

Amazing Son-In-Law Chapter 5701 - 5720

Steve was taken aback by the sight of the elderly man standing before him, his beard unkempt and his hair white as snow.

As soon as the man recognized him as a member of the Rothschild family, Steve couldn't help but ask, "Do you know me?"

Walter's father burst into tears and exclaimed, "Of course I know you! You're the eldest son of Mr. Howard Rothschild, Steve Rothschild.

I... I am your distant relative, Steve Hogwitz, the head of the Hogwitz family. Just lie you, my name is Steve... Please... Please save me and my son!"

After hearing this, Steve was horrified. He looked at the man crying in front of him and the sick man on the hospital bed, tears streaming down his face as he struggled to sit up. Although he had been tasked with finding the father and son, he never imagined that he would locate them on his very first day in Aurous Hill

But what shocked him even more was that this father and son were in the clutches of Charlie, enduring unimaginable torture.

He turned to Charlie with urgency and demanded, "Mr. Wade... What... What in the world is happening here?"

Charlie asked, "What's going on? What do you want to know?"

Steve quickly pleaded, "They're the people I came searching for. They're relatives of the Rothschild family. Why are they here?"

"Oh," Charlie smiled and said, "So, you are relatives. Come on, Jiro, open the door and let their family reunite..."

Jiro responded with enthusiasm, "Okay, Mr. Wade, I'll open the door right now."

He then took out a bunch of keys from his pocket, selected one, and unlocked the iron door.

Upon seeing the door open, Walter's elderly father knelt before Steve almost instinctively.

Tears in his eyes, he pleaded, "Sir! In terms of blood relation, I could be considered your distant cousin. Please, for the sake of family, take me and my son back to the United States. If we are left here, both of us will soon perish."

Steve quickly turned to Charlie and said, "Mr. Wade... Uhm... These two are the individuals I've been tasked to find..."

Charlie shrugged, his tone indifferent, "Congratulations, you've found them. With this visit to Aurous Hill, you can consider your mission accomplished and your duties fulfilled. Tonight, at Heaven Springs, let Don Albert prepare another feast. We'll celebrate your success..."

Steve immediately implored, "Mr. Wade, these individuals are relatives of the Rothschild family. My mission was to locate them and bring them back. I sincerely hope you can show magnanimity and allow them to leave with me..."

Charlie sneered and retorted, "Steve, you haven't even grasped why they're locked up here, yet you dare to boldly ask me to set them free. Do you think I won't have the audacity to refuse?"

Steve, sensing Charlie's anger, hurriedly clarified, "Mr. Wade, I truly didn't mean it that way. I was simply desperate to save them and didn't fully comprehend the situation. I don't know what mistakes they've made to end up locked up here."

Charlie glanced at Steve Hogwitz, then pointed at Steve Rothschild, his voice icy, "Go on, both of you share your stories. Tell this Steve what you and your son have done."

He warned sternly, “You better spill everything, or I'll make you eat dog food for a month...”

Steve Hogwitz promptly began, “Sir... This is what happened... My son was led astray...”

He proceeded to recount how Walter became entangled with Doris Young and the Emgrand Group, how he poisoned Doris Young's father, and how he coerced her into submission by threatening her with a stolen kidney.

Conscious of Charlie's presence, he dared not conceal a single detail.

Once he finished speaking, Charlie sneered, “You truly are a despicable scumbag... Your account clearly exposes your son's vile actions. This well-planned series of events proves his intentional scheming. You initially dismissed it as a momentary lapse, but was it truly just a moment? It lasted at least a month, didn't it?”

Fear coursed through Steve Hogwitz, and he hastily corrected himself, “Mr. Wade, you're right. I chose my words poorly. My son is indeed a scum. He orchestrated all of this...”

He pleaded, “Mr. Wade, please rest assured, we're willing to apologize to Ms. Young and her family and provide them with financial compensation. We just hope you can give us a chance, and we'll do everything in our power to earn their forgiveness...”

Charlie mocked, “It seems you people have a knack for eloquent speech. Every word that spills from your mouths sounds noble and righteous. According to your earlier statements, are you suggesting that this matter is solely between you, Doris Young, and her family, and has nothing to do with me? As long as you can secure forgiveness from Doris Young and her family, we can consider the matter closed?”

While Steve Hogwitz did entertain that notion, he couldn't possibly admit it in public.

With a helpless expression, he clarified, “Mr. Wade, you've misunderstood me. I didn't mean to imply that it has nothing to do with you. I simply hope for an opportunity to apologize to Ms. Young and her father and make amends through practical actions...”

Charlie turned his gaze to Steve Rothschild beside him and calmly remarked, “You see, can you blame me for being tough on them? It's remarkable how you all share the same shameless way of speaking. Look at his tone, doesn't it resemble yours?”

Steve Rothschild had already sunk into despair upon hearing the whole story.

Seeing Walter's father attempting to manipulate the situation, he knew it was futile to attempt to take them away. Though he hadn't interacted with Charlie extensively, he was well aware of Charlie's *modus operandi*. If you dared to provoke him, he wouldn't let you off the hook, let alone provoke him.

Walter's audacity to harm Charlie's people was shocking, especially given Charlie's reputation. It seemed miraculous that Walter had not been executed for his actions.

As he pondered this, Steve Hogwitz knelt before him, tears streaming down his face as he pleaded, “Sir! Please, I beg of you, sir! My son and I suffer unending torture here. Please, for the sake of our familial bond, rescue us by any means necessary! My son did... But such mistakes warrant police involvement, not life in darkness with damaged kidneys...”

Steve Rothschild, observing the desperate man before him, seethed internally. “Damn it, your son committed such vile acts, and you dare beg me for rescue?”

He thought, “How could I possibly save him? Even asking Charlie for leniency probably made me less favorable in his eyes.”

At that moment, Walter, lying on the hospital bed, struggled to climb out. He then slowly crawled towards the door, resembling a gravely ill animal, while crying and begging, “Sir... Please... Please save us... Please...” Witnessing Steve's hesitation, Walter's father, unyielding, clung to his leg and cried, “Steve, please, I implore you! We are family! Blood is thicker than water! Our lives rest in your hands!”

At this scene, Steve Rothschild's patience snapped.

Overwhelmed by frustration, he struck Walter's father across the face, shouting, “You despicable wretch, how dare you claim kinship with me?!”

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Walter's father stood in stunned silence, his face contorted with shock and disbelief at the force of Steve's slap.

His trembling hand instinctively reached up to cover his reddening cheek as he gazed at Steve, his eyes filled with a mix of sorrow and confusion. He couldn't help but sob, his voice choked with emotion, “But... But I'm older than you... was the first one to be called Steve...”

Steve's anger only intensified at his words. He slapped Walter's father again, his voice dripping with venom as he cursed, “Why didn't your damn father change your name when he found out I was also called Steve?! How dare you challenge me?!”

Walter's father's face swelled up on both sides, a physical manifestation of his deep anguish. Tears streamed down his face as he

pleaded, “Sir, please, now is not the time to blame me for sharing the same name as you... We need to find a way to save ourselves!”

