head, subtly closing their gap, his lips curling into a warm smile that almost made Lucinda lose herself.

His voice was gentle and charming, “Apart from handsome, what do you think about me?”

Lucinda, oblivious to Stefan closing the gap, laughed, “You’re awesome, Stefan. You’re the real catch. I’m so lucky to have you as my husband for just \$500.”

Noah was so shocked he almost hit the brakes.

Holy moly!

She got Stefan for just \$500?

That’s not the point.

The point is, Stefan and Lucinda aren’t actually married?

Then why was Emma so happy, even telling them that they had a new boss named Lucinda and they should respect her like they respect Stefan? Did the old lady not inform the household?

Turns out, Stefan was actually rented by Lucinda to be her husband.

Luckily, Noah managed to hold himself together without reacting, not daring to turn back, speak, or attract any attention.

He was a bit nervous because he had inadvertently overheard Stefan’s secret.

Would Stefan fire him to keep the secret?

Stefan's eyes deepened.

This girl had no guards against him.

He had a lifetime to make her fall for him.

Now, it was just the beginning, he didn't need to rush.

"I'm really tired, I'll take a small nap. Stefan, wake me up when we get there."

Lucinda leaned against the seat and closed her eyes.

Before she knew it, she was asleep.

After she fell asleep, her body started to lose control, slowly leaning towards Stefan.

Stefan was more than ready to accept.

He carefully pulled her into his arms, letting her sleep against his chest.

"Noah."

Stefan called out softly.

Noah immediately responded, "Mr. Stefan, I didn't hear anything."

Stefan smiled slightly, Noah was quite smart.

"No one is to speak about me and Lucinda. When the time is right, I will bring Lucinda home myself."

Lucinda had no clue about his real identity, he didn't want to freak her out.

He had to play it cool.

Once they got real close, he would spill the beans about his true identity to Lucinda.

“No worries, Mr. Coleman, we’ll keep your secret for as long as you need.”

Only a handful knew that Lucinda had rented Stefan.

As the housekeeper, Emma didn’t leak any info to the old house, so they wouldn’t stick their noses in.

“You guys did a good **job** just now, once I get back, I’ll give you a raise.”

Noah’s face lit up instantly. Who wouldn’t love more salary?

He said with a smile, “Mr. Coleman, it’s all part of the job.”

“From now on, whenever I’m with Lucinda, don’t call me Mr. Coleman. She doesn’t know my real identity yet, I don’t want to scare her.”

If she found out he was the big shot of the Anderson family, she would definitely ask for a divorce on the spot.

And he didn’t want a divorce.

He won’t ever get a divorce in his lifetime!

Noah assured him, “Yes, I promise not to drop the ball.”

After a slight pause, Noah still asked, “Mr. Coleman, are you and Ms. Moore officially hitched?”

“Yup, but... this is none of your business, knowing too much might come back to bite you.”

Stefan didn't go into detail about his situation with Lucinda.

## Chapter 15

The Pinehurst Hotel was owned by the Martinez family and was one of the ritziest hotels in Pinehurst.

Owen said he wanted to welcome Ruby, so naturally, it was held at their family's hotel.

This was his own place where he could move freely and do what he wanted. Ruby had a few drinks, her beautiful face flushed under the light, exuding a mature woman's charm.

From the moment Owen saw her, his eyes were glued to her.

“Ruby, where are you planning to stay?” Owen asked, handing her a full glass of wine, “Why not stay at my place? It's big, with plenty of rooms. You can pick any. My mom adores you, she'd be thrilled if you moved in.”

Owen's mother and Ruby's mother used to be friends and were very close privately.

Owen and Ruby knew each other since they were kids, all because their moms were close.

Ruby swirled her wine glass, watching the liquid draw beautiful curves in the glass.

“Owen, thanks **for** the offer, but I still have a house in Pinehurst. I didn't sell the villa. I would come back occasionally over the years, and most of the time I stayed there, the maid is still looking after it.”

Ruby declined Owen's offer.

Her main reason for coming back was to marry Stefan, to become the next matriarch of the Anderson family.

How could she possibly move into the Martinez family?

Owen and Stefan were enemies.

Even if they weren't enemies, how could she move into the Martinez family? Stefan would definitely suspect she was with Owen.

Ruby wouldn't do anything that could potentially harm her reputation.

Owen said, a little annoyed, "Last summer when you came back, you stayed at the Anderson family's vacation villa until you left."

Ruby laughed, "That villa of the Anderson family is open to the public. Lots of people vacation there every year, I'm not the only one. Owen, let's make a toast."

Owen lifted his glass, clinked it with hers, and took a small sip, his eyes never leaving her as she downed her drink.

"Owen."

Ruby put down her glass, reached out, and took Owen's hand, "You and Stefan have known each other since you were kids, you used to be friends, why do you have to fight to the death? It's hard for me, being stuck in the middle."

Owen looked down at her delicate hand.

She took the initiative to hold his hand, which made him happy.

