

## Heartstrings On Fire Chapter 201 - 230

### Chapter 201

Jared's voice was low, "So I've always felt guilty about Ryder and my sister, because I didn't protect him back then. He was actually a cheerful kid who loved to laugh when he was little."

Agnes saw Jared beating himself up, and it broke her heart, but she had no clue how to comfort him.

The next day. Agnes and Ryder cycled to school together.

However, the whole trip was spent in silence.

After school in the afternoon, Agnes, on a whim, went to see a shrink.

By evening. Agnes headed to the East Hall for a rehearsal.

The drama club members hadn't arrived yet.

Only Kerri was there, sweeping the hall.

Seeing Agnes looking down, Kerri hurried over, "Have you figured out what's up?"

That was Ryder's privacy, and of course Agnes couldn't make it public.

Agnes said, "It's about some stuff that happened when he was a kid. But it's a tough nut to crack because I went to consult a psychiatrist in the afternoon."

Kerri asked, "What did the psychiatrist say?"

The psychiatrist said if the usual mental interventions have been tried, the only option left is to overcome psychological barriers through coercive intervention”

Kerri was like, “You mean by forcing him to face his fear? Just keep taking pictures of him and forcing him to face?”

Agnes nodded, “But that’s brutal, and it’s not our place to do that.”

Kerri anxiously said. “But we don’t have time to change the roles now, what are we gonna do?”

agree to the forceful treatment,” a cold male voice came from behind.

Agnes and Kerri turned around to see Ryder.

Agnes was like, “But you...”

Ryder calmly said, “Let’s give your method a try.”

By evening, all the members had gathered.

Agnes closed the hall door and switched off the lights..

She had borrowed some SLR cameras from the photography club.

Now everyone was standing under the stage with a camera

Ryder was alone on the stage, expressionless.

Agnes, serious-faced, said, “Let’s kick things off.”

At that moment, everyone lifted their cameras and started shooting, the dim hall was instantly lit up by the flashes.

“Ah! Ryder on the stage let out a low moan, instinctively covering his eyes with his arm.

He was about to fall, leaning against a prop on the stage.

Agnes immediately said, “Stop!”

“Don’t stop, keep going”” Ryder struggled to say.

Everyone looked at Agnes She nodded and they continued shooting

Ryder on the stage looked like he was being tortured, his hand white-knuckled on a table, eyes tightly shut as if lost in painful memories, his body starting to shake uncontrollably

In the end, he could barely stand, leaning heavily on the table.

Finally, Ryder collapsed.

Agnes rushed onto the stage, Ryder, are you okay?”

Then she immediately waved everyone to stop, “Alright, that’s enough for today, stop recording

Ryder sat on the ground, curled up like a scared chuld, burying his head in his knees, trembling all over

He looked fragile and pathetic

Nobody had expected to see this side of the cold price they knew

Agnes told the others. “You guys can leave now I handle thas”

Everyone knew Agnes was taking care of Ryder's pride, so they all left  
Only Agnes and Ryder were left in the hall, with a single, dim light, creating a stilling atmosphere.

## Chapter 202

Agnes knelt down and said worriedly; "Ryder, are you okay?"

Ryder was still shaking all over.

Agnes was pondering how to handle this situation. She probably shouldn't have done it this way

Agnes said, "I'll turn on the light, might make things better."

"Don't go."

Before Agnes could stand up, her hand was seized by Ryder.

He didn't lift his head, still in a curled posture, but his hand was tightly holding onto Agnes's hand.

Agnes could only silently sit back in her spot, saying, I won't go

She had no idea how much time passed like this.

All Agnes knew was that her hand, gripped by Ryder, was numb.

But Agnes also gradually felt Ryder's trembling ease.

Finally, Ryder let go of her, raising his head.

Agnes's hand was pinched white, almost void of any sensation.

But she still asked Ryder with concern, ‘Are you feeling better?’

Ryder’s face was gradually returning to normal. Looking at Agnes’s pale hand, he said apologetically, “I’m sorry”

Agnes was startled for a moment, and then shook her hand, laughed and said, “It’s okay, it’ll be fine in a bit.”

Ryder said, “Let’s go home.”

Agnes checked her watch, it was already nine o’clock.

They rode home together,

They entered the house one after the other, and happened to meet Alyssa when they changed their shoes. Alyssa asked, “You two came back together?”

And came back so late.

Agnes said, “Ryder and I were rehearsing a play for a school performance, we just finished”

The moment Agnes mentioned ‘Ryder, Ryder paused while he was changing his shoes.

Alyssa was surprised and unbelievably asked Ryder, “Really? You actually participated in a drama?”

She knew her son disliked crowded places. He’d never participated in any performance since he was little.

Ryder answered perfunctorily, then coldly said, “I’m going upstairs first”

When Ryder was going upstairs, Jared was coming down.

Upon seeing him, Agnes rushed over.

She ran too fast and almost tripped, but was caught by Jared.

Jared gently said, “How can you still be so clumsy like a child, watch your steps.

Agnes snuggled into his arms and whispered, “I missed you”

The words made Jared happy. He laughed, pinched Agnes’s cheek, and gave her a peck on the lips.

They were at the corner of the staircase, out of sight.

But Ryder wasn’t far away

He was on the upper staircase and saw this sweet scene.

Ryder’s eyes darkened.

He quickly returned to his room.

Jared brushed the bangs off Agnes’s forehead, softly asking, “Why so late today?”

– told you before, I’m rehearsing a play now.

“How about I pick you up at night?”

performed in ten days, I’ll be coming home late these days.”

“No need, your nephew is here, what are you worried about? He’s rehearsing with me.”

Jared nodded, “Then I need to remind him to take good care of you”

Agnes smiled. The feeling of being the elder of someone older than herself was a bit strange Jared asked, “Are you hungry?”,

Agnes whined, “I’m starving, I haven’t had dinner, can you make me something?”

Jared laughed, “Sure!”

Agnes suddenly remembered, “Oh, Ryder hasn’t had dinner either, can you make him something too?”

## Chapter 203

Jared made Agnes favorite dish.

Just standing by it made Agnes’ mouth water.

Jared said, “It’s almost ready, go fetch Ryder.”

Agnes responded and happily went out to find Ryder.

After a couple of knocks, Ryder opened the door.

Upon seeing Agnes at the door, Ryder frowned.

Ryder asked, “What is it?”

Agnes said, “Jared cooked it. You haven’t had dinner, come join us.”

Ryder said coldly, “I’m not hungry”

With that, he shut the door.

Agnes shook her head helplessly.

She really couldn’t figure out Ryder’s temperament.

She thought their relationship had improved.

But he was so moody.

Agnes said, “Your nephew’s not hungry, he’s not eating”

Jared frowned.

Agnes sat down, saying, “Don’t worry, I’ll eat it all.”

Agnes was truly hungry, after two bowls, patting her belly, she said, “Honey, you’re making me fat.”

Jared reached out and pinched Agnes’ cheek, “That’s good, being fat gives you meat to eat.”

“I’m not a pig”

“You’re a greedy little pig.”

While they were fooling around, Alyssa came in

Upon seeing Alyssa, Agnes immediately sat up straight and called out, “Sis.”

In this house, the one Agnes was somewhat afraid of was Alyssa.

Although Alyssa was kind to her and spoke gently.

Perhaps it was because she had seen her interviews before, she felt that she was a big shot in the fashion world, dignified and elegant, and naturally distant.

Alyssa walked in with a smile, “Jared, Agnes, I’m going abroad soon, I came to tell you, live here for a while, it makes dad happy to have you around.”

Jared grunted in response, then stood up and said, “I’ll drive you to the airport

Alyssa said, “No need, the driver can take me, get a good rest tonight”

Alyssa walked up to Jared and naturally adjusted his collar, “Jared, don’t put all your energy into work, pay attention to your health, eat on time, sleep on time, you might not care now because you’re young, but when you get older, you’ll have all sorts of problems.”

Jared laughed and said, “I’m not a kid anymore, why do you have to say this every time you leave?”

Alyssa laughed and said, “In my heart, you will always be a kid ”

Agnes felt the scene in front of her was very warm.

These two people in front of her eyes were important figures in the business and fashion world, unmatched by others.

But at this moment, they showed the simplicity and reality of ordinary people.

The days that followed were as usual.

Going to class, writing papers, rehearsing, and then home.

It was worth mentioning that Ryder’s lens phobia improved day by day after Agnes stimulated him in extreme ways.

## Chapter 204

Even when they’re under the spotlight of the camera, they keep their cool.

But they don’t totally lose control, even if they restrained themselves a little, others would be able to notice.

All members were very happy. As the days rolled by the school celebration was just around the corner.

For the last few days, Agnes and Ryder had been practicing even after they got home.

Sometimes they'd be up late into the night rehearsing.

They'd practice on the little balcony of the sunroom on the second floor.

This spot happens to be next to Jared's study.

Sometimes, Jared would purposely leave his French doors open so he could overhear their lines.

Sometimes, Ryder would scold Agnes when she mispronounced her lines. Sometimes, he could even hear them bickering and horsing around.

Surprisingly, Jared even heard Ryder laugh.

Ryder's always been a bit of a loner, rarely ever laughing out loud.

But just in these few days, Jared's heard him laugh three times.

Jared got up and headed towards the balcony

The two on the other side have finished rehearsing and were discussing the details of a line

Their heads were close together, in a bit of a disagreement over a line.

But even though they're arguing, there's a slight smile on Ryder's face, like he's purposely teasing Agnes.

Agnes, on the other hand, was debating seriously.

Jared's steps paused slightly.

When Agnes looked up and saw Jared, she immediately got up and ran over, grabbing Jared's arm and grinning from ear to ear, "What brings you here? Are we being too loud and disturbing you?"

Jared shook his head, "Nah, I just thought I'd drop by and see how you guys are doing."

Agnes said. "Great, how about we show you what we've got?"

But Ryder's already stood up and walked over, his face back to its usual coolness, "I'll take a break first."

After saying this, he left the balcony.

Agnes rolled her eyes, "He's such a party pooper."

Then, she added, "Maybe he's just shy, he idolizes you and might be nervous."

Jared chuckled.

Suddenly. Agnes looked up at him, saying with anticipation: "Our school celebration is in three days, can you come and watch me perform?"

Jared pretended to frown, "I have a business trip tomorrow, not sure if I can make it back in time."

Jared watched as Agnes face fell from hopeful to disappointed

This little girl changed expressions so fast.

Suddenly Jared pinched her cheek, Alright, I'll go. I'll be back a day early, I'll definitely be there to support you"

Agnes immediately brightened, “Our performance starts at 3 in the afternoon, it’s the final act of the celebration, don’t forget, okay?”