“Save you?” Steve scoffed, his anger unabated as he pointed an accusing finger.

“Your damn son has committed a heinous crime, and you have the audacity to ask for salvation? | would rather take matters into my own hands and give Mr. Wade an explanation!”

Steve's words carried a chilling weight. He was dead serious. To him, his mission in this foreign land was a matter of completion or failure.

If he found a living person and successfully brought them back, his mission would be deemed complete.

If he found a lifeless body and returned with it, his mission would still be considered accomplished. However, if he found a living person but failed to bring them back, his mission would be deemed a failure. And he knew all too well that Charlie would never allow him to bring Walter and his father back alive. So, if he wanted to fulfill his mission, the most logical solution was to kill them both and bring their lifeless bodies back to the United States.

Once they were dead. Charlie would not have a reason to keep their bodies. Therefore, if Charlie agreed. Steve would already take it upon himself to eliminate these two wretches. This way, he would complete his mission without offending Charlie.

With this resolve in mind, Steve turned to Charlie and earnestly proposed, “Mr. Wade! These father and son are wicked beyond redemption. Why don't you hand them over to me? I'll have my men dispose of them once and for all!”

Walter and his father were overcome with shock and terror. They had hoped that Steve would come to their aid, but they never expected him to harbor such murderous intentions.

In that moment, Charlie looked at Steve with a sly smile, his eyes glinting with a hint of mischief. He posed a question, his tone filled with curiosity, "Are you truly serious? They are your relatives, after all. As they say, blood is thicker than water. Moreover, back in Heaven Springs, you mentioned that anyone who dared to cross the Rothschild family should pay with their lives. How can you now turn around and harm your own kin?"

Steve clenched his jaw, his eyes burning with determination as he gritted his teeth, "Mr. Wade, the Rothschild family is not one to be trifled with. When I made that statement about paying with their lives, it was under the assumption that the members of the Rothschild family had committed no wrongs. But if they were to err... Be it these two mongrels from a collateral branch or even direct blood relatives, I would not hesitate to eliminate them!"

Walter's father, consumed by anger, lashed out, "Steve, you bastard! We had hoped for your assistance, but instead, you desire to kill us! Is there no shred of humanity left in you?!"

Steve, driven by fury, kicked Walter's father forcefully, his words dripping with venom, "Count yourself lucky that we are in China and not the United States! Otherwise, I would have shot you dead! And your bastard son!" "With that, Steve turned to Charlie and pleaded, "Mr. Wade, please give me the chance! Give me a gun, and I will put an end to these two scumbag right here, right now!"

Walter, still kneeling on the ground, begged desperately, his voice filled with desperation, "Mr. Wade, spare our lives, please!"

Walter's father crawled towards Charlie, his body trembling, tears streaming down his face as he pleaded, "Mr. Wade, do not be swayed by Steve's madness. Find a way to save us, even if it means keeping us imprisoned here!"

Charlie chuckled for a moment before addressing Steve, “If you're set on eliminating them both, I won't stand in your way. However, taking their bodies back to the United States is out of the question.”

“Why not?” Steve retorted hastily. “Let me deal with the bodies. I'll handle the transportation back to the United States. You won't need to worry about a thing.”

Shaking his head in dismay, Charlie responded, “Think logically, Steve. They've been missing for quite some time. If you kill them now and try to transport the bodies, what if their families demand a forensic examination to determine the cause of death? If it's discovered they died just days ago, coinciding with your arrival in Aurous Hill, your father will surely question you. How will you explain that to him?”

Steve began to realize the complexity of the situation.

“Mr. Wade, then what's the best course of action for eliminating them?” he inquired.

Walter's father collapsed, his voice choked with tears and anger. “Steve, what madness has possessed you? We never wronged you, yet you're plotting our deaths! What twisted plan are you hatching?” Steve found himself speechless, unable to reveal the truth.

But as he avoided their gaze in silence, Charlie interjected, “He's here in Aurous Hill on a mission from his family, tasked with bringing you back, dead or alive. If you remain alive, how could he fulfill his duty?”

“Damn you!” Walter's father spat at Steve, his eyes blazing. “Are you even human, Steve? To contemplate killing us, a father and son, merely to fulfill a family obligation?”

With Charlie exposing his intentions, Steve dropped the facade.

“Your son attempted murder for his own selfish gain,” he snapped back. “How dare you accuse me? If not for your despicable actions, why would we be in this situation? You're the beasts here, yet you have the audacity to point fingers!”

Turning to Charlie, Steve suggested, “Mr. Wade, I'm done with this mission. Dispose of these two monsters. Chop them up and feed them to the dogs outside. I'll stay in Aurous Hill a few more days, then return home. If anyone asks, I couldn't find them, alive or dead. Let whoever comes after me.”

Shocked by Steve's ruthless proposal, the father and son realized they faced a grim fate. Death seemed preferable to such a merciless end.

Kneeling before Charlie, they begged for mercy, tears streaming down their faces.

Charlie interjected with a smile, “If I kill them now, all the resources invested would go to waste. Their incarceration and medical expenses are substantial.”

Without hesitation, Steve offered, “I'll cover the costs, Mr. Wade! Whatever it takes, ten times, a hundred times, even a hundred million dollars!”

Trembling, Walter's father implored, “Mr. Wade, grant me a chance to contact my wife. I'll arrange for a billion dollars. Spare our lives, but leave us with dignity!”

Enraged, Steve lunged forward, aiming a kick at Walter's father.

“You're shameless, trying to bargain now?” he spat.

Intervening, Charlie advised, “Don't act rashly. A billion dollars is a considerable sum. If he offers a hundred million and he offers a billion, I'd stand to gain an additional 1.1 billion.”

Hearing this, Steve paused, taken aback.

“Mr. Wade, why do you need their money? Wouldn't it expose you?” he queried. Smirking, Charlie explained, “It's simple. I make your task impossible while still profiting. Understand?”

Intrigued, Steve pressed, “How?”

Charlie explained, “Here's the plan... I've arranged for them to be placed on a freighter bound for the Middle East. Once the ship reaches the Arabian Sea after passing Sri Lanka, I'll instruct them to record a video on the freighter, showcasing the vast sea as the backdrop. They'll then contact their families, demanding one billion US dollars in crypto...”

“Upon receiving the ransom, I'll spare their lives. However, they'll remain under my watch, never to be released. Once the video goes public, it'll be clear they're at sea, not in Aurous Hill. You'll be free to return home, and no one will question the mission's outcome.”

Eagerly, Steve exclaimed, “That's brilliant, Mr. Wade! Let's proceed!”

Walter and his son breathed a sigh of relief, albeit temporary.

Despite the grim reality, they found solace in the slim chance of survival offered by Charlie's scheme. The price of a billion dollars seemed trivial compared to their lives.

Anxiously, Walter's father inquired, “Mr. Wade, will you truly send us to the Middle East?”

Charlie smiled wryly, “You have a hopeful imagination. You'll make a detour to the Middle East, then return here. No one will suspect your return to Aurous Hill. It'll be your new home for the foreseeable future.” Their hearts sank at the realization, resigned to their fate.