But her words stopped him from being happy.

Owen withdrew his hand and said coldly, "Why don't you go persuade Stefan to stop being my enemy? Ruby, you're obviously biased towards Stefan."

"I... I treat you both the same." Ruby denied favoring Stefan.

Owen looked at Ruby quietly, his voice tinged with bitterness and resentment, "Ruby, in the high society of Pinehurst, who doesn't know about your deep feelings for Stefan? But what about him? Have you forgotten how he treated you ten years ago?"

"Who made you leave your hometown and go abroad ten years ago? Are you still going to continue loving him?"

He suddenly grabbed Ruby's hand, held it tightly, letting her feel his unwillingness and anger.

“Ruby, we've known each other since we were kids, and I'm not inferior to Stefan, but I've never been in your eyes. Haven't you felt my feelings for you all these years? I've been waiting for you, waiting for you to let go of Stefan, willing to come back. Ruby, let go of Stefan, that man may seem kind on the outside, but he's cold-hearted. You can't touch his cold heart, he doesn't know how to love. Have you ever seen a woman by his side over the years? I've never heard of him dating or flirting with other women. He's almost thirty, and he doesn't even have a girlfriend. People in our circle may not be in a hurry to get married, but this is not normal for him, right? I suspect he has some kind of sexual dysfunction!”

Ruby was silent for a moment.

Owen's suspicion about Stefan triggered Ruby's memories.

Stefan's birthday was **in** July, a romantic season when weddings were often held. People often say that those born during this period are romantic and affectionate.

But Ruby only saw cold-heartedness in Stefan.

Ten years ago, on Stefan's nineteenth birthday.

Ruby, who was only half a year younger than him, made a bold decision, to give herself as a birthday present to Stefan that night.

But Stefan was unmoved....

He also told her that he had never loved her, that they were only playmates when they were kids, **not** even close to liking each other.

Ruby didn't expect her bold attempt to end up like this.

Unable to bear the emotional blow, she chose to go abroad.

Only she, Stefan, and Owen knew about this.

At that time, Ruby considered Owen her best friend, she didn't hide her attempts to get close to Stefan from Owen, she even asked Owen for help. “Ruby, I don't want to be just

your friend, I want to be your boyfriend, and future husband, Ruby, can't you see my feelings for you?"

Ruby looked at him and didn't speak.

She understood.

As she grew older, she gradually realized that Owen's kindness towards her was out of love, he was so good to her, so tolerant of her, all because he loved her!

Owen wasn't bad either, but Ruby wanted to conquer Stefan.

"Owen, you're drunk."

"I'm not drunk."

Owen replied quietly, "Don't change the subject, I know what I'm saying."

Ruby paused for a beat, yanked her hand back, picked up her bag, and got up. "It's late, and after a long flight today, I'm beat," she told Owen. "I'm heading home to take a load off. Thanks for the hospitality, Owen. Once I've recharged, I'll treat you to a meal."

With that, she split.

"Ruby, Ruby!"

Owen hollered her name twice, but couldn't keep her from leaving.

He smacked the table hard in frustration and anger.

"Stefan," he seethed, "I swear on **my** life, I won't let you off the hook!"

His prejudice against Stefan was largely due to Ruby, but business interests also played a part.

There ain't enough room in this town for two big shots.

Their businesses were virtually identical, so it was only natural that the two would butt heads in the same industry.

Ruby walked out of the Pinehurst Hotel, took out her cell phone and called her driver, telling him to come pick her up. After hanging up, she couldn't help but send Stefan a text.

The message was brief, "Stefan, I'm back."

Once she sent the message, Ruby sat there, waiting for Stefan's reply.

Stefan got a text from Ruby. He read it, but didn't reply.

## Chapter 16

He never had feelings for Ruby. They just knew each other from their families being close since they were kids.

They practically grew up together, but Stefan wouldn't agree with the idea that they've liked each other since childhood. Stefan looked down at the girl sleeping sweetly against his chest, his gaze softening. He gently touched Lucinda's face with his hand.

Seeing that she didn't wake up, he glanced at the driver, who was focused on the road. He nudged Lucinda a little, then quickly planted a kiss on her cheek.

Stealing a kiss from a girl was both nerve-racking and chaotic, but also sweet.

After the stolen kiss, Stefan hugged Lucinda tight again, looking ahead as if nothing had happened.

"We're almost there, young master."

"Alright, remember not to call me that when Lucinda and I are together."

"Got it, young master, oh, Mr. Coleman."

The driver immediately changed his way of addressing Stefan.



Suddenly, Lucinda's phone rang.

Stefan wanted to answer it for her, but she woke up.

Realizing she was in Stefan's arms, she quickly moved away.

She gave Stefan an embarrassed smile. She just wanted to take a quick nap, but ended up falling asleep in his arms.

Even though they were legally married, they had an agreement. She was renting him to play her husband, he wasn't her real husband.