The next day, Jared left for his business trip

He tried to cut the trip short and managed to catch the flight home the night before the school celebration.

Earber, he had told Agnes over the phone that he might not be able to make it back that night.

Agnes was slightly disappointed.

However, Jared arrived at the Whitfield Manor at 9:30 that night.

Imagining the bright smile on Agnes’ face when she saw him, Jared’s heart was filled with warmth for some reason.

It’s only been two days, but he missed her deeply.

When the butler opened the door and saw Jared, he’s surprised, “Mr Whatfield, aren’t you supposed to be flying back tomorrow?”

Jared casually replied, “I changed my plans, where’s Agnes?”

“Mrs Whitfield and Mr. Ryder were rehearsing their play on the balcony. They should still be there.”

Jared headed up the stairs, directly towards the balcony.

Chapter 205

Two figures were visible in the distance.

Jpon seeing the two people over there clearly. Jared gradually came to a halt.

A marble table sat on the small balcony.

At this moment, Agnes was asleep on it.

yder was sitting next to Agnes.

le still held a script in his hand.

But he didn't move.

His gaze firmly settled on Agnes' face.

lared caught this scene and felt a strange premonition.

hen, he saw Ryder slowly lower his head, gently kissing Agnes' cheek.

from Jared's angle, he could see both of their faces clearly.

Agnes was deeply asleep, completely unaware.

And Ryder's lips were just lightly touching Agnes cheek.

His eyes were closed, his eyelashes trembling, and his fingers tightly clutching the crumpled script.

From his trembling fingers, his restraint and endurance could be seen.

Even the pain he couldn't hide...

Jared was tucked away, silently observing this scene.

His eyes slowly darkened, turning into an unfathomable black...

His fingers also slowly clenched into a fist

In the end, Jared turned and left.

Agnes was awakened by Ryder.

When she woke up, she was somewhat confused: “What happened?”

Ryder looked at her: Wipe your drool, your sleeping posture is really bad.”

Agnes casually wiped her face, but there was no drool?

Agnes asked, “Did I fall asleep? Where did we leave off with the lines?”

Ryder replied. “Go back to sleep, staying up late isn’t going to help.”

Agnes thought about it, they had already practiced quite a bit.

When she looked up, she saw Ryder’s face as red as an apple.

Agnes stood up, placing her hand on Ryder’s forehead: “What’s wrong with you? Your face is so red, do you have a fever?”

Ryder sensibly stepped back, avoiding Agnes’ hand.

He didn’t look at Agnes, seeming somewhat flustered: “I’m fine, I’m going back to my room.”

After speaking that, he quickly left.

Agnes stood on the balcony in a daze.

Was he having one of his episodes again? Always getting angry for no reason

But, he couldn’t really be sick, could he?

Agnes returned to her room, glancing at the clock on the wall, it was already ten o'clock.

Maybe because she just had a nap, Agnes wasn't sleepy at all.

She wondered where Jared was

He was supposed to be back tonight, but it was postponed to tomorrow.

She didn't know if he was lying to her, maybe he just didn't have time to come back.

Agnes sighed, but he was really busy, he was in charge of the entire Tim Group.

Agnes couldn't really blame him.

But, she really missed him....

After hesitating for a moment, she decided to call Jared.

The phone rang for a long time without being answered, was he asleep?

Just as Agnes was about to give up, Jared's deep voice came from the other end: "What do you need..\* Hearing this voice, Agnes was slightly taken aback.

Because Jared's voice was too cold, like sinking in ice

In the past, when she called him, his tone was not like this.

Agnes was a bit flustered, she said "Nothing special, just wanted to ask what you're doing."

Jared's voice was still cold: Tm in a meeting"

Chapter 206

Agnes was deeply disappointed.

Maybe it was Jared's frosty tone that shattered her hopes.

But she might have really bothered him.

"Well, you go on with your stuff."

Jared grunted a response and hung up the call.

Agnes held the phone, feeling her heart sink a little more.

She just missed him, just wanted to hear his voice.

Meanwhile...

Jared stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling window in his office on the 99th floor of Tim Tower.

In his hand was a half-burned cigarette.

He rarely smoked.

In the hazy smoke, his face looked incredibly indifferent.

The scene on the balcony just now seemed to reappear before his eyes, his fingers clenched tight, feeling more irritable than ever.

He didn't expect...

The next day was the campus festival of Lakeside College.

The whole Lakeside College campus was very lively.

Today Lakeside College was open to the public, students from other schools could come and visit.

Of course, the highlight was the campus festival performance competition among 32 colleges.

Agnes's drama was scheduled to start at three in the afternoon.

It was the last performance of the whole competition.

Before going on stage, Agnes kept looking at her phone backstage.

She was wondering why Jared hadn't texted her yet.

He said he would come...

Maybe he was really too busy.

But even if he couldn't come, he should have told her. Agnes was hesitant about whether to call Jared.

But she was afraid of being rejected like last night.

She didn't know when she became so cautious.

What a headache

"Hey, isn't that our star, Agnes? You're so unrecognizable in your costume, it's a pity you didn't major in acting."

A teasing voice came from behind her.

Agnes turned around to see Cecile strutting over, surrounded by a group of girls

Agnes frowned and asked. "What are you doing here?"

Cecile said with her arms crossed, “I’m here to watch your performance. Don’t look at me like that, I’m here to congratulate you. Give it your best shot, I’ll watch till the end.”

Then, Ryder came over

He calmly walked up to Cecile and said, “Don’t stir up trouble”

Seeing Ryder, Cecile grinned, “Ryder, you’re looking hot today. I’ll send you flowers after the performance.”

“No need, Ryder replied, his expression cold.

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Kerri ran over, “Stop chatting, it’s our turn. Get ready to go on stage.”

Agnes didn’t have time to think about anything else and immediately got ready

A girl next to Cecile said, “Ryder is protecting her. Agnes is so today, her future career will be smoother, I saw several agents are here”

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corner of

Cecile’s she stole your role, and if she gets

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everything is uncertain

performance hasn't started yet, who knows how it will turn out success or failure, Agnes, you stole my role and the guy f like, I'll make sure you remember this day forever. The performance was about to begin, and the lights in the auditorium gradually dimmed. The curtain slowly pulled back, and the music started to play..

Jullet fell in love with the man her family hates. She shouldn't have met him in the first place, now it's too late."

As the narration went on, the characters came out one after another....

## Chapter 207

The show was very successful..

You could tell from the continuous applause

During intermission, Agnes was backstage, peering out at the audience.

She was looking for Jared

But it was a sea of people below the stage, and with the dim lighting, Agnes couldn't see clearly.

The final act of Agnes's performance began.

It was Juliet's love suicide scene

The plot was extremely tragic.

Tears streaming down her face, Juliet said. "What is this? A cup held tight in my true love's hand? I know, it must be poison that has ended his life. Alas! You drank all the

poison, leaving none for me? I'll kiss your lips, perhaps there's some poison left on them, enough to kill me. Your lips are still warm!"

At this point, a commotion broke out, Juliet stabbed herself with a dagger and fell from the high platform....

The place she fell was only about a meter high, and there were stairs made up of props.

Even though it was just a meter, there was a cushion where she landed, so Agnes wouldn't get hurt.

There were flower and plant props to cover it up.

The ending was Juliet and Romeo dying together.

So, after Agnes fell, she had to lie there motionless on the cushion until the show ended and the curtain came down...

A voiceover came on "The families of Romeo and Juliet were heartbroken over the lovers' suicide. In regret, the two families reached a tragic reconciliation.. Lying there motionless, Agnes couldn't help but wonder if Jared had come today.

But suddenly, the stage lights began to flicker, going bright and dim.

The next second, a scaffold on the side of the stage suddenly fell, tipping towards Agnes.

There was a sudden scream of terror from below the stage

Agnes was deep in thought and didn't react in time.

The next second, Ryder, who was backstage, rushed up.

He threw himself over Agnes

There was a muffled groan of pain.

The scaffold landed right on Ryder's back!!

Tranquil Care Hospital.

Agnes and Jared were both standing outside the emergency room.

Agnes was sitting on a chair.

Just thinking about what just happened made her body shake uncontrollably.

If Ryder hadn't rushed up without hesitation, using his body to protect her, she would be the one lying in the hospital.

But Agnes didn't know what was happening now.

Jared was standing at the door of the emergency room.

Agnes locked up and saw his back.

Turns out, Jared came to watch their performance and he was really close

After the accident, Jared was the first one to rush up on stage and take Ryder to the hospital.

If it weren't for his calm and decisive action, Agnes didn't know what would've happened

Jared walked over to Agnes, holding her trembling hands: "Don't worry too much. He should be fine\*

Agnes looked at Jared "But I'm still scared"

Jared comforted her “Don’t be scared, I’m here, I won’t let anything happen to him.”

Just then, the door of the emergency room opened.

The doctor walked out, surrounded by a group of nurses.

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Agnes immediat

stood up, ran over, and asked anxiously. “Dr. Elisha, how is Ryder doing now?

## Chapter 208

Dr. Elisha pulled off his mask and said, “He suffered a fractured rib, but the injury is not serious. In order to prevent sequelae, he needs to be hospitalized for observation. But don’t worry too much. Young people are generally very strong, and he should recover soon.”

Jared let out a sigh of relief

When he turned to look at Agnes, he found her already in tears.

Agnes was clearly shaken.

When that hefty iron frame came crashing down, she felt as if she were being dragged into the depths of the ocean.

A huge wave came violently and almost drowned her. But Ryder had grabbed her.

When Agnes looked at Ryder again, he was already lying in the hospital ward

His chest was strapped down

He was sitting up straight, furrowing his brows, a hint of pain visible on his face.

Jared walked to the bedside and asked him, “How are you feeling now?”

Ryder gave a faint smile. “I’m alright. Don’t tell my mom and grandpa. I don’t want them to worry”

Jared responded, “I know.”

After Ryder finished his gaze shifted to behind Jared.

Agnes walked up behind Jared, her eyes still red and swollen.

“Are you okay...

“Are you okay...

The two said this sentence almost at the same time. Afterwards, the ward returned to previous tranquility

Jared furrowed his brows

Agnes was the first to speak. “I wasn’t injured. Luckily you were there”

Ryder glanced at Jared, his tone returning to its usual coolness. “I’m glad you’re okay, In that situation, I would have protected anyone, so don’t mind it.” On the way home

Agnes sat in Jared’s car, finally regaining her composure.

But Jared was poker-faced, not uttering a word.

The temperature in the car seemed to have dropped a few degrees.

Agnes felt increasingly guilty.

Ryder was Jared's favorite nephew, and now he was in the hospital because of her. That must've upset Jared a lot.

