

## Heartstring On Fire Chapter 151 - 200

### Chapter 151

Originally, Beatrice just wanted to test the waters and see if Jared knew about Agnes and Elton's relationship. She didn't expect Jared to be so protective of Agnes, afraid of her being misunderstood by the Whitfield family

Agnes knew that Beatrice wouldn't back down easily, she was good at causing a scene in public. But luckily, Jared knew her well, and Beatrice's attempts only made her look foolish

During dinner, Jared was very gentle to Agnes, even cutting her steak for her.

The Whitfield family had never seen this side of Jared Tim was pleased, his son was not young anymore, and he had not had any woman by his side for many years. There were rumors that he was not interested in women and was gay. This worried him a lot, and he had even arranged a blind date for him. Now he finally understood. Seeing him so caring and gentle, he felt he would soon have a grandson.

Deep down, Beatrice was filled with jealousy Laura had warned her to behave herself today, not to confront Agnes head-on, not to steal the spotlight. But she couldn't control herself

When Beatrice saw Jared cut a piece of steak for Agnes, she suddenly put on a smiley face and said, "I love steak too, could you cut a piece for me"

The plate of Porto steak was indeed quite far from Beatrice. But her request was a bit strange. However, she put on an innocent and carefree look, which didn't raise any

## Suspicious

But Agnes knew Beatrice was doing it on purpose. She wanted to get closer to Jared in front of her and act harmless. Agnes simply handed her the steak in her bowl and said, “You can have this piece.” Beatrice coquettishly said, “That’s the one Jared picked for you; I can’t take it, Jared. Could you pick another piece for me? I really love steak.”

She acted as if she was just greedy for steak in order to cover up her honest thoughts. She wanted to test Jared’s reaction. Even if his woman was her sister, he could accept another one, all men were the same, unable to resist a woman who took the initiative. She was young and beautiful and believed she could attract men more than Agnes Beatrice looked at Jared with a greedy face.

Tim laughed, saying. “Beatrice is so innocent and lively, Jared, just pick a piece for her.”

But Jared simply said, “Shelly, is there any more Porto steak?”

Shelly was their nanny. Shelly replied, “There’s plenty.”

Jared said, “Since Beatrice likes it so much, bring all the steak to her, even the pan, put it next to Beatrice, and let her eat to her heart’s content.”

Ten seconds later.

Beatrice looked at the pan full of Porto steak next to her, her face turned ghastly!

Jared actually treated her like this!

Looking at Beatrice’s astonished face, Agnes couldn’t help but want to laugh.

Jared was really blunt

Agnes told Jared, “Come here, there’s some sauce on your face; let me wipe it for you.”

Jared leaned over.

Agnes took a napkin, pretended to wipe his mouth, and actually kissed Jared’s cheek quickly. No one else saw this scene, but Ryder, sitting next to Jared, saw it clearly.

## Chapter 152

Jared was obviously shook. He didn’t expect Agnes, who was always well behaved, to pull a stunt like that in public

Her cheeks were burning, a hint of shyness still lingering on her face. She quickly returned to her seat after kissing him, burying her head in her food as if nothing had happened

Jared, however, moved closer to her on purpose and said, “Babe, I think I’ve got some sauce on my lips too.”

Agnes was speechless This man!

It seemed like there was a price to pay for her bold move

Agnes sighed, picked up a napkin, and wiped his lips.

Tim couldn’t bear to watch anymore, “Can you guys save the intimacy moment in your room? We have guests.”

Even though he said that, he was actually quite pleased

After dinner, Preston and Tim chatted in the study.

Laura and Alyssa were in the living room discussing Chanel’s latest dress style.

Jared and Ryder were talking in the yard.

Beatrice took advantage of the moment and approached Agnes, asking, “Agnes, did you set me up just now?”

Agnes replied, “Don’t just go blaming people. Jared gave you the beef, not me. If you want to settle scores, you should find him.”

“How would he treat me like that if you didn’t hint him?” Beatrice asked.

Agnes replied, “Beatrice, I don’t have the energy to target you.”

Beatrice sneered, “You wouldn’t dare. Agnes, you may be Jared’s wife now. But I’ll let you know, I will take your place and make you pay

“Beatrice, I suggest you stop embarrassing yourself. Jared will never like you” Agnes said

“Jokes on you. If you could become his wife, why wouldn’t he like me? What makes you better than me? Men are naturally attracted to novelty, are you so confident that he won’t betray you?” Beatrice said.

Agnes replied, “He won’t, I trust him.”

From the moment Jared publicly stood up for her, Agnes chose to trust him.

Beatrice laughed upon hearing this, “I don’t believe he’ll resist temptation. Agnes, just wait. Jared will fall for me sooner or later”

Beatrice’s words didn’t intimidate Agnes, because she knew that Jared’s ex-girlfriend was Mamie. Compared to Mamie, Beatrice was nothing special.

Agnes didn't want to waste her time arguing with Beatrice and went into Jared's bedroom.

This bedroom was something Agnes had already seen at Tim's birthday party. What impressed her the most was a whole wall of glass windows.

They had even Agnes unconsciously recalled the scene, and her face flushed.

She looked around Jared's bedroom. The room was mainly in black, white, and gray, with minimal decoration. Apart from a large bed and a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf, there was hardly any other furniture.

It was so Jared.

Agnes casually flipped through the books on the bookshelf until she heard some noise at the door..

Jared walked in after opening the door. He walked up behind Agnes, wrapped his arms around her waist, and asked gently, "What are you reading?"

Agnes showed him the cover of the book.

Jared took the book from her without a change in his expression, "Is it interesting?"

Well, she was just flipping through it out of boredom.

Jared's breath was already on her lips, her back pressed against the bookshelf. As his arms on the bookshelf slowly tightened, their eyes locked, full of flirtatious tension.

Agnes finally experienced how seductive a man could be, like Jared right now.

She was moved by his charm and couldn't help but kiss him on the lips and playfully said, "You're way more interesting than this book!"

## Chapter 153

Jared's eyebrows twitched slightly This was Agnes's second time today making the first move to kiss him

After the kiss, she didn't dare to meet his eyes, obviously shy

Agnes was also feeling a bit embarrassed. Did she come on too strong? Plus, Jared's deep gaze didn't give away his true feelings. Would he dislike her for being so forward?

Feeling awkward, Agnes forced a smile, slowly moving down to escape his light hold

Just as she was about to break free, she was suddenly scooped up by Jared.

This was different from his usual hugs. He was holding her around the waist, placing her back against the bookshelf.

Startled, Agnes instinctively tightened her legs around his waist. Jared, in turn, held her up, supporting her bottom with his hands.

Their current position was highly suggestive, and they were so close they could almost hear each other's heartbeat.

Their bodies were almost completely pressed against each other, while Agnes could distinctly feel the heat from a certain part of his body. Her face turned as red as a beet. Before she could react, Jared was kissing her again.

A passionate kiss...

And soon they were tangled up in the sheets.

Just as things were heating up, they heard a knock on the door. Agnes immediately tensed up, pushing Jared away, but the man lost in the moment refused to stop.

It felt like her soul was on fire, as if she was floating on cloud nine. But the ever-loudening knock on the door brought her back to reality.

She had always been a good girl, never having experienced such indulgence, yet in such a thrilling situation, she reached the peak...

Everything else seemed to disappear, as if she was floating on a calm lake. The warm water enveloped her, like lying in her mother's arms gazing at the stars as a child.

Calm and blissful.

Jared watched her, dazed beneath him. He stroked her hair, gently kissed her forehead.

He stared at Agnes's flushed face, not wanting to miss any slight change in her expression.

By the time he emerged from the room, half an hour had passed. Agnes had already taken a shower, changed into fresh clothes, and sobered up.

But her face was still flushed, like the evening glow.

The one knocking was the butler. He had come three times during that period.

The first time, Alyssa asked them to join her in the living room for some fruit. The second time, the parents wanted to have a talk with Jared in the study. The third time, the guests of the Whitfield family were ready to leave

When Preston left, Agnes and Jared finally came downstairs.

Alyssa said, “What have you two been doing in the room that you took so long to come down?”

Agnes immediately blushed, giving Jared a surreptitious pinch.

But Jared remained calm and simply replied, “There was some urgent business to attend to, so we were delayed a bit.”

Alyssa grumbled, “You’re just like your father, such a workaholic. Can you ever earn all the money in the world?”

Preston, however, said, “Jared is young and ambitious, that’s a good thing.”

Agnes thought to herself. He was indeed a seasoned businessman, decisive and cunning. His lying skills were top-notch

Beatrice gritted her teeth and clenched her fists, because she saw the obvious hickey on Agnes’s neck.

Clearly, they had just been doing something in the room.

## Chapter 154

Tim Bald. “I just had a chat with Mr. Pritchard about your wedding Now that you’ve got the marriage certificate sorted, let’s get the wedding done ASAP”

Jared replied, “I’ve talked this over with Agnes. We’ll have the wedding after she graduates “

Agnes was on the same page, considering she was still a student.

She said, “Let’s hold off on the wedding until after I graduate I’m about to be a senior, and I’m gonna be super busy”



Even though she didn't have many classes, Agnes needed to start working on her thesis. Her research topic was set and it was super complicated. Add to that, she was also acting so there was no time to plan a wedding

Besides, thinking about a Whitfield family wedding, it was bound to be a media circus. Agnes felt it was better to delay it if possible.

In a nutshell, she wasn't ready yet

After mulling it over, Tim said, "If you guys have it all figured out, there's no rush"

Preston gave a few words of advice and then left.

Agnes and Jared were staying at the Whitfield Manor tonight.

Jared was really busy and was working in the study even at night, while Agnes was flipping through a photo album she'd picked up from a shelf in her room.

It was all pictures of Jared as a kid. Sure enough, someone who was handsome now was also handsome as a kid.

Almost all the pictures were of Jared with Alyssa. Everyone knew Jared and his sister were super close, and she could tell from the pictures.

Jared, who'd come in unnoticed, walked over and asked, "Why are you still up? What are you looking at?"

Agnes looked up Jared was already sitting next to her, arms around her, chin resting on her shoulder.

He looked tired, but he was still making an effort to chat with her.

Agnes said. "I'm looking at pictures of you as a kid. You were so delicate, almost like a girl."

Jared smiled a little and said, "Are you complimenting me or making fun of me?"

"Of course I'm complimenting you." Agnes said

Agnes pulled out a photo, probably from when Jared was five or six. He seemed to be at some event, looking very serious. Even as a kid, there was a sense of maturity in his eyes that was similar to now

Agnes said, "Give me this picture, I'll keep it as a memento."

Jared leaned in close to her ear and asked, "Why? Missing me already?"

Agnes blushed, and when she turned her head, her lips almost brushed his face, "I just think you were really cute as a kid"

"Okay, no need to explain I know how much you like me." Jared said.

Agnes was speechless.

She continued to look at the pictures, asking, "Why are there only pictures of you and your sister here, no pictures of Ryder?"

At this, Jared's brows furrowed slightly. He said, "He doesn't like pictures, he has camera phobia."

Camera phobia?

This was the first time Agnes had heard this strange term.

Jared said, "It's because of something that happened when he was young. Even though it's been many years..."

Jared's expression turned serious. There was even a flash of guilt and pain in his eyes, as if he was lost in some past memory.

Agnes didn't press further but changed the subject, "By the way, how did you come up with the name Oscar?"

Jared didn't expect Agnes to suddenly change the subject and was slightly taken aback.

"I mean the Golden Retriever Agnes said.

Jared's eyes shifted, and he casually replied, "Just a random name, no special reason."

Before Agnes could say anything. Jared said, "It's late, time to sleep."

Agnes nodded, put away the album, and went to bed.

## Chapter 155

Agnes was headed off to the set early in the morning, and she left the house together with Jared. When they were heading out, Ryder was fixing his bike. It looked like he

had a flat tire

Even though it was summer break, Ryder still went to Lakeside College every day.

The medical program at Lakeside College was notoriously tough. Even during summer break, they had to keep doing experiments.

Jared glanced over. Hop in, Ryder I'm headed to Lakeside College anyway."

Ryder's bike wasn't getting fixed anytime soon, so he didn't refuse.

Agnes sat in the passenger seat, while Ryder took the back. Through the rear-view mirror, she could see Ryder engrossed in his medical books all the way.

Such a nerd

They arrived at Lakeside College in no time, and Ryder got out first.

Before Agnes could get out, Jared grabbed her arm.

Agnes was puzzled, "What's up?"

When Jared pointed to his cheek, Agnes immediately understood, blushed and leaned over to plant a quick kiss on his cheek. Then she got out of the car in a hurry.

Jared said, "Call me when you're done, I'll pick you up"

Agnes replied, “No need, the last scene today is at Maplewood Manor. I’ll just go home after”

Jared was satisfied and drove off.

After he left, Agnes noticed that Ryder hadn’t left after getting off the car. He was standing right across from her, about a few feet away. Which meant, he definitely saw her kissing Jared

Agnes felt mortified. But she then decided that as his elder, she should act like one.

She thought for a moment and then said, “Ryder, your studies are pretty intense, huh?”

Even she found it cringeworthy the moment she said it. Why did it sound so natural when Jared called him Ryder. But when she did, it just felt so weird?

Agnes saw Ryder frown. He didn’t say anything, just turned around and walked into Lakeside College with his backpack on one shoulder.

Agnes so regretted trying to act like an elder. Ryder must’ve been put off by it.

When Agnes arrived on set, everyone gathered around her in two lines, “Good morning, Mrs Whitfield.”

Before she could react, she was ushered to sit down. People were offering her water, fanning and massaging her back, “You’ve been working really hard, Mrs. Whitfield”

Agnes laughed, “What’s gotten into you guys? Please stop this.”

They were just kidding around.

Ava said, “Mr. Whitfield gave everyone a big bonus yesterday. So of course, we’re being extra nice.”

Jared gave out bonuses? She had no idea.

Agnes said, “Alright, enough with the jokes. The director’s here, we’re about to start.”

Everyone stopped fooling around when they heard the director was coming. They quickly got into their positions and started doing their makeup.

Beatrice walked in with a gloomy expression and sat down in silence. Her things made a loud clatter.

Today’s script included a scene between Beatrice and Agnes, which was also Beatrice’s last scene.

The scene was set in a closed-off villa. In the movie, Beatrice played Ruby, who was in love with the male lead, Samie. She was jealous of his girlfriend, Sylvia

Today’s scene was a party scene. It was Samie’s birthday and he was throwing a pool party at his house. Ruby, out of jealousy towards Sylvia, planned to push her into the pool but was found out. In the end, it was Ruby who fell into the pool, causing an embarrassing scene.

## Chapter 156

The shooting was going smooth as butter And Jared came back earlier today. He even watched them filming.

When the director called it a day and they all went back to the set. Jared grabbed a towel and started drying Agnes hair

Thanks,” Agnes said, laughing.

Beatrice was watching from the side, green with envy. She was the one who was supposed to fall into the pool and be soaking wet. But in Jared's eyes, it seemed like Agnes was the only one in sight.

Beatrice suddenly got up and walked towards Agnes

Agnes and Jared were chit-chatting in the garden. The garden path was paved with cobblestones and filled with various filming equipment.

On her way over, Beatrice deliberately tripped over a tripod and hurled herself towards Jared.

She let out a yelp, which drew the attention of everyone around.

Everyone took a sharp breath. They all knew that Beatrice had beef with Agnes and she was always stirring trouble. This time, it was definitely on purpose.

But there were more than just one or two people who had the hots for Jared, yet the only one who would dare to openly show it was Beatrice. She was Agnes younger sister, a daughter of the Pritchard family.

Jared probably wouldn't just stand by and do nothing. But if he actually caught Beatrice, given her personality, she would probably take that chance to get closer to him.

Then there was a dull sound.

It sounded so painful. Everyone was in shock.

Just now, Jared quickly dodged

He not only dodged himself but also put his arm around Agnes' shoulder and quickly moved her aside. It was like a reflex action, shielding Agnes in his arms as if he was afraid of her getting hit by something.

Beatrice face-planted, and it was quite a sight. She started crying on the spot, while her assistant immediately helped her up. Her hair was a mess, already wet and now sticking to her face. Her face was scraped in several places, bleeding, looking a mess.

Beatrice sobbed, "My foot, it hurts"

Beatrice had twisted her foot and it was starting to swell.

Many people on the set actually felt a sense of schadenfreude at the sight because Beatrice was usually arrogant and rude, acting like a diva. No one could handle her. She really brought this on herself.

Although they were secretly pleased, they had to put on a concerned face.

May came over and said, "Beatrice, you really need to be more careful. Your injuries look serious. We should take you to the hospital.

Beatrice just kept crying.

Agnes never thought Beatrice would be so foolish to pull stunts on Jared, just asking for trouble.

Seeing her being laughed at, Agnes felt a pang of sympathy. After all, she was her sister. Even though Agnes didn't like her sister, she couldn't just stand by and do nothing in the end, it was Agnes who took Beatrice to the hospital.

Jared drove with a sullen face all the way. His wife was so kind, and she might be taken advantage of.

After the check-up, it showed that there was no major damage, just some minor skin wounds.

With a sprained ankle, she needed to lie down and rest for a while.

When they left the hospital, Beatrice suddenly grabbed Agnes' arm and said, "Agnes, mom and dad are not home, so there's no one to take care of me. Can I stay at your place for a few days?"

## Chapter 157

As soon as Beatrice called Agnes, she felt something was off. The term was a bit too respectful and it made her suspect that Beatrice was up to something Beatrice claimed she wanted to crash at their place for a few days, but Agnes had a feeling that Jared was her real target. Just as she was about to say no, Beatrice turned to Jared who was driving and said, "You wouldn't turn me down, would you? I promise I won't be a bother. Just let me stay with you guys."