Steve breathed a sigh of relief, acknowledging, “Mr. Wade, you're truly remarkable!”

For Steve, Charlie's plan offered a clean exit strategy. With their apparent relocation at sea, the mission's failure would be attributed to circumstances beyond Steve's control.

Relieved, he posed a final concern, “Do you think their family will attempt to trace their location and search surrounding freighters?”

Charlie chuckled, dismissing the notion. “Impossible. Finding them at sea is like finding a single piece of meat in a hot pot. Besides, my ships are heavily guarded by the Dragon Temple. Any attempt to board would be futile.”

Chapter 5703

Steve had long been aware of Charlie's true identity and had thoroughly investigated his background.

He knew that Charlie was already the head of the Wade Family and that the Evans Family would fully support him. Despite the outside world believing that the Wade Family had been taken over by the Dragon Temple, Steve had witnessed Charlie's cunning.

He had manipulated the top figures of the Rothschild Family, so how could he possibly bow down to the Dragon Temple?

Therefore, he concluded that the Dragon Temple was undoubtedly Charlie's puppet

Considering the combined power of the Wade Family, the Evans Family, and the influence Charlie had cultivated, he even had the strength to challenge the entire Rothschild Family. Not to mention that he possessed the Life-Saving Pill and had control over the old man's life. If he were to go up against the Rothschild Family, his chances of victory would be even greater.

With such immense power, it was impossible for the Hogwitz Family to be discovered while traveling the Arabian Sea.

Just as Charlie said, finding two troublemakers in the vast sea was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

With this in mind, he immediately said to Charlie, “Mr. Wade, your plan is truly remarkable and it benefits us in many ways! | see no problems with it!”

Charlie smiled and replied, “Even if there are problems, it doesn't matter. It's just the Hogwitz Family, right? If everything goes smoothly, I'll demand one billion dollars from them. If any issues arise, I'll ask for ten billion.”

The father and son trembled, unable to utter a word.

In contrast, Steve straightforwardly declared, “If the Hogwitz Family doesn't know what's good for them, you mustn't hesitate to deal with them. Once I become the head of the family, if they still exist, | will personally erase them from American society!”

The father and son's hearts sank as they realized that their so-called strong support, the second-in-command of their own master, was groveling before Charlie and even planned to kill them himself.

How could they rely on him?

It seemed that the Hogwitz Family was nothing more than a lone fight for Charlie.

A family with a total asset of only a hundred billion dollars, what could they use to oppose him?

If they provoked Charlie, they would end up bankrupt. It would be too late to regret.

Therefore, Walter's father quickly said, “Mr. Wade, rest assured, if you give me the chance to make a video, | will ensure my family cooperates and gives you the money. They won't cause any trouble!”

Charlie nodded slightly, satisfied. Steve also breathed a sigh of relief.

One billion dollars meant nothing to him. He could consider it as a tribute to Charlie. Furthermore, this matter could be resolved relatively satisfactorily, so the cost-effectiveness of one billion dollars was very high.

Thinking of this, he quickly asked Charlie, “Mr. Wade, how would you like to receive the one billion dollars? Would you prefer a direct bank transfer or converting it into virtual cryptocurrency?”

Charlie replied, “It's not a large sum of money, so let's convert it all into cryptocurrency. it might come in handy in the future.”

Steve exclaimed, "Alright, Mr. Wade! | will arrange that!”

Charlie nodded and turned to Walter and his father. He said coldly, “I will arrange for the two of you to board the ship as soon as possible.

But remember, if anyone tries to play tricks, | will have them chopped up and thrown into the sea to feed the fish. Understood?”

Both of them nodded without hesitation, saying, "We understand, we understand!”

Charlie then asked, "Are you satisfied with my solution?"

The father and son dared not voice any dissatisfaction and nodded repeatedly, saying, “We are satisfied, very satisfied!”

“As long as you're satisfied.” Charlie nodded slightly, then turned to Jiro and said, “Jiro, I'll give you a chance to prove yourself.”

Jiro was excited and said, "Mr. Wade, please give me your orders! | will do my best to serve you!"

Charlie smiled and said, "After the ship is ready, you will go on board with them. Your only task is to closely monitor them and ensure they don't make any sudden moves. Once the mission is accomplished, you will be a free man in the dog farm. You will receive a basic monthly salary and can have whatever you want as long as it's not prohibited."

Jiro trembled with excitement upon hearing this.

Although his current treatment was not bad, he was still only partially free. He couldn't freely leave the premises. But if he became completely free, he could enjoy the sunshine and have a salary. With a salary, he could afford things that were previously beyond his reach. This was a significant improvement in his current situation.

Thinking of going from hardship to comfort, Jiro couldn't help but burst into tears. He looked at Charlie and choked up, "Mr. Wade, I will never forget your kindness!"

Charlie nodded and smiled, "Do well, and your days will only get easier here."

Saying that, Charlie spoke sternly, "But remember, | can give you a certain degree of freedom, but you must have clear boundaries in your mind. If you exceed the limits I set, | will not spare you. Understand?"

Jiro naturally understood the meaning behind Charlie's words. But now, even if he had the opportunity to escape, he wouldn't take it.

On one hand, he couldn't escape Charlie's pursuit. On the other hand, where could he go if he escaped?

Sneak back into Japan?

Not to mention whether he could return, even if he could, his own brother, Ichiro Kobayashi, would never let him go. So his best option was to stay here.

Therefore, he humbly said to Charlie, “Mr. Wade, rest assured, | will never exceed the boundaries you set!”

Charlie was satisfied with his attitude and then turned to Don Albert and said, “Don Albert, make arrangements for the ship in the China. Sea as soon as possible. Find a cargo ship heading to the Middle East and send them on board. Also, inform Wesley to have some the Dragon Temple soldiers ready. They should be fully armed and escort them throughout the journey.”

Charlie then looked at Steve Rothschild and smiled, “Mr. Rothschild, we've seen enough. It's time for us to go back. | don't know which hotel you'll be staying at tonight?”

Steve hurriedly answered, “Mr. Wade, I'll be staying at the Aurous Hill Intercontinental for the next few days. The Intercontinental Group has shares owned by our Rothschild family, so it's like our own property.”

“Good...” Charlie nodded and smiled, “It will take at least ten days for them to sail to the Middle East, and it will take at least ten more days to release the information through video. During this time, it might be hard for you to act as if you're in Aurous Hill.”

Steve respectfully said, “During this time, | wonder if Mr. Wade has any availability. | also want to take the opportunity to learn from you.”

Charlie smiled and said, "We're all good friends, so you don't have to be so formal. In a few days, Mr. Peter Cole will come to Aurous Hill. Let's get together then. He is very grateful to you for what happened in New York.” Upon hearing this, Steve's expression became somewhat unnatural. He dared to contact Charlie because he knew that his father was unaware of Charlie's existence and had no knowledge of the connection between Charlie and the Four Treasures of the Study.

However, when he heard that Peter Cole was coming to Aurous Hill, he immediately felt a sense of distance. After all, this person was the mastermind behind the theft of the treasure from the Rothschild family. If he had any relationship with him, his father would definitely kill him.