In her heart, Agnes silently decided to do her best to make it up to him.

The next morning when Jared woke up, he found no one beside him.

He glanced at the wall clock and found it was just past five in the morning

Jared frowned, getting up.

Agnes was not in the room.

When he left the room, he went to the dining room and saw Agnes cooking soup

Jared walked over and asked, "What are you doing?"

Agnes turned around "I'm making Ryder a com soup. He can't eat solid food now, so he can only have soup."

"You can ask the nanny to do this kind of thing"

Agnes responded, "He was injured saving me. Now, he's in the hospital and I can't do much. I can only do what I can to express my gratitude."

Agnes had put the cooked soup into a thermos.

Then she told Jared, "You can go back to sleep. I'll deliver breakfast and then head to school'

For several consecutive days, Agnes got up early to make soup.

From the initial corn soup, to mushroom soup, and then to tomato soup, there were different variations every day

Actually, Agnes's cooking skills were just average.

But, in order to take care of Ryder, she specifically asked the chef at home for advice, and would repeatedly cook soup at night, gradually mastering some skills. These days, she was even learning how to cook other dishes.

Every night when Jared came home, he could see Agnes busying herself in the kitchen.

Then, he would silently enter the study, not returning to the bedroom until very late

Agnes gradually noticed that Jared seemed busier these days, returning home later and later.

Sometimes, to wait for him, she would deliberately stay in the kitchen a little longer.

When Jared came home, she would always cheerfully bring a bowl of freshly cooked soup to his study. However, Agnes noticed that Jared never had it.

The next morning, the soup was still on the desk in the study.

Agnes was a bit disappointed, but she also knew Jared was picky about food. Maybe her cooking skills weren't good enough, so she put even more effort into cooking.

But it seemed like it was all for naught

## Chapter 209

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Obviously, the chefs at home praised her for her improved cooking skills, but why did Jared refuse to take a bite? Today, Agnes was cooking Italian chicken soup.

She planned to bring it over to Ryder tomorrow morning

From afar, she noticed the light in Jared's study was on again.

Jared used to come to the kitchen to check on her when he came home. But now, he would go straight to his study and be busy until late into the night.

By the time Jared returned to his room, Agnes was already asleep.

Over the week Agnes and Jared rarely chatted.

Agnes filled a bowl with soup and carried it over to Jared's study.

But Jared wasn't looking at his documents.

He was standing on the small balcony of his study, smoking, lost in thought.

Agnes had no idea Jared smoked.

No wonder she noticed a faint smell of tobacco in the house these past few days.

Agnes stood at the door, knocking gently

Jared turned around.

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As soon as he saw Agnes at the door, Jared immediately extinguished his cigarette and walked over. Jared asked, "What brings you here?"

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Holding the bowl of soup in her hands, Agnes said, "I cooked Italian chicken soup today, it's really good, try some." Jared frowned and said, "You don't need to bring soup here anymore, I don't like to eat these stuff."

There was a hint of coldness in Jared's words that made Agnes, still holding the bowl of soup, feel awkward.

Somewhat nervously, Agnes asked, "Did something bother you? You've been..."

"I want to be alone for a while."

Before Agnes could finish, Jared cut her off.

And in his tone, Agnes felt a clear sense of impatience and irritation.

Agnes was slightly stunned, and then said, "Then remember to go to bed early" With that, Agnes left with the bowl of soup

She didn't even step into the study.

She walked down the long hallway

Agnes felt a bit down, even wanting to cry

But she suddenly thought she was being too sensitive.

Maybe Jared just ran into a tough problem at work.

Since she couldn't help, she shouldn't add to his troubles with her emotions.

Agnes held back her tears and smiled at herself.

Agnes, you need to be Jared's sunshine, bringing him warmth and light

Thinking this, Agnes started to feel better again.

Meanwhile, in his study, Jared clenched his fist and slammed it on the desk.

His knuckles cracked loudly.

Jared had never been so troubled before, his heart feeling as if it was being bitten by a thousand ants.

He knew he had been cold and heartless to Agnes these past two days.

Seeing her trying so hard to please him only made him feel more irritated

He wasn't even sure what was going on.

He was probably running from the problem for the first time, not daring to think too deeply about what was wrong

The next morning, when Jared woke up, Agnes was already gone from the Whitfield Manor

Jared checked the time it was seven in the morning

Agnes should be at the hospital now

Without even having breakfast, Jared drove to the hospital

When Agnes arrived at the ward, Ryder was already awake.

Ryder's condition had greatly improved and there were no complications.

He was just immobilized by straps and had a bit of trouble moving.

But the doctor said he could be discharged in a couple of days and would be fine with some rest at home

When Ryder saw Agnes enter, he couldn't help but smile slightly

But he said, "Why

u here san

Chapter 210

Agnes said, "What's with you Whitfield folks? Can't you show a bit of gratitude?"

For some reason, looking at Ryder reminded her of Jared.

She felt stifled inside

She couldn't vent her anger on Jared, so she took it out on Ryder.

After all, he was Jared's nephew and he looked a lot like Jared.

Noticing Agnes's mood, Ryder's expression shifted slightly, "Did you have a fight with Jared?"

Agnes placed a food box on the table and opened it one by one, “No”

“Then why do you look upset?”

“Maybe because the soup I cooked isn’t tasty.”

Ryder fell silent for a while.

After a long pause, he finally said, “Your soup is delicious”

Agnes was taken aback.

Then she suddenly turned her head

She looked into Ryder’s eyes.

Ryder’s ears immediately turned red, and then he looked away.

Agnes, however, burst out laughing.

He complimented her and was actually shy about it.

Although Ryder was mostly cold and moody like Jared, he occasionally showed a cute side.

Agnes felt a little better.

Holding a bowl of soup, she teased him, “What did you say just now? I didn’t hear clearly, say it again.”

Ryder turned shy. “I didn’t say anything”

Agnes laughed, “You just said my breakfast was delicious, but now you’re denying it, why so shy? Compliment me, I’ll be happy, and I’ll cook more delicious food for you

Ryder didn't say anything

Agnes passed the soup, "Here, today's breakfast is Italian chicken soup, I started cooking it last night."

Ryder finally turned around and reached out to take it.

But he just changed the bandage this morning, and it was a bit tight, causing a sudden pain in his chest when he

moved.

Ryder clutched his chest and grunted.

Agnes became worried, "Are you okay?"

Ryder shook his head, Tm fine

Agnes saw him pick up the bowl with a frown.

Every move seemed stiff, as if he was enduring pain.

Agnes immediately took the bowl back, "Don't move, let me feed you."

Although Ryder seemed reluctant, he didn't object.

Agnes brought a chair over to the bed and sat down.

Ryder sat on the bed.

Agnes scooped up a spoonful of soup and brought it to Ryder's mouth.

But Ryder was staring at Agnes's face, as if in a daze.

Agnes urged, "What are you daydreaming about? Open your mouth."

Ryder snapped out of it and obediently took a small sip.

Agnes looked at him expectantly. "How's it taste?"

Ryder didn't look into Agnes's eyes, but he still nodded and said softly. "Delicious."

Agnes's mood suddenly improved a lot, You're the cutest."

Ryder blushed and retorted, "Who's cute?"

Agnes teased him with a smile, "You look really cute, obedient and cute"

"I'm not Oscar"

You're even cuter than Oscar"

Agnes enjoyed teasing Ryder more and more, mainly because seeing his usually icy face imitated was a pleasure.

At this moment, a tall figure had been standing at the door for a while...

## Chapter 211

Jared didn't step inside. He just stood at the entrance for a while and then turned around and left

After leaving the hospital, Agnes went straight to school.

As soon as she got there, she heard a group of girls gossiping.

"Have you heard that Cecile was expelled from school?" "For real? Cecile is the mayor's daughter. She has been domineering in the school, causing many problems, but the principal's been turning a blind eye. Did she really get expelled?"

“Yup, it’s true. It’s not known which powerful person she offended, but she’s been fired

“That’s really good news! The queen bee of the school’s mean girls got expelled. Guess the rest will have to toe the line now.”

Agnes, hearing all this, was a bit puzzled.

Cecile got expelled?

Why?

At lunch, Agnes mentioned it to Kerri

Kerri said. “It might be Jared’s doing I gotta tell you something. The stage collapse at the school festival wasn’t an accident. Someone used sulfuric acid to corrode the material of the stage which caused the stage to collapse”

Agnes was shocked. “Who would be so vicious?”

If someone had gotten hit by the steel frame of the stage, it could have been fatal.

If someone did it on purpose, that’s murder.

Kemi continued. “I heard the acid was in a timed device. The culprit could control the time. And the stage collapsed when you were on it. So, who in this school hates you enough to do something so vicious?”

“Cecile?” Agnes couldn’t believe it.

There was a lot of conflict between her and Cecile, but Agnes couldn’t believe that Cecile would want to kill her.

Kerri went on, “So, Cecile getting expelled is a good thing. She has always harbored malice towards you, plus she lost a bet to you before. Fortunately, she was expelled, otherwise we don’t know what she will do in the future.”

Agnes was still a bit dazed.

“So I think Jared had something to do with Cecile being expelled. She’s a mean girl who tried to frame his wife and hurt his nephew, Mr. Whitfield wouldn’t stand for that”

Heanng Kern talk like that, Agnes started taking it more seriously

She wanted to ask Jared what was going on when she got home

But she didn’t expect him to be off to Japan on a business trip.

The day he came back was the same day Ryder was discharged from the hospital.

Ryder was discharged in the afternoon and came home for dinner.

Everyone at home already knew.

Tim was very worried, and Alyssa came back early from Paris.

Thankfully, Ryder was recovering well.

He could walk freely now.

Jared was away on business for a week.

He rarely left for this long.

Agnes spent every day counting the hours.

Eventually, she couldn't help but ask Jared's secretary about his schedule.

The day Jared came back, Agnes went to the airport to wait for him.

The plane was delayed

Jared didn't arrive until the evening

Agnes greeted him with a big smile and an enthusiastic hug

"Jared looked surprised "What are you doing here?"

"I asked Leo about your schedule I wanted to surprise you"

"Jared sounded indifferent. "We're in public, we should behave. Let's go home."

Agnes was taken aback

She didn't understand why Jared was so cold all of a sudden.

Every time she came back from a trip, she'd go to pick him up and he'd always be happy

Jared took a few steps, saw that Agnes was still standing there, and turned and asked,  
"Aren't you coming?"

Agnes responded and rushed to catch up.

Maybe he's just too tired, Agnes thought

Chapter 212

Once they got in the car.

Agnes had been secretly watching Jared's expression.

Jared looked really wiped out

All Agnes wanted to do was to cheer him up

She said, “Jared, Ryder got discharged from the hospital today. I cooked dinner myself.”