According to their agreement, they should avoid physical contact as much as possible.

Lucinda pulled out her phone, checked the caller ID and said to Stefan, "It's Ike." He was definitely calling to check on her.

Lucinda picked up her brother's call.

"Ike."

"Mom wants you guys to come home tonight. Are you back yet?"

"We're on our way. Let me see where we are." Lucinda looked out the window. The driver said, "We're about five minutes away."

Hearing the driver's words, Ike said, "We'll wait for you at home."

Lucinda thought to herself, "If you're not waiting for me at home, where else would you be?"

But she didn't dare to voice her complaints for fear of being scolded by Ike.

Her marriage to Stefan was a big deal to her family.

She got married without her parents' approval!

After hanging up, Lucinda yawned and muttered, "I was woken up by Ike's call before I had enough sleep."

It was almost time for them to get home, so she couldn't go back to sleep.

"Stefan, let's go over our lines."

Stefan raised an eyebrow, "Lines?"

What lines?

"If my family asks us why we got married, what are you going to say?"

Stefan's deep gaze made her feel like he was inscrutable. When he looked at her quietly, it was as if she was the woman he loved most in the world.

**In** fact, they were just a little more than strangers.

"What do you want me to say?"

Lucinda thought for a moment, then said, "You can say that you've liked me for a long time. Today, you bumped into me and found out I wanted to get married, so you married me."

She couldn't say Stefan was her rented husband, So, she had to come up with a plausible reason to convince her family.

It was mainly to convince her mother. If her mother believed her, she wouldn't have to go on blind dates anymore. She could live a peaceful life.

They could divorce in less than a month.

**Trading** \$500 for a few years of peace and quiet was a good deal to Lucinda.

“Okay.”

Stefan replied with a smile, “Sure, I’ll answer your parents’ questions according to your instructions.”

“Besides asking us why we got married, my mom will definitely check your family background. Stefan, you can answer however you like. If you don’t want my mom to know the real situation of your family, you can make up some lies.”

She didn’t mind.

Stefan lightly touched her nose, then laughed, “Your mom would be angry if she heard you say that.”

Teaching others to lie to her mother was definitely something Lucinda would come up with.

“I have no choice. My mom keeps urging me to get married. She calls me so many times a day asking the same question. I’m about to go crazy.

It’s like she was going to be single for the rest of her life. But she didn’t think that being single for life was a big deal.

After complaining about her mom, she began to admire Stefan, “Stefan, your parents are so open-minded. They never interfere with your marriage.”

Stefan smiled, “Yes, they’re very open–minded. They don’t interfere with my romantic life. My grandma always says that marriage is important. You should marry someone you love and who loves you back. That’s the key to happiness.”

The elders of the Anderson family were indeed forward–thinking.

They were wealthy and powerful, and had many talented young people. Grandma said, there was no need for the Andersons to establish business ties through marriage. They could marry whoever they liked, and the family would not interfere.

Maybe because he was almost 30 and never had a girlfriend, the elders were worried that he might have some issues that he was too embarrassed to talk about.

So, they were eager for him to find a girl he liked and get married.

Grandma almost said that as long as he liked a woman, she would agree to the marriage.

“That’s great! My mom just worries about me a lot. My dad and grandparents won’t say anything. My grandma even said she didn’t want me to get married so soon.”

“But in the end, my mom has the final say. My grandparents won’t interfere.”

Stefan held her hand and could tell she tensed up a bit.

Clearly, this girl wasn’t used to them being all touchy–feely.

“Don’t worry, I promise I’ll get the job done.”

Looking at his ridiculously handsome face, Lucinda sighed. “Stefan, if you were a woman, you’d definitely be a stunning beauty who would make millions of men fall for you.”

Stefan was speechless.

When they pulled up to the front gate of the Moore family's residence, the driver stopped the car.

He didn't really want to interrupt Stefan and Lucinda's chit-chat, but they had arrived at the destination and he had no choice but to butt in.

"Mr. Coleman, we're here."

Suddenly feeling nervous again, Lucinda held Stefan's hand tightly, whispering in his ear, "Stefan, whether I can live a peaceful life or not, it's all on you now."

Stefan nodded solemnly.

Before they even had a chance to get out of the car, Ike had already come out of the house to greet them.

"Ike." Lucinda called his name after stepping out of the car.

Ignoring her, Ike waited for Stefan to get out of the car and landed a punch on his shoulder.

Lucinda gasped.

"Ike!" she shouted.

Grabbing Stefan by the collar, Ike shouted angrily, "Stefan, you damn sneak, you married my sister without a peep! Tell me, when did you start fancying Lucinda? I treated you

like a friend, a bro, an old pal, and this is how you repay me? You didn't say a word and whisked away my only sister!"

## **Chapter 17**

Stefan had just got off the car when he was suddenly punched by Ike out of nowhere, but he didn't lose his cool. He grabbed the hand Ike used to yank his collar and said in a low voice, "Ike, can you let go?"