There was even a hint of flirting in her voice by the end.

Agnes had to admit she was somewhat impressed by Beatrice. Her audacity was really something else.

But Jared wasn't a pushover, or so Agnes thought. She expected him to turn Beatrice down without hesitation, But to her surprise, Jared said, "Sure, there are plenty of empty rooms at Maplewood Manor. Take your pick"

Beatrice was ecstatic. She hadn't expected Jared to agree. Perhaps he didn't find her as annoying as she thought. She shot a triumphant glance at Agnes, raising an eyebrow as if to say "score one for me".



She was one step closer to her goal. Sharing the same roof everyday would give her plenty of opportunities. The thought excited her.

Agnes, on the other hand, was feeling a bit blue. She hadn't expected Jared to say yes, Did he feel guilty for not catching her on purpose?

Back at home, Beatrice picked a room closest to the master bedroom and moved in cheerfully. Agnes was about to go to her room, when she noticed Jared locking the door to the master bedroom. "What are you doing?" she asked.

"We're going to stay at the Whitfield Manor for a couple of days." Jared replied.

It then dawned on Agnes that Jared had seen through Beatrice's plan all along. He had agreed because he never planned to stay.

Beatrice's plan had fallen through. For some reason, Agnes felt a sudden lift in spirits. As they left, she felt a mischievous thrill.

Meanwhile, Beatrice lay in bed, still daydreaming about all the potential romantic encounters under the same roof with Jared,

Although the Whitfield Manor was sparsely populated, it was always brightly lit, day and night, because Alyssa disliked the dark.

At dinner that night, Tim was thrilled to hear that Jared and Agnes would be staying at the old house for a few days. "Why don't you move back in? It's great when the family's together." Alyssa suggested.

But Jared declined, "It's a bit far from the office and Agnes's school, but we'll visit often."

Tim grumbled, “How far could it be? It’s just a short drive. I think you just enjoy your freedom too much and hardly come home”

Alyssa said, “Dad, you’ve got to understand the young folks. Jared just got married and it’s normal that he wants to spend time alone with Agnes. Plus, you might become a grandpa sooner this way.”

At the mention of becoming a grandpa, Tim was over the moon. He then turned to Agnes and said, “Agnes, eat up. You’re too skinny. You need to build up your strength.”

Agnes was taken aback by Tim’s eager look. She was only twenty. Why was she supposed to think about having babies?

“I’m full.” Ryder put down his fork and said, “I’m heading to my room.

Alyssa frowned, “You hardly ate anything.”

Without saying anything, Ryder left the dining room and went to his room.

## Chapter 158

Jared asked, “What’s up with Ryder?”

With a shrug. Alyssa replied, “Isn’t he always like this?”

Jared said, “I feel like he’s been acting a bit off lately. Did something happen?”

Alyssa nonchalantly said, “He’s a teenage boy, they’re all a bit stubborn. Besides, you’re his role model, always pushing himself to be like you. I’m not worried at all. With you being so wonderful, my son can’t be far off.”

Agnes, however, was feeling a bit uneasy. She suspected that Ryder's sudden change might have to do with her. She was, after all, the stranger who had suddenly intruded into their family. And she was about the same age as him, even a few months younger, yet she was now his elder, stealing his attention, even overpowering him with seniority.

Alyssa had mentioned earlier that Jared was his role model, but she had stolen his role model's affection. It was enough to throw anyone off balance.

Before, Agnes thought, she and Ryder were sort of friends. His current coldness must be because of this.

Agnes thought it necessary to have a chat with him, to tell him she couldn't steal Jared's love for him.

So that evening, Alyssa prepared a fruit platter. When it was time to deliver it to Ryder's room, Agnes volunteered, "I can take it."

She approached Ryder's room with the fruit platter, a bit nervous.

But she knocked on the door anyway.

No response.

| Agnes knocked again.

Finally, the door opened. Ryder stood there as cold as ice.

But when he saw Agnes standing there, he paused for a moment.

Agnes quickly flashed a smile, "Hi, I've brought you some fruit."

Calling him Ryder in the morning had made him angry. This time, Agnes was clever, just simply greeting him. They were on equal footing now, surely he couldn't still be mad?

As expected, Ryder's expression didn't worsen. He simply asked, "You're just here to bring me fruit?"

Agnes said, "Well, I also wanted to talk."

Ryder's expression changed. Then he opened the door wider, "Come in."

Agnes entered Ryders room. Upon entering, Agnes almost thought she was in the wrong room. Ryder's room was almost an exact replica of Jared's.

A big bed, a floor-to-ceiling bookcase, a large window.

Agnes thought to herself. Jared really was his role model, even his room was set up the same way. He must admire Jared so much.

Agnes set down the fruit platter, saying, "I noticed you didn't eat much tonight."

Ryder coldly said. "Just spit it out."

Not wanting to beat around the bush, Agnes dived straight in, "Ryder. The truth is, Jared still loves you very much. Even though he's married to me now, that won't change. You two are blood relatives, I can't replace you in his heart. And now, you didn't lose Jared, but had me. From now on, we're family, and I'll care for you just

like Jared does"

Agnes let everything out in one breath. But, after she said all this, she noticed Ryder's face had darkened considerably.

Chapter 159

Did she say something wrong again? Because when she said it, she clearly saw Ryder frown.

Ryder opened his mouth and said, “Are you done? If so, you can leave now.”

Agnes felt extremely awkward. She quietly left Ryder’s room, gently closing his door behind her. When she returned to her own bedroom Jared, who was sitting on the sofa reading documents, looked up and asked, “Where have you been?”

Agnes walked over, a dejected look on her face, “I think your nephew really hates me.”

“Oh? You mean Ryder?” Jared asked

Agnes replied, “It’s all because of you. He must think I stole you away from him.”

Jared chuckled, stroking Agnes’s hair, “That’s not it. Ryder is just more introverted and solitary. But if you give him some time, you’ll discover he’s actually a really warm person.”

“Warm” was a word Agnes simply couldn’t associate with Ryder. Didn’t he know that Ryder was called Prince Frost at school?

The next day. Beatrice, limping, came looking for trouble with Agnes at the film set. In the lounge, Beatrice pointed at Agnes’s nose and asked, “Agnes, are you deliberately bullying me?”

Agnes calmly replied, “How did I bully you?”

“Why didn’t you come home last night? You left me alone in that big house. Isn’t that bullying me?” Beatrice said.

Agnes replied lightly. “You chose to stay at Maplewood Manor, but I didn’t say we were going to stay there too. You’re staying there not because you’re alone at home, but for some other purpose, right?”

There were many people in the lounge, and Agnes wasn't trying to protect Beatrice's dignity.

Beatrice retorted, "Agnes, don't accuse me without reason. Don't think everyone is as dirty-minded as you."

"Why don't you explain how I made you out to be dirty-minded?" Agnes asked.

"You!" Beatrice was choked by Agnes' words.

Everyone clearly saw what Beatrice was up to. The fall yesterday was probably on purpose. She just didn't expect Jared to not show any consideration. And now she had taken the opportunity to stay at the Maplewood Manor, her intentions were even clearer. Everyone admired Agnes's good temper, being able to tolerate Beatrice's blatant coveting.

Beatrice said defiantly, "I'm only staying there temporarily because of my injured foot. Once it's healed, I'll move out immediately." After saying this, she turned and left the lounge.

She didn't believe they would never come back!

Ava said, "Agnes, you're too nice, you'll get bullied. Look at Beatrice, she's too arrogant. Her foot is clearly mostly healed, but she's still sticking around at your and Mr. Whitfield's house. Her intentions are too obvious."

Agnes said, "Never mind her. She can't possibly live there forever."

However, Beatrice was busy at Maplewood Manor every day, and Agnes's scenes weren't completed until two months later. During this time, Jared never visited Maplewood Manor again.

Beatrice was very angry at Agnes. It must be because she didn't want Jared to come back.

On the day her scenes were finished, Jared invited the entire film crew to Noir for a celebration dinner.

Noir was the most upscale and elegant private restaurant in Willowbrook Town, loved by the high-class crowd. But the prices were not something ordinary people.

could afford

And that day, the hundreds of people on the film crew practically booked the entire Noir.

## Chapter 160

Noir was a restaurant built on an artificial lake. The many pavilions were actually exquisite private rooms. These rooms were connected by a winding water corridor. From a distance, the brilliant lights created a unique scenery that also carried a sense of luxury

Justin had a lot to drink, leaning on Agnes' shoulder, he sobbed and said, "Agnes, I really can't bear to part with you. Please divorce Jared and come with me. Let's go to the Eiffel Tower, and all those romantic and fun places"

As Justin spoke, he actually started singing. The melody was very gentle. But sung from the drunken Justin, it was unforgettable.

Justin sat with the director, scriptwriter, and some other key creative personnel. They were all on edge because sitting on the other side of Agnes was Jared

But Justin insisted on sitting next to Agnes, not clear if he was really drunk or pretending

During the three months of working together on a movie, Agnes and Justin had become friends. Justin was her childhood playmate, Lil Potato. Maybe because of their mothers,

they would talk about things from their childhood, including the warm memories when their mothers were still alive, which Agnes missed greatly.

Agnes said to Justin, “You’re drunk, let Yvonne take you home, okay?”

Justin leaned on Agnes’s shoulder and refused to leave, “I’m not going I want a kiss, and a hug”

Justin was really drunk, and Agnes didn’t know what to do. She stood up and said to everyone, I’ll take Justin to the rest room, and let him sleep for a while. Then call Yvonne come to pick him up.”

With that, she helped Justin up and walked out.

Jared watched their retreating figures, his eyes slowly narrowing. Everyone was nervous for Justin, was he pushing Mr. Whitfield’s limits?

They originally thought Mr. Whitfield would have someone forcibly remove Justin. But to their surprise, he asked a waiter, “Do you have anything for sobering up?”

The waiter replied, “Yes.”

Everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Jared was truly a big shot, and no one could compare to his magnanimity. His wife was being pestered by another man, yet he could so generously consider his health and ordered him a hangover soup.

Jared casually said, “Make me the most bitter hangover soup. My friend has unique tastes. The ordinary one might not sober him up, the bitterer the better”



The waiter glanced at Jared, they had never had such a request before. But he still went to prepare the soup.

The people at the table all had satisfied expressions. This was the Mr. Whitfield they knew. Additionally, they deeply sympathized with Justin, the phrase “asking for trouble” fit him perfectly.

Agnes returned quickly. At the same time, the waiter brought in a very bitter hangover soup. Agnes curiously asked, “What’s this?”

Jared smiled, his eyes gentle, “I ordered a hangover soup for Justin. He’ll feel better after drinking it.”

Agnes was overjoyed, “You’re so thoughtful.” She thought Jared would be upset.

Jared still smiled and said, “Your friends are my friends.”

Then he turned to the waiter and said, “Take this hangover soup to the lounge, make sure he drinks it all.”

Agnes was deeply touched, “Honey, you are just too sweet.”

Everyone was stunned‘ Ms. Pritchard, it seemed like she didn’t know her husband well enough.

## Chapter 161

One by one, many people came to toast. First, they toasted the director, then Jared.

Of course, today was Agnes’s wrap party, and naturally, she was the star of the show. Although Agnes was substituting juice for alcohol, she still drank quite a bit.

Halfway through the banquet, Jared stood up and said, “I have a few friends here today, I’ll bring Agnes to say hi.”

Agnes followed Jared out and curiously asked, “Who are these friends you’re taking me to meet?”

Jared responded, “It’s Brayden’s birthday today, and he’s having a little get-together here. We ran into them when we came in, so it wouldn’t be nice not to say hi. Plus, I can introduce you to them.”

Agnes knew who Brayden was. He was part of one of the Four Families of Willowbrook.

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The Four Families of Willowbrook the Whitfield family, the Bowman family, the Simonds family, and the Bartley family all had business dealings with one another. From the previous generation, they had been friends, and the intertwined interests involved were quite complex.

—

The Simonds family was a hot topic whenever people chatted leisurely.

Brayden was the only third generation of the Simonds family. The Simonds family had few descendants, with only one old lady supporting a huge family business. Therefore, the old lady’s only wish was to have a great-grandson as soon as possible to continue the Simonds family line. So, it was said that the old lady arranged an engagement for Brayden with a girl since he was young, and forced them to marry abroad as soon as they came of age.

However, Brayden did not like the girl at all and had never shown her off in public. He was always clamoring for a divorce. The problem was that the girl was also eager to

break up. The couple was always at odds and constantly fighting. But it had been two years now, and they still hadn't divorced.

Agnes curiously asked, "It's Brayden's birthday, so will his rumored mysterious wife also be there?"

Jared said, "I don't know, we'll find out when we get there."

Agnes followed Jared through several water corridors and finally entered a luxurious private room at the far east. This was probably the most elegant and quiet place in Noir.

Pushing open the door, the lively atmosphere hit them. There were seven or eight men in the room. And, of course, each had a stunningly beautiful lady by his side. Agnes took a closer look and realized that these ladies were all minor celebrities in the entertainment industry.

Maria, just played the lead role in a new drama and gained a lot of fame. Sydney, known in the entertainment industry for her girl-next-door image, had countless die-hard fans. Jessica, who just participated in the Victoria's Secret show in Paris, was outstanding and her worth skyrocketed.

There were many familiar faces from the entertainment industry that she didn't expect to see here.

They had clearly finished eating. Some were playing pool, some were sitting on the couch rolling dice, others were chatting.

Sydney, who was always as pure as a white lily, was now flirting and sitting on a man's lap, "Shawn, I just made a mistake because my hand shook. Can I have another try?"

Shawn, the man they called, said with a mischievous look in his eyes, "You were the one

who suggested this game of Jenga. Our agreement was that whoever's tower falls first has to strip off an article of clothing. You can't back out now, it's your turn."

Sydney pretended to be reluctant but still took off her lacy little shawl, revealing a backless tank top underneath. After taking off her shawl, she gently tapped Shawn's chest, "You really don't feel sorry for me at all."

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Shawn laughed loudly, "Let's continue, want to count how many clothes you're wearing today." "You're such a jerk!" Sydney said

Agnes stood at the door, shocked by the scene inside.

## Chapter 162

The young inheritors of the Big Four had always been the talk of the town in the entertainment industry, and everyone wanted a piece of them. Back in the day, Jared was the one everyone was dying to get close to

Agnes had never seen anything like this before.

All sorts of celebs, be it icy or glamorous, were here trying to outshine each other it looked like some real life version of a royal court drama.

Jared knocked on the door casually Finally, the peeps inside the room noticed the two newcomers at the door

Shawn was the first to react. He pushed Sydney, who was still sitting next to him, away and greeted them, "Jared, we thought Brayden couldn't even get you to come

His gaze then fell on Agnes standing behind Jared Shawn was stunned, “Who’s this little girl?”

Jared put his arm around Agnes’ shoulder and said nonchalantly, “She’s my wife, Agnes.”

Shawn was so surprised that he nearly dropped his jaw, “So this is your twenty year old little wife?”

Jared ignored Shawn and holding Agnes’ hand, walked over to the man of the hour, Brayden.

Because of their sudden appearance, the room went quiet in an instant. All eyes were on the girl beside Jared,

The girl looked innocent. Her face was free of makeup, but her skin was as flawless as a peeled egg. She had delicate features, a high ponytail revealing a smooth forehead and was dressed casually

So, this was the lady of the Whitfield family from the Big Four. She was nothing like what they had imagined.

Jared walked up to Brayden and said, “Brayden, sorry, I’m late.”

Brayden laughed and said, “Your presence is an honor, that’s all that matters.”

Brayden’s gaze fell on Agnes, “Agnes is truly beautiful. No wonder Jared is reluctant to bring her out, probably afraid of some playboys getting ideas.”

Shawn chimed in, “We are indeed playboys, but you two are good family men. However, Brayden, why didn’t you bring your wife to show us on your birthday? Jared brought Agnes, you’re being unfair.”

Brayden replied, “My wife isn’t suitable for these occasions.”

Shawn laughed, “Oh? You finally admitted you have a wife. Looks like the day you introduce her to us isn’t far away!

Jared casually added, “Didn’t Brayden just say? He’s afraid you playboys might get some ideas about her.”

They bantered back and forth, creating a lively atmosphere.

Agnes could tell that they were really close friends. Among the people present, there was also Aaron, the eldest son of the Bowman family and Yolanda’s brother. And that Shawn, was a childhood friend of Brayden’s. Although his family wasn’t part of the so-called Big Four, they were also a prominent family with military and political background, influential and powerful.

Perhaps because she was Jared’s wife, the ladies present wanted to get close to her, even pulling her over to the sofa to play games.

After a while, she found this quite fun. Everyone was chatting and laughing, and she gradually loosened up:

## Chapter 163

Jared stepped out of the private room to take a call.

Although Agnes was physically there, her mind trailed after Jared. Shawn noticed her preoccupation and reassured her, “No need to worry. I just checked, it’s a call from his company secretary. Probably something work-related stuff. Jared isn’t like us. He doesn’t have a lot of female friends. Over the years, there’s really only been Mamie.”

Shawn realized he'd put his foot in his mouth. He slapped his forehead in exasperation, "Look at me, blabbering away. Don't mind me, Agnes. I'll punish myself with three drinks."

And he did, downing three shots even though Agnes told him it wasn't necessary. Despite her words, she did feel a bit awkward. If even their friends knew about Jared and Mamie being a long time couple, their feelings for each other must be pretty deep.

Agnes had never asked about Jared and Mamie, nor dared to. At least for now, Jared was a dutiful husband, always by her side.

As for Mamie, Agnes decided to let time handle that issue.

Suddenly, the door to the private room swung open. Agnes looked over, expecting Jared. But, as the saying went, speak of the devil.