Hearing that name, Jared frowned, opened his eyes, his voice cold as ice, I know”

Agnes bit her lip gently. “I ordered a cake for Ryder. We can pick it up in a bit.”

Jared’s fingers twitched slightly, his voice still icy, “Alright,

After getting the cake, Agnes got back into the car all excited, telling Jared. The owner of the bakery also gave me a bouquet of lilies. Ryder was discharged from the hospital. Today is just the night gift for him.”

“Agnes, you were too involved in that scene.”

Jared suddenly said.

Agnes was puzzled

What shocked her was not what Jared said, but his expression.

His face was as cold as an ice sculpture, and his eyes, they were like icy daggers, radiating a cold glow.

Agnes, as if she didn’t catch on for a moment, asked, “What did you say?”

A trace of mockery appeared on Jared’s face, “Ryder, Ryder, how many times do you need to say this name every day? Agnes, please recognize your identity. He’s not Romeo and you’re not Juliet. Please show some self-awareness as my wife.”

Agnes didn’t understand. It took her a while to finally catch on

Disbelief filled Agnes's eyes. "Jared, what do you think I am?"

What was Jared implying?

He actually suspected her of having an affair with Ryder.

While Jared was away on a business trip, they would call each other every night.

Agnes did mention Ryder, but that's because he's Jared's nephew, and someone he cares about a lot. Agnes was just updating Jared on Ryder's health condition to put him at ease

She didn't expect Jared to think this way.

Anger welled up in Agnes out of nowhere, on top of that, she felt it was incredibly ridiculous and absurd.

Her and Ryder, how could that even be possible?

But Agnes still tried to keep herself composed and explained, "I think you got the wrong idea. Ryder and I are just friends, plus, he's your nephew. I've always seen him as my nephew too."

Jared's fingers clenched tightly. He got a wrong idea?

What he saw with his own eyes could not be wrong.

Ryder was someone he watched grow up and he had been acting strange lately.

Jared knew that Agnes was innocent and probably didn't do it on purpose.

But he vented the frustration he had been holding back for days on her anyway.

Jared pinched the bridge of his nose, his voice extremely lined, “Keep your distance from him from now on. The Whitfield family’s reputation is good, and I don’t want it ruined because of you two.”

Agnes didn’t respond

But her heart ached as if it was being stabbed with a knife

The Whitfield family’s reputation can’t be ruined because of the two of them?

Has Jared already concluded that they’re having an affair?

Agnes remembered when she was framed by Jenny, and everyone misunderstood her only Jared trusted her unconditionally

-But now

The car smoothly pulled up to the Whitfield Manor

Jared and Agnes got out of the car

The lights of the Whitfield Manor were still shining bright

Yet Agnes suddenly felt a chill

Chapter 213

Once they stepped inside, the butler took Jared’s coat and said, “Jared, Ms. Pritchard, Tim, and Alyssa are all waiting for you in the dining room.”

“Where’s Ryder?” Jared asked.

“The young master just got home and should be in the dining room as well, the butler replied.

Jared nodded in response, and then headed upstairs toward the dining room.

Agnes was silent carrying a cake and trailing behind Jared

She had forgotten about the lily flowers gifted by the cake shop owner and didn't bring them inside.

Alyssa lit up when she saw Jared, gently touched his face, and said with a frown, Jared, why did you lose so much weight?"

"I didn't lose weight just been out of town on a business trip," Jared replied

Alyssa stared at him for a moment before saying. "You definitely lost weight. You've always been a picky eater, you surely didn't eat well while out. Next time, I'll send our chef with you, so I won't have to worry"

Jared responded with a helpless smile, "I was on a business trip, not a vacation"

Then he changed the subject, asking, "What did you make for dinner today?"

"I made fish and chips, roast chicken, grilled lobster, and spaghetti bolognese, all your favorites, Alyssa replied with a smile.

The Whitfield family actually had a dedicated chef who would prepare a variety of dishes, mostly high-end seafood and imported ingredients.

But these home-style dishes were rare treats

Alyssa turned to Agnes and said, "Jared once had spaghetti bolognese at a restaurant in another city and has been craving it ever since. I hired many chefs to make it, but he always said it wasn't the real spaghetti bolognese, just regular noodles. I had no choice but to go to that city and learn how to cook it myself. Jared is really picky."

Agnes laughed and said. “You’re really good to Jared.”

Alyssa looked at Jared with a loving smile, “Of course, he’s my beloved little brother

That’s when Agnes noticed Ryder sitting at the dining table, his gaze fixed on Alyssa

His eyes seemed to show a hint of accustomed loneliness.

Despite her short stay at the Whitfield Manor, Agnes had noticed this.

Alyssa seemed to care more for Jared than for Ryder, whether in how often she talked to him, or fixing his attire before they went out.

And Jared acted like a child around Alyssa.

But Alyssa’s care for Ryder was significantly less obvious, not that she didn’t care, but she wasn’t as expressive.

Perhaps it was because Ryder was always cold and distant, as if he rejected everyone

Agnes handed the cake to Ryder, saying, “Congrats on your discharge. This cake is my gift to you.”

“Thanks” Ryder replied.

During dinner, only Tim, Alyssa, and Jared were talking

Ryder didn’t say a word.

And the usually lively Agnes was unusually quiet, just eating silently.

Alyssa noticed Agnes’s change in mood and asked, “Agnes, what’s wrong? Is something bothering you?”

“No. I’m just thinking about some things, Agnes quickly denied

Jared casually said, “Agnes and I are planning to move out tonight.”

Agnes suddenly looked up at Jared

“Why are you moving out?” Tim asked, puzzled.

Alyssa said, “Don’t worry, they don’t always have to stay with us. Jared is newly mated, let him enjoy his newlywed life. It’s okay for them to move out, as long as they visit us often.”

## Chapter 214

Agnes didn’t utter a single word the whole time, but she was very sad.

Jared was planning to move out. She felt like he was convinced she and Ryder were having a secret affair

After dinner, Agnes didn’t want to stay in her room.

She was feeling way too suffocated

So, she went out to the yard

There was a marble bench in the yard.

Agnes sat down, staring blankly at the night sky.

Oscar came over and nudged Agnes’s ankle with his nose.

Agnes looked down, giving Oscar’s fluffy head a pat

“What’s up?”

Agnes had no idea how long she'd been sitting there

Suddenly, a cold voice came from behind her.

Agnes turned her head and it was Ryder.

Agnes suddenly stood up.

For some reason, she was feeling a little nervous.

Probably because she knew Jared had misinterpreted their relationship, Agnes was feeling a bit uncomfortable. Agnes gave a small smile: "Nothing, just hanging out with Oscar

Ryder also came over, squatted down, patted Oscar, and asked, "I was asking about you and Jared, what's up?" Agnes didn't expect Ryder to ask that

Agnes tried to sound as normal as possible: "We're fine, why do you ask?"

"I can tell, he's not in a good mood"

Actually, Jared was acting no different from usual, Agnes had no idea how Ryder noticed.

But she would definitely not tell Ryder about Jared misunderstanding their relationship.

That would be way too awkward.

Agnes tried to change the subject: "You seem to know him pretty well."

Ryder was silent for a moment: 'I've always looked up to him since I was a kid, he's amazing, able to support the Tim Group since he was 17. He's a genius, but I'm not. No

matter how hard I try, I can't catch up to him. Tim and Alyssa always only have eyes for him.”

Agnes was surprised

Such a cold person would actually say something like that.

At Lakeside College, he was seen as a genius by others, the best student in the medical school.

Why would he think like that?

Agnes suddenly felt that Ryder had been living in Jared's shadow since he was a child, and the psychological pressure must be great.

“Actually, you don't have to compare yourself to him. You're you, not anyone else. Why do you have to compare yourself to him?”

“Because I don't want my mom to always only say good night to him, remind him to eat on time, pack his luggage, bring him gifts, always only have eyes for him.” When Ryder said this, there was no jealousy, but a deep sense of sadness and helplessness.

Agnes didn't know what to say for a moment.

The two just sat in silence, with Oscar sniffing around their feet.

“Ryder” a cold voice came from behind.

Agnes and Ryder both turned around.

Jared came over, holding a gift box in his hand, handed it to Ryder: “This is a gift for you.”

Every time he came back from a business trip, Jared would bring him a gift.

Ryder opened the gift box, inside was a car key.

Jared explained, “You’re about to graduate, I thought you might need a car. This car was ordered overseas, it can be delivered to the house in a month. It’s just a regular car, because you’re about to start your internship at the hospital, and the luxury cars we have at home are too conspicuous. I hope your first luxury car is bought: with your own salary”

The Whitfield family’s underground garage was filled with many cars, but they were all very expensive luxury cars

Ryder said, “Thank you.”

Jared was silent for a moment, and then said, “Actually, Agnes helped me choose this gift. If it wasn’t for her, I might not have thought of it. You should thank her.”

## Chapter 216

Ryder recalled, the first time he heard the name Agnes, was on the third day of military training after enrolling in university.

At that time, he had just come back from abroad and was still not used to domestic life and jet lag

The scorching summer, the high-intensity military training, and what was worse, he ran into a very strict officer.

Back then, military training wasn’t divided by majors or classes. It was random, each group consisting of sixty people from different majors and classes.

In order to test their endurance, the officer would always make them stand in the blazing sun for half an hour before lunch every day when the sun was at its strongest

He was not feeling well in those few days, but kept pushing through

When he felt that he was about to fail and the world in front of him began to become blurred, someone next to him suddenly handed him a bottle of mineral water. The girl's voice was clear and pleasing to the ear, "Hey, boy, this is for you."

He strained his eyes to look at the person next to him, only to see a face that made his heartbeat race.

She handed him a bottle of mineral water and said softly, "Drink it, but don't let the officer see you."

Ryder took the water bottle, which had clearly been drunk from before.

He was a germaphobe, not liking to use things that others had touched, let alone water that someone else had drunk.

However, at that moment, he didn't mind at all.

He opened the bottle and took a big gulp, and the world in front of him gradually became clear.

From that day on, he began to pay attention to this girl.

Unfortunately, just as they were about to get to know each other, they were separated into different training groups due to re-grouping.

But he still often saw her.

For instance, during breaks, she liked to sit under the basketball hoop on the playground with a group of friends, chatting, and sometimes even sneaking some snacks

That summer, the temperature was unusually high

When everyone was sitting on the ground, exhausted after training, she could always be seen handing out bottles of mineral water to the people around her. He wasn't good at making friends, but he still learned her name from others.

Agnes—

That summer was long, hot, and suffocating

But that name was like a block of ice in the summer heat, making him feel cool and refreshed every time he thought of it.