Lucinda rushed over, pulling Ike away, "Ike, is this how you treat guests? It's Stefan's first time at our place, he's been on the road for so long, hasn't even stepped foot in the door and you've already punched him. Do you hate him that much?"

Ike said, "...Lucinda, you're defending him so much. What has Stefan done to you that you'd even marry him? Do you really know him? Do you know his past?"

His own sister was marrying his college buddy.

Ike felt very uncomfortable. "We've known each other for eleven years, how could I not know him? Plus, he was your classmate, right? What secrets could he have?"

Ike said, "... You've grown up, you're all grown up. Why have you become so stubborn?"

Lucinda went silent.

Her brother's reaction was a bit over the top.

In the past, Ike and Stefan were on good terms. Every time school was out, they'd go home together.

"Ike!"

Lucinda's mom, Fiona, also came out.

With her booming voice, Ike involuntarily cringed, but still managed to shoot Stefan a nasty look before turning around to go inside. Following Fiona was Vincent, Lucinda's dad.

Fiona turned to Stefan.

She hadn't seen Stefan since he graduated from university.

After a few years, meeting again, the once shy and polite boy had suddenly become her son-in-law.

Fiona took a good look at Stefan.

Then, she put on a polite smile and said to Stefan, "Stefan, long time no see, you must be tired from the long ride. Come inside and rest." She nudged her husband subtly, signaling him to lead Stefan inside.

"Mom, Dad, sorry to bother you so late."

As soon as Stefan spoke, he directly addressed Lucinda's parents as mom and dad, catching everyone off guard.

Vincent furrowed his eyebrows, not saying a word.

Fiona was taken aback for a second and then laughed, "I'm the one who called you guys back, no need to apologize."

Seeing Stefan unload many gifts from the car, Fiona said, "Why did you bring so much stuff, it's not necessary, we're not short of anything."

Lucinda chimed in, “Mom, you always say we’re not short of anything except a son-in-law or daughter-in-law. Now I’ve brought you a son-in-law, we’re just short of a daughter-in-law.”

Fiona gave her a stern look.

Lucinda cheekily stuck out her tongue.

Vincent stepped forward to help Stefan with the stuff.

They went inside first.

Lucinda was held back by her mother.

“Mom, what’s up?”

Lucinda pretended to be clueless.

“You dare to ask, did you really register to marry Stefan?”

“Didn’t Ike already tell you guys? Would I trick you?”

Fiona was stunned.

Although she kept pushing her daughter to get married, she didn’t expect her to get married at such a fast pace.

“Mom, look, Stefan is far better than those so-called high-quality men you arranged for me. He’s the real deal.” Lucinda bragged about her good taste.

“You and Stefan were classmates in college, and you’ve known him for a long time. But you guys didn’t interact privately, do you know him?”



Lucinda said, “Stefan works at Ascend Global and lived in Diamond Ridge Estates before we got married. The rent there is crazy high. He must have a good salary to afford it. Ascend Global is the biggest corporation in Pinehurst, involved in all sorts of industries, a huge and profitable company.”

“I bet his position is not low, his family is very open-minded, not like my mom always nagging me about getting married. I’m really envious of him.” **And** with that, Fiona gave her a light smack on the head.

Fiona said unhappily, “Women age fast. I just want you to find a better man while you’re still young and beautiful. What’s wrong with that?”

“Stefan works at Ascend Global and can afford to live in Diamond Ridge Estates. Looks like he’s quite eligible. By the way, where does his family live? How many are there in his family?”

Lucinda was taken aback by the question.

She only thought about how Stefan would answer her mom’s questions and forgot her mom would also ask her.

“They also live in Pinehurst. He’s living with his parents and grandparents.”

Lucinda’s dismissive answer left Fiona unsatisfied.

“Mom, let’s go inside. We can’t keep Stefan waiting for too long. It’s not polite.”

Worried that Fiona would keep asking, Lucinda quickly grabbed her hand and led her inside.

Inside, Stefan was sitting on a single sofa, facing four people sitting on the couch.

All eyes were on Stefan,

The coffee table was empty, not even a glass of water.

“Ike, why didn’t you get Stefan a glass of water?”

Lucinda started complaining about her brother as soon as she entered.

She naturally sat next to Stefan. Stefan immediately made room for her.

To make the act more convincing, Lucinda sat next to Stefan. The couple squeezed onto the single-seater sofa.

The Moore family was infuriated by the scene.

Their sweet daughter, so easily won over by someone like Stefan.

“Ike, go make some tea for Stefan and bring some fruit.”

Despite the questions in her mind, Fiona knew how to be a gracious host.

After all, this was their son-in-law.

Even if they weren’t happy about it, there was nothing they could do. They were already married. What else could they do?

Fiona was at her wit’s end, constantly nagging her daughter to get hitched, but her daughter kept striking out in the dating game.

She thought Lucinda would never get over George, but lo and behold, Lucinda got hitched at lightning speed out of the blue.