In walked Mamie.

The lively room turned awkwardly quiet. No one expected Mamie to show up here. Even Brayden was surprised. As he had purposely not invited Mamie, knowing Jared would be there.

Mamie walked in, dressed in a long black dress with a matching blazer draped over her shoulders. Her makeup was flawless, her long, waves of hair were perfect, and she radiated authority.

"Brayden, you didn't invite me to your birthday party. Isn't that a bit disrespectful?" Mamie asked as she walked in.

Brayden quickly apologized, "Mamie, you're a big star, always busy. I didn't want to trouble you. It's just a simple birthday party, no need to take it to heart."

Mamie handed over a box, “This is your birthday gift.”

Brayden was thrilled, “Mamie, you’re too kind.”

He opened the box to find a limited-edition watch.

“I know you collect watches. I had this one brought back from Germany. It’s part of a limited edition of a hundred, not yet released, I’m sure you’ll love it.” Mamie said.

“Nobody spoils me like you do, Mamie. Thanks, I love it.” Brayden replied.

Mamie scanned the room, her gaze finally landing on Agnes. Everyone became anxious, especially Brayden, who looked worried.

Mamie’s sudden appearance at his birthday party and her extravagant gift surely had a purpose. Except for Jared, she hardly gave any of them a second thought. Her showing up today was likely because she knew Jared would be there. But

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wasn’t around. His young wife didn’t look like she could handle Mamie. If Mamie picked a fight, there’d be no telling how it would end.

Brayden signaled Aaron, seated nearby, to fetch Jared. Aaron rose and calmly left the room.

By this time, Mamie was already making her way towards Agnes.

Chapter 164

Everyone was on edge.



The young actresses who were previously chilling on the couch, all stood up. They greeted Mamie with respect. Mamie's status in the entertainment industry was unparalleled, and they never thought they would bump into her here.

Mamie sauntered over and grabbed a bottle of red wine from the table.

Brayden, scared willess, hurried over and shielded Agnes, "Mamie, we can talk it out, no need to get physical."

Mamie, however, burst into laughter, "You thought I was gonna use this wine bottle as a weapon?"

With Mamie's feisty character, she might indeed take a hard stance against Agnes without uttering a single word.

Brayden chuckled awkwardly, "Mamie, you've always been graceful and sophisticated, never resorting to violence, I must've misunderstood."

Mamie smiled, "I was just curious about what wine you guys were drinking. Hmm, quite ordinary. But today, I've brought some special booze for you."

Just as she finished a few people walked in and placed two boxes of alcohol on the table. The waiter helped to open the boxes. Inside were various types of hard liquor. Mamie said, "These are fine liquors I've collected from around the world. It's your birthday today, and these are perfect for the celebration."

Everyone was taken aback. The alcohol Mamie brought were all high-proof liquors.

Shawn picked up a bottle, "Holy cow! This is a Scottish distilled whiskey, made using 17th-century distillation techniques. This whiskey has the highest alcohol content, and due to its unique storage method, it has a very distinctive taste. It's 92% proof, it's said that this liquor could fuel a sports car to 100km/h. And this one here, it's the American

Everclear! Due to its complex brewing process, it's 95% proof. But this stuff can seriously mess you up, it's banned in many states. And there's also this high-proof Puerto Rican rum, Jamaican rum. Mamie, where on earth did you dig up these treasures?"

Mamie laughed but didn't answer Shawn's question. Instead, she asked, "What game are you guys playing?"

Sydney quickly replied, "We're playing Truth or Dare. Mamie, wanna join?"

Mamie seemed intrigued, "Sure, what are the rules?"

Sydney explained, "Two people take turns spinning a bottle on the table. Whoever the bottle points to when it stops has to choose Truth or Dare. Truth is asking any question, Dare is asking the other to do anything."

Mamie said, "Sounds fun, but Truth is too boring. Let's play Dare."

Everyone was surprised that Mamie would be interested in this seemingly juvenile game.

Maria asked, "What's Dare?"

Mamie explained, "The rules are simple. The winner gets to ask the loser to do anything. If they can't do it, they have to pick a bottle from these and drink it all in one go. How's that?"

Everyone looked at each other, at a loss for words. They all felt that Mamie was prepared and ready for a showdown.

Jessica asked, "This game sounds exciting. Mamie, who do you want to team up with?"

Mamie extended her hand without hesitation and pointed, "I'll play with her."

She was pointing at Agnes.

## Chapter 165

All eyes were on Agnes. Mamie was sitting across from her, giving her the cold shoulder, “Don’t tell me you’re chicken out?”

No doubt, Mamie was throwing down the gauntlet One was the new flame, the other the old love, it was like watching a soap opera seeing these two women face off

If Agnes didn’t rise to the challenge, she’d lose face in front of Jared’s posse But if she did, there was a huge power disparity between the two. Mamie was a rich kid who could pull any stunt she wanted

Most folks were just there for the drama Brayden was the only one freaking out Neither woman was easy to handle. If Jared’s little wifey got picked on here, his birthday bash was screwed.

But then. Agnes, after a two-second silence, coolly said, “Alright, game on.”

She was curious to see what storm Mamie would stir up. If a showdown was inevitable, she’d just have to grit her teeth and bear it.

The two women were officially at war. Shawn volunteered, “Til spin the bottle. No favorites, I promise.

Round one started

Shawn spun the bottle skillfully and quickly. Everyone in the room was gathered around, eyes glued to the bottle on the table. The bottle gradually came to a halt, pointing straight at Agnes

A smug smile played at the corners of Mamie’s lips, “You lost.”

Shawn said, “Mamie, you can now ask Agnes to do something. What’s it gonna be?”

Sweat was beading on Brayden’s forehead. He was wondering why the hell Aaron was taking so long.

Mamie looked around the room and then said, “The vibe in here seems to have died down since I arrived, so why don’t we have Ms. Pritchard liven things up. Find a guy in this room and kiss him, tongue and all, for a minute. Ms. Pritchard, if you please.”

The room fell silent at Mamie’s words.

Everyone knew Mamie was out to cause trouble, and this game was the perfect chance for her to mess with Agnes. But what she was doing was not just messing with Agnes, it was messing with the men in the room too!

Kiss a guy for a minute? Knowing Jared, anyone who laid a finger on his girl wouldn’t get off easily.

Agnes was poker-faced.

All the guys instinctively took a step back. No one dared mess with Jared’s girl. They were all silently praying: Please, not me! But they were all still down for a good show. Would this chick really pick a guy and go in for a hot makeout session?

Unfazed, Agnes was ready. Mamie offered, “If you can’t do it, you have to down a bottle. Just a reminder, this is not your average booze.”

Agnes knew, as Shawn had already explained. These were rare, high-proof spirits that could seriously mess you up. Considering her low alcohol tolerance, one bottle could be a serious health risk. She couldn’t drink it. But this dare...

Agnes looked around the room. All the men were on edge. They were thinking, this girl wouldn't really pick a guy to make out with, would she? Apparently, she was a young actress in the middle of shooting a film. Maybe she didn't mind. But the chosen guy would be in hot water.

Jared didn't like people touching his stuff, especially his wife.

Agnes's gaze finally landed on Shawn.

## Chapter 166

Shawn felt Agnes's eyes boring into him, her gaze so intense it left him quaking in his boots. Fear was etched all over his face as he stammered, "Agnes, don't kid around like this. Jared will have me killed."

Agnes held her stare for a moment longer before her eyes drifted past him, towards the entrance of the private room.

Just then, the door swung open. Jared and Aaron sauntered in.

Agnes sprang to her feet, striding past Shawn towards Jared. She closed the gap between them in a heartbeat, planting a kiss on Jared's lips.

Cheers and whistles erupted in the room. Every guy there breathed a sigh of relief. Jared's timing was impeccable.

Mamie had said any guy in the room, but she hadn't specified who.

It was clear Mamie's aim was to stir up trouble. Everyone knew Jared's territorial nature. His wife was off limits. Rumor had it, he personally stepped in whenever his wife had to shoot intimate scenes.

But instead of causing a stir, they all got a front seat to a lovey-dovey show.

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Jared was taken aback at first. He didn't expect the usually reserved Agnes to make such a bold move in public. But he didn't push her away.

Shawn approached with his phone, quickly explaining. “Jared, play along for a minute. Agnes and Mamie are playing a game.”

Jared's brow furrowed, but he quickly caught on and played along. As the kiss went on, he even started to take the lead.

“Time’s up!” Shawn announced, holding up his phone, “A full minute, not a second less.”

Only then did Agnes pull away from Jared. She was a little dazed, her cheeks flamed up like ripe tomatoes.

Jared wrapped his arm around her waist, whispering, "Careful, babe."

Agnes shot him a fierce glare. They were only playing a game, while pretending was all they needed to do. But Jared's kiss left her reeling. She felt like jelly, her mind in a fog.

The crowd in the room was stunned. The unapproachable and aloof Jared, publicly kissing his wife for a full minute. And he seemed to enjoy it, like he hadn't had his fill yet.

The rumors were true. Jared really did spoil his wife rotten.

Jared was now leading Agnes towards the couch.

Mamie's face darkened. She didn't expect Jared to come back just in time. She knew Jared was a stickler for rules, and he wouldn't allow his woman to get cozy with another man. But this backfired on her, giving them a chance to flaunt their love.

Thinking of the sight of them kissing, Mamie's hand tightened into a fist as she coolly declared, "One more round!"

The room fell silent for a second before Shawn excitedly ran back.

This was getting interesting. The new flame and the old love were squaring off. Who would Jared choose?

Everyone was enjoying the spectacle. After all, Jared was the golden boy, and his life was as precise and flawless as computer data. He had never encountered a problem he couldn't solve. So his friends, who had grown up with him but always lived in his shadow, were more than happy to stir the pot!

## Chapter 167

Shawn was eyeing everyone around him carefully. Jared didn't seem to be stopping him, so he gave the bottle another spin.

But, when the bottle came to a halt, it was once again pointing at Agnes,

Everyone fell silent.

Shawn, feeling a bit awkward, said to Agnes, "Agnes, I didn't cheat, but your luck is really."

With everyone watching, there was no way Shawn could have cheated.

Agnes accepted the challenge and asked Mamie, "What do you want me to do this time?"

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Mamie had a cold look on her face. All eyes were on her. She stated slowly and clearly, “I want you to divorce Jared.”

The room fell silent immediately. Things seemed to be getting serious.

Everyone present knew that Mamie and Jared were childhood sweethearts. Their wedding news had even been rumored before. However, Jared suddenly announced that he was getting married with a young woman. The reason behind this was unknown to outsiders.

But Mamie was also quite the character. She was a top star in the entertainment industry, the young lady of the Bartley family, pursued by many.

To outsiders, she and Jared seemed equal rivals. Surely, she wouldn’t be troubled over a relationship. But it seemed like the reality was different. Now, her saying these words showed that she hadn’t let go of Jared.

Everyone was stunned, unsure of how to diffuse the situation.

Shawn said, “Mamie, it’s just a game, no need to take it so seriously.”

Mamie looked at Agnes firmly, “Isn’t life just a game? If you’re in, you’ve got to play by the rules.”

Agnes, without a moment’s hesitation, stood up and took a bottle of liquor from the box. She was about to chug it down but was stopped by Jared, “What do you think you’re doing?”

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Shawn explained, “That’s the rule of the game. If you can’t complete the challenge, you have to drink a bottle. But this is a rare strong liquor. It could be bad for Agnes.” Jared took the bottle from Agnes and said, “The rules didn’t say someone else can’t drink for you, right?”

Shawn quickly responded, “No, they didn’t.”

Jared said calmly, “Agnes is my wife, and we are one. If she’s to be punished, then I’ll drink for her.”

As he finished, Jared had already popped the bottle open and started drinking slowly.

Everyone was taken aback. They all knew Jared’s words were actually meant for Mamie.

Everyone felt a bit sorry for Mamie. How hurt must a woman be to use a game to try to win back her love? But they all knew, it was just a game for fun. Could it really change the current situation?

Jared had made his stance very clear.

Agnes stood there, bewildered, trying to stop him. But Jared gave her a comforting look, signaling her not to worry. Agnes didn’t know much about liquor, so she wasn’t aware of the potential consequences of the strong drink. But Mamie did. Seeing that Jared had drunk half of it, she said, “That’s vodka from the Balkans in Bulgaria. Aren’t you afraid of risking your life drinking like this?”

Jared didn’t stop and drank it all in one go. The moment he put the bottle down on the table, everyone clapped for him.

Jared didn’t seem to be affected by the drink, maintaining his calm and elegance. He said in a voice as calm as the breeze, “Asking me to divorce is like asking me to end my life.”

## Chapter 168

Jared actually spouted some pretty mushy stuff, but it didn't sound cheesy coming from him, kinda heart fluttering

All the girls in the room were shooting envious glances at Agnes. Jared was actually risking a showdown with Mamie for her.

A look of disbelief spread across Mamie's face. She was with Jared for years, when did Jared ever say something sweet?

She even started to question, did they ever had a romance during those years? She thought his cold demeanor was just his nature, why did he seem like a changed man with Agnes?

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Agnes saw Jared downing an entire bottle of booze, and worriedly asked, 'Are you okay?'

Brayden chimed in, "No worries, Jared's always had a great tolerance for alcohol. He's been a heavyweight since his teens."

Something flickered in Agnes's mind, but she couldn't quite put her finger on it. Something felt off.

Shawn asked again, "Round two?"

Mamie clenched her fists. With gritted teeth, she declared, "Bring it on!"

She refused to believe that she couldn't take her down today.

Agnes hesitated, but Jared chuckled and said, "Have fun. If you can't handle anymore, I'll drink for you."

The atmosphere was heating up.

Everyone was curious to see how this catfight would end.

The bottle started to spin again, and Everyone's heart was in their throat.

In the end, the bottle slowly came to a halt, pointing at Mamie instead of Agnes. Everyone was taken aback, and some even wanted to applaud.

Finally, Mamie was picked.

Shawn breathed a sigh of relief. If it pointed at Jared's wife three times in a row. Knowing Jared, he would cause a scene afterwards.

Everyone thought, this was getting interesting. Mamie had just targeted Agnes twice, and now was her chance to strike back.

Especially the young actresses, they seemed to be gloating. Mamie was always acting high and mighty, so they just wanted to see her stumble.

Shawn observed everyone's reactions. Then he carefully said to Agnes, "You can make a request."

Agnes and Mamie locked eyes, the first time she dared to meet Mamie's gaze. She said seriously, "I hope you won't disturb our life again."

Agnes's words were short and calm, but they carried an undeniable air of confidence and determination.

Who would've thought this seemingly fragile girl could be so powerful? Mamie just demanded they divorce, so this was like her clapback. And given her status, she had some leverage.

Mamie sat there, not moving. But her heaving chest and clenched fists clearly showed that she was at the end of her rope.

Who did this girl think she was? She appeared out of nowhere, stole Jared, and now told her not to disturb their life.

What right did she have? Did she know about her and Jared's decade-long relationship? Did she know what they had been through?

She actually dared to make such a shameless request.

All eyes were on Mamie.

Mamie stood up, grabbed a bottle of booze from the box, and uncorked it forcefully. She sneered, “No one in this world can order me around.”

## Chapter 169

Mamie started to knock back the booze, head held high.

Brayden came over, trying to reason with her, “Mamie, this could end badly. Quit the drinking. It’s just a game, no need to get so worked up’

But Mamie didn’t stop. She continued to drink, her eyes locked on Jared

Everyone could see it. Mamie was waiting for Jared’s reaction. If Jared stepped in, that would be a game changer.

Right now, the situation was super awkward.

If Jared didn’t step in, Mamie was definitely going to flip her lid.

But then again, Mamie was Jared’s ex, and they grew up together. Even if the love was lost, they still shared a bond of friendship. If Jared didn’t help, he might get a rep for being heartless. But if he did, to Mamie, it would be like giving her a glimmer of hope.

A little spark could start a forest fire! In the future, Mamie would definitely stir up more trouble.

And his wife was right there. If he wasn’t clear about his stand, it could cause misunderstandings.

Jared’s brow furrowed. He didn’t seem to have any intention of stepping in.

He kept looking at his watch, as if he was waiting for something.

Just then, the door to the private room opened again. The man at the doorway was Ivan.

He took one glance, strode over, and snatched the bottle from Marie. He smashed the bottle, glass shards flying everywhere.

Everyone gasped.

He said to Mamie coldly, “How long are you planning to keep this up?”

Ivan’s timely appearance was probably not a coincidence. No wonder Jared kept checking the time, he probably foresaw Ivan stepping in.

In this world, the only person who could control Mamie, besides Jared, was probably her big brother Ivan. But Ivan was also known for spoiling his little sister rotten. Actually, many people there had also grown up together, so they knew that Mamie wasn’t always this arrogant. A huge part of it was because Ivan spoiled her. The Bartley family had a vast empire, but Ivan’s parents died in a car accident when he was 18. At that time, he was bullied by other family members, almost losing everything.

Nobody knew how hard the 18-year-old Ivan worked to take over all the Bartley family’s businesses, started Century Entertainment, and bagged half of the entertainment industry. But everyone knew that during the hardest times, it was just him and his sister.

Later, after Mamie became famous, she mentioned in an interview. Their parents’ death hit Mamie hard. She cried to her brother, saying that with their parents gone, nobody loved her anymore.

Ivan told her that he would make her the center of attention in the entertainment industry, so that way everyone in the world would notice her, and she wouldn’t feel lonely. So, Century Entertainment was actually a star factory Ivan built for Mamie.

This showed how much he loved his little sister.

Mamie collapsed on the sofa. Probably due to the alcohol, she started crying into her hands.