Charlie also noticed his concern and said with a smile, “Steve, you don't have to worry. Uncle Cole is coming to Aurous Hill with a completely new identity. After he arrives, he will start fresh in Aurous Hil, and your father won't be able to trace him.”

Then, Charlie continued, “By the way. | suggest you also assume a more ordinary false identity, immerse yourself in the local life in Aurous Hill, explore the city. You might even fall in love with It. When the time comes, the Rothschild family is welcome to come to Aurous Hill for investment!”

Steve quickly agreed and said, “Okay, Mr. Wade! I'll follow your advice!”

Chapter 5704

‘When Steve returned to the opulent Heaven Springs, his spirits were considerably lifted compared to when he first arrived.

During the journey, he was plagued by anxiety and uncertainty about the schemes Charlie had in store for him. But now, everything became clear.

The father and son from the Hogwitz family were no longer his concern. All he had to do was wait for the release of the video showcasing their time at sea, and then he could finally go back home.

Charlie could also sense the improvement in Steve's mood, so he smiled and asked, “Steve, | assume you must be thrilled now that the most crucial matter has been resolved as soon as you arrived in Aurous Hill right?”

Steve chuckled and replied, “Honestly, | was quite worried before | came here. | feared that | wouldn't find any evidence and would have to return empty-handed. People would definitely mock me behind my back. But now, once you release the video, no one can blame me for not doing my job. It's their own fault for dragging their feet for so long. After all, it's been a significant amount of time, and it's their responsibility that the people were relocated to the Middle East.”

Then, Steve expressed his concern, “I just hope my father won't send me to the Middle East again...”

Charlie smiled and reassured him, “I highly doubt your father will send you to the Middle East once more. It's a chaotic place right now, and once you step foot there, it's like vanishing into thin air. Let alone finding the people you're searching for, ensuring your own safety would be a daunting task. | believe this matter will remain unresolved.”

Steve nodded and gratefully said, “Thank you for your comforting words, Mr. Wade!”

Upon their return to Heaven Springs, Steve's subordinates failed to notice anything out of the ordinary. Since he would be staying in Aurous Hil for another ten days, Charlie advised him to rest at the hotel for the time being.

After bidding farewell to Charlie, Steve left Heaven Springs.

The security personnel of the convoy breathed a collective sigh of relief and promptly drove him to the hotel where he would be staying.

Once Steve left, Charlie instructed Don Albert, “Inform Zachary to relay the message to the local gang in Aurous Hill to keep a close eye on these Americans and report to me if any unusual circumstances arise.”

“No problem, Master Wade!” Don Albert promptly agreed.

Glancing at the clock, Charlie noted that it was just a little past three in the afternoon. He decided to pay a visit to the villa situated on the picturesque hillside and see if Nanako Ito had made any progress in harnessing her inner strength. He was about to inform Don Albert and Isaac Cameron when he received a call from Zoey's father John Riley.

Charlie answered the call and politely greeted him, "Hello, Uncle Riley."

Mr. Riley chuckled and inquired, "Charlie, I heard from your father-in-law that you're back in Aurous Hill?"

"Yes." Charlie smiled and replied, "I just returned. Is there something you need to discuss with me?"

Mr. Riley chuckled shyly before speaking, "I do have something I want to discuss with you in person, but I understand you're usually quite busy. I was wondering if you might have some time?"

Charlie replied without hesitation, "Of course. Whenever it suits you, just give me your address, and I'll come over."

Charlie had always held Mr. Riley in high regard. It wasn't just because of his good character and considerable talents, but also because he and Charlie's mother were classmates and long-time friends.

Mr. Riley hurriedly responded, "I've just finished at the University for the Elderly. It's the weekend, so there are no classes. Why don't you give me your address, and I'll come to you?"

Charlie pondered the timing. It was already past three in the afternoon, and Mr. Riley must have had lunch. With a few hours until dinner, it wasn't ideal for them to meet at Heaven Springs. Plus, considering Mr. Riley had spent many years in the United States, he probably had a habit of afternoon coffee.

So, Charlie suggested, “Alright, Uncle Riley, there's a Starbucks not far south of the University for the Elderly. How about we meet there for a coffee?”

“Perfect!” Mr. Riley exclaimed with a smile. “I was just thinking of getting a coffee before meeting you. Let's rendezvous at the coffee shop. What would you like? I'll order it in advance.”

Charlie smiled, “An iced Americano, please. You go ahead; I'll join you shortly.”

“Alright, see you soon!”

Although Charlie wasn't sure why Mr. Riley wanted to meet him, he felt it mustn't be too serious since he'd requested a meeting. So, he didn't probe further over the phone, feeling reassured.

After informing Don Albert and Isaac Cameron, Charlie headed to Starbucks to meet Mr. Riley.

Upon arrival, more than twenty minutes later, Charlie spotted Mr. Riley already seated by the window.

As Charlie entered, Mr. Riley stood up, adjusting his suit and waving shyly. “Charlie, over here!”

Charlie smiled and approached, taking his seat as offered. Mr. Riley promptly pushed the ordered coffee towards Charlie.

Taking a sip, Charlie queried curiously, “Uncle Riley, what's the reason for this sudden meeting?”

Mr. Riley hesitated momentarily, his expression uncertain, before finally speaking, “Well... | should've brought this up long ago, but you've been in the United States recently, haven't you? | wasn't sure when you'd be back, so | didn't discuss it openly yet...”

He paused for a moment, gathering his courage, and continued, “The thing is, Charlie, Matilda and | are planning to get married.”

Initially taken aback by the news, Charlie quickly expressed his joy, “Congratulations, Uncle Mr. Riley! Matilda is an exceptional partner, a rare gem among people of the same age. You've truly struck gold!”

Curious, he inquired, “When did you and Matilda decide to get married?” Mr. Riley smiled somewhat bashfully and explained, “You know we went to South Korea for a cultural exchange organized by the city. | publicly professed my love for Matilda, and she accepted. After spending some time together, we realized that we were well-suited for each other. Plus, we're not getting any younger, and we don't want to delay such an important decision. So we decided to take the next step and start a small family.”

He continued, “Last month, | took Matilda on vacation for a few days. | had already bought a ring and proposed to her by the seaside. She said yes, and after discussing it with our children, both Zoey and Paul supported us. They're both exceptional individuals and don't require our constant worry. They're urging us to get married as soon as possible. | wanted to wait for you to return and inquire about your availability. We would be honored if you could officiate our wedding.”

“Invite me to be the Officiant?” Charlie instinctively asked, “Uncle Mr. Riley, 'm your and Matilda's junior. Is it appropriate for me to be the Officiant?”

Mr. Riley replied earnestly, “Both Matilda and | have lost our parents, and we don't have any close elder relatives, especially after living overseas for so many years. After | returned to Aurous Hill, | realized that both my school and Matilda's university are filled with people who are only interested in personal gain and lack true culture. If we were to ask any of them to be the Officiant, it would be beneath us.”