In the following years, he hardly ever spoke to Agnes, but he knew everything about her

She was a journalism student, loved eating at the second cafeteria. She spent most of her weekends in the library, and at nine-thirty every night, she would run a lap around the playground before going to bed...

And her boyfriend, named Elton Taylor.

He had been quietly paying attention to this girl, but she seemed unaware of his existence.

Jared once told him, “If you look at a girl and your heart races at first sight, if you feel like you’ve been electrocuted and can’t stop trembling, then, that girl is your true love.”

However, by the time he realized this, she had already become Jared’s girl.

But his memory was still stuck in that summer, her crisp voice, “Hey, boy...

Agnes had already returned to the house, and Jared followed her in.

They started arguing, and Alyssa, seeing this, walked over

Agnes saw Alyssa coming and stopped arguing with Jared.

Alyssa asked, "What's up with you two, why the fight?"

Agnes didn't answer, but Jared said. "We're leaving"

He grabbed Agnes hand and started heading out.

Agnes walked along, trying to shake off Jared's grip as they went.

## Chapter 217

There was obviously some beet between them, and just then, Ryder walked in.

Alyssa noticed that Ryder's mood was off too. She called out to him a few times, but he seemed not to hear and went straight upstairs. Alyssa frowned.

Once they got in the car, Agnes didn't say a word, and Jared looked pretty grim.

Finally, Agnes couldn't hold back and asked, "Jared, why did you say those things? You don't trust me at all. How am I supposed to face Ryder now? What do you think he's going to think?"

Jared suddenly slammed on the brakes, and the car came to a stop by the roadside

Jared said coldly. "How can I trust you when you're always thinking about him?"

Agnes was taken aback, "I'm not thinking about him, I just don't understand why you think that. What have I done to make you think there's some ambiguous relationship

between Ryder and me? you suspect me, you should at least have some proof. You can't just accuse me for no reason”

Agnes thought she and Jared had been together long enough.

He shouldn't be the jealous type, nor get mad over trivial stuff, it was just beyond comprehension.

What on earth made Jared misunderstand her?

“Evidence, do I still need evidence? Isn't everything you've been doing lately the best evidence?”

Agnes was furious. What on earth had she done wrong?

seemed like Jared was just randomly accusing her. His attitude now was cold and firm, as if he was absolutely certain.

It was as if no matter what Agnes said, he wouldn't believe her.

And why should she explain something that never happened?

Suddenly, Agnes didn't want to talk anymore. She felt an indescribable unfairness.

“Jared, I don't want to explain to you anymore. I am clear about what I've done, and no matter what I say, you won't believe me.” ‘Agnes, from today onwards, you're not allowed to get close to Ryder.’’ Jared said coldly after a few seconds of silence.

What chilled Agnes was that his tone was almost a warning

H

Getting close to Ryder?

So, Jared not only thought they were flirting, but also that she was the one initiating it?

Or did he think she was trying to seduce him?

Yes, since he thought there was a problem between them, and Ryder was so aloof and wouldn't approach her.

There was only one possibility, that she was the one approaching Ryder, actively seducing Ryder.

Agnes thought this was just ridiculous.

Agnes almost yelled out, "Jared, I'm not as bad as you think!"

With that, Agnes opened the car door and got out.

Jared didn't catch up

## Chapter 218

Agnes kept running after getting off the car, and finally stopped beside a bus stop. She couldn't hold back the tears any longer.

Why was this happening?

Agnes didn't get it. She hadn't done anything wrong.

She sat on the bench for a long while, deciding not to go back.

The sight of Jared's suspicious gaze was like a sharp knife cutting into her.

She didn't want to go home either Beatrice was waiting to laugh at her misery and she couldn't just roll over and let her win. Agnes checked her phone and finally decided to call Kerr.

In less than 20 minutes, Kerr showed up

They had a short chat and then left together.

Meanwhile, a black Maybach was parked not far from the bus stop.

The man inside had a gloomy face, lighting up a cigarette

He lit it up but didn't take a puff, just letting it burn down to the stub before lighting another one.

The car was filled with smoke and the smell of tobacco. Jared wasn't really fond of the smell.

But the slightly bitter scent seemed to calm him down.

Why did he say those hurtful things to her? Even Jared thought he was a complete fool

He knew she was innocent and he should have protected her more. That was what his common sense was telling him. But every time he saw Agnes with Ryder, it felt like a snakebite to his heart.

He overheard their conversation Ryder had never spoken that way to his family before.

Jared only realized then that Ryder had his own share of troubles and dilemmas.

What bothered Jared was that Agnes was the first one to break through Ryder's defenses.

Jared knew the gravity of the situation.

Ryder was similar to him in many ways, once they fell, it was hard to let go.

But each time, Agnes would insist there was nothing special between her and Ryder, which frustrated Jared.

What a blockhead!

Couldn't she see it?

Jared wasn't doubting Agnes, but he was beginning to doubt himself.

Ryder was his nephew, cold on the outside but warm inside.

He and Agnes went to the same school, they were the same age, they had things to talk about.

And Agnes was still somewhat reserved around him.

But with Ryder, it was different. Agnes was more outgoing, joking with him, teasing him.

It made Jared feel that Agnes was more at ease with Ryder, more herself.

For the first time, Jared realized that even he could feel jealousy, and it was driving him crazy.

Agnes got in the car with Kerri, her mind elsewhere the entire ride.

Finally, Agnes noticed the car had stopped at Maplewood Manor and Kerri had already exited the vehicle.

“Why did you bring me here? I don’t want to go home. That’s why I called you, Agnes asked after getting out of the car

But then Agnes considered that Kem was a boarding student and the single beds at school were really cramped. There was no way two people could fit.

If she had known, she would have just found a spot in the school library to stay for the night.

“Don’t worry,” Kerr said. “Who said anything about going home? I’ve moved out this semester and I’m living here now.”

## Chapter 215

Suddenly, the garden became so quiet it was deafening. Agnes furrowed her brow at Jared

What on earth was Jared talking about?

She had never brought up the topic of the car. Why was he saying all this?

Ryder stayed silent for a while, and just said lightly: “thanks”.

Then Jared spoke again. “It’s been a while, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen you regard Agnes as your aunt. Do you think that Agnes is not from our family?” Agnes finally

understood that Jared was forcing Ryder, so he said what he said just now on purpose. This made Agnes very angry Firstly, Jared knew damn well that Ryder was older than her and they were classmates. She disliked pressing him as a relative.

This was the reason for their estrangement before, and now that their relationship was a little better, Jared brought up the subject again. Secondly, Agnes knew Jared was just trying to remind her that she and Ryder were now family. She should always keep her distance from him.

The words seemed to be directed at Ryder, but they were probably meant for her. Jared still didn't trust her!! Anger ignited in Agnes' heart! Jared's gaze, however, was fixed on Ryder.

His words were far from confrontational, even accompanied by a faint smile.

But Ryder was as indifferent as an ice sculpture, he stood there quietly without speaking. "Why won't you talk to Agnes? Jared asked nonchalantly. Ryder remained silent, his expression unreadable.

But after spending some time together, Agnes had gotten to know him.

This boy was the same as Jared, the more expressionless and calm he was, the more agitated his heart was. They didn't easily express emotions on their expressions, but it didn't mean they were emotionless.

From Agnes point of view, Jared was bullying Ryder by doing this. He clearly knew Ryder's character, and he also knew that Pyder cared about her identity. He already felt that he was not valued at home, his mother and grandfather only loved Jared, and now Agnes suddenly came. However, Jared was still forcing him, forcing him to accept the fact that Agnes was his elder, that is, forcing him to lower his status in this family by another level. For Ryder, it was brutal! Ryder still refused to speak or even meet Jared's gaze.

He just lowered his head and pinched the car key box with his fingers. "Why won't you accept it? Have you never acknowledged Agnes as your aunt in your heart? Ryder, what are you thinking?"

"Enough, Jared! You've gone too far!" Agnes said suddenly

Agnes felt that it was too much to bear. He doubted her, and now he doubted Ryder. What a cold man Ryder was, didn't he know that? It was originally a completely fabricated thing, but he wanted to let everyone know, make everyone feel dissatisfied? How would she face Ryder, how would she face everyone in the family? Jared's gaze darkened, his expression turning icy

Agnes shoved Jared aside and turned straight into the house.

Jared stood there for a moment, then turned and entered the house too. Only Ryder was left standing where he was, staring at the bright light in the room, and Jared catching up with Agnes's back...

## Chapter 219

Agnes looked surprised. "You live here too?"

Kem answered, "I told you I'm married, this house is our new home. We bought it two years ago but haven't lived in it until recently. I moved here to find a quiet place because of some stuff going on at home"

Agnes just hummed in response and followed Kerri into the house

Even though they lived in the same community, there was still some distance between the houses.

All the houses in this community were detached houses with gardens. Each house was surrounded by tall trees and had its own driveway. They didn't bother each other, and the privacy was great.

So Agnes, who had been living here for a long time, had hardly ever seen her neighbors.

All these houses were fully booked before they were built.

The developers would contact the homeowners before starting construction and design the houses according to their preferences.

So each house had its own characteristics, there was no uniformity.

Jared's house was designed to be simple and low-key, but Kerr's house was quite luxurious

Seeing Agnes standing at the door in shock, Kerri explained, "Don't mind it, my husband's a rich kid, he designed this house."

Agnes replied, "I think it's great. Your husband may be a rich kid, but at least he's talented. But Kerr, who did you marry? You never told me" Agnes was clearly curious

She knew a bit about the distinguished families in the Capital. Anyone who could afford a house in Maplewood Manor was surely not ordinary She might even know them.

Kerri sighed, "Do you want to meet him? He's inside, you'll know once you go in."

Agnes was surprised "So you're living here with him."

Kern quickly said, "No, he got kicked out of his house and has been freeloading off me."

Kem sounded angry, but her face turned red.

She turned around and went into the house

Suddenly. Agnes felt that Kem's marriage might not be as simple as she thought, there might be some stories.

Although Agnes felt that this was Kerri and her husband's private space, and she might disturb them by coming here, she couldn't help being curious and walked in. As she was

going upstairs, she heard a man's voice from upstairs "Kerr, where did you go so late? Did you go see that little bastard again?"

Kerri snapped back: "Is there anyone in this world who's a bigger bastard than you? You came uninvited, eating my food, drinking my drinks, do you have the face to talk about others?"

"I bought this house"

"It seems you've forgotten, you gave this house to me two years ago. You said it was my compensation after our divorce, now the name on the property deed is mine"

The man slowly approached, trapping her between the stair railings, his tone vague Kern, you're thinking strangely. We're not divorced yet."

The man's lips were about to touch hers...