Without hesitation, Ivan squatted down, picked Mamie up, and left the private room in silence.

## Chapter 170

When Mamie left, she was slumped over Ivan, drunk off her face, mumbling. “Why why did it turn out like tins...

The private room fell silent for a while after Mamie and Ivan’s exit

Brayden felt awkward What should’ve been a joyful birthday bash had turned into a catfight between Jared and two women. Seeing Mamie in such a state, Agnes felt terrible too. She tugged gently at Jared’s sleeve, saying, “I wanna go home”

Jared turned to Brayden, ‘Brayden, we’re gonna take off. Sorry for the drama, we’ll make it up to you next time?’

Brayden patted Jared on the shoulder, showing understanding, and said in a low voice, “Take good care of Agnes when you get home. Young girls can get all kinds of crazy ideas.”

Shawn joked from the side, “Sounds like you’ve got a lot of experience. Isn’t your partner about the same age as Agnes?”

Even after they’d gotten in the car, Agnes still felt a bit dazed.

Jared gently stroked her hair, asking. “What’s wrong?”

Suddenly, Agnes turned her head and asked in a dazed tone, “Why did you choose me?”

Jared was a bit puzzled, “What do you mean?”

Agnes looked downcast, “Can’t your feelings for Mamie after all these years outweigh your feelings for me? Why did you choose to marry me?”

What Agnes really wanted to know was why Jared had so firmly stood by her side. She couldn’t figure it out. She’d always thought she was just a band-aid for Jared’s emotional wounds.

Just happened to be there at the right moment.

But now with Mamie trying to win him back, Jared’s firm stance made her suspicious. Did Jared have some other plans?

Agnes even wondered whether Jared was using her to test Mamie’s limits.

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If that was the case... Agnes’s gaze became gloomy.

Jared seemed to be stumped by this question and didn’t respond immediately.

Agnes’s heart seemed to be sinking to the bottom of the sea at his silence. Had she guessed right?

“Agnes, I’m going to tell you the truth, promise not to get mad at me.” Jared suddenly became serious.

Agnes felt a knot in her stomach, “Just say it. Whatever the reason, I can handle it. I just want to know the real answer.”,

Even though Agnes said this, she felt a pang in her chest.

She probably hit the nail on the head.

Jared said earnestly, “I’ve been pondering over this question too. But I eventually thought, you might be the only one who dares to push me around.”

Agnes was taken aback, “What are you talking about?”

Jared chuckled, as if he recalled something, “Don’t you remember? That night, you dragged me into your room, pounced on me like a wild animal. You almost tied me up, and then you... I had no chance to resist.”

Jared was obviously referring to the first time they met.

But at that time, Agnes was completely wasted. The only thing she remembered was waking up the next day with an unfamiliar man beside her. She had no recollection of what happened before.

When Jared mentioned it, her face turned as red as a ripe tomato. She said in embarrassment and shame, “You’re kidding, right? You’re six foot one, who could force you if you didn’t agree?”

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Jared looked wronged, “You probably don’t remember how you were then. You were like a madwoman, incredibly strong. I really couldn’t resist and my clothes were even torn by you. I still have that outfit. If you don’t believe me, I can show you when we get home!”

## Chapter 171

Right now, Agnes just wanted to find a place to hide. She had zero memory of what Jared had told her, but there were some things she couldn’t just spill out. She was a lightweight when it came to drinking, and she wasn’t a pleasant drunk. On top of that, she had ten



years of taekwondo under her belt, so she was strong. What Jared said wasn't entirely out of the question. Agnes was so embarrassed she totally forgot what she was originally talking about. She thought they were both drunk that day, so that's why...

Suddenly, Agnes remembered something. She asked, "Aren't you the one who can't get drunk?"

Brayden had just mentioned that Jared could hold his liquor. He'd just downed a bottle of hard liquor and was totally fine now. Meanwhile, Mamie was acting out after just two sips, showing how strong that stuff was.

Jared nodded, "Indeed, I can hold my liquor pretty well."

Agnes asked, "Then how did you get drunk at that dinner with Director Zoe?"

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That time Jared, as an investor, had gotten drunk at a dinner. Ivar ended up dumping him on her. In the end, Agnes had to book a room at the hotel.

At that time, Agnes was mad at Jared because of his relationship with Mamie, but that day, Jared ended up having the upper hand.

Jared said casually, "Agnes, they say some people are born with a worm inside them, so they don't get drunk. But sometimes the worm needs to rest. That day, the worm inside me happened to be resting."

Agnes was confused, thinking about what kind of worm he was talking about. When she turned her head and saw the smirk on Jared's face, Agnes suddenly got mad, "Jared, are you messing with me again?"

She huffed and stopped talking to him.

Jared, laughing, took Agnes's hand and became serious, "If I say I liked you the moment I saw you, you might not believe it. I find it ridiculous myself. But since the first time I saw you, I felt familiar, curious, and had no aversion to you. In fact, I couldn't help but want to be near you. So, Agnes; I can't answer your question. Because I don't think it was just a one-night stand between us. That night, I thought it through. From the moment I touched you, I intended to make you my wife and spend my life with you. So, our marriage wasn't because of that night. But because I liked you the moment I saw you."

Jared still remembered that night at the bar. That night, she was sloppy drunk and fell right into his arms.

He usually hates physical contact with others, but that night, the moment she fell into his arms, he could smell a faint fragrance amid the strong smell of alcohol. Her flushed little face was like a ripe red apple.

Friends around them all thought this girl was obviously drugged. Several even offered to help, saying they'd handle it.

He usually didn't like to get involved in such things. But that day, he unexpectedly took her in his car and brought her home. That night, was a game-changer.

Agnes was indeed drugged that day. Jared had investigated and soon found out it was her friend, Jenny.

By then, Jenny had left.

Jared had no intention of telling Agnes about it. She was kind-hearted, and he didn't want her to see the dark side of the world.

Jared didn't consider himself the type to take advantage of others. But that night, he did lose control.

## Chapter 172

Jared still couldn't figure it out even now. He didn't have any special feelings towards women before. Even with Mamie, there was nothing special. He thought maybe there was something wrong with him. But that night, after meeting that girl, his feelings seemed to have changed.

His body seemed to have awakened a new sensation, and it got stronger and stronger. He could feel that some boundaries he had been holding onto for years were finally broken.

Yes, he did something not so cool this time, taking advantage of someone when they were vulnerable. He knew Agnes was not herself at that moment, but he still approached her.

That night, he barely slept. Looking at the girl who was sleeping beside him like a kitten, he felt confused for the first time.

Why her? Even he himself couldn't answer this question.

Jared never believed in fate. But after meeting Agnes, he had a strange premonition. That feeling of first love.

When she kissed him, the feeling of electric shock, and the involuntary tremble throughout his body, were experiences he had never had before.

He did struggle. The appearance of this girl seemed to have broken his bottom line, like throwing a stone into the water, causing a huge fluctuation.

And yet she asked him why? He wanted to know why more than her.

After hearing Jared's words, Agnes' heartbeat suddenly accelerated. Jared said he liked her the moment he saw her. Fireworks suddenly popped up in her mind, and her heart was filled with pink bubbles.

Agnes lowered her head, and asked shyly, "So, are you confessing to me?"

Jared smiled slightly, "Sort of."

She was filled with joy.

Jared suddenly changed the topic and asked, "What about you?"

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Agnes was stunned, "What about me?"

"Why did you agree to marry me that morning when I proposed?" Jared asked.

Agnes answered, "Because I had just broken up then, and starting a new relationship is the best way to heal from a breakup. Besides, we had slept together that night. If I don't marry you, who else could I marry? You're not bad you know, so I agreed."

When Agnes looked at Jared again, his face was not happy. Jared gritted his teeth and asked, "So, you were just using me as a tool to heal your feelings?"

"What do you think?" Agnes teased him deliberately. Seeing Jared's face getting darker and darker, she found it amusing.

Jared's voice was cold, seemingly reluctant to ask, "What about now?"

Agnes stroked her chin, pretending to think, "Now..."

She sneaked a glance at Jared. His angry look was actually quite cute.

Agnes felt that she had teased him enough, and it was time to comfort him. She immediately showed a smile, and hurriedly said, “Now of course you’re the best and I love you the most. You know, I find your angry look very charming.”

This was the first time Agnes had expressed her feelings so directly.

She mentioned “you” couple times in a row, which made her feel a little uneasy.

But Jared seemed very satisfied with this. The serious look on his face finally eased a bit, and the corners of his mouth curled up slightly. He said lightly, “Continue.” Continue what? Was this guy addicted or what?

Agnes began to rack her brains, “Jared is handsome and elegant, talented. His charm is irresistible.”

Jared suddenly coughed twice.

Agnes asked, “What’s wrong?”

Jared replied, “Okay, that’s enough.”

Agnes stuck out her tongue, then leaned over and gave a gentle kiss on Jared’s face. She felt like she was beginning to like this man more and more.

## Chapter 173

After the shooting of the movie “The Magical Romance of Cinderella, Agnes was about to start a new semester. She was now a senior

On the first day of the new semester, Agnes was the talk of the town

The big magical movie was shot right at Lakeside College, so it was the hot gossip among all students. But the leading lady was none other than Agnes from the joontalions

department. What was even more shocking she got hitched with the big cheese of the Whitfield family at just 20.

This was the buzz all summer long. No doubt, Agnes became the center of attention.

So, on the first day of the new semester, many were at the school gate waiting for her arrival.

As soon as Agnes stepped into campus, she felt gazes falling on her from all directions. Many were looking at her, talking about her, but not daring to interact with her.

With her sharp ears, Agnes heard a lot of rumors.

“Look, that’s Agnes from journalism, tied the knot with Mr. Whitfield at only 20. That’s why Mr. Whitfield only accepted an interview from a campus magazine it was all for her.”

“I heard Starlight International Group is run by Justin, she’s so lucky. Not only did she marry into wealth, but she also got to act with the hottest and most handsome star.

“Her dad is the chairman of Starlight International Group, and I heard he funded the movie. Justin is also a star of Starlight. So, her family background really does matter. She was born with a silver spoon in her mouth, we can’t really compete with that.”

“But, wasn’t there a rumor that Prince Frost announced that Agnes from the journalism department was his girlfriend? Is that true?

“Isn’t Prince Frost, Ryder Whitfield, Mr. Jared’s nephew?”

“But their relationship was public. I was there at the cafeteria when Ryder held Agnes’s hand and declared it after Ceole tried to provoke him. How could that be fake? What’s going on?”

“Maybe she was with Ryder first, then got close to the family after meeting the parents!”

“Oh my gosh, this is so complicated.”

Hearing all of this, Agnes felt uncomfortable. She was worried about this issue before the new semester started. While she never admitted it. Due to Cesile’s misleading many people on campus had misunderstood her relationship with Ryder.

Ryder only used her as a shield to avoid Cecile. Even he probably didn’t expect his shield to become a burden and tarnish his reputation. No wonder Ryder was so annoyed with her now.

“Look, isn’t that Prince Frost? Oh my god, he’s so handsome. I can’t believe I get to see him on the first day of the new semeste

“Why is he coming to school with Agnes? Do they live together?”

“Wow, his ex-girlfriend became a family member? Isn’t that awkward?”

Everyone was buzzing with gossip.

Agnes turned around. Sure enough, she saw Ryder not far behind her.

He was still looked handsome and aloof, wearing a simple white shirt, but with an artistic vibe. Carrying his black backpack as usual, he gave off a cold, restrained, and mysterious feel.

No wonder so many girls at school were head over heels for him. His face looked like it was straight out of an anime.

Agnes couldn’t help but stop in her tracks.

Watching Ryder come closer, when he was next to her, Agnes considered whether to politely say hi. But he didn't even glance at her just walked right past her treating Agnes as if she was invisible.

Agnes watched as Ryder walked away and let out a sigh. Maybe, he also heard those rumors at school.

That probably made him dislike her even more.

## Chapter 174

Agnes didn't have a lot of classes this semester. After grabbing some textbooks for her major, she planned to head back home as classes hadn't started yet.

At the school gate, she ran into Kerri. After catching up, they decided to grab some grilled fish together.

At the restaurant, Agnes confessed, "Kerri, there's a reason I didn't tell you about my marriage."

Kerri was Agnes' college roomie and her best friend besides Jenny. Agnes felt she owed her an explanation. But Kerri said, "I get it. Stuff like this can be hard to share"

Agnes let out a relieved sigh, "I thought you'd be mad that I kept such a big thing from you."

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Kerri hesitated, "Actually, there's something I haven't told you either."

Agnes asked in surprise, "What's up?"

Kerri nervously confessed, "Agnes, I'm married too, but I haven't told anyone."



Agnes was stunned.

Kerri, with her gentle demeanor, kind nature, and outstanding academic performance, was a medical student at the renowned neurology department of Lakeside College, the same major as Ryder.

She was always the model student, spending all her time studying, doing lab work, writing papers, or doing clinical rotations with professors. She rarely mingled with boys outside her major.

How on earth did she end up married?

Agnes asked, “When did this happen?”

Kerri confessed, “Two years ago, I got married in Vegas when I was 18.”

The more Agnes thought about it, the more complex it seemed. There must be a story there.

Before Agnes could ask, Kerri explained, “You must think it’s unbelievable, like something out of a TV drama. But my life is just like that. I was an orphan, lived in an orphanage for 12 years, then got adopted by a family. They paid for my education and planned out my life to a tee. From the moment they adopted me, I knew I had no freedom. They’ve done so much for me. So no matter what they arranged, I had to accept.”

Agnes could see the helplessness on Kerri’s face. For a moment, Agnes felt she couldn’t keep prying. She could tell, Kerri wasn’t happy in her marriage.

How could a girl who was forced to marry at 18 possibly have any love in her life?

Agnes had heard about some wealthy families adopting helpless girls to groom them into suitable brides for their disabled sons when they couldn't find a suitable match from a good background. Then, these girls would be bound by their gratitude for the rest of their lives, unable to make their own decisions.

Agnes never thought this would happen to Kerri.

Seeing Agnes' worried look, Kerri said, "Don't worry about me. Luckily, he's not into me and has been thinking about divorce. I'm just waiting for him to let me go so I can start my own life."

Kerri didn't mention who her husband was and Agnes didn't ask. If it was bound to end, there was no need to dig deeper. Agnes had always held this view.

Kerri must have made up her mind to tell her about it today.

Agnes said, "Well, I wish you a speedy divorce."

Kerri clinked her glass with Agnes' and said, "Thank-you."

## Chapter 175

The two continued to chat for a bit.

Out of the blue, Kerri said, "I just saw that you're pretty popular in the voting for the school culture festival. Looks like you stand a good chance of winning the whole competition. Mr. Whitfield seems to have boosted your popularity quite a bit."

Agnes asked, puzzled, "What culture festival?"

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Kerri explained, “The annual school culture festival. Each school sends a performance to compete, and the winning performance gets a reward. It’s a big deal for the school’s reputation. Plus, this year’s festival coincides with Lakeside College’s centenary celebration, so we got the hosting rights. The school’s taking it super seriously.”

Agnes was actually familiar with the yearly school culture festival. It was like a big cultural exchange competition among various universities. Every year, universities would compete behind the scenes for the hosting rights.

The festival took place at the end of October every year, with top universities nationwide sending a performance to compete. Top government officials would come to watch, and in recent years, there was even a hefty cash prize and a medal of honor.

Although it was ostensibly to promote cultural exchange, in reality, it was a power struggle among the major universities. The school always placed great importance on this event.

Agnes said, puzzled, “But aren’t all the competing performances handled by the performing arts department?”

The reason Agnes didn’t make a big deal out of this event was that for many years, the opportunity to participate was basically given to the performing arts department. The students there were incredibly talented. Some of them had even entered the entertainment industry and made a name for themselves.

Naturally, they should be the ones to take on such a task that brought glory to the school.

It was said that the school culture festival was a great opportunity for performing arts students to showcase their talents, as many people from entertainment companies would come on the day of the competition. If chosen, they could become famous overnight.

The current rising star in the entertainment industry was the champion of the last culture festival. Her stunning opera performance swept everyone off their feet. She was spotted by a talent scout, released her first album, and starred in two TV series in the same year, becoming famous overnight.

Almost all performing arts students saw the culture festival as a stepping stone to the entertainment industry, and there would be some disputes every year over the performance.

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Kerri said, “In the past, this had nothing to do with us. But this year the school has a new rule. Apparently, the school has decided that the competing performance will be a play this time, so there’s a school-wide vote to select a male and female student with the highest popularity to be the leads of the play. The announcement was sent out a month ago, and the voting is posted on the official website, with the names of almost all students on it. The deadline is tomorrow. I checked this morning, and among the girls, you have the highest popularity right now, followed by Cecile.”

A month ago, Agnes was fully devoted to the drama crew and had no time to pay attention to anything else. Now, she finally had some free time to pick up her phone and glance at the campus forum, which she usually never cared about.

Sure enough, in the popularity vote, she was leading with over thirty thousand votes. The second place only had over ten thousand votes. She was undoubtedly in first place. She also casually glanced at the voting situation for the boys. Without a doubt, the first place in the boys’ vote was everyone’s favorite, Ryder.

Chapter 176

Agnes was a bit baffled

She had nothing against participating in a drama performance. After all, it was all about bringing honor to the school and she always felt a strong sense of duty towards that

But to pair up with Ryder... Agnes couldn't envision how awkward that would be.

Kerri said, 'Agnes, you better brace yourself. Tomorrow is the last day of voting I don't think Cecile would let this opportunity slip by so easily Her obsession with Ryder is well-known. How could she possibly pass up the chance to rehearse a play with Ryder?'