He continued, looking at Charlie, and said, “But we both hold you in high regard. Both Zoey and Paul wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for you risking your life to save Zoey in Syria. After discussing it, we believe you are the most suitable person to officiate our wedding. We hope you won't decline.”

Since Mr. Riley spoke with such sincerity, Charlie naturally had no objections and readily agreed, “No problem, Professor Riley. I'm honored that you and Matilda have chosen me for this role. | accept being the Officiant.”

Mr. Riley's excitement was palpable as Charlie agreed. He quickly expressed his gratitude, saying, “Thank you so much, Charlie! Considering your past travels abroad, | felt hesitant to bother you, hence the delay in setting a wedding date. Do you think you'll be staying in Aurous Hil for a while? If so, I'll promptly arrange the wedding date and secure a venue.”

Charlie interjected, "No need to worry about the venue. The sky garden at Shangri-La is at your disposal anytime for you and Matilda. Just give me the wedding date, and I'll handle the rest.”

Upon hearing this, Mr. Riley clasped Charlie's hands earnestly, saying, “Charlie, | ask for nothing more. It's all deeply appreciated.”

Charlie smiled warmly, replying, “You can count on me anytime.”

Mr. Riley continued, “Regarding the wedding date, my personal inclination is the sooner, the better. Neither Matilda nor | are getting any younger, and you're well aware of the differing societal norms between China and abroad. Lingering without marriage might invite unnecessary gossip. | wish to resolve this matter swiftly, both as a sincere gesture to Matilda and to uphold our dignity... I've consulted the almanac, and next Saturday seems auspicious. I'll discuss it with Matilda, and if she agrees, we'll proceed with determination.”

Charlie admired Mr. Riley's sense of responsibility and decisive approach.

Conversely, his own father-in-law, Jacob, clearly adored Matilda, yet hesitated to sever ties with Elaine, leading to the entanglement between Matilda and Mr. Riley.

Reflecting on Jacob, Charlie inquired cautiously, "By the way, Uncle Riley, your marriage to Matilda hasn't been made public yet, has it?"

"No," Mr. Riley admitted candidly. "I wished to await your return and discuss it with you first. If you're in agreement, we'll finalize the wedding date and venue, then send out invitations. If Matilda is open to next Saturday, I'll swiftly compile the guest list and draft the invitations tonight."

Charlie nodded slightly, unsure whether he and Matilda would send an invitation to his father-in-law, Jacob. However, since Matilda worked at the same senior university as Jacob, it would be impossible to keep their marriage a secret from him.

As he pondered about his father-in-law, Charlie couldn't help but worry.

If Jacob were to find out about this, he might have a breakdown, wouldn't he?

Chapter 5705

Charlie's worries were not unfounded. He had long known that his father-in-law still harbored feelings for Matilda, despite her being with Mr. Riley.

When Charlie returned from his exchange program in South Korea, he was devastated like never before. The bankruptcy of the Wilson family didn't even register in his mind.

If there was still a chance to salvage a relationship when your loved one was dating someone else, getting married to someone else was like signing a death warrant.

Moreover, with Matilda and Mr. Riley's impressive backgrounds, their age and experience, if they decided to marry at this stage in their lives, it meant they were planning for a long-term future together. So, Jacob had even less of a chance.

At this moment, Jacob remained oblivious to this grim reality. He was busy teaching a calligraphy and painting training course at the senior university. They called it a training course, but in reality, all he did was create a few PowerPoint slides, showcasing classical calligraphy and painting works from various eras and explaining their historical background to the students.

In truth, this kind of thing didn't require any technical skills. Jacob was typically averse to trouble, so he simply copied and pasted text from an encyclopedia into the slides. He stood on stage, reading the content from the encyclopedia, knowing that it lacked substance. However, since he held the position of second-in-command in the Calligraphy and Painting Association, he had to save face.

Despite the lack of substance, Jacob remained enthusiastic.

Lately, he had been going to the senior university more frequently than to the Calligraphy and Painting Association.

‘The main reason for his frequent visits was that Matilda taught classes there, allowing him more opportunities to interact with her.

However, in the past few days, Jacob had grown increasingly disheartened.

He couldn't comprehend why Matilda, who had clearly still loved him when she returned from the United States, had quickly moved on with someone else. And ever since Matilda got together with Mr. Riley, her eyes no longer held the same spark they once did when she

looked at him.

Jacob could tell that Matilda's gaze towards him now held no distinction from how she looked at other men her age. On the contrary, every time she looked at Mr. Riley, a different light gleamed in her eyes.

This afternoon, as Jacob drove his Cullinan to the senior university, he happened to spot Mr. Riley driving a domestically made new energy vehicle to pick up Matilda.

Jacob had done some research on that car and knew it was only worth around a hundred or two hundred thousand. Compared to the Cullinan, it was nothing special.

So, when Mr. Riley parked his car and Matilda stepped out, Jacob parked his car on the right side of Mr. Riley's car, the side from which Matilda would exit. He even lowered the car window and greeted the two from a higher position.

He had anticipated that Mr. Riley would feel somewhat inferior upon seeing him driving a Cullinan, but he hadn't expected Mr. Riley to be completely unfazed by the car. Instead, Mr. Riley asked if Charlie had returned yet.

Upon hearing that Charlie had indeed returned, both Mr. Riley and Matilda appeared elated. Jacob couldn't comprehend why the two of them were so overjoyed. While delivering his PowerPoint presentation, Jacob occasionally glanced down at Matilda in the audience.

Previously, Matilda had been attentively listening, but now she was engrossed in her phone, an expression of girlish shyness and happiness on her face.

Jacob grew suspicious and pondered to himself as he continued his presentation, "What did Matilda discuss with that guy? She seems so happy..."

At that moment, Matilda received a message from John Riley.

In the message, he informed her about the outcome of his conversation with Charlie and expressed his desire to expedite the wedding.

Matilda was deeply moved by her beloved's eagerness to marry her and provide her with a title and a family.

She had completely fallen for John and believed he was the perfect match for her. They shared similar backgrounds, education, values, and even living habits. She couldn't find a single flaw in him and felt as though fate had tailored him perfectly for her.

The greatest disparity between men and women is that even when a man decides to move forward, he is often still bound by the past.

However, most women, once they decide to move forward, no longer hold any attachment to the past.

Matilda was one such woman. Though she had ruminated over Jacob for all these years, once her heart was captured by John, she no longer harbored any love for Jacob.

But Jacob remained clueless. He still naively believed that Matilda must have lingering feelings for him and that her decision to be with Mr. Riley was likely due to his failure to provide an explanation.

He saw himself as the male protagonist in a Korean drama, with Matilda as the female lead. No matter how many twists and turns they encountered, he believed she must still love him and had to love him.

This blind confidence was a common trait among many men, perhaps due to an overdose of unrealistic Hong Kong and Hollywood romance movies, where they always believed that even if they were ordinary, they must be someone's true love, and someone would forsake all else to be with them. And because of this, he had recently entertained the idea of trying to win back Matilda.

But winning her back didn't mean being together with her, rather, it meant attempting to make Matilda give up on Mr. Riley and continue to love him by exuding his masculine charm. As for whether he should divorce Elaine, that was a separate matter.