Cough cough cough....

Agnes couldn't help but cough a few times.

Why did she see this as soon as she walked in?

Kem immediately pushed the man in front of her away.

The man finally noticed that there was another girl who came back with Kerri

She was standing under the stairs, covered by large green plants, so he didn't pay attention for a while. But when he recognized her face, the man exclaimed in surprise, 'Agnes?"

Chapter 220

Agnes was completely taken aback because the man standing in front of her was Brayden Simonds!

So... so...

Kerri was the adopted daughter of the Simonds family, the one everyone in town knew about but no one had ever actually seen?

Agnes could hardly believe it.

Kemi had already walked up to Agnes, looking a little surprised she asked. “You guys know each other?”

Agnes nodded. “I went to his birthday party once with Jared.”

Kem frowned, “Let’s go upstairs, don’t mind him”

Halfway up, they were stopped by Brayden who looked like he’d just had a bath, wearing a grey bathrobe.

His hair was wet and his face was somewhat stern.

He said to Kerr, “What on earth is going on?”

Kerri replied, “Brayden, Agnes is my friend, she will be staying here temporarily, it’s none of your business. Also, you better not snitch or I’ll toss your stuff out” Brayden frowned, “Don’t be so stubborn, you’re making things difficult for me.”

Brayden turned to Agnes “Agnes, is it okay for you to spend the night outside like this? Does Jared know you’re here?”

Agnes looked a bit scared, “Am I disturbing you guys? Maybe I should just go

Agnes could tell.

Although Kerri and Brayden seemed to bicker all the time, they were husband and wife living under the same roof.

What their relationship was exactly, was hard to say.

Her being here, would inevitably cause disturbances.

But Kem grabbed Agnes's hand, "Where would you go if you leave now? Don't mind him, it's my house, you can stay as long as you want."

With that she dragged Agnes upstairs.

Brayden frowned and went back to his own room.

Kem prepared a guest room, fully equipped.

She brought over some new clothes, "You're about my size, you can wear my clothes for now"

Agnes still felt a bit awkward, "I'm still causing you trouble."

"What trouble? You have no idea how happy I am to have you here. I can't stand Brayden, living under the same roof with him is driving me crazy"

Agnes laughed, "Do you really dislike him that much?"

Kerri quickly said, "Absolutely, we're like oil and water, we can't be together for more than three minutes without fighting"

Agnes laughed, "But when he tried to kiss you just now, you didn't dodge"

"Well... I was caught off guard. Normally, I would've fought with him."

“Okay, okay, no more excuses. Actually, Brayden is a nice guy. He’s Jared’s friend. I’ve heard Jared mention him before. He may seem a bit wild on the outside, but he’s not a player At his last birthday party, even though there were lots of beautiful women, none of them were by his side”

Kerri said, “You don’t need to defend him. Anyway, there’s no future for us, we’ll be getting a divorce soon”

Agnes didn’t know much about their situation, so she couldn’t offer any advice.

Was there a secret behind their peaceful mamage?

Agnes sighed deeply, “Anyway, thank you for letting me stay here”

“Just relax and make yourself at home. But I can’t guarantee that Brayden won’t tell Jared ”

When Herri mentioned Jared, Agnes’ eyes darkened

Chapter 221

“Why did you guys fight? Was there a misunderstanding?” Kerri asked.

Agnes endured the gnevance in her heart and told the whole story. After hearing the story, Kerri couldn’t believe it: “It’s too much for him to doubt you and Ryder What’s wrong with him?”

Having it all out in the open, Agnes felt a lot better

But she was disappointed, and she fell on the sofa and didn’t want to move: “Men are not reliable. Kerri also said: “There is no good man in the world” “Exactly” Brayden had just

changed and passed by the door of the guest room. The door was ajar, and he happened to overhear their conversation.

A smirk tugged at his lips, almost bursting into laughter.

Then he jingled his car keys, heading straight down to the garage:

The 99th floor office of the Tim Group

Upon opening the door, Brayden saw Jared standing by the floor-to-ceiling window, his back turned, looking lonely.

Brayden strolled over, plonked himself down in Jared's office chair, tossed his car keys on the desk, spun the chair around and sighed, "Being the boss is no picnic. Working late into the night, it's not as cushy as my life"

Jared turned around at this, glanced at Brayden, and said dryly. "Your carefree days are numbered. I hear your brother is thriving at the Simonds Group. Has Madeleine Simonds taken a liking to him? Just wait, soon enough you'll be called to work at the Simonds Group."

The Simonds family might not have many heirs, but their connections were complex. Madeleine, a widow from a young age, single-handedly managed the massive Simonds Group.

She had one son, Jadeon Simonds

However, Jadeon fell for a divorcee with a child, Lavinia.

After much dispute with Madeleine, he finally married Lavinia and brought along her child.

Raised in the Simonds family, the child changed his name to Kent Simonds under Jadeon's guidance. He's Brayden's half-brother, five years his senior, but not related by blood to the Simonds family. Brayden and Kent didn't get along, and Madeleine wasn't fond of this "grandson."

However, after a tragedy struck the Simonds family and Jadeon and his wife died in a plane crash, leaving Madeleine devastated, she reluctantly let Kent handle the business and began training him.

Brayden was young then, and Madeleine was running out of steam.

Her original intention was to groom an assistant for Brayden, but to her surprise, Kent had gained significant influence in the company over the years. This raised Madeleine's hackles

Even though he was considered part of the Simonds family, Madeleine would never hand over the vast Simonds estate to someone not related by blood. So, recently, she's been nagging Brayden to start working at the company

Brayden was getting pretty fed up.

4

Jared hit a nerve with his comment. Feeling a bit awkward, Brayden said, "I think it's good to let him run the company. He's the one who's hard working, and he's willing to. I just need those shares, getting dividends every year. How comfortable this kind of life is! Madeleine just dislikes me. She forced me to start a family before, now pushing me to inherit the family business. She doesn't know what my dreams are"

"What's your dream?"

"To be a man of leisure."

Jared was speechless

## Chapter 222

Brayden looked at Jared's expression and waved his hand, saying, "It's okay. I know you may not understand. I didn't come here to talk about my own matters. What are you planning to do about this?"

Jared's gaze turned deep. "What exactly are you referring to?"

"Don't play dumb. I just told you over the phone that your wife is currently with my wife. When do you plan on going to pick her up?"

Jared leaned against the window and fell silent for a long time. "Let's see how the situation unfolds"

"What exactly happened between you two? You used to be so in love, making us all envious. How did things change so quickly?"

Jared looked at the night scenery outside the window, with car lights flickering like stars. Standing there, his inner self was filled with loneliness

Jared didn't respond.

There were many things he couldn't just say casually

Brayden started advising him, "You should cherish her and make her unable to leave you. That way, she'll depend on you and won't leave. You could try going to pick her up directly, let her rest a bit, and stabilize her emotions"

Jared turned around, glanced at Brayden, and then said, "Nonsense."

A faint smirk appeared on Brayden's lips. "This isn't nonsense. It's my valuable experience."

Jared rolled his eyes.

When Brayden left, Jared still wasn't convinced by his words.

How could someone usually so brilliant be so stubborn when it came to matters of the heart?

Agnes ended up living in Kem's villa.

It was close to their home, perhaps only a five-minute walk away.

But for Agnes, it felt like the ends of the earth

Agnes poured all her energy into her studies, conveniently as she was busy writing her thesis and had no room for other thoughts.

Because of their previous campus activities, she and Ryder Whitfield were popular on campus.

Agnes didn't like excessive attention, so she spent most of her time in the library and only returned home late every day.

One day, when she came home, she was extremely exhausted and went upstairs without turning on the lights.

The stairs and corridor were covered in thick carpets, making no sound as she walked

When Agnes reached the master bedroom, she heard noises coming from inside.

Unconsciously, Agnes halted her steps.

The bedroom door was half-open, with a faint light seeping through the crack.

Kerri's voice was clearly filled with anger.

"Brayden, get out!"

Brayden's voice carried a hint of frivolity. "If I leave now, will you be willing?"

Kern was even more furious "Brayden, you're the most shameless rascal! Get out!"

And the commotion inside the room seemed to intensify

Brayden's voice became somewhat hoarse "Kern, you're my wife, and what I give you, you must accept!"

Then there was a heavy thud, as if someone inside the room had bumped into something

Suddenly, Kerr let out a scream!

Agnes sensed that something was wrong

Could they have resorted to violence during their argument?

So, without hesitation, she pushed the door open..

Agnes had intended to intervene, but upon seeing the scene inside, her face instantly turned red....

Chapter 223

They were actually making love.

Agnes immediately turned around, frantically covering her eyes.

So, when Kerri said she was going out, she meant.

Even though they were covered with a thin blanket, she didn't see much.

But the scattered clothes on the floor and those positions, obviously showed their behavior....

Agnes really wished she could find a place to hit her head and get it over with.

"Uh, sorry,

I'm leaving now, you guys carry on

With her eyes covered, Agnes hurriedly rushed out of the room.

As she reached the door, she bumped into the doorframe because she was covering her eyes, and then she stumbled out of the door.

Agnes ran out of the villa all the way to a dimly lit place in the distance.

But her face still felt like it was on fire, and she forcefully slapped her own head.

Why did she rush in there so impulsively?

Too embarrassing, how was she going to face those two in the future?

As Agnes walked, she regretted.

Agnes walked out step by step along the private driveway of the villa. She didn't know where to go for a moment. When she reached the gate of the community, Agnes suddenly felt lost.

In such a big city, where should she go?

Just then, a car drove from a distance, it was the Maybach she was all too familiar with

Two beams of car lights shone directly on her. Agnes wanted to dodge but it was too late.

The car had already stopped next to her and the car window slowly rolled down.

Inside the car was Jared's indifferent face. "Get in "

She hadn't seen Jared for several days and there had been no contact between them

Jared hadn't even sent her a text.

Agnes knew Jared's personality, he wouldn't take the initiative to contact her, but she still subconsciously checked her phone.

There was a faint expectation in her heart, but even Agnes didn't know what she was expecting

These days, she had arranged her schedule to be full, busy until ten in the evening before going home.

But Jared was like a nightmare she couldn't escape from, appearing in her mind whenever she had a moment of free time.

Agnes felt that if this continued, she would definitely collapse.

But at this moment, seeing Jared's face so close, and his familiar indifferent tone, Agnes suddenly found it ironic.

These days, she had been struggling in pain and on the verge of collapse, but he was still calm and composed, as if everything had no effect on him. Now, did he want to act as if nothing had happened?

Then what about the pain she had suffered in these past days, and the struggles in her heart?