Even though Kerri put it that way, Agnes was still at a loss. The voting wasn't over yet and the official results hadn't been announced. And even if she wanted to discuss this with school executives, Agnes had no idea who to go to. She could only wait and see how things would unfold.

However, the next morning, as soon as Agnes opened her eyes and checked the campus forum.

She saw that her votes had been overtaken by Cecile, who was leading the popularity chart with a 50,000 vote advantage.

Agnes actually felt relieved. It was within her expectations. How could Cecile possibly give up this golden opportunity? Even if it meant getting people to rig the votes, it wouldn't be surprising.

However, when Agnes was about to close the forum, she noticed a new thread that was even more popular than the voting thread. The title of the new thread was 'Don't be fooled by her looks, the sinister girl from the journalism department.'

Agnes had a bad feeling and when she clicked on the thread, her suspicions were confirmed. The thread was about her.

Agnes read the whole thread from start to finish and by the end, she could only conclude that it was filled with lies.

It fabricated a lot of negative content about her, like how she used Ryder to get close to Jared, and used unfair means to get the leading role in Cinderella. It said she was promiscuous, frequented bars and led a chaotic personal life. It even said that she was secretly canvassing votes for the campus election. Every evidence in the thread was falsified.

Agnes's fingers began to tremble involuntarily. She never liked being the center of attention, but she was always thrust into the spotlight.

There were already thousands of replies to the thread.

Agnes randomly scrolled through a few.

"I never expected her to be such a schemer, there's so much story behind this. Using an ex-boyfriend to get close to his family, then quickly getting married after rising to the top. Very few people can pull that off."

"How can you become Mrs. Whitfield without some tricks? Besides, the cultural festival has always been handed over to the performance department. This year's sudden open vote might have some secrets."

"This kind of girl has a good family background, is pretty, heartless, cunning, and emotionally intelligent. No wonder she's a winner in life at just 20. It's so unfair!"

"This is just the opinion of the thread starter. Don't just jump on the bandwagon. I'm a journalism student. I know she's a good person."

"Kid, haven't you heard that women are dangerous? Even the pretty ones are no exception. A friendly reminder, keep your distance from her to avoid trouble."

Almost all of the comments were derogatory and defamatory, with many personal attacks. Of course, there were also people who pointed out objectively that these were unfounded accusations, but not many people were interested in pursuing the truth.

All they knew was that this girl's rise was meteoric, which made them envious.

Agnes couldn't bear to continue reading. At the end, she glanced at the signature.

The one who posted this was: Cecile is the superstar.

There was no doubt that it was Cecile.

## Chapter 177

After Agnes got to school, she made a beeline for the drama department. She'd done a quick online search for the department's class schedule. Turned out Cecile had a large-scale culture class at nine in the morning in a lecture hall.

Agnes was already waiting at the door before they finished class.

The moment the bell rang students came pouring out. Everyone cast weird glances at Agnes waiting by the door. Every now and then, Agnes could even hear whispers of hypocrite and malicious

Finally, out came Cecile.

Seeing Agnes, she raised an eyebrow and smirked in disdain, "Well, look who it is, the hottest starlet of the moment. What brings you to our humble drama department? Let me guess, you've done one play and you're already thinking of switching careers?"

Agnes cut to the chase, "Did you post that thread on the school forum?"

Cecile played dumb, “I have no idea what you’re talking about. You’re the one who wanted to be in the limelight, and now you’re exposed. Why drag me into this?”

Agnes retorted coldly, “Cut the act. I’ve traced the forum ID, and the registered account is your student ID. Are you still going to deny it?”

Cecile’s smirk didn’t falter at being exposed; she seemed rather smug. She said sarcastically, “So what if I posted it? I didn’t lie. You climbed up the ladder using Prince to get to Jared. You landed the role of Cinderella only because of your father’s connections, didn’t you? I just laid out the facts for everyone to see your true colors.”

Agnes shot back, “Do you even know what the truth is? Your so-called truth is just made up. You only aim to defame me, to knock me off the popularity list so you can take over my place. The real hypocrite here isn’t me, it’s you.”

The crowd at the door had already grown since class ended. Seeing the school’s two hot topics clashing, everyone stopped to watch. Some even whipped out their phones to record the whole thing.

Agnes’ direct accusation seemed to have left Cecile red-faced and angry, “Agnes, you’re talking nonsense. I’ve always been the top of the popularity list. Why would I fight with you over a role that’s already mine?”

“Already yours? I don’t think so. You think everyone in school is an idiot? You’re obviously rigging the votes. Cecile, let me tell you. I wasn’t interested in this role before, but you’ve crossed the line. I’m telling you now, I’m taking that role. We’ll see.” With that, Agnes turned and walked off, leaving a buzz behind her.

“Oh my god, Agnes is so badass.”



“She seems to have a point. Why did such a post appear at this crucial time? And indeed, Cecile’s votes are now far beyond Agnes’, ‘she was behind by over 10,000 votes just yesterday. Something fishy’s going on.”

“Could it be that what Agnes said is true? That Cecile deliberately posted it to frame her.”

\*Shut up!” Cecile’s furious roar resounded from afar.

Agnes had blurted out those words in a fit of anger. She hadn’t really decided whether to participate in the school competition, but now, it seemed she had no other choice.

Yet she had no regrets. With people like Cecile, the more she let them push her around, the worse they get. Agnes had avoided trouble before not because she was afraid of Cecile, but because she didn’t want to stir the pot. But now that trouble had come knocking. If she still chose to endure it, then she’d really be a pushover.

## Chapter 178

After Agnes came out, she gave Jared a ring.

Jared was in a meeting, but he paused it, and went to the balcony to answer, “Agnes, what’s up?”

Agnes asked, “Can you do me a favor?”

“Shoot.”

“I remember you said you have a hacker mate, the one who traced back the anonymous posts Jenny Fitz spread on the school forum. Can you pass me his contacts? I need him to do me a favor”

Jared responded, “Sure, I’ll shoot his info your way later.”

It took Agnes by surprise how quickly Jared agreed, so she asked, “Aren’t you curious about what favor I need?”

Jared said, “If you wanted to tell me, you would’ve.”

Agnes thought it was unnecessary to bother Jared about it. Plus, what she needed was kinda childish, so she said, “I’ll fill you in when I get the chance.”

“Sounds good.” Jared’s voice was gentle.

After hanging up, Jared dialed Mr. K’s number.

Mr. K responded, “I’ll go all out.”

Jared said, “Report back to me afterwards.”

Mr. K retorted, “Isn’t that a bit much? Why are you always keeping tabs on her?”

Jared countered, “Our company’s tech director position is still up for grabs. Maybe I should have a chat with your mom?”

“Jared, I messed up! My mom still thinks I’m in the States, don’t spill the beans.

Whatever Agnes asks me to do, I’ll keep you posted.”—

Agnes soon received a call from an unknown number: “Hello, this is Mr. K, what can I do for you?”

Agnes made her request. Mr. K assured her, “No problem, I’ll sort it out in no time.”

Agnes felt a bit embarrassed, “Thanks, sorry for the trouble.”

Mr. K cheerfully said, “It’s okay! Jared’s business is my business, Jared’s wife is my…”

Agnes was taken aback.

Mr. K realized he'd put his foot in his mouth and quickly apologized, "Sorry, I misspoke, don't take it personally. I'll get back to you."

With that, Mr. Khung up.

Agnes was still a bit dazed.

Why did this guy seem so unreliable?

-But as it turned out, although Mr. K was a bit of a chatterbox, he was top notch.

In the afternoon, Agnes's votes started to skyrocket.

By the cut-off time for voting, Agnes had just edged out Cecile Higgins by a single vote.

Agnes had asked Mr. K to help her rig the votes. She told him that she just needed to beat the original first place by a hair.

And this "hair" turned out to be one vote.

It was clear that in the afternoon, Cecile was also rallying for votes.

But, she was always held back by Mr. K.

The video of Agnes and Cecile's morning conversation at the classroom door was also uploaded to the school forum. Soon, the whole school knew that these two popular girls were officially at war!

Chapter 179

Agnes saw the final results and was pretty chuffed.

Mr. K is really something else.

Keeping a one-vote lead must be tough, and just this one vote might already have Cecile blowing a gasket.

Even though victory is within arm's reach, it always seems to be trailing by one vote.

Cecile was obviously fuming. She knew this was Agnes hitting back.

The next day, Cecile dragged Agnes to the Dean's office. She accused Agnes of rigging vote, therefore her first place should be revoked.

Dean was planning to confirm the cast and arrange rehearsals.

She'd also heard about the "one vote difference" incident on the forum.

Agnes said, "Yeah, I rigged the votes, but I reckon I'm not the only one doing it. Andrea, you should look into it. I suggest disqualifying all those involved in vote rigging"

Cecile was gobsmacked.

So that's what Agnes was up to! She blatantly rigged the votes to force the school to investigate and get her punished too.

But how could Andrea not see through this?

In a public vote, vote rigging is bound to happen.

Especially with the two girls in front of her, one the mayor's daughter and the other the most popular rising star.

The school had already made up its mind. They saw Agnes' popularity and thought she could benefit the school.

But, dealing with Cecile isn't a piece of cake either.

Now, both of them rigged the votes and their popularity is sky-high.

If they disqualified both, it'd be a massive loss for the school.

Andrea thought for a moment and said, "Both of you are pretty popular. I'll give you both the script, and you can form your teams and rehearse. In half a month, you'll perform in front of the school. The more audience, the higher your popularity. Then, I'll select the more popular team for the competition. Is that fair?"

Andrea thought, this way, everyone will rehearse, no time will be wasted, and they can promote within the school. Plus, competition between them would spur improvement. Both agreed.

As they left the Dean's office, Cecile said to Agnes, "Agnes, let's make a bet, see who gets picked in the end, you or me."

Agnes said, "Alright, what's the stake?"

Cecile said, "If I win, you let me slap you three times, how's that?"

Cecile seemed smug, as if she could already see herself slapping Agnes.

Agnes said, "Fine, but if I win, you have to announce to the whole school over the PA system that your previous posts were all lies, and you have to personally apologize to me!"

Cecile agreed, "Deal."

Agnes headed home with the script.

Now she agreed to this, she needed to start preparing.

The reason she made a bet with Cecile was to leave herself no room for retreat.

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This was her only chance to prove her innocence, she couldn't give it up easily.

If she doesn't take a firm stand this time, there will be more false accusations in the future. Agnes was already fed up.

Agnes approached Kerri Bradford to discuss strategies.

Kerri said, "Finding actors won't be hard. You're the president of The Journalism Society, there are bound to be many willing participants. But I must remind you, Cecile is a performing arts student, a teacher's pet. The performing arts department will definitely help her rehearse to grab this opportunity, that's her big advantage. Plus, they have many popular, talented actors. If you want to beat Cecile, the only thing you can do now is to find a partner who is more popular than the performing arts students."

Agnes and Kerri thought of the same person and almost at the same time said, "Ryder Whitfield!"

## Chapter 180

The only person who could outshine the performing arts department in terms of popularity was Ryder from the medical school.

But the moment his name was mentioned, Agnes immediately vetoed him.

The reason Agnes did not want to participate in the competition was because she did not want to share the stage with Ryder

So why was she inviting him to join now?

Kerri said, “Agnes, Ryder is your only shot at winning He’s the top dog in the male lead popularity vote. If you don’t go for him, Cecile will. You better make a move now! With your relationship with Jared, you should have no problem convincing him to take your side.”

What Agnes didn’t tell Kerri was that Ryder was currently pissed at her.

Agnes was torn

In fact, Kerri was right. Cecile already had a huge advantage. Without Ryder, Agnes wouldn’t stand a chance of winning.

She didn’t fancy being humiliated by Cecile in public.

After all, she and Ryder were practically family. He should lend a hand if his aunt was in trouble, right?

So, after parting ways with Kerri, Agnes headed straight the medical school.

But Agnes did not expect to be one step behind.

Ryder was in the lab.

The lab was quiet, but Cecile was already there.

“Prince, do me a favor, will you? You’re the top pick in the popularity vote, the rightful male lead. I know you’re swamped, but you’re a bright spark. You won’t need much rehearsal time. This is about bringing honor to our school.”

“Plus, the prize money for this competition is 200K. I promise, with our popularity, we can outshine the other universities. Once we win all the prize money is yours, okay?” “I know you’re not short of cash, but even if you don’t join now, the school will still force

you to participate later on, because you've already been picked as the male lead." Ryder, engrossed in his experiment, was bothered by Cecile's interruptions: Finally, he snapped, "I have no interest in performing in a play. I'll go talk to Andrea myself and tell him to find someone else."

Cecile asked, "Ryder, are you refusing to join my team because you're waiting for Agnes to ask you?"

At the mention of Agnes, Ryder's body stiffened slightly.

He looked up to see Agnes standing in the doorway.

With her back to the door, Cecile didn't realize Agnes was already there.

Cecile continued loudly, "Ryder, I'm not a fool. I know you fancy Agnes, but you should know that the two of you can never be together. She is now your..."

"Shut up!" Ryder cut her off sharply.

Caught off guard by Ryder's icy demeanour, Cecile was left speechless.

Ryder's expression was colder than usual.

The temperature in the lab seemed to drop a few degrees..

"I... I'm sorry... I shouldn't have said that," Cecile stuttered.

Ignoring her, Ryder's gaze shifted past her to the doorway.

Cecile turned around to see Agnes standing quietly in the doorway.

Cecile quickly put two and two together. No wonder Ryder was so upset just now.

She turned to Agnes and snapped, "What are you doing here?"



## Chapter 181

Agnes walked in and laid it out: “I’m here for the same reason as you.”

She approached Ryder and blurted out, “I want you to be the male lead in my play”

Upon hearing this, Cecile was livid “Agnes, how could you be so shameless? You’re his aunt by marriage now, don’t you know to avoid inappropriate interactions? Do you want the whole school to think Prince is getting too close with his aunt? Or, are you just trying to play the field?”

“Cecile, don’t twist my words. If there’s anything inappropriate between us, he knows better. Andrea asked us to form our own teams for the competition. It’s only fair that I fight for a popular male lead As for what you’re implying, time will tell that we’re innocent.”

Cecile snapped, ‘Agnes, you know what I can’t stand? Your holier than thou attitude. You only care about yourself. Have you considered Prince?’”

“Alright, you two, cut it out,” Ryder interjected

Cecile asked, “Are you really going to do the play with her?”

Ryder replied, “I’m not doing the play. You both can leave.”

Agnes was the first to leave, believing that if Ryder said he wouldn’t participate, then he wouldn’t.

Plus, with his aloof personality, he probably wasn’t interested in acting in a play.

The next day, rumors circulated that Ryder would be acting in a play with Cecile.

All the news was posted on the school bulletin board, including the competition between Agnes and Cecile's teams, and their bet.

Standing in front of the bulletin board, Agnes was a bit agitated.

So, Ryder really agreed to be the male lead with Cecile?

At lunch, Agnes confirmed the news with Kerri.

Kerri, who was on the same course and had the same tutor as Ryder, interacted with him frequently.

Kerri wondered, "I can't figure out why Ryder would support Cecile and turn you down. Could it be that he's planning to sabotage her at the crucial moment?"

Agnes responded, "you are overthinking. Do you think he's that type of person?"

Ryder was not that complicated. He either didn't agree to it, or he gave his all.

Being his classmate for three years, Kerri knew this well.

Kerri didn't know, but Agnes did. Ryder simply didn't like her.

Kerri sighed, "I think our chances of winning are slim. Cecile has become 'strong. Where can we find a male lead who can compete with Ryder?"

Agnes also felt a bit down.

She banged her head on the table and groaned, "Why did I bet with her? I feel like I've lost already. Ryder, you traitor!"

But Agnes was only a bit down at lunch. After she finished eating, she said, “Regardless, we need to give it our best shot. Who’s the second most popular guy?” Kerri answered, “It’s Vinson from the drama department.”

Vinson, a drama student, had gained some popularity after shooting a promotional video with Ava. He was good-looking, humorous, humble, and well-liked. But, his popularity paled in comparison to Ryder’s.

Agnes quickly found Vinson, who readily agreed to help.

## Chapter 182

Agnes spent the entire day, finally deciding on all the characters.

That night, she summoned everyone in a classroom for a meeting.

She distributed the script to everyone.

The school chose the play “Romeo and Juliet”.

It’s a classic love story that everyone knows. Agnes is playing Juliet, and Vinson is Romeo.

Kerri will be playing Juliet’s nurse.

Agnes said, “Tonight, everyone go back and read the script well. Tomorrow we start rehearsing officially. We only have half a month. In half a month, we will perform at the same time as Cecile’s team, so I hope everyone can give it their all.”

Everyone was full of enthusiasm.

By the time Agnes returned to Maplewood Manor, it was already nine o’clock.

Jared had just arrived home. He asked Agnes, “Why are you coming back so late?”

Agnes told Jared that she was participating in the school culture festival’s theatrical performance.

Jared asked, “Play performance? Is there a kissing scene?\*

Agnes laughed, “Is that all you care about?”

Jared said, “I won’t stop you from acting from entering the entertainment industry. I only have one requirement, no kissing scenes, no bed scenes, no overly intimate scenes.”

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Agnes asked, “What if I can’t choose my scenes?”

Jared said, “Then I be the understudy for that actor.”

Agnes said, “If that’s the case, the media might write big articles about how the president of the Tim Group’s hobby is being his wife’s kissing scene understudy!” Jared leaned in close to Agnes’s ear, taking off his coat, “I don’t care what they say.”

Jared’s breath made Agnes’s ears tickle, but she was really tired today.

She gently pushed Jared away, “It’s just a regular play, there are no kissing scenes. You can relax now, okay?”

Jared pretended to be regretful, That’s a shame. If there were erotic scenes in bed, I could’ve been the understudy.”