Jacob finally concluded his lackluster PowerPoint presentation. The retired seniors in the room gradually roused from their drowsiness and began to pack up.

Some had to proceed to other classrooms for different courses, while others completed their arrangements for the day and prepared to go home to purchase groceries and cook.

Matilda had just made plans with John on WeChat to return home and work on the guest list for the wedding. After John finished meeting with Charlie, he drove back to the senior university to pick her up. Consequently, she gathered her belongings and prepared to leave. Jacob observed her swiftly packing up and exiting the classroom through the rear door.

He hurriedly caught up with her from behind and called out, "Matilda!"

Matilda turned around, gazed at Jacob, and smiled. "Jacob, what's up?" Jacob hesitated for a moment before awkwardly saying, "Well, | just wanted to ask if you're free tonight. | want to treat you to a meal."

He resorted to playing the nostalgia card, saying, "Let's go to the old alley near our school and eat at a food stall. You remember, we used to go there all the time. Although it's not the same as before, the food stalls in that area have maintained their authentic taste throughout the years."

If Matilda still harbored love for Jacob, this nostalgic gesture would surely have a profound impact. However, at this moment, Matilda had

already decided to move forward, so Jacob's words held no emotional sway over her.

She smiled apologetically and said, "I'm sorry, Jacob. John is waiting for me downstairs, and we have some matters to discuss. Today won't work, but we can schedule another day. My treat..."

Jacob hadn't anticipated his nostalgic gesture to fall flat.

His original plan was to use nostalgia to entice Matilda to join him for a meal near their school, allowing him the opportunity to revisit their old memories and make a subtle move. After all, revisiting old memories was the most effective way to rekindle past emotions, without a doubt.

But he never expected Matilda to remain unfazed. There was no shyness, no embarrassment, no nervousness, and certainly no excited panic like a startled deer. She simply declined his invitation as she would decline any ordinary friend, politely and directly.

Upon hearing that Mr. Riley was waiting for Matilda, Jacob grew even more disheartened. The fact that Matilda referred to Mr. Riley as "John" in his presence only intensified his discomfort.

Thus, he could only resort to the "retreat is the advance" strategy from The Thirty-Six Strategies of a Scum Man and self-deprecatingly said, "Ah, it seems John is indeed a good man. Since you've been with him, you don't even have time for old classmates."

Matilda, unlike Jacob, was naturally straightforward and fearless, devoid of the subtlety often found in Eastern cultures. She spoke and acted exactly as she pleased, without concealing anything. Therefore, when she sensed that Jacob seemed to blame her for rejecting his invitation, she honestly replied, "I'm truly sorry, Jacob. John

and | plan to have the wedding soon. He wants me to go back with him to finalize the guest list. Once we finalize it, we need to start writing the invitations. So, | really ca n't make it today. We'll definitely schedule another day!”

After speaking, she swiftly turned and descended the stairs, leaving Jacob standing there in a state of utter despair.

At that moment, after hearing the word “wedding”, Jacob's mind went blank. He stood motionless, wearing a vacant expression. He watched her leave, dumfounded, unable to believe that this woman who had loved him for thirty years was actually getting married to someone else!

Just then, a student passed by him and curiously asked, “Vice President Wilson, what are you doing standing here?”

After a brief moment of surprise, the student exclaimed in shock, “Vice President Wilson, why... Why are you crying? Are you okay?!”

Chapter 5706

‘When Jacob regained consciousness, tears were already streaming down his face.

The student sitting across from him, concerned for his well-being, asked, “Vice President Wilson, are you feeling unwell? Should | call your family to come pick you up?”

In Jacob's mind, the sharp and sarcastic face of Elaine appeared, filling him with fear. He quickly wiped away his tears and stammered, “N-No... No need... I... | just got something In my eye...”

The person clearly didn't believe his feeble excuse and persisted with concern, “Vice President Wilson, why don't I call your family or

arrange for a driver to take you home?”

“No, no need.” Jacob hastily waved his hand and said, “I’ll call my son-in-law to come pick me up. He just returned to Aurous Hill, so he shouldn’t be busy.”

With that, he swiftly took out his phone and dialed Charlie’s number.

Just a few minutes ago, Charlie had left the café, preparing to see off Mr. Riley.

Observing Mr. Riley heading towards a domestically produced new energy vehicle, Charlie asked with confusion, “Uncle Riley, wasn’t the car you were driving before a different model?”

“I just bought this car.” Mr. Riley smiled and explained, “I recently gave a lecture on finance, carbon neutrality, new energy, and the supply chain at the university. I conducted a study on the topic of overtaking in the curve of domestically produced new energy vehicles. To gain a deeper understanding, I decided to switch to a domestically produced new energy vehicle. It’s also a way to support the domestic automobile industry with practical actions.”

Charlie nodded and remarked, “Matilda told me that the Evans Family has invested in the new energy field in China. They are starting with power lithium batteries and have high hopes for new energy.”

Mr. Riley’s eyes lit up and he smiled, “Power batteries are a promising field. Although we entered the game a bit late, they are the core of the new energy industry. The most expensive component of new energy vehicles is the power battery. Whoever can obtain the most cost-effective battery can produce the most cost-effective car...”

“I believe that with the Evans Family’s strength and vision, they won’t solely focus on power batteries. They will begin with power batteries

and ultimately aim for vehicle manufacturing. After all, the upstream industry of the automotive sector demands heavy assets and offers low profit margins. It's better to focus on the overall solution for a better chance of success.”

Charlie curiously inquired, “Uncle Riley, do you have high hopes for the new energy industry?”

Mr. Riley nodded and replied, “Of course, it's the perfect example of overtaking in the curve. The old industrial powers have accumulated numerous years in the internal combustion engine sector, forming their own technological barriers and comfort zones. Latecomers can only imitate them, but they have no chance of surpassing them on the same track...”

“In this situation, they must find a new game that they haven't paid attention to, focus on that new game, and when they have developed to a certain extent, challenge the foundation of the old powers, forcing them to chase you on your track. This can overturn all their previous advantages.”

Continuing his explanation, Mr. Riley added, “Have you ever studied how Apple's earphones used one product to overtake in the curve?”

Charlie shook his head, “No...”

Mr. Riley said, “For so many years, traditional headphone manufacturers have been emphasizing dynamic drivers, sound quality, cables, and all kinds of data and technologies that ordinary people don't understand. If Apple competes with them on those standards, there is simply no chance...”

“But Apple directly created a pair of truly wireless earphones, with automatic connection when you open the lid, automatic switching when you put them on your ears, automatic pause when you take them off, and automatic charging when you put them back. Sound quality

doesn't really matter. Other brands are all researching sound quality, right?”

“I just won't talk about sound quality with you. I insist on working on aspects beyond sound quality that you haven't paid attention to, and then compete with you. That's overtaking in the curve... Now look at the headphone market, it is completely dominated by Apple's earphones and imitators. | can confidently say that the development of traditional wired headphones for over a century has been completely overturned. | believe that one day in the future, the new energy vehicle industry can also overturn the entire automotive industry.”