And, for Agnes, this matter hadn't passed

Agnes tried to make herself look as calm as Jared

Agnes asked, "Don't you have anything to say to me?"

Jared looked at Agnes coldly. "No"

Maybe it was this kind of indifference that made Agnes unbearable, and she turned to leave

In the end. Jared got out of the car and caught up with Agnes, grabbing her arm directly: 'Agnes, when are you going to stop arguing with me?"

Agnes looked helpless "Do you think I'm arguing with you? Jared, it's you who doubted me, slandered me, should I accept your humiliation? Jared, I tell you, this matter is not over"

Jared's face had already turned cold: "So, what do you want me to do?"

"Agnes looked at Jared "Unless you apologize to me and to Ryder, otherwise I..."

Before Agnes could finish speaking, Jared turned and left

Then she heard the sound of the car engine roaring

Jared's car quickly drove away

Chapter 224

Agnes couldn't hold back the tears, but she raised her head and tried not to cry.

She had been 100 naive, thinking that someone like Jared would actually apologize

He had always been a man of divine nobility, so why would he ever admit his mistakes?

In his eyes, she was intentionally getting close to Ryder.

And now, he had stopped the car to talk to her, but only because he didn't want to make a scene.

She had actually expected him to apologize, and that made him angry enough to leave

Agnes stared into the darkness, suddenly feeling a sense of confusion

With no money and nowhere to go, she could only return home in the end.

When Agnes arrived at the Pritchard family mansion, it was already late at night.

Everyone was asleep, so Agnes took out her keys to open the door. However, it wouldn't budge.

Eventually, even the alarm went off, waking up Preston and Laura.

It was already midnight by then.

Preston went downstairs to investigate and was surprised to see Agnes standing at the door. "Agnes, what are you doing here?"

Beatrice also came down, still groggy and unaware of what was happening. As soon as she saw Agnes, she immediately snapped awake. "I thought we had a burglar in the house. Turns out it's just you."

Beatrice emphasized the word "burglar" with particular emphasis

Preston was actually quite pleased. "Come in, it's freezing outside. Why are you dressed so lightly? And where's Jared? Did you come back alone?"

“I think she looks like she got kicked out of the house. Agnes, did you have nowhere else to go, so you came back? Look at you, it’s truly pitiful, Beatrice remarked Preston shot Beatrice a glare ‘Shut your mouth. Can’t you speak nicely to your sister

Since Agnes had already come back, she had prepared herself, but she didn’t expect the locks on the door to be changed.

“Dad, why can’t my key open the door, and why can’t set off the alarm?”

Laura, wearing silk pajamas, also came over. “I changed the locks. We had a break-in before, and I lost a lot of my jewelry. So I changed the locks Agnes, you’ve been away for so long that my new key can’t be given to you”

Laura’s tone was gentle, even carrying a hint of intimacy, but Agnes never felt it was genuine.

When she arrived just now, she found that the main gate of the mansion wasn’t ever locked.

If the house had really been burglarized, how could they be so careless?

However, Agnes understood in her heart, even though she would never expose her

Agnes simply replied, “Well then, Ms. Laura, just give me the new key tomorrow.”

Laura’s expression subtly changed, but her smile remained. “But Agnes, why did you come back so late, and alone? Jared, really, letting a young girl like: outside so late. It’s really worrisome.”

Upon hearing Laura’s words, Preston grew suspicious “Agnes, what’s going on? Are you having a disagreement with Jared?”

you walk

Agnes said, “He’s on a business trip in Japan right now. I just lost the key to Maplewood Manor, so I came back to stay for a few days. You’re probably overthinking things.”

Laura smiled and said, “If you haven’t had a disagreement, then that’s great Your father and I only hope for a happy married life for you”

Preston also breathed a sigh of relief. “Agnes, it’s late. You should go to bed too.”

Agnes nodded and went back to her room.

## Chapter 225

As Agnes lay in bed, she suddenly felt powerless

Her mind was filled with images of Jared’s cold face

Her heart felt as heavy as a rock, making it hard for her to breathe.

As Agnes rolled over, the door was flung open. Upon seeing the person who walked in with pride, Agnes frowned.

“Beatrice Pritchard, it’s basic manners to knock before you enter someone’s room,” Agnes remarked.

Beatrice crossed her arms and sneered, “Agnes, this is my house. Everything here is mine. You’re just a freeloader. Oh, and by the way, I forgot to tell you, I changed the locks There are only three keys, and none of them are yours.”

“Beatrice, I’m tired Don’t start trouble or I promise you’ll regret it.”

“You gonna hit me? Yeah, right, Agnes I know you’re all badass with your taekwondo but you don’t have the guts to hurt me You’re just living off our dad’s quilt. If you ever hit me, he won’t love you anymore.”

Agnes didn’t get mad.

She was used to Beatrice’s mockery.

If she let every little thing get to her, she’d drive herself crazy.

Beatrice was a pain in the ass she couldn’t deal with, but she could avoid.

Agnes took out her earbuds from under the pillow, plugged them in, and just ignored Beatrice, closing her eyes and laying back down.

Beatrice went on, “Agnes, did you have a fight with Jared Whitfield? I told you, why would Jared ever be interested in you? You’re so boring. He just found you fresh for a while Tell me, did you guys break up?”

Beatrice said a lot, but Agnes ignored her completely

Beatrice thought that she had had a fight with Jared because she understood Agnes’s character.

Agnes would never come back to this house unless she was absolutely desperate

And she came back today, late at night, no less. It must be because she had nowhere else to go.

Agnes had just said that Jared was on a business trip in Japan.

When Beatrice heard, she smirked inside. She had been keeping track of Jared’s schedule, and he hadn’t been away these past few days.

Agnes was lying, and that just confirmed her suspicions.

But no matter how much Beatrice pressed, Agnes barely reacted.

What Beatrice hated most was Agnes's haughty demeanor.

She stormed over and yanked Agnes's earbuds out, "Are you deaf? Can't you hear me when I'm talking to you?"

Agnes suddenly grabbed Beatrice's wrist.

Her voice was icy, "Give me my earbuds"

In fact, there was no sound in the earbuds, she had heard every word Beatrice had said.

She knew she should ignore Beatrice.

But Beatrice kept mentioning Jared, and in the end, she couldn't hold back her anger.

Beatrice's wrist was held tightly, the pain made her cry out, "Agnes, let go of me, it hurts..."

Agnes suddenly let go, and Beatrice fell to the ground, her right hand shaking uncontrollably from the pain, "Agnes, how could you do this to me." Agnes walked over, picked up her earbuds, and said coldly, "if you don't leave now, do you want your other hand to get hurt too?"

Beatrice was furious.

Usually, Agnes was very easy-going, no matter how much she insulted her, she would just ignore her. But today, she suddenly got angry.

This at least proved one thing, everything she just said was true, so it pissed her off

Even though Beatrice's hand hurt, she felt a sense of joy inside, "Agnes, I won't hold you responsible. No wonder Jared kicked you out with you acting like this."

## Chapter 226

Beatrice stormed off in a huff, leaving Agnes lying in bed, feeling miserable and clueless about what to do next.

The next day, being the weekend, Agnes had no school, so she slept in until noon. Apart from grabbing some lunch, she spent the entire day holed up in her room, not venturing outside

In the evening, there was a knock on her door, and Agnes assumed it was her nanny Latonia, calling her for dinner.

However, to her surprise, it was Beatrice standing there. Beatrice appeared to be in high spirits, a big grin plastered on her face as she said, "Agnes, let's go to the dining room for dinner. My mom cooked today, and she whipped up all your favorite dishes."

Agnes glanced at Beatrice, her brows furrowed.

Beatrice usually didn't chat her up like this.

Something was definitely up

And Beatrice looked rather odd today, dressed in a white dress.

Her hair, usually wavy, had been straightened, and she wore a lighter, more natural makeup look, which made her look stunningly different. Agnes, although not really in the mood for dinner, sensed that today was somehow special.

Beatrice, all smiles, urged Agnes to hurry downstairs where everyone was waiting. Beatnce left, and Agnes, still in her pajamas, hurriedly changed and made her way to the dining room.

As she entered, she was taken aback by who she saw sitting at the table it was Jared. Jared was engaged in a cheerful conversation with Preston, who had a broad smile on his face.

Next to Jared sat Beatrice, who seemed to be deeply involved in the conversation, sweetly addressing him. Agnes felt a pang of surprise and confusion.

Beatrice, noticing Agnes, immediately came over and put her arm affectionately around hers, welcoming her to the table.

Despite Beatnce's smile, Agnes could sense something cunning in her eyes. It became apparent that Beatrice's earlier sweetness and elegant appearance were all for Jared But why was Jared here in the first place?

Agnes felt like she was being dragged to the table by Beatrice.

Preston chided, "Agnes, Jared came over today. Why didn't you let us know earlier?"

Beatrice instantly chimed in, "Jared, Agnes mentioned you were on a business trip in Japan. When did you come back?"

Agnes knew Beatrice would ask something like this.

But she didn't feel guilty, she just looked at Jared

Jared casually replied, "I just got back from Japan, and came straight here from the airport."

Beatrice's expression froze for a moment.

He hadn't really gone on a business trip to Japan, yet he agreed so naturally.

Beatrice said this just to inform Jared that Agnes was lying

But instead of exposing the truth, Jared had gone along with her lie.

Beatrice's fingers clenched tightly

Laura emerged from the kitchen, beaming, "Agnes, you should've told us earlier, I could've cooked more dishes. It was too rushed today, and I could only whip up some basic ones."

Even though she said 'basic', there was a wide variety of dishes on the table.

Agnes casually said, "He's not a head of state or something. Treating him like a VIP isn't that like treating him as family?"

Laura never saw it coming that Agnes would talk back to her.

## Chapter 227

Agnes was usually the quiet one, so her sudden rebuttal took everyone by surprise

Laura awkwardly laughed it off. "Why are you suddenly butting heads with me? Jared is, of course, family"

Preston quickly interjected. "Let's all sit down and have dinner Agnes, please, take a seat

Jared just watched Agnes from the sidelines

He was seated at the night of the host, Preston.

And Beatrice had no qualms about taking the seat on the left.

Preston chided, "Heatrice, don't be so thoughtless. That seat should be for Agnes."

Beatrice retorted. "This has always been my spot. I'm used to sitting here"

Agnes said nothing and took the seat farthest from Jared

She didn't even look at him.

She didn't understand why he had stormed off yesterday and then showed up out of the blue today.

What was he here for?

Laura quickly changed the subject, "Let's enjoy the meal. Jared, I made this salmon especially for you. I chatted with Agnes before, and she mentioned that this is your favorite".

Jared replied indifferently. "Thank you, Ms. Laura."