Agnes joked, “Whose understudy? The beds?”

Jared was speechless.

Agnes didn't tell Jared about her bet with Cecile.

She also didn't tell him that Ryder was also participating and was on Cecile's team.

Agnes didn't say anything because she didn't want to worry Jared. These things should seem childish to Jared. He's busy every day and doesn't have time to deal with these petty student conflicts.

As for Ryder, Agnes felt that if she told Jared, Ryder might think she was tattling behind his back and might dislike her even more as a result.

After all, Ryder really didn't have any obligation to help her. After sleeping on it, Agnes felt much better.

The next day, they started rehearsing officially.

Lakeside College has two auditoriums, one is East Hall, and the other is West Hall.

In half a month, they will perform in these two halls at the same time.

But in reality, East Hall is a bit older, much smaller than West Hall, and the environment is much worse.

The better rehearsal location is undoubtedly West Hall.

Agnes thought, since she's already lost the advantage of the actors, then she should utilize the geographical advantage.

She knew that these two halls have always been managed by the campus logistics department.

Agnes found the staff member responsible for managing the auditoriums, submitted her rehearsal application to him, and got the key to West Hall.

In the morning, Agnes and a few members moved all the props to West Hall.

At noon, Agnes invited all the members to have lunch together.

Everyone planned to start rehearsing in the afternoon. However, when they arrived at West Hall, they found all their props that they had moved in the afternoon were thrown outside.

When Agnes walked in, she saw Cecile directing. “Throw this, this, and this, all out.”

## Chapter 183

Agnes rushed forward to stop them, “What the hell are you guys up to?”

Cecile walked over and said, “We need to rehearse in the West Hall, so we gotta clear out all the unrelated stuff.”

Agnes retorted, “I’ve got the permission slip for the use of West Hall. For the next half a month, it’s ours. Please leave.”

Cecile arrogantly replied, “Don’t you know that the drama department gets priority to use the hall? What good does your permission slip do? The teacher helping us rehearse is our department head and the principal’s daughter. Do you really think you can argue with me over the usage of West Hall?”

Kerri chimed in, “Even if she’s the principal’s daughter, she should still play by the rules.”

Cecile scoffed, “Well, why don’t you go and tell the principal about the rules?”

After saying this, Cecile turned around and continued to direct, “Throw out all the remaining props and costumes.”

Agnes’s team wasn’t about to back down. A heated argument broke out and it almost came to blows.

Just then, Ryder showed up with his backpack.

Seeing Ryder, Cecile immediately put on a big smile and went over to him, “Ryder, why are you here so early? I thought you’d only have time to rehearse in the evening.” Ryder, expressionless, asked, “What’s going on?”

Cecile latched onto Ryder’s arm, “Just some people who don’t know how to behave causing a fuss.”

Kerri lashed out, “Cecile, what the hell are you talking about? Ryder, you came at the right time, you judge.”

Kerri explained in detail about Cecile’s attempt to take over West Hall, including how Agnes went to the school early in the morning to apply for the use of the hall and how they had worked hard to move the props.

Kerri said, “You guys are way over the line! West Hall is a public space of the school, there’s no such thing as special privileges!”

Everyone’s eyes were on Ryder, as if waiting for his judgement.

Ryder had great influence, and he was the only one who could control Cecile.

If he decided to back out, Cecile would have no choice but to comply.

Agnes’s gaze also fell on Ryder’s face.

Even though Ryder and Cecile were on the same team, Agnes believed Ryder was fair-minded.

Agnes didn't believe Ryder would agree with Cecile's actions.

Ryder was silent for a moment, and finally looked at Agnes, coldly saying, "You might as well give up. You can't possibly win the selection, why bother?"

Agnes didn't expect Ryder to say this.

Others seemed surprised too.

Regardless, everyone knew that Agnes was Ryder's aunt.

Even just for that relationship; Ryder should help her.

Cecile was also surprised. She hadn't expected Ryder to openly support her. Smugly, she said, "Agnes, Prince is right. If you admit defeat now, we can forget about our bet. If you insist on going on, don't blame me for not showing mercy."

Agnes retorted, "I won't give up, and I won't admit defeat."

With that, Agnes turned to the others, "Let's move our things to East Hall."

As she walked away, Cecile's triumphant laughter followed her, "I'd love to see how long she can hold out!"

## Chapter 184

The whole afternoon, everyone was hustling to move props to the East Hall.

Kerri was puzzled, "Why are we just giving in like this?"



Agnes explained, “Even if we stayed and fought, the outcome would be the same. So why should I bust my hump? The principal is running for the position of Cultural Department Head and needs Cecile’s father’s political backing. He’s definitely gonna back her up.”

Kerri fumed, “I’m not angry about Cecile, it’s what Ryder said. Lately, he’s been acting like he’s under some dark spell, totally different. He used to be man of few words, but he could always see right and wrong clearly. I don’t get why he’d side with Cecile this time.”

Agnes replied. “They’re on the same team, helping Cecile is just par for the course. Now, quit whining and let’s clean this place up.”

By the time they finished cleaning the East Hall, it was already evening. Everyone was dead tired.

Agnes had planned to have dinner with everyone, but then Jared called to say that the old manor was hosting guests that evening and wanted them to come back.

Agnes had no choice but to rush back to Maplewood Manor, take a shower, and switch into fresh clothes.

In the car, Agnes asked, “Who’s Grandpa hosting tonight?”

Jared answered, “He served in the military when he was young.

lung. After retiring, he always valued the camaraderie among his comrades. Tonight’s guest is an old buddy from his military days who’s been living abroad. He couldn’t make it for Grandpa’s birthday, so he’s paying a visit now that he’s back in the country.”

Agnes nodded.

Jared added, "Of course, the key point is that he's bringing his granddaughter. This is basically a blind date in disguise."

Agnes was sipping on her juice when she heard 'blind date' and almost spat it out.

Agnes asked cautiously, "Blind date? For who?"

Jared found Agnes' sudden tension amusing, "Who else? Ryder, of course. Who did you think it was?"

It took a moment for Agnes to process.

Because Tim had once arranged a blind date banquet for Jared, Agnes immediately thought of Jared when she heard 'blind date'.

Agnes said, "Isn't Ryder the same age as me? He's only 20 and they're already setting him up on a blind date, isn't Grandpa being a bit too hasty?"

Jared said, "He's a year older than you. Actually, this isn't really a blind date. Grandpa just wants them to meet and be friends, After all, his aunt is even younger than him, and he's about to graduate without even a girlfriend."

Agnes huffed, "He doesn't see me as an aunt at all. We're always at each other's throats."

The thought of what happened earlier today made Agnes seethe with anger.

Jared picked up on something, "What, you two had a falling out?"

Agnes sighed, "Never mind. I don't want to talk about it."

Jared probed a bit more, but Agnes didn't say much.

She wasn't the type to talk behind people's backs.

She knew that Ryder was prejudiced against her because of his uncle. If he found out she'd been badmouthing him to Jared, their conflict would only escalate.

Soon, they arrived at the brightly lit Whitfield Manor.

As they entered, Jared asked the butler, "Where's Ryder?"

The butler replied, "He just got home. He's in his room now."

## Chapter 185

Agnes went upstairs with Jared, giving a nod to Tim as they passed by

They hung out for a bit. Suddenly, the butler popped up, "Sir, your guests have arrived

Tim cracked a satisfied smile, "Jared, come down with me to welcome the guests. Agnes, go fetch Ryder and both of you head straight to the dining room." Agnes gave a curt nod

Tim and Jared went downstairs.

Agnes was taken aback for a moment, then turned around to find Ryder.

The closer she got to Ryder's room, the more peeved she felt.

Finally, she stopped at the door.

Agnes took a deep breath, getting ready to knock, but before her fingers touched the door, it swung open.

Ryder was standing there

Agnes froze, hand still hanging in mid-air.

Ryder seemed just as surprised to see Agnes at his door. He paused, then scowled, “What do you want?”

Agnes asked, “Why did you help Cecile today? She was clearly in the wrong.”

Agnes couldn’t hold back her annoyance.

Ryder replied, “I just told the truth. You really didn’t need to waste your energy.”

Agnes was riled up by his words, “So, you’re so sure you guys are going to win, huh?”

I never do anything I’m not confident about.”

\*So, you joined Cecile’s team just to help her beat me? Ryder, what did I do wrong? Why are you treating me this way?”

Ryder’s gaze darkened, “You didn’t do anything wrong.”

Agnes was confused, “Then why are you treating me this way?”

Ryder coldly said, “I just don’t like you.”

With that, Ryder left the room.

Agnes was seething.

When Agnes entered the dining room, the guests had already arrived.

Agnes spotted a girl about her age.

But, her style was totally different from Agnes’. She was wearing a belly-baring tank top and a butt-skimming miniskirt. She was pretty, and her smile was as bright and warm as sunshine.

The girl was trying to chat with Jared in broken local language.

Agnes frowned.

Tim was chatting with his old friend.

Seeing everyone had arrived, he said, “Let me introduce you all. This is my old friend, Wallace George, and his granddaughter, Anna George.”

Anna, full of energy, introduced herself, “I’m Anna, this is my first time in this country, nice to meet you all.”

Her local language pronunciation was pretty rough, sounding a bit awkward.

Wallace explained, “My granddaughter grew up abroad. She’s not really fluent in the local language, but she’s great in other ways. Please bear with her.” Tim said, “Anna is a lively and cheerful girl. I really like her.”

Then Tim added, “Let’s all take a seat and start the meal.”

Anna insisted on sitting next to Jared, clinging onto his arm and chatting away.

The initial plan was to set up Anna with Ryder, but she didn’t talk to him at all, only showing enthusiasm towards Jared.

After a bit, Jared suddenly said, “Let me introduce you. This is my wife, Agnes.”

A noticeable disappointment Bashed in Anna’s eyes, “Wife? She’s your wife? You’re married?”

Her pronunciation was so off that it sounded like she was grinding her teeth as she spoke.

Chapter 186

Jared took Agnes' hand and announced, "Yes, I'm married"

Anna exclaimed with surprise, "But she looks so young!"

Jared laughed and said, "I just have a thing for young, pretty girls. What's wrong with that?"

Agnes nearly laughed out loud. He actually said that out loud!

Her mood brightened a lot.

Jared always cared about her feelings.

Alyssa chuckled, "You announce it to everyone you meet. The whole world knows you're married now, stop bragging."

From start to finish, Anna and Ryder didn't interact.

Ever since Jared announced his marriage, Anna seemed a lot quieter.

Ryder was like a ghost, silently eating his food.

Agnes really loved oysters. When there was only one oyster left on the plate, both Agnes and Ryder reached for it.

Agnes paused and withdrew her hand. Ryder took the oyster without any hesitation and put it on his plate.

Alyssa, who was sitting beside them, saw this.

She scolded Ryder, "How could you be so thoughtless?"

Ryder acted as if he didn't hear her.

Agnes quickly said, “It’s okay, I’m Ryder’s aunt, I should let him have it.”

Ryder’s hand paused noticeably.

Actually, Agnes knew Ryder did it on purpose.

When there were many oysters before, he didn’t eat any, but he just had to fight her for the last one.

Ryder was just unhappy with her, both at school and at home.

Agnes was really angry inside. She knew Ryder was particularly bothered by the fact that she was his aunt, so she decided to suppress him with her status as an elder. Sure enough, Ryder suddenly said, “I’m done eating, I’m going back to my room.”

After finishing his sentence, he got up and left.

Actually, this was not the first time this had happened. Many times before, as long as she was present, Ryder would leave early. The fact that he stayed until the end of dinner today was already quite rare.

The Whitfield family all thought that Ryder was just going through puberty, so they didn’t pay much attention to it.

After dinner-Wallace and Tim were chatting in the study.

Anna took Agnes to chat in the yard.

Jared went upstairs to Ryder’s room.

Ryder was in his room writing a report.

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Looking at the professional data on the computer, he felt so annoyed for the first time that he couldn't even read a single word. Jared walked in. Ryder was surprised, "Why are you here?"

Jared walked over to Ryder and handed him a small rectangular black box, "This is a gift I brought back for you from my last business trip. Ryder opened the box and saw a black fountain pen inside.

Jared asked, "Do you like it?"

Ryder smiled and said, "You've shaped my taste since I was young. I like anything you choose."

Jared casually said. "Then why don't you like the aunt I chose for you?"

Ryder seemed to pause for a moment. He quietly closed the box.

Casually sitting on Ryder's desk, Jared calmly asked, "Can you tell me why you don't like Agnes?"

## Chapter 187

Ryder suddenly lifted his head, asking, "Did Agnes tell you I don't like her?"

"She didn't say anything, but your actions spoke volumes," Jared replied.

His dislike for Agnes had been obvious the whole evening.

He even resorted to petty tactics like snatching food.

Knowing Ryder as he did, Jared knew that he had never particularly liked or disliked anyone in his life.



This intense dislike was a first.

Ryder asked coldly, “I don’t get why it’s her. Weren’t you always into Mamie? She’s nowhere as good as Mamie, why would you marry her?”

“Because my heart fluttered, Ryder. If you meet a girl, and the moment you set eyes on her, you feel a jolt like electricity, even your heart starts racing, and you start trembling. That girl is the one for you. That’s my advice.”

“So, you really do like her, right?” Ryder’s eyes dimmed.

“Yes, I love her,” Jared replied.

Ryder lowered his head, his emotions unreadable, and said, “I get it.”

Jared patted Ryder on the shoulder, “Even if you don’t like her, don’t be too harsh on her, got it?”

Ryder just muttered a reply.

The next day.

After breakfast, Jared drove Agnes to school.

Ryder didn’t join them in the car. He had gotten up early, but didn’t have breakfast with them.

The rehearsals went smoothly.

But Cecile kept stirring the pot.

Agnes didn’t mind the daily squabbles.

Until the day before the performance selection.

Agnes had her last rehearsal that night.

As soon as she entered East Hall, everyone swarmed her, saying, “Agnes, we’re screwed.”

“What happened?”

“Our props and costumes have been ruined.”

Agnes went backstage to see for herself.

All the props and costumes had been splattered with paint.

“What the hell happened?”

“Do we even have to ask? Obviously, Cecile is playing dirty, ruining our props and costumes. Tomorrow is the selection, she’s ruthless.”

Vinson said, “She already has the upper hand, why would she do this?”

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Kerri retorted angrily, “This way, she’s guaranteed to win.”

Agnes frowned.

The other members were freaking out, asking anxiously, “Agnes, what do we do? Without props and costumes, how can we perform the play? We only had one set of costumes, borrowed from another school and now they’re ruined.”

Kerri said, “I’m gonna confront Cecile.”

Agnes grabbed Kerri's hand, "When were these costumes ruined?"

“Everything was fine at our rehearsal last night, but this morning they’re like this. I think Cecile must’ve sent someone to sabotage us last night.”

“Do you have any proof?”

“Do we even need proof? Who else could it be?”

Agnes said, “Without evidence, if we rashly confront her, she won’t admit it. She might even turn it around on us, saying we’re framing her because we’re not confident about winning. After all, as Vinson just said, they’re very confident about their performance tomorrow. To outsiders, they wouldn’t need to do this.”

Kerri frowned, “So what do we do now? We can’t just let it go. And without props and costumes, what are we going to do tomorrow? Are we really going to give up?”

## Chapter 188

“Y’all keep rehearsing. I’ll handle the wardrobe situation.”

With that, Agnes took off.

‘Agnes, where are you headed?’ Kerri hollered after her.

Agnes beelined for Century Entertainment.

She had already given Ivan a ring previously.

So she faced no hurdles on her way up and went straight to the CEO’s office.

Ivan’s secretary, Faye, recognized Agnes: “The boss is in a meeting, just chill here for a bit.”

After waiting less than five minutes in the office, Ivan made his return.

“This is the first time you’ve reached out since we wrapped up the TV series,” Ivan said, entering with a gentle expression and steady stride. Agnes stood up immediately: “Mr. Bartley, there’s a favor I need to ask.”

\*Jared is my friend, and you’re his wife. Please call me Ivan.”

Agnes hesitated slightly: “Ivan.”

“What do you need?”

Agnes spilled the beans about her university drama performance.

“You’ve got clout in the industry. I was thinking maybe you could hit up a production crew for some props for us.”

“That’s a piece of cake. Century Entertainment has its own prop warehouse. I’ll take you there later, pick whatever you need.” Agnes breathed a sigh of relief and smiled:

“Thanks, Ivan.”

“But I do have a question. Your dad could’ve easily sorted this out too. Why did you come to me?”

“My dad’s been swamped lately. All the stuff with Starlight International Group has been handed off to my stepmom, so…”

In recent years, Preston Pritchard has been dealing solely with investments, leaving all matters of Starlight International Group to Laura.

For Agnes, asking Laura for help was a bigger hassle than turning to Ivan.

Ivan immediately got the picture and didn’t probe further.

Ivan changed the subject: “Since I did you a solid, don’t you owe me one?”

Agnes was taken aback. What could he possibly need her help with?

“If it’s within my power, I’ll do my best.”

Ivan glanced at his watch and said, “It’s almost lunchtime. How about treating me to a meal?”

So it was just a meal. That’s easy.

“Treating you to a meal is the least I can do. What do you feel like eating?”

“I’m craving carbs today.”

Agnes thought for a moment: “How about Italian pasta at Cloud View?”

Cloud View is the city’s swankiest restaurant, known for its famous pasta.

Ivan shook his head: “I don’t feel like going anywhere fancy today. Any homey little diners around?”

Agnes pondered for a moment and then her eyes lit up:

“I know just the place. Right outside our university, I go there all the time.”

Ivan and Agnes walked into Burger Barn on the university’s local food street. “You mean to say you’ve brought Jared here before?”