Mr. Riley added, “Of course, it's still too early to discuss these matters now. New energy vehicles are still not mainstream, but precisely because they are not yet mainstream, there are opportunities for entrepreneurs...”

“Once they displace fuel vehicles and become mainstream, the dragon slayers will become the evil dragons. Many people will start researching the next new track. The Evans Family is entering now, and although they didn't seize the first opportunity, it's still not too late.”

Charlie asked again, “Now there are already too many domestic new energy brands. Do you think there is still a chance for vehicle manufacturing?”

“Of course there is.” Mr. Riley replied seriously, “There are indeed many new energy brands now, and many of them are struggling on the verge of bankruptcy. But the automotive market is vast, and new energy only accounts for a small portion of it, which proves that the future of new energy is still promising...”

“And now, if they enter the new energy vehicle manufacturing sector, and if their competitors only target other new energy brands, it would be a small-scale competition. They should broaden their horizons and compete with traditional fuel vehicle manufacturers. If they can halve the global sales of Toyota, Honda, and Hyundai, then they will truly become giants.”

Mr. Riley then remembered something and said, “Charlie, actually, you can also explore this field. You have money and resources, and you have BAIT Shipping as a shipping channel. If you enter the automotive industry, there will be great development opportunities, and this industry is very fulfilling. If one day the streets are filled with cars manufactured by you, it will be a great source of pride.”

Charlie smiled and said, “To be honest, Uncle Riley, | don't have a high education and don't have much knowledge about cars. If | were to do this, | would be completely clueless.”

Then, Charlie continued, “But really agree with your point of view. The new energy market is a trend, and its future market share will definitely increase. If you are interested, | can introduce you to my uncle and second uncle. If you want to give it a try, | can also be your investor.”

Mr. Riley quickly waved his hand and self-deprecatingly said, “I'm just an old scholar studying finance. | can talk for hours, but when it comes to practical operations, I'm probably not as skilled as you.”

Charlie shook his head and said, “Sometimes, what an industry needs is not necessarily professional skills, but strategic vision. Even if your skills are strong, if you choose the wrong direction, it will only lead to a dead end. If the Evans Family wants to enter vehicle manufacturing, they must learn from you. If you can join them, it would be even better!”

Mr. Riley laughed and said, “Joining is out of the question, but after | return to China, | have conducted detailed research on the domestic new energy market. If they are interested, | can voluntarily serve as a consultant and discuss my ideas with them. Perhaps it will be helpful to them.”

Charlie eagerly said, “That would be fantastic! Let's do this, after you and Matilda finish the wedding, I'll find an opportunity to arrange a meeting for everyone to get together and have a good chat.”

“No problem.” Mr. Riley readily agreed, and then said, “Charlie, I'll go to the university to pick up Matilda. Let's find time to chat later!”

“Okay!” Charlie nodded and watched Mr. Riley leave. In his heart, he couldn't help but think of the idea of recruiting Mr. Riley for his own endeavors.

When he started BAIT Shipping, he had wanted to hire Mr. Riley as the person in charge, but at that time, it seemed that he wasn't interested in shipping and was set on the university.

However, after their conversation today, Charlie realized that Mr. Riley had a great passion for new energy vehicles. If he could create a platform in the new energy field with real money and resources, and then invite him to join, he would most likely not refuse.

Having made up his mind, Charlie decided to arrange for his uncle and second uncle to meet Mr. Riley after his wedding.

Just then, he received a call from Jacob.

He pressed the answer button and said, “Dad, what's the matter?”

Jacob's voice sounded hoarse and dejected as he said, “Good son-in-law, where are you?”

Charlie replied, “I'm outside having a cup of coffee and discussing some things with a friend. Do you need something?”

Jacob said, “Good son-in-law, if you're available, can you come to the university to pick me up? | feel so overwhelmed and I need someone to talk to...”

Chapter 5707

Upon hearing Jacob's words, Charlie surmised that he must have already been aware of Matilda's engagement to Mr. Riley.

“Hey, Dad, I'm not far away. I'll come over now. Let's meet at the entrance,” Charlie spoke up.

Jacob choked up and replied, “Alright, I won't drive. I'll wait for you at the entrance. Hurry up, my good son-in-law!”

“Okay.” Charlie agreed, but intentionally delayed a few minutes after hanging up the phone.

After all, Mr. Riley had just left, having gone to the Senior University to pick up Matilda. If Charlie were to go there now, there might be an awkward encounter with the four of them at the school gate. It would only make the situation more uncomfortable.

Charlie wasn't afraid of embarrassment, but he was concerned that his father-in-law would become even more upset.

After deliberately stalling, Charlie finally drove to the Senior University.

Meanwhile, Matilda stood by the roadside at the entrance of the Senior University, awaiting Mr. Riley's arrival.

At the same time, Jacob walked out of the Senior University in a daze. However, when he spotted Matilda standing by the road, he instinctively halted in his tracks.

At this point, he had already lost much of his self-confidence. He was well aware of the vast difference between himself and Mr. Riley.

Sometimes, he even took pride in this, thinking, “So what if Mr. Riley is better and more outstanding than me? The woman you love doesn't love you, but instead has loved me for over thirty years. Love works in mysterious ways.”

But now?

The sole advantage he possessed to salvage his dignity had completely vanished, and it had even become Mr. Riley's advantage. This only intensified his feelings of inferiority. Thus, when he saw Matilda waiting for Mr. Riley, he immediately turned his head and found shelter behind a sturdy French plane tree, using the trunk as a shield for his face.

Soon enough, Mr. Riley arrived in his modest domestically-produced new energy car at the roadside.

Jacob, hidden behind the tree, peered through one eye and couldn't help muttering to himself, “Damn, he has the audacity to show up in such a shabby car. And without tinted windows, too. How dare that Mr. Riley be so confident? If it were me, I wouldn't even have the nerve to hold my head up driving this car”

While muttering under his breath, Jacob witnessed Matilda and Mr. Riley involuntarily drawing closer to each other, eventually sharing a kiss through the armrest box of the car.

In truth, the two middle-aged lovers were usually quite reserved, rarely displaying such intimacy in public. But today was different.

For from this moment on, they were truly embarking on preparations for their wedding, a new milestone in their relationship. Moreover, Matilda was deeply moved by Mr. Riley's actions. Since returning to China, Matilda had come across many middle-aged people at the Senior University and had witnessed some middle-aged love affairs.

In her opinion, middle-aged individuals in China rarely got married. Instead, they listed their requirements and negotiated like business partners. If feasible, they would become companions without the need for marriage. However, for the sake of saving face for themselves and their children, they rarely opted for marriage and wedding ceremonies.

The situation in the United States was also quite unique. Westerners tended to approach marriage with caution, with many couples staying together for years and raising multiple children without ever tying the knot. Having children together and jointly raising them didn't necessarily lead to marriage. Few people actually got married, and by the time they did, they already had several children together.

Yet, Mr. Riley was acting like a young man in love. He had invited Matilda on a trip, secretly arranged a proposal ceremony on the beach, and dropped down on one knee with a ring. These gestures not only moved Matilda, but also gave her a sense of security she had never experienced before.