Fiona was pretty sure Lucinda got married in a flash. Aside from George, Lucinda didn't have any other male friends. Fiona was pretty bummed out thinking her beautiful, top-notch daughter didn't have any guys chasing after her.

What on earth are these guys looking at!

“Alright then.”

Fiona gave the orders and Ike didn't dare to disobey.

He grudgingly went to brew some tea and cut up some fruit.

“Lucinda, you lend a hand as well.”

Fiona wanted to split them up so she could get the lowdown on this guy named Stefan, oh, her “son-in-law“.

Lucinda subtly nudged Stefan's thigh, and Stefan subtly nudged her back.

They both understood what the other **meant**.

Lucinda stood up and left.

“Stefan.”

Fiona cut to the chase and asked straight up, “Did Lucinda rope you in to play the role of her husband, just to get me off her back about getting married?” Earlier, when she asked her daughter where Stefan's family lived, how many people were in his family, her daughter couldn't answer.

Fiona began to suspect that their marriage was just a show for her.

Chapter 18

Stefan slowly pulled out their marriage certificate and placed it on the small coffee table in the living room. He said to Fiona, “Mom, Lucinda and I are legally married, this certificate is real, we’re not faking it.”

Fiona picked up the certificate on the table and examined it.

All the information on the certificate was real, indicating that it wasn’t a fake document to deceive her. Moreover, the accompanying wedding photo had been included. The two people in the photo were smiling sweetly, like a couple that had been dating for many years. This showed that when they registered for marriage, they truly loved each other, and there was no deception or coercion.

Recalling what Ike had said, Fiona handed the document back to her husband for a second look. She asked Stefan, “You and Lucinda have known each other for many years, but you didn’t have much contact privately. How did you suddenly think of getting married?”

This happened after their daughter had failed in matchmaking many times.

Fiona didn’t want to suspect that her daughter and Stefan were pretending to be a married couple to deceive her, but she couldn’t help but doubt it because it was too coincidental.

Stefan showed a gentle expression on his face and explained, “Mom, I fell in love with Lucinda a long time ago. But since she is younger, I needed to wait patiently for her to grow up and wanted to have a stable job before confessing to her.

“I didn’t **expect** that while I was working hard, Lucinda already had a boyfriend and their relationship was going well. Although I was upset, I respected Lucinda’s choice. As long as Lucinda is happy, even if she is not with me, I hope she can be happy.”

Stefan spoke very sincerely.

If his friends heard this, they would say that he was a very affectionate man.

“Because my company is close to Serendipity Cafe that she opened, I was meeting clients and conducting business there today when I found out about Lucinda’s failed matchmaking attempt. I found out that she and her boyfriend had broken up.

“At that time, Lucinda was still upset about the matchmaking. I felt sorry for her and thought this was my chance to confess, so I expressed my feelings to her and asked her to marry me. Lucinda agreed, and we went straight to register for marriage.

“Mom, that’s how things are. There’s no pretending to be a married couple. After some twists and turns, Lucinda came back into my life. This time, I seized the opportunity because I didn’t want to miss such a good girl again. I want to make her truly happy with my own efforts.”

The Moore family was speechless.

It felt like they were listening to a story.

Lucinda, who was helping her brother cut fruit, also heard Stefan’s words and secretly praised him, “Stefan really has a knack for acting, it’s a pity he didn’t become an actor.”

He’s handsome, charming, and can act. It’s a waste not to be an actor.

If it weren’t for the fact that she was the female lead in his fabricated story, Lucinda would have believed the words Stefan said.

“Mom, although Lucinda and I got married a bit quickly, we’ve actually thought it through and won’t regret it. I promise, from now on, I’ll love Lucinda, pamper her, spoil her, and never let her suffer.”

The Moore family was still silent for a long time.

They didn’t know what to say.

Stefan’s condition was the best compared to those Lucinda had met in matchmaking.

And they have known each other for a long time.

“Stefan, come, have some tea.”

“Stefan, have some fruit.”

Ike and Lucinda came over one after the other.

Lucinda secretly gave Stefan a thumbs up.

Stefan looked at Lucinda lovingly. His action in the eyes of the Moore family looked like a heartfelt confession.

His eyes were full of tenderness.

Lucinda couldn't help but exclaim in her heart, "... Oh my God! Stefan, your acting is too convincing! I almost thought you really loved me."

"Since you two have made this decision after careful consideration, we can't say anything. Stefan, where do you live? We need to visit."

Fiona held back her reluctance.

The little girl they had brought home years ago, who had grown into a beautiful young woman with their care, was now married.

Although she was always urging marriage and arranging matchmaking for Lucinda, she was the one who was most reluctant to let Lucinda go.

Stefan smiled, "I live in the suburbs, the address is quite remote. It's a bit difficult to get there and easy to get lost. So, I'll tell my parents to come here and visit you."

Fiona nodded, "Since you and Lucinda are legally married, we as parents definitely need to meet."