Agnes looked pretty smug: “Yep, I’ve brought him here. He said the burgers are really good.”

The beef burger came out piping hot.

Agnes suggested, “Better eat it while it’s hot.”

Ivan took a bite, a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

“Isn’t it amazing?” Agnes asked

Ivan chuckled, “Of course, Jared’s a picky eater. If he says it’s good, then it must be.”

The burger had a homey taste to it, although the beef was of average quality and the excessive seasoning masked the original flavor.

Having grown up with Jared, Ivan knew how picky he could be, especially about food.

This kind of burger definitely wasn’t Jared’s cup of tea.

Jared probably just said it was good to keep Agnes happy.

Agnes grinned from ear to ear. “If it’s good, have some more.”

Ivan responded with a smile, “Sure, you should have some more too.”

## Chapter 189

Both of them had a huge meal.

When it came time to pay, Ivan reached for his wallet.

Agnes quickly cut him off, “I told you I’m treating you, a beef burger isn’t going to break my bank.”

With a smile, Ivan put his wallet away and didn’t argue with Agnes.

After eating, Ivan took Agnes to the prop room at Century Entertainment.

It was a massive storage room, pretty much like a prop supermarket.

Rows upon rows of shelves were filled with all kinds of props, from ancient to modern, they had everything.

Ivan helped Agnes pick out props, and they quickly found all the ones they needed.

Ivan called over Faye and instructed him, “Help Ms. Pritchard take these props to her school.”

“Sure thing”

As he finished speaking, Faye suddenly pulled out a small box and handed it to Ivan, “Oh, by the way, Mamie just had her assistant drop this off.”

Agnes was right there at the time.

It was a sleek little black box. Inside was a men’s diamond-encrusted watch. There was also a note in the box. It read, “To my dearest Ivan, Happy Birthday.”

Ivan smiled as he put the watch away.

Agnes was surprised, “Is it your birthday today?”

“Yes.”

Agnes seemed a bit upset, “If I’d known, I wouldn’t have treated you to a burger. I should have gotten you something nicer.”

“Having someone to eat with is more than enough for me. Is there a law against having a burger on your birthday? Agnes, I’ve had a great day. Thanks for eating with me.”

Hearing this, Agnes felt a pang in her heart.

This high and mighty Ivan didn’t have anyone to eat with him.

Perhaps on his birthday, he felt even lonelier, which is why he asked her to join him.

Agnes didn't know what to say, she just said, "Well, if you ever can't find anyone to eat with, you can call me. I may not have enough money to treat you to fancy meals, but I know all the best eats around here."

Ivan gently replied, "Sounds good."

Agnes said her goodbyes and left with Faye.

As Faye was driving, he looked at Agnes in the rear-view mirror, a smile on his face.

Agnes asked, "What's so funny, Faye?"

"You're the first person, besides Mamie, who's managed to get a genuine smile out of Mr. Bartley."

Agnes found this odd. In her mind, Ivan was always a gentle person.

"Why doesn't Mr. Bartley have anyone to eat with on his birthday? Isn't it a bit too lonely?"

Faye barely held back a laugh, "Mr. Bartley got hundreds of birthday telegrams today, not to mention phone calls and texts. There are definitely plenty of people who'd love to have dinner with him, but Mr. Bartley is too busy to deal with all the invites."

"If he's so busy, why did he have dinner with me?"

"Ms. Pritchard, you must mean a lot to Mr. Bartley for him to take time out of his schedule to have dinner with you and help you find props."

Mr. Bartley is a man who values his time greatly, yet he took out two hours today to help Ms. Pritchard get props.



Agnes was a bit confused.

She was the one who had dinner with him, how did it turn into him having dinner with her?

But even if Ivan treated her differently, it was probably because of Jared.

They arrived at the school soon after,

Faye helped move all the props into the auditorium.

Kerri and the others were all amazed when they saw it, “Agnes, where on earth did you get such beautiful props and costumes?”

## Chapter 190

All those old props and costumes from before were practically ancient relics of the school, and many were already damaged.

But everything Agnes brought was brand spanking new and really fancy.

Especially the costumes. It was as if they were custom-made for the characters.

They were a whole lot better than the previous ones.

Agnes said with a smile, “I borrowed these from a friend, so handle with care, guys. I’ll need to return them later.”

Kerri stated firmly, “I’ll stay up all night for guard duty, just in case someone comes to cause trouble.”

Agnes couldn’t help but chuckle, “Alright, I’ll pull an all-nighter with you.”

Vinson suggested, “How about we all stay and take turns on guard duty? We can squeeze in more rehearsal time. After all, the show’s tomorrow. No matter what, we’ve got to give it our all.”

Everyone agreed.

Agnes felt a huge sigh of relief.

At first, staging this play was just a bet with Cecile, a way to vent her frustrations.

But through the past two weeks of rehearsals, Agnes had grown to enjoy the process.

The teamwork, the friendly atmosphere, and their shared goal made it all worthwhile.

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They all knew the score.

Even with the cool props, they were still behind Cecile in terms of popularity.

Not to mention, Cecile could use Ryder’s fame to hype up her show.

During Cecile’s rehearsals, West Hall was practically trampled underfoot.

And that’s not even mentioning the actual performance day.

But win or lose, Agnes was satisfied that she’d given it her best shot.

Meanwhile, at West Hall.

A group of people were also having their final rehearsal.

Lina from the drama department whispered something to Cecile.

Cecile's face changed instantly. She clenched her fists and said, "Agnes, you're quite capable. You managed to dodge this bullet."

Lina asked quietly, "Should we continue with our plan tonight?"

Cecile scoffed, "Are you dumb? They've already been burned once, do you think they'll fall for it again? No need to do anything else. Even if their props are made of solid gold, they won't stand a chance against me tomorrow."

Then she asked Lina, "Did you distribute the flyers I asked you to?"

Lina replied, "Done and dusted. The school notice boards are plastered with our flyers. Everyone knows that anyone who comes to watch our show at West Hall tomorrow will get a souvenir. Don't worry, West Hall will be packed tomorrow."

A smug smile appeared on Cecile's face.

Lina asked confusedly, "Cecile, we already have a good chance of winning, with Prince Frost and you here. Why did you spend so much on these souvenirs?"

Cecile replied coldly, "You don't get it. I don't just want to win, I want to win hands down. I want East Hall to be completely empty, Agnes' efforts over the past two weeks to be in vain, utterly destroyed. Have people stationed around East Hall tomorrow. If anyone tries to go in, lure them over with the souvenirs."

A sly smile appeared on Cecile's face.

She thought to herself, "Agnes, this time, I will beat you to a pulp, make you utterly humiliated."

I want Prince to see your humiliation, your incompetence, and be completely disappointed in you. And about that bet, just thinking, about you being humiliated in public makes me ecstatic!

I won't be showing any mercy!"

## Chapter 191

The vibe at Lakeside College was lit.

Today was the day when the two most popular girls at Lakeside College were going head to head in public.

At nine o'clock, East Hall and West Hall were kicking off their theater plays at the same time.

When the curtain fell, the hall with the most audience would be crowned, and their show would represent Lakeside College at the College Culture Festival.

Fast forward to 850

In the hall where Agnes was there were only a handful of people, all friends from The Journalism Society

Kerri was grinding her teeth, "Cecile has spent a load of money on small gifts, every person who goes to West Hall gets one. Many people were lured in by that

Agnes chuckled. "My defeat this time looks pretty grim"

"She's playing this game just to win."

Seeing Agnes looking down, Kerri asked with concern, "Agnes, are you okay?"

Agnes took a deep breath, “No matter what, even if there’s only one audience watching, we must finish the play Get ready, it’s about to start”

Kerri didn’t say anything more.

Just as she finished her sentence, a commotion was heard from the entrance of the hall

Everyone turned their heads to look.

A flood of students poured into the hall.

They were screaming at the top of their lungs, “Justin! It’s really Justin!! Justin, I love you!!”

Agnes was stunned.

There he was, the man with the sunglasses, slowly walking into the hall surrounded by bodyguards.

It was Justin

Agnes didn’t expect Justin to show up out of the blue.

Justin’s appearance completely changed the game.

Within minutes, the hall was jam-packed

Even the doorway was filled with people.

And tons of students were still trying to squeeze in, it was locking a bit out of control

Justin took a seat in the very middle of the first row, took off his sunglasses, revealing his signature charming smile

He didn't say a word, just glanced at Agnes on stage.

The hall erupted with screams

All the actors on stage were also hyped up

Kern was gripping Agnes' arm. "Justin, oh my god, it's the real movie star Justin! I finally get to see him in person today"

Agnes looked at the hall that was now filled to the brim, and said to Kern, "Let's get started"

The music began, and the play officially started

The play went smoothly and had a great response throughout.

Although at first, everyone's attention was on Justin.

But Justin was watching intently, and gradually, everyone started to be drawn to the actors on stage.

When the curtain fell, Justin was the first to clap

Then, the hall erupted with thunderous applause

Justin stood up

Suddenly, he had a bouquet of roses in his hand

Justin walked up to the stage and handed the roses to Agnes, "Agnes, you're so great

Agnes was filled with gratitude. "Thank you. Justin"

The hall went wild again.

The mention of Justin's name stirred up the hall

Some people even tried to rush the stage

But they were stopped by Justin's bodyguards.

Despite this, the hall was becoming increasingly chaotic, with screams echoing

Many people tried to rush the stage, and the bodyguards seemed to be overwhelmed

Things were about to go south. Agnes quickly grabbed Justin's hand and said, "We need to leave, or things could get dangerous."

Many people tried to rush the stage, and the bodyguards seemed to be overwhelmed.

Things were about to go south. Agnes quickly grabbed Justin's hand and said, "We need to leave, or things could get dangerous."

## Chapter 192

Agnes just waltzed out the backdoor with Justin.

She casually grabbed a jacket and a hat from backstage for Justin to disguise himself.

When they slipped out the backdoor of the auditorium, nobody spotted them.

Agnes finally realized the power of being a celebrity.

Turns out, the crowd wasn't just limited to the people inside the auditorium, there was a line stretching from the auditorium all the way to the school

gate

From the start to the end of the show, for one and a half hours, people were still pushing and shoving, trying to get into the auditorium.

Agnes managed to drag Justin into an empty lab.

When they finally stopped, Agnes huffed and panted, “Why did you suddenly show up?”

Justin chuckled, “I came to see your performance. You’ve been ghosting me for a while.”

Ever since the movie shooting wrapped up, Agnes had rarely been in touch with Justin.

“How did you know I had a performance today?”

“I just got back from the film festival yesterday, Ivan invited me to dinner and he mentioned it casually, so I came over today. You could’ve asked me for props. I could’ve gotten you better ones.”

Agnes felt a wave of gratitude, so it was Ivan who had helped her out.

Agnes told Justin, “You really saved my bacon today, what do you want to eat, my treat.”

“I did you a huge favor and all you are offering is a meal?”

Agnes laughed and asked, “Then what do you want?”

Justin thought for a moment, I haven’t decided yet, but you owe me one. You’ll have to pay it back when I need you.”

“You really know how to bargain.”

Thanks for the compliment. Justin said, slinging his arm over Agnes’s shoulder “Let’s go grab a bite.”

After lunch, Justin took off.



As an international superstar, it was really something for him to squeeze in some time to show support.

When Agnes went back to East Hall, the crowd had already dispersed.

But some of the main cast were still there.

Seeing Agnes return, Kerri rushed over and said, “Agnes, I can’t believe Justin came! We totally turned the tables on them. Did you know? All the audience at West Hall left. In the end, Cecile tore her costume and smashed the props mid-performance. It was so satisfying.”

Another actor chimed in, “You bet, she spent a fortune on souvenirs and now they’re piled up like a mountain backstage. No one wants them, she totally took a hit this time”

“Agnes, you’re such a sneak.”

Speak of the devil, Cecile showed up.

Cecile’s furious voice echoed from the entrance.

Agnes looked over to see Cecile storming up to her, pointing at her nose, “You’re so shady. You got Justin to cause trouble.”

Agnes replied, “Cecile, it’s a fair competition. The winner is determined by the number of audience members, there were no rules against using any means to attract the audience. You bought a bunch of souvenirs and heavily promoted them on the notice board. You even tried to steal audience members from East Hall. You even deliberately damaged our props and costumes. Compared to your methods, ours seem pretty fair”

Kerri added, “Some people only allow themselves to do bad things but can’t stand others doing the same. After all the wrongs you’ve done, you still have the nerve to make a scene here. If the school had a ‘Thickest Skin’ award, you’d definitely win it”

‘Kerri, you’re gonna pay for this.’ Cecile was thoroughly enraged.

## Chapter 193

Cecile launched herself at Kerri out of nowhere.

Thud!

A dull sound echoed through the room.

Cecile’s arm was seized by Agnes, who flipped her onto the ground with one swift move.

Everyone around was stunned speechless.

Agnes moved like lightning, in one fluid motion, leaving everyone awestruck.

Who could’ve seen this coming? Agnes, having such a badass move up her sleeve?

Cecile, winded from the throw, lay on the ground for a good while before growling, “Agnes, you...”

How dare Agnes make a fool of her in public!

Struggling to her feet, Cecile spat, “Agnes, do you think you’ve won? The selection isn’t over yet, it’s still anyone’s game.”

With that, Cecile stormed out of the hall.

“What’s she up to now?” Kerri rolled her eyes.

Later in the afternoon, the heads of both drama clubs were summoned to the administrative office by Andrea.

“Agnes, your play was fantastic. And who would’ve thought that Justin even showed up? It gave our school a huge publicity boost, we even made the headlines. The principal’s

thinking of rewarding you. So, I'm announcing that your drama club will be in our school culture festival. You've got half a month, so do your best to shine" Andrea said.

Agnes replied, "We won't let you down."

Just then, Cecile interjected, "Isn't it a bit early to make a decision? I don't think Agnes' team can pull off the performance!"

"How so?"

"Romeo and Juliet without Romeo? How's that supposed to work?"

Agnes furrowed her brows, an ominous feeling creeping up on her.

She couldn't help but glance at Vinson, the actor playing Romeo.

Sure enough, Vinson was frowning guiltily. He mumbled, "I'm sorry There's been a family emergency, and I've asked for a long leave. I can't participate in the upcoming rehearsals, so..."

Agnes felt a chill run down her spine.

Kerri was the first to react, "What's going on at home? Just tell us, we can figure this out together. But you can't back out now, you know how much this selection means to Agnes."

Vinson hung his head, his voice filled with regret, "Agnes, I'm really sorry."

Kerri snapped, "What did Cecile offer you to betray us like this, Vinson? Are you really going to screw over everyone's hard work these past two weeks Vinson kept his head lowered, his eyes shut and his fingers tightly clenched. All he could muster was a soft, "I'm sorry"

Cecile, on the other hand, burst into laughter. "Without Romeo, your team can't perform. We'll take your place. Agnes, it seems you've lost the bet after all. According to our agreement, you owe me three slaps I told you, I won't show mercy"

Cecile's arrogance was too much. She walked up to Agnes, and right in front of the principal Andrea, raised her hand to slap her.

But before her hand could land, it was stopped mid-air by a force.

“Enough!” Ryder’s voice echoed across the room.

Everyone was taken aback.

All eyes were now on the cool-headed guy....

Ryder then coldly declared, “I’ll take Vinson’s place.”

Chapter 194

“What did you just say?”

Cecile looked incredulous.

Ryder shrugged off Cecile’s hand.

Turning around, he told the director, “I’ll be stepping in for Vinson as Romeo.”

Even Andrea was taken aback by this dramatic turn of events.

But Agnes was indeed a talented actress, and her previous popularity would surely make the school event a hit.

Andrea said, “That’s the best possible scenario. Now, I declare Ryder will replace Vinson as Romeo, Spend some time rehearsing and get used to each other. Bring honor to our school in two weeks.”

As she left the office, Cecile was trembling with rage.,

Ryder simply walked away.

Agnes stared at his retreating figure, puzzled.

He always seemed to hate her, so why did he help her at this critical moment?

“Agnes, you got lucky this time, but don’t count on this kind of good fortune next time.”

With that, Cecile attempted to leave.

But Agnes blocked her path, “Isn’t it time we settled our scores?”

“What scores?” Cecile played dumb.

Agnes tossed a piece of paper at her, “Remember our bet? I won, so you need to go to the administration office and clear up that you intentionally slandered me on the school forum. I’ve already prepared the statement. Go now.

Cecile glanced at the statement, her fingers trembling with anger.

“I won’t read it.”

”

“Alright, then like you, I’ll give you three slaps. But I’ve been practicing Taekwondo since I was a kid, so my punches might be a bit hard. But to go easy on you would be a disservice to all the things you’ve done!

Agnes had already raised her arm.

“Wait, I’ll read it!”

Cecile gritted her teeth.

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She hadn’t expected Agnes to be a Taekwondo practitioner, though it should’ve been obvious from the shoulder throw she did earlier that day. If Agnes really hit her, she might be disfigured.

Kerri told a classmate, “Go with her to the broadcasting room. Make sure she reads the statement word for word!”

Ten minutes later.

Cecile’s voice came over the school’s PA system, I’m Cecile, and I’m here today to clear up a misunderstanding I admit that I intentionally slandered Agnes on the school forum without any proof, and sabotaged her props during the play. I deeply regret my despicable actions and take this opportunity to sincerely apologize to Agnes, and I hope she can forgive me...”

Agnes and Kerri were in stitches as they heard Cecile gritting her teeth.

“Sweet justice! Look at her gritting her teeth in anger. She must be livid.”

Agnes smiled, ‘She’s been too arrogant. Hopefully, this will teach her a lesson

Thank goodness for Ryder’s help. Otherwise, you might’ve been in trouble.”