Laura's expression faltered when she heard him call her Ms Laura

He regarded Preston as his father-in-law, but he still called her Ms Laura.

Just because Agnes refused to call her mom, he followed suit

Agnes just quietly ate her food, unbothered by the drama.

Jared spent the dinner chatting with Preston, discussing stocks, financing, and real estate prices.

Beatrice kept interrupting, but her comments were often ridiculous.

Laura served another dish, roasted lobster.

The crustacean's shell was hard and prickly, making it difficult to peel, but it was Beatrice's favorite dish.

She pricked her finger while peeling the lobster, drawing blood

Beatrice held out her finger to Jared, "Look, I pricked my finger"

Jared replied nonchalantly, "Put a band-aid on it."

Beatrice giggled. "Thanks for your concern."

And then Jared started peeling the lobster

He chatted with Preston while effortlessly peeling the lobster.

Beatrice thought Jared's movements were graceful. His long fingers, his unhurried movements gave off an indescribable relaxed aura. The peeled lobster went into a new plate glistening and translucent, and Jared's fingers remained oil-free.

Beatrice couldn't contain her happiness when she mentioned her pricked finger, and Jared took it upon himself to peel the lobster for her. A sense of anticipation welled up inside her, and the feeling only grew stronger as time passed. After a while, Jared stopped, wiped his hands with a wet napkin, and naturally handed the plate to Beatrice. It was meant for her, and she was overjoyed, eager to reach out and savor the dish

"Thank you Beatrice started to say, but her words were cut short as Jared said nonchalantly. "Give it to Agnes"

In an instant, Beatrice's face turned pale

But Jared gave her a polite smile, "Thank you"

Beatrice managed a strained smile, “Sure”

Saying that, she got up and came the plate over to Agnes.

Despite trying to control herself, she still slammed the plate down in front of Agnes her voice dripping with sarcasm, “Agnes, Jared is so considerate, night? You’re so lucky.”

## Chapter 228

Beatrice was consumed by envy as she watched Jared hand over a plate. In her hopeful excitement, she thought the plate might be for her However, Agnes seemed preoccupied, lost in her thoughts while staring at the shrimp. Jared’s behavior left Agnes wondering about his intentions Was he trying to make amends?

After dinner, Agnes had planned to retreat to her room, but Jared remained on the sofa, engaged in a conversation with Preston Laura approached Agnes and requested her assistance in cutting some fruit, providing her with a task to distract her As Agnes headed to the kitchen, she returned to find Preston had already

left.

Meanwhile, Beatrice was enthusiastically chatting away beside Jared, and they both seemed engrossed in something Curious, Agnes walked over to see what had captured their attention. To her surprise, Beatrice had brought out an old photo album to share with Jared, who appeared genuinely interested

As Agnes rarely took photos, most of the images in the album were from the time when her mom was still alive, and she was just a young girl.

But there were a lot of Beatrice’s photos. She always loved to doll herself up.

Because Laura also loved photography, most of the photos in the album were of Beatrice.

There were only a few photos of Agnes.

Beatrice said excitedly. “Look, this is a photo of me when I was five years old. It’s so cute, right? When I was five, my mom took me to shoot advertisements and I was even on the cover of magazines. This is my middle school graduation photo. At that time, I was the prettiest girl in the whole school. And this...” Beatrice continued talking, but when she finally looked up, she realized that Jared hadn’t been paying any attention to her at all. Instead, he was fully absorbed in examining a picture he held in his hands.

The photograph featured Agnes and her mom when Agnes was just five years old, the edges now tinged with yellow from the passage of time.

The picture had casually slipped out from the album as they were flipping through its pages, capturing Jared’s interest for an extended period. This discovery filled Beatrice with fury.

Had all her efforts to explain herself been in vain? It seemed like she could never manage to capture this man’s attention. Even when they were looking at photos together, his focus was always on Agnes.

Beatrice quickly flipped through the album.

In the end, she found a photo tucked in between pages.

Beatrice pulled out the photo and feigned surprise, “How is this photo still here? I thought Agnes threw out all their photos after she broke up with Elton. I can’t believe there’s still one here.”

Sure enough, Jared’s curiosity was piqued by the name “Agnes”. He glanced at the photo in Beatrice’s hand, and she pretended to be shocked as she spoke, “I really didn’t mean to. Agnes and Elton were together for ten years, and their relationship was very deep. Agnes

is a sentimental person, so it's understandable that she kept a photo of them. Please don't be mad I think Agnes just wanted to hold onto a memento, and there's no other meaning behind it"

Jared's gaze fixated on the photo, capturing the moment when the boy and girl in the picture leaned their heads together, wearing radiant smiles filled with joy and vitality. Agnes, at that time, had a sweet smile resembling a blooming spring flower-bright and dazzling. The boy's eyes were filled with love as they rested on the girl's face in the photograph.

## Chapter 229

Beatrice couldn't contain her excitement as she noticed Jared's face growing more serious. She had luck on her side when, years ago, Agnes was sorting out photos and she managed to secretly keep one for herself.

Originally, she had intended to use it as leverage to threaten Agnes, but she hadn't anticipated its use in this moment

With a tinge of regret and nostalgia in her voice, Beatrice began spinning a tale, "You know, Agnes and Elton were victims of a cruel twist of fate.

If only her friend hadn't stolen Elton away, they might have been married by now. They were incredibly close, Elton used to visit our house frequently, even staying overnight in Agnes's room when he didn't go home. We all thought they were destined to be together, but then..."

As expected. Jared's expression darkened with each passing second. What Beatrice was saying weighed heavily on him, and unbeknownst to her, Agnes was witnessing the whole exchange.

What nonsense was Beatrice spewing?

Sure, Elton Taylor did come over a lot, but even when he stayed the night, he definitely never slept in her room.

Through all these years, from their childish youth to their clueless adolescence, they never crossed any boundaries. Beatrice was just stirring the pot, trying to get Jared's hackles up.

Her relationship with Jared already had a Ryder Whitfield shaped obstacle, and now there was an Elton too. Agnes scoffed in her mind.

Then she walked over, setting the fruit plate on the table.

She took the photo from Beatrice's hand.

Agnes tore the photo into pieces, then threw them into a nearby trash can.

Beatrice was stunned, she even forgot for a second that Jared was right there, yelling but, "Agnes, what the hell are you doing?"

"

It was only after she spoke that she realized Jared was right next to her.

She quickly changed her tone, "What are you doing this for? Jared's not that petty, you don't have to go to such extremes to prove your innocence. Right, Jared?" Beatrice was thrilled seeing this

She knew there must be trouble in paradise between Agnes and Jared.

Because during dinner, Agnes didn't say a word

Jared was poker-faced, showing no signs of emotional change.

But Agnes was a terrible actress, anyone could tell there were issues between the two

If not now, when would she have a better chance to stir things up?

Agnes said coldly, “Beatrice, it’s none of your business to meddle in our affairs. Do you think he’s some kind of fool to fall for your cheap tricks?”

After saying that, she turned to Jared, “I need to talk to you.”

After that, Agnes turned and left.

Beatrice was fuming. She didn’t expect Agnes to be so ruthless in clearing up the misunderstanding.

She quickly explained to Jared, “Jared, I wasn’t trying to stir things up. She’s just being overly suspicious, always thinking the worst.”

Jared, however, didn’t pay Beatrice any mind.

He followed Agnes straight upstairs.

After Agnes entered the room and closed the door, she turned around and asked, “Jared, what are you here for?”

Jared replied, “Didn’t you say you had something to tell me?”

“Jared, I have nothing to say to you, I just don’t want to see Beatrice stirring up trouble”

“Why do you care about that troublemaker?”

Agnes was taken aback

So Jared knew what was going on

Jared said coldly, “You might not have anything to say to me, but I have something to say to you.”

## Chapter 230

Agnes was tight-lipped, seemingly waiting for the words to follow.

However, Jared stayed silent for a long while without uttering a word

Finally, Agnes couldn’t bear it anymore “Spit it out, will you?”

Jared seemed to heave a sigh: “Agnes, can we stop bickering?”

“Bickening? Jared, you think I’m the one bickering? You’re the one accusing me for no reason, you’re the one misunderstanding my relationship with Ryder, and now you’re saying that I’m the one bickering. Jared, do you really think I’m a pushover? I won’t let this slide. I’ve said it before, this isn’t going to be over so easily!” “Ryder likes you!”

Agnes had just delivered a mouthful of angry words.

When Jared bluntly cut her off with a single sentence, Agnes thought she must have heard him wrong.

“What did you say?”

Jared stated clearly: “I said Ryder likes you, as a man likes a woman.”

Agnes found it unbelievable.

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But after a moment of shock, her anger flared up even more. “Not only are you blaming me, now you’re blaming Ryder too? Jared, I’m so disappointed in you. If you’ve come here just to lay more blame on me, then please leave. I don’t want to hear it.”

Jared was angry too. “Agnes, are you deaf or just dumb? You don’t understand a damn thing” “Even if I don’t understand anything, it’s better than you accusing people left and right” Agnes was pissed off to the max.

First, he said that she was the one chasing after Ryder, now he suddenly says Ryder likes her Agnes replied coldly: “Are you happy only when you think you’ve been betrayed?”

I’m not your slave, why should I listen to you? I have my own choices and thoughts

“So, your choice is to oppose me? Your thoughts are to continue flirting with him?”

Suddenly, Jared lunged forward, grabbing Agnes’s hand, pinning her against the wardrobe in the next second.

Jared’s eyes were icy cold, gripping Agnes’s slender wrist tightly: “Till say it again, Ryder likes you. I don’t care what you think, but from today on, you’re not allowed to flirt with him. You don’t need to understand why, just do as I say “

In reality, ever since Jared started thinking this way. Agnes had not seen Ryder at all

The school was big, but she still bumped into him occasionally.

But even when she did, Agnes deliberately avoided him.

She always felt a bit uncomfortable.

But she had never actively flirted with Ryder. She hadn’t in the past and she wouldn’t in the future.

However, the way Jared spoke, with such a strong tone, completely disregarded her feelings.

He had never trusted her.

“Jared, if you’re so sure of yourself, then there’s nothing I can say ”

Agnes stopped talking too.

She turned her head, her chest heaving

She could clearly feel Jared’s grip on her arm getting lighter and lighter.

The pain in her wrist was like a stab to her heart.

Yet Agnes bit her lip, enduring the pain.

Jared was even more furious.

He couldn't understand why Agnes couldn't comprehend what he was saying

Wasn't Ryder's affection for her obvious enough?

She was just a little girl, did she understand a man's heart? Yet she stubbornly believed it was just innocent friendship.

If things continued this way, they would only get worse

One day, Ryder might not be able to pull himself out, and become his rival in love.