Even if Stefan's parents came over, the Moore family would still have to find time to visit Stefan's family.

After all, their daughter was going to spend her life in their home, they had to know where their daughter lived.

"It might be inconvenient recently" Stefan said apologetically, "My parents are traveling abroad and haven't returned home yet. They probably won't be

back for another month or two."

Fiona asked. "So, you and Lucinda are not in a rush to hold a wedding?"

Stefan looked at Lucinda, still with that affectionate look. He said with a pampering tone, "This matter is up to Lucinda. Whenever she wants to hold the wedding, that's when we'll hold it."

“Dad, Mom, if you have any requirements for the wedding, just mention them. I’ll do everything I can.”

Lucinda picked up an apple and ate it while listening.

Even the wedding was mentioned.

Stefan was really a dedicated actor, the world owed him an Oscar for best actor.

“We don’t have any requirements. As long as Lucinda is happy, we’re happy.”

This was Vincent’s attitude as the head of the family.

“Mom.” Ike called softly, mumbling inside, “Shouldn’t we be interrogating the suspect? How did we jump straight to planning a wedding?”

Fiona shot her son a look, then said to Stefan, “Stefan, Ike here has a few questions for you, you better answer them honestly.”

Ike didn’t know what to say, he was totally baffled.

A few minutes later.

On the rooftop of the Moore family’s building.

Ike leaned against the railing, facing Stefan.

The breeze of the night was incredibly refreshing.

“Ike, what do you want to ask?”

“Got a cigarette?”

“You know I don’t smoke.”

He remembered that Lucinda didn’t like men who smoked.

“Lucinda doesn’t like men who smoke, does anyone in your family smoke?”

Ike said a bit impatiently, “That doesn’t mean I don’t smoke.”

“If you want to ask something, just ask, I’ll tell you.”

Ike took a deep breath, then asked straight out, “Are you up for it?”

Stefan replied, “...Ike, can you be more specific?”

Are you up for it?

In what sense?

“I mean are you a real man, or are you just trying to deceive Lucinda because you’re actually impotent? For all these years, there hasn’t been any woman around you, I, no, our male classmates think you might be sexually dysfunctional, or have some psychological issues.”

## **Chapter 19**

Stefan’s face turned sour.

What’s wrong with Ike? Did he have some mental problems?

With a threatening tone, Stefan asked Ike, “Do you want to try?”

And then, Ike’s face turned just as sour. He almost threw a punch again.

Annoyed, he said, “Stefan, I ain’t hinting anything, alright?”

Stefan sneered, “If you doubt me again, I can prove to you...”

“Alright, alright, I believe you, I believe you!”

Ike cut him off.

“Stefan, you’re engaged to Lucinda. You can’t go after me. I’m a handsome dude, but I’m only interested in women.” Stefan replied, “I didn’t ask you to validate me. I have a fiancée. Whether I can do it or not, my fiancée would know best.”

Ike: “...You and Lucinda aren’t married yet. You guys can’t do that!”

Ah, his precious little sister was going to be taken by this jerk!

Ike was in low spirits, feeling more and more annoyed by his old classmate and Lucinda’s fiancé.



Stefan didn't give a damn about what Ike said.

His target was Lucinda..

As long as Lucinda was willing, he, as a ready-to-be husband, could marry her anytime.

On the rooftop, two men were glaring at each other.

Downstairs, Lucinda was sitting in front of her computer, hands tapping away on the keyboard, words popping up on the screen.

Fiona opened the door, saw her daughter busy writing, then quietly retreated and closed the door.

Lucinda knew her mother had been there. She intended to chat with her after finishing a section, but Fiona left, not disturbing her writing.

It was already 10 PM. She was still short of her daily updates. She had to finish them before midnight.

She had no choice, because her coffee shop wasn't making a profit yet.

So giving up was out of the question. After all, with hope ahead, persistence would pay off.

Her editor told her she could level up by the end of the month. If she was willing, she could switch to a sharing model next month. If not, the original base price could be raised a bit. This way, her income would be higher, and she wouldn't have to work so hard to get the same amount of payment.

When she was not disturbed, Lucinda wrote really fast.

“You're writing a novel?”

Stefan's voice suddenly came from behind.

Lucinda didn't have time to close the file, so she admitted, “Yeah, a novel, a web novel. It's published online, not the kind for printing.”

As a newbie, she just started writing web novels recently to earn a little more. She was still an unknown, so publishing was far away for her.

Stefan laughed, “I didn’t expect to marry a great writer.”

“Stefan, quit kidding. What great writer? I’m just writing web novels to make a living. Instead, you surprised me, Stefan.”

Lucinda turned her head in his direction, noticing the door was not closed. She teased, “Stefan, have you ever thought about being a star? You’re really good at acting. Seriously, you’re wasting your talent if you don’t. Or, wanna consider it? I can be your agent.”

Stefan chuckled and flicked her forehead lightly.