Feeling pleased, Agnes didn’t head back to Maplewood Manor after school, but went straight to Tim Tower.

Her public affair with Jared had garnered a lot of attention, and everyone now knew that this 20-year-old college student was actually the wife of the CEO of the Tim Group

Everyone greeted Agnes with respect.

Agnes hadn’t told Jared she was coming, so she didn’t take his private VIP elevator.

Instead, she took the staff elevator to the 99th floor.

The elevator opened directly to the secretarial department outside the CEO’s office.

Agnes had Interned here for a month, so she was familiar with everyone.

Everyone was surprised to see her. Her former Intern buddy, Mia Taylor, was the first to greet her, jokingly saying, ‘Good afternoon, Mrs. Whitfield! How can I assist you today?’

## Chapter 195

Agnes blushed slightly, “Mia, stop teasing me.”

Mia chuckled, “I’m just stating facts. Are you here to see the boss? He’s in a meeting right now.”

The other people in the office were attracted by their conversation and came over to say hello.

“Lock, isn’t this the boss’s wife? We should show her some respect.”

Agnes felt a bit uncomfortable surrounded by everyone.

“I’ll wait for him in his office.”

Agnes then made her way through the office towards the boss’s office.

Suddenly, Agnes bumped into someone.

A loud shriek filled the room, drawing everyone’s attention.

The person Agnes bumped into was none other than Yolanda Bowman.

Yolanda and Agnes were schoolmates and had previously interned together in the Tim Group’s secretary department.

Everyone knew about Yolanda’s crush on Jared.

Yolanda had been holding a cup of coffee and a stack of papers, all of which were now drenched.

“So being the boss’s wife means you can just bump into others? This is our workplace, not your playground. We need to work to support ourselves, but you have the boss to take care of you.”

Yolanda’s sharp and sarcastic words created a tense atmosphere.

Who would have thought Yolanda would dare to confront the boss’s wife like this?

But considering Yolanda’s background, it wasn’t surprising. She was the heiress of the Bowman family and was rumored to have been planted in the Tim Group.

Why would Yolanda not stay in her own company, but instead join the Tim Group’s secretary department?

Everyone could see her intentions.

During their internship, they had joked about Yolanda potentially becoming the boss’s wife.

After all, the Bowman family and the Whitfield family were a perfect match in terms of wealth and status.

But then Agnes showed up.

Naturally, Yolanda was fuming.

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“It’s you who bumped into me on purpose,” Agnes responded calmly.



Agnes had been walking normally when Yolanda suddenly stood up and walked right into her.

Clearly, she was picking a fight.

Yolanda dropped her stack of papers, “These are my hard work for the day, the reports I painstakingly put together, and now they’re ruined. My day’s work is gone. Why would I falsely accuse you, Agnes?”

Agnes frowned.

People around started whispering. “That report is the company’s semi-annual employee reimbursement form, it’s all manually sorted out, very troublesome. Yolanda wouldn’t deliberately mess it up.”

“But she’s too bold, even if it’s Agnes fault, she’s in a higher position now, and Yolanda dares to confront her directly.”

“She’s the daughter of the Bowman family, of course she’s not afraid. Besides. I’ve always been puzzled, the boss is already married, why is she still waiting here?”

“She’s

just too stubborn”

Agnes couldn’t defend herself.

Suddenly, someone shouted, “The boss is coming out,”

Everyone turned their eyes towards the meeting room.

Sure enough, Jared came out of the meeting room and noticed the situation.

He seemed to notice Agnes and headed straight over.

Agnes always seemed to inadvertently cause misunderstandings.

And she

currently had no

to explain herself clearly.

Agnes blushed, she originally wanted to surprise Jared, but instead seemed to have caused him trouble..

Jared had noticed Agnes for quite some time.

## Chapter 196

He glanced at the shattered cup on the floor and the reports stained with coffee scattered around, asking solemnly, “What the hell happened?” Yolanda jumped in to explain first, “Boss, I was about to bring you these reports to look over, but she intentionally bumped into me. I know she’s your wife, but she needs to apologize to me. I worked my butt off on these reports all day.”

Agnes was fuming.

There’s no way Jared would believe her, right?

Agnes blushed as she looked at Jared.

But Jared was unfazed, asking Yolanda, You’re saying she bumped into you on purpose. But why would she do that?”

Yolanda was taken aback, “I think it might be jealousy, She might have misunderstood that there’s something going on between us...

Everyone in the room gasped in surprise.

Yolanda really had guts to say anything.

Wasn’t this just stirring the pot between Jared and Agnes?

Even if there was nothing going on, this was just asking for misunderstandings.

Jared’s voice remained calm, “So you’re saying that Agnes misunderstood that there’s something going on between us, thus she was upset and bumped into you on purpose?”

Jared’s gaze never left Yolanda,

Yolanda’s cheeks flushed.

She had never been under such intense scrutiny from the boss before.

This feeling... was intoxicating

Yolanda replied, “I think that’s it.”

Would Jared understand her feelings by saying this?

In fact, she had always liked this man and believed she was better than Agnes in every way.

Although the Pritchard family was also wealthy, it fell short compared to the Bowman family.

She didn’t understand why Jared would choose Agnes when they were both interning at the Tim Group.

Jared raised an eyebrow slightly.

Then he said coldly, “Since your presence here causes misunderstandings for my wife, you can hand in your resignation to HR tomorrow”

Everyone gasped in surprise.

Agnes’ eyes widened in shock...

When Jared turned to Agnes, his gaze softened significantly.

He said, “Next time you come to see me, let me know in advance. I’ll arrange for someone to pick you up so you won’t run into such troubles” Everyone was shocked.

This blatant favoritism was too much.

Almost all faces showed signs of envy and jealousy

Yolanda couldn’t believe what she was hearing, “Boss, what did you say? You want me to quit?”

Jared didn’t bother with her anymore, coldly saying, “I don’t like repeating myself

With that, he took Agnes’ hand and walked towards his office.

Yolanda was shaking with rage, sitting down on a nearby chair, her fingers turning white  
Everyone was dumbstruck.

Jared actually asked the person Agnes didn’t like to resign, how bossy was that?

Even if the boss was smart and saw through the situation, he shouldn’t be so rash.

Not to mention Yolanda’s background, he should show some respect to the Bowman family.

Agnes followed Jared into the office

## Chapter 197

Once they were in, Agnes said, “Honestly, I don’t think this is right.”

Jared chuckled, “What do you think isn’t right?”

Agnes said, “The whole thing about you firing Yolanda. Even though she was deliberately making things difficult for me, it didn’t have to result in her losing her job. Also, the Bowman family isn’t just any ordinary family...”

“I got one question for you, Jared cut her off.

Agnes was taken aback.

Jared asked, “Are you happy that I fired her?”

After a moment of hesitation, Agnes blurted out, “Yes!”

Jared laughed softly, ruffled Agnes’s hair and said, “That’s all that matters. And this serves as a warning. Does anyone think they can mess with my wife, Jared’s wife? Let’s see who dares to bother you in the future,”

Jared’s words were said in a casual manner.

But Agnes felt like she was completely submerged in a jar of honey.

Suddenly, she stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Jared’s waist, “Honey, you’re going to spoil me rotten.”

Jared turned, cupped Agnes’s face and placed a gentle kiss on her forehead, “Spoil you rotten, I will. It’s my pleasure.”

Agnes was beaming inside.

Just as the two were planning to go out for a lavish meal, they received a call from Alyssa.

She said that Tim had just suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized.

So, they hurried off to the hospital.

Tim was already settled in a VIP suite.

Upon seeing Jared and Agnes, he chided Alyssa, “I told you, it’s just an old problem. You didn’t have to bring Jared and Agnes into this.”

Agnes approached the bed, “How could we not know? If you don’t tell us, we’ll worry even more.”

Tim looked at Agnes’s worried expression and chuckled, “I know my own body. We all have to accept aging. But I’m glad you’re here”

Alyssa chimed in with a serious look, “Lucky I found him in time. He was gasping for air on the floor. The maid wasn’t careful, forgot to give him his medicine. I’ve fired all of them.

Tim added, “You’re just overreacting, even fired the servants.”

Alyssa turned to Jared, “Jared, I need to go to France for a fashion show. I think you two should move back home for a while. I don’t trust the new staff yet. Someone needs to keep an eye on them.”

Jared nodded, “Alright.”

Leaving the hospital, Agnes regretted, “We should’ve moved back home earlier. Today was too close. I can’t even imagine what would have happened.” Jared stayed calm, “Don’t worry. It’s just another one of Alyssa and Tim’s schemes. They put on a show every year, hoping I’ll move back.”

Agnes was shocked. You mean Tim was faking it?”

Jared nodded, “Didn’t he look perfectly healthy? And if it was serious, wouldn’t Ryder be there?”

“Maybe he doesn’t know?”

‘Maybe he just doesn’t want to be part of their drama.’

Agnes was speechless.

“Why don’t you just expose the truth?” she asked.

Jared smiled, “Tim cares a lot about his pride. If I expose the truth, wouldn’t that be a slap in his face? Let’s just move back for a few days, so his efforts won’t go in vain.”

So, the next day, Agnes and Jared officially moved back to the Whitfield Manor with no set return date.

## Chapter 198

Tim was out of the hospital the next day.

At dinner the next day, Agnes saw Ryder again.

Although Ryder had agreed to replace Vinson in the role, he never heard from her didn’t contact her, and didn’t participate in the rehearsal. That was a problem because the school festival was in half a month, and the school was taking the performance seriously.

Therefore, it was necessary to hurry up and rehearse. After dinner, Agnes saw that Ryder didn't go back to his room but was bathing Oscar in the yard.

Ryder wasn't keeping a straight face, he was talking to Oscar while bathing him. Where on earth did you go today? You're all muddy. Lucky I'm bathing you, or if Jared saw it you would be in trouble."

There was a touch of doting in Ryder's words, and even a hint of a smile on his lips.

Agnes walked over and squatted next to Oscar, patting his back and said, "I never thought you'd look so cute when you smile."

Ryder was taken aback, then instantly put on his poker face: "I can't stand people cozying up to me."

Agnes played innocent: "I wasn't talking about you, I was praising Oscar. Look at him, isn't he adorable when he smiles, just like a cherub."

As she spoke, Agnes intentionally teased Oscar's face.

Ryder just snorted, a hint of blush on his face, and bowed his head.

He seemed a bit miffed.

Agnes felt that Ryder wasn't as icy as the rumors said.

It was actually fun to joke around with him.

Agnes chuckled silently, then put on a serious face: "Ryder, thank you"

As Ryder was rinsing Oscar's paws, he said coldly: "No need for thanks, I'm just doing it for Jared."



Agnes suddenly felt that Ryder might not dislike her as much as she thought.

Agnes said, “No matter who you’re doing it for, you helped me, and I appreciate it. By the way, let’s start rehearsing at East Hall tomorrow night.” Ryder didn’t respond.

Agnes was still waiting for his answer.

Oscar was getting impatient from the bath, trying to break free several times.

Ryder suddenly said, “Help me hold him. He always gets annoyed when I wash his back paws”

Agnes quickly held Oscar’s neck and pressed him with her body.

By the time the back paws were washed, both of them were panting.

Just as they stood up,

Oscar also suddenly stood up and shook his fur vigorously.

Agnes was all wet,

She almost screamed, “Oscar, did you do that on purpose?”

Seeing Agnes’s angry face, Ryder suddenly burst into laughter.

His laugh was really charming.

Agnes said, “See, you should learn from Oscar, smile more, you look good when you smile.”

Ryder’s laugh was really good-looking.

His smile was clean and pure, like the first rays of sunlight on a snow-capped peak.

Agnes was really praising him this time, but his face turned gloomy again in an instant.

Well, he was indeed a moody boy.

Ryder said, “You should go inside, you’re all wet.”

Ryder was already avoiding eye contact.

Agnes looked at her clothes and nodded, “Then I’ll go in first then”

## Chapter 199

When Agnes walked in, Jared and Alyssa were in the living room having a chat

Seeing Agnes come in all drenched, they asked, “Agnes, what happened to you??

Agnes laughed and said, “Just gave Oscar a bath, ended up soaked. I’m heading upstairs to change clothes.”

With that, Agnes headed upstairs

After a while, Ryder also came in all wet, still holding Oscar by the hand.

Alyssa remarked, “So they both bathed Oscar together? It seems like their relationship has improved.”

Jared chuckled, I’m heading upstairs.”

Agnes’s clothes were wet, so she decided to take a shower when she got to her room..

When she came out of the bathroom, she ran into Jared.

Jared sat on the edge of the bed, patting the spot next to him, “Come here.”

As Agnes toweled her hair, she walked over and sat next to Jared.

Jared naturally took the towel from Agnes and helped her dry her hair.

Agnes leaned comfortably against his shoulder, like a little kitten.

Jared asked, “You and Ryder made up?”

At this, Agnes’s eyes lit up.

She told Jared about the school play competition and the wager.

Finally, Agnes said, “He was really reliable when it mattered, but it’s all because he respects you, so the person I should be thanking is you.”

Agnes snuggled in Jared’s arms.

Jared felt that this girl was different from before.

He could feel that before, she was a bit scared of him, not daring to look him in the eye when she spoke.

Whenever they were together, she was always very passive

But now, she was actually taking the initiative to be affectionate.

She had become more lively and radiant.

Jared had to admit, he enjoyed this change, enjoyed her dependence, admiration, and love.

Jared leaned down to kiss her, “I prefer if you show your gratitude in practical ways.”

“No, my hair is still wet.”

“No? Don’t worry, I can handle it.”

The next day, Jared drove Agnes to school.

He just happened to see Ryder also getting ready to leave on his bicycle.

Although Ryder came from a well-off family, he never needed anyone to drop him off or pick him up from school, he always cycled. Jared offered him a ride, but was rejected.

This made Agnes feel a bit embarrassed.

Agnes said to Jared, “Maybe I should start biking to school too, your car is too flashy, every time you drop me off it draws a crowd”

Jared thought for a bit, “Sounds good, I travel for work sometimes and may not be able to drop you off every day.”

After a day of classes and dinner, Agnes headed to East Hall.

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It was time to start preparing for the school festival performance. Even though it was still the same play as before, with the change of the male lead, everyone had to readjust.

The other members had already gathered in the auditorium.

Kerri asked, “Will Ryder actually come back? What do we do if he doesn’t show up for rehearsal?”

Agnes had already raised this issue with Ryder the night before.

But whether Ryder would actually come back, Agnes was not sure.

“He’s here.” Cynthia suddenly exclaimed excitedly, pointing at the entrance.

Ryder walked in.

## Chapter 200

He was wearing a white shirt with a black shoulder bag slung over his shoulder

Outside the auditorium, the sun was setting.

He seemed to stride in, riding the glow of the sunset, exuding a charming nonchalance within his cool demeanor.

Several girls in the auditorium praised his handsomeness at the same time,” so handsome!”

Agnes felt delighted and said to Ryder, “You’re here.”

Ryder’s voice was cold, “Wasn’t it you who said rehearsals start today?”

The rehearsal officially began.

After changing into costumes, everyone couldn’t help but marvel at him once again.

“OMG. Ryder looks so handsome in costume.” The rehearsal went smoothly, considering that everyone was familiar with the script due to the previous auditions.

Towards the end of the rehearsal, Cynthia walked down the stage and took out her camera to snap a photo.

Suddenly, Ryder lost control, as if he couldn’t maintain his balance. He crouched down, looking terrified, holding his head, and uttered in a cold, almost harsh tone: “Stop taking pictures!”

Everyone was stunned, clueless about what had just happened.

Even Cynthia was taken aback and didn’t know how to react.

Agnes, on the other hand, recalled her previous question to Jared about why there were no childhood photos of Ryder at home.

Jared mentioned that Ryder had a fear of camera lenses.

At the time, Agnes didn't inquire further. She simply found the question peculiar.

But Agnes never imagined it was true.

After a while, Ryder regained composure.

Ryder said, "Sorry, but can we not take photos next time?"

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Cynthia replied, "But on the day of the performance, many people will definitely be taking photos. If you can't handle that, how will you perform?"

On the way home, Ryder and Agnes walked one after the other.

Whitfield Manor wasn't far from the school, about a half-hour journey.

Initially, Agnes planned to take a taxi back.

However, seeing Ryder pushing his bicycle without riding it, she quietly followed behind him.

Cynthia's words had clearly affected Ryder.

After dinner, Agnes pulled Jared into the room and asked, "What's the story with Ryder's fear of camera lenses?"

Jared frowned and said, “He was kidnapped when he was young. The kidnappers took numerous photos to threaten the Thomas family. That’s when he developed this psychological trauma”

Agnes was incredibly surprised. “So, he really is the son of the richest man, Cillian Thomas”

In fact, there were many rumors about Ryder’s biological father.

The most widely accepted version was that he was the child of Cillian and Alyssa Whitfield, the wealthiest couple in this country.

Cillian was notorious for his philandering ways and had already been married three times.

His marriage to Alyssa was kept low-profile back then, so it remained unknown to the public.

But now Agnes learned that Alyssa was Cillian’s second wife

Ryder was also acknowledged as the third son of the Thomas family.

It was reported that Cillian had been trying to bring Ryder back home for years, but Alyssa strongly opposed it.

Sighing, Agnes asked, “So, there really isn’t any solution for Ryder’s fear of camera lenses?”

Jared replied, “We’ve tried numerous times throughout the years, even consulted several psychologists, but the impact on him was significant. That incident also influenced his introverted and solitary nature”

As Jared spoke, he appeared full of self-blame

That year, he was 12, and Ryder was 6 when they went to the amusement park together, and later...

Agnes tightly held Jared's hand, "You can't blame yourself. Don't be too hard on yourself. After all, you were just a child back then