“When I can’t survive in the business world, I’ll consider your suggestion, **to** be a star.”

“When you’re famous, Stefan, remember to give me more autographs.”

“You’re my agent, do you need my autograph?”

Everything of his was hers.

“Which website is your novel published on?”

Lucinda told Stefan the website she signed with and her pen name.

“How’s the income from writing?”

“I’m a newbie, so I signed the minimum guarantee contract. I have to keep updating to make money. I need to write for more than 10 hours a day to make enough for rent and living expenses

With an extra rent from him, her financial burden was heavier.

Keep going. Lucinda! Stick to the path you choose, no matter what.

Stefan’s eyes were filled with sympathy.

“Stefan, what did Ike ask you about?”

Stefan chose to keep quiet.

“Can’t you tell me?” Curiosity filled Lucinda’s eyes.

Stefan pursed his lips and said softly, “Your brother asked me if I could do it.”

“Can you?”

Lucinda hadn’t quite understood him, so she asked.

After asking, she saw his serious face, his deep gaze at her, a spark seemed to be dancing in his eyes.

Such a heart-fluttering gaze.

Her heartbeat involuntarily sped up.

Stefan’s gaze was irresistible!

Lucinda turned away, facing the computer screen, not looking at Stefan, so she wouldn’t be captivated.

“Lucinda, in the future, no matter who says I have a problem, if you have any doubts, you can come to me for verification. I’m more than willing to cooperate with your inspection,”

Lucinda didn’t know what to say.

She didn’t understand what he meant?!

What problem he had?! What inspection?!

“Go on with your work. I won’t bother you. I’ll go rest in the guest room next door.”

Of course, Stefan couldn’t share a room with Lucinda yet, even if they were married.

Lucinda rented him to be her shield, and the Moore family couldn’t accept letting this wolf live with their daughter.

So, they arranged for him to sleep in the guest room.

“Goodnight, Stefan.”

“Goodnight.”

After Stefan left, Lucinda started writing again.

As she was writing, she thought about what Stefan just said. Ike asked him if he could do it.

Could he do what?...

Huh?

Got it!

Do intimate things!

She actually asked him again!

Lucinda was so embarrassed that she wanted to crawl into a hole to hide herself.

Oh, no need to blush. He left a while ago.

Half an hour later, Lucinda finally finished today's update, uploaded the finished chapter to her author backend, then logged out.

She picked up her phone, habitually opened the website's app, opened her bookshelf, then opened her own book.

Sometimes when her latest updates didn't get approved, they won't show up. After she updated, she would open her own book to see if the new chapters were visible. If they were, she wouldn't have to worry.

If the updates didn't appear, she'd be able to spot the problem sooner rather than later. This way, she wouldn't be left in the dark, not knowing why her new chapters got rejected and unable to make updates.

"Huh? Wow! So many gifts! My goodness!"

On the platform where Lucinda had signed a contract, readers could send gifts. A flower was worth one-tenth of a cent while a diamond was worth almost a buck. They could also send any amount of in-app currency. Some of the gifts' value would go to the website, but as a hardworking author, she would get a hefty cut too.

At that moment, she realized her book had received a ton of diamonds.

She remembered vividly that her past work had only received five diamonds in total.

Readers usually sent her a few flowers as encouragement as diamonds were pricier and less likely to be gifted..

But now, she had received tens of thousands of diamonds.

After splitting the profits with the website, she would still make almost twenty grand.

Just from the gifts alone, she was making more than her monthly writing income.

“Did I just attract some filthy rich reader?”

Lucinda had a satisfied grin on her face. The reader who ranked first on the gift leaderboard was named “Waiting ForHer“.

It was this loaded reader who had gifted her tens of thousands of diamonds!

That’s so rich! She was so thrilled she was flipping and flopping on her bed!

## **Chapter 20**

Lucinda and her contract hubby had a chill weekend at home, with Ike driving them back to the city on Sunday afternoon.

Ike’s company had rented an apartment for him, and he initially planned to take the couple back with him, but Lucinda rejected the offer.

The place was too far from her shop and wouldn’t be convenient for work the next day.

So Ike ended up dropping them off at their rented house.

Knowing that the two of them were living together made Ike a bit uncomfortable, but he couldn’t really say anything.

After all, both of their parents had accepted Stefan, so there was no point in Ike opposing it.

“Lucinda, you go ahead, I need a word with Stefan.”

Lucinda glanced at Stefan and got out of the car, she still had to take the stuff from the car to the house.

These were home-cooked foods her mom had brought for her, including Fiona's homemade chili sauce.

There were also some vegetables and fruits grown in their home garden.

Every time she went back home, her parents would prepare a lot of stuff for her to bring back to the city. "Lucinda, I'll take care of this stuff later."

Stefan stopped her, not wanting her to carry such heavy things.

The stuff was plentiful and quite heavy.

"I'll take some of the fragile stuff first, and you can bring the rest in later. And bro, don't forget to lend a hand."

Lucinda reminded Ike that he should help out and not just stand by.

"Yeah, yeah."

Ike responded dismissively.

He didn't really plan to help, he wanted Stefan to do it all by himself, to tire him out!

He still couldn't accept that his classmate had become his sister's husband.

Lucinda took some stuff and headed for the house.

Once she walked away, Ike turned to Stefan who was sitting in the back seat of the car and warned him, "Stefan, just because my parents and grandparents don't hate you, don't get cocky. If you treat Lucinda badly, I won't let you off the hook. If you think Lucinda is doing something wrong, you are not to hit her, and you are not to yell at her. Call me, and I will take her back home immediately. I'll take care of her **for** the rest of her life!"

Lucinda was their family's treasure, and they couldn't bear to hurt her in any way.

Stefan responded seriously, "Ike, we might not have been close, but we were classmates for four years, and we've kept in touch since graduation. Don't you know me at all? I..."

Ike interrupted him, "I don't know you. When we were in school, a lot of classmates and I thought you were not easy to get along with. All I know about you is your name, your age, and that you were single before you met Lucinda. That's it."

“I work at Ascend Global, don’t you know that?”

“...That’s all I know.”

“Ike, since you have such a view of me, no matter how nicely I speak, you won’t believe me. I can only prove my love for Lucinda through time and actions.” Ike glared at Stefan for a while before reluctantly saying, “I’ll take your word for it this time. Get out and carry the stuff in.”

Stefan smiled and said, “I didn’t plan to bother you with this in the first place, brother.”

“Don’t call me brother. Every time I hear you call me that, it hurts even more. My beloved little sister was taken away by you, and now every time I see you, I get pissed.”

Stefan just smiled, not saying anything.

He carried several bags of stuff prepared by Lucinda’s mom out **of** the car.

Ike seemed afraid he might change his mind. As soon as Stefan got the stuff **out** of the car, he drove off.

Stefan carried several bags of stuff, without a single complaint, and headed for the house.

When he got to the door of Lucinda’s room, Lucinda came to open the door for him, her eyes curved into crescents from smiling.

“Stefan.” Lucinda reached out to help.

“I can handle it.” Stefan refused her help.

He had married her and he was going to spoil her for a lifetime.

He would do all the heavy and tiring work.

All she needed to do was to be his happy wife.

“Stefan, I have some good news.”

Lucinda closed the door, turned around and smiled at Stefan, “I’m going to make a fortune!”

Stefan put all the bags in one corner of the room, turned around and asked with a smile, “How so? Did you win the lottery?”

“I’ve never bought a lottery ticket. It’s my book! I received a lot of gifts today. Apart from the wealthy reader who gave me a lot of diamonds last night, more readers gave me gifts today. I suspect those readers are falling in love with me.”

Stefan laughed, “How much money can you make from the gifts they sent you?”

“Probably more than half, the website takes a cut.”

After saying this, Lucinda cried out in pain, “Ah, I lost so much money!”

If someone tipped her a diamond, she and the website would split the money, she wouldn’t mind. But when the base amount of money increased, she began to begrudge the money that was taken away.

“If they gave me so many gifts and coins on my birthday, it would be perfect, because all the tips received by the author on their birthday go 100% to the author, no need to split with the website.”

Stefan didn’t know how to answer.

The fact that Lucinda’s book could receive so many gifts, apart from Stefan himself generously investing money to make his wife happy, also had a lot to do with him posting the link of Lucinda’s book published on the website as a post. Those who could see his status were basically his good friends and some important clients, all of whom were wealthy. He chose not to let his family see this message, fearing that they would be too enthusiastic or curious and scare Lucinda.

He told them it was a novel written by his wife.

Those bored bosses immediately showed great interest. They downloaded the app, recharged, and then gave gifts and coins to Lucinda’s book. Stefan’s initial intention was to help Lucinda increase some popularity and let more people read her book, but he didn’t expect those people to **start** throwing money!

Anyway, it wasn’t him who forced them to throw money, it had nothing to do with him!



“Ah, can’t do much about it, can we? The platform gave me the chance to publish my novel, so of course there’s gonna be some costs. They take a bit of my money, they take a bit of my money, it is what it is. Lucinda quickly came to terms with this.

Stefan smiled, “That’s the spirit. After all, running a website isn’t free, they gotta make a profit. They can’t be running at a loss, right? Your birthday’s passed, hasn’t it?”

“Yep, half a year ago.”

As Lucinda replied, she thought of her brother and then asked, “Has Ike left already? Didn’t he come with you?”

“He’s got work tomorrow, and he lives quite a distance away from here, so he left earlier.”

“Stefan, I can tell that Ike might not be the friendliest to you, don’t take it to heart, he just needs time to accept the situation.”

Lucinda gave Stefan a thumbs-up, “But Stefan, your acting skills are top-notch! My mum had her suspicions, but you managed to pull the wool over her eyes. Now she totally believes in our marriage, and I can live in peace.”