And now, Mr. Riley had taken yet another significant step forward in their wedding plans, setting a date just one week away. This filled her with even greater joy, and their kiss perfectly reflected their current state of mind.

However, for Jacob, who secretly watched them with tears streaming down his face, this genuine display of affection only further devastated his mood.

After a few seconds of kissing, both of them wore happy and radiant smiles. Mr. Riley then drove away, brimming with happiness.

Jacob watched the car disappear around the corner, feeling utterly devastated. Leaning against the plane tree, he slumped to the ground, tears streaming uncontrollably. In his anger, he even subconsciously pounded the soft soil a few times, luckily avoiding any injury to his

fingers.

Just then, that familiar voice resurfaced, “Vice President Wilson, what's wrong with you? Why are you crying again? Did your son-in-law come to pick you up?”

Jacob raised his head and saw that it was that clueless fool once again, further fueling his rage.

He quickly wiped away his tears and waved his hand dismissively, saying, “I'm fine, I'm fine. You don't need to worry about me. I'm just not feeling well.”

The man, engrossed in his concerns, inquired once more, “What about your son-in-law? Why hasn't he arrived yet?”

Jacob replied, “He's on his way already.”

As Jacob spoke, Charlie was already pulling up to the gate of the University for the Elderly.

Not spotting Jacob by the roadside, Charlie proceeded to drive the car directly into the courtyard of the University for the Elderly.

As the car passed the sycamore tree, Charlie caught sight of his father-in-law slumped on the ground.

He promptly halted the car, swung open the door, and rushed over.

Observing his father-in-law's tear-streaked face, looking even worse than when he'd been confronted by Elaine, Charlie inquired with genuine concern, “Dad, are you alright? Why are you seated here?”

Though Charlie asked with understanding, it also served to enhance the authenticity of his concern.

At the sight of Charlie, Jacob found a release for the pent-up grievances within him. Tears welled uncontrollably, streaming down his face in a torrent of emotion.

The person failed to detect the sarcasm in Jacob's words and replied with a shy smile, "Vice President Wilson, no need to be so polite to me. Why don't | accompany you to the hospital? | can help you make an appointment."

Charlie feigned surprise and inquired, "Dad, what's happening? Why are you still in tears? Are you alright? Let me take you to the hospital for a check-up!"

Jacob shot the man a despondent glance, gritting his teeth before uttering, "Jerry, thank you..."

Unaware of Jacob's ironic tone, the man responded bashfully, "Vice President Wilson, you're too kind. Why be so formal with me? How about | accompany you to the hospital and assist you? Maybe register a number or something?"

"No, no, no," Jacob quickly interjected, feeling the man was like a jinx. "My son-in-law can accompany me. | won't trouble you further." With that, he extended his arm towards Charlie. "Good son-in-law, please help me up. | can't manage on my own."

Charlie reached out to assist him. After expressing gratitude to Jerry, Charlie helped Jacob into the passenger seat.

Only then did Jacob notice that Charlie was driving a Rolls-Royce. and not just any Rolls-Royce. but the luxurious Phantom model. Surprised, he exclaimed, "Good son-in-law, where did you get this car?"

Charlie explained, “One of my clients lent it to me. Since you needed urgent assistance, | brought his car.”

Adding, “Dad, you're really something. You're in tears and yet you still care about the car. What's going on? Your friend mentioned you've been crying twice?”

At the mention, Jacob erupted, “That Jerry, he's in his fifties and still blind as a bat! He can't take a hint! Nagging incessantly! Damn it, he deserves an earful”

Charlie inquired, “Dad, what's troubling you?”

Jacob's expression darkened once more. He sighed heavily, his voice choked with emotion. “Charlie... Matilda... She is getting married...”

“Married?” Charlie asked, intrigued. “To Professor Riley?”

“Yes!” Jacob spat out with venom. *To that bastard!”

Charlie shrugged helplessly. “When it rains, it pours. Besides, we're already together, so their marriage is natural, isn't it?”

“Why should he?!” Jacob retorted furiously. “Matilda has harbored feelings for me for over thirty years!”

Charlie nodded, calmly stating, “But you've been married to Mom for thirty years.”

Jacob's face flushed with embarrassment. “| was intoxicated... And had a moment of weakness... Damn it, | was taken advantage of by Elaine!”

Charlie countered, “Dad, what's the point of bringing up the past now? Even if Matilda loved you thirty years ago, it doesn't mean she still does now. People change, right?”

“I...” Jacob argued, his face reddening. “When Matilda returned to China, you were there with me to greet her. Can't you see she still cares for me?”

“I Can,” Charlie affirmed.

He continued, “But that's in the past...”

With a change in tone, Charlie recounted a joke. “There's a tale about a man who gives five yuan to a beggar every day. Eventually, the beggar feels entitled to the money. When the man doesn't give him money one day, the beggar demands to know why. The man replies that he used the money to buy gifts for his wife. The beggar retorts, ‘Why use my money for your wife?’”

Pausing, Charlie concluded, “Matilda may have loved you for thirty years, but that's her choice. She can give her love, but she's not obligated to. If one day she decides to give it to someone else, you have no right to intervene.”

Jacob felt humiliated. “Charlie, do you also think I'm unworthy of Matilda?”

Charlie continued driving with one hand, while the other gestured in a calming motion as he spoke, “No, Dad, let me be straightforward. Right now, it's not about whether you're worthy of Matilda. She's on the verge of marrying Professor Riley. Even if you are suitable for her, if she doesn't choose you, what options do you have?”

Jacob interjected urgently, “So you're suggesting | should try to salvage the situation before their wedding?”

Charlie sighed, feeling a sense of helplessness, “What's there to salvage at this point? Your concern should be what happens if Mom learns about Matilda's impending marriage! From what | understand, you have no direct involvement in Matilda's return to China...”

“But if Mom discovers Matilda's marriage, she'll inevitably dig into when Matilda returned and her activities since then. Considering your frequent interactions with Matilda at the University for the Elderly, and even your trip to Korea together, your tranquil days are about to be Disrupted!”

Chapter 5708

“I can't believe it!” Charlie's words struck Jacob like a bolt of lightning, filling him with immediate terror.

In a nervous tone, he blurted out, “Charlie... Is Matilda going to personally deliver the invitation to our house? If Elaine finds out that I've been hiding Matilda's return to the country for so long, she'll go absolutely ballistic and confront me!”

Charlie had long seen through Jacob's character. He knew that escaping Elaine's clutches was an impossible feat.

So, he shook his head and said, “I can't say for sure if they'll invite you. If you're afraid, you can tell Matilda that you don't want to be invited to the wedding and that you don't want to go.”

Signing, Jacob said, “That's just a temporary solution. Even if Elaine doesn't find out this time, who knows when she'll discover the truth in the future. In fact, many of our classmates already know about Matilda's return to the country. You even attended the gathering back then, but Elaine had no connection or contact with any of us, so she never found out.”

Charlie smiled and said, “The timing of Matilda's return to the country is quite sensitive. If I remember correctly, she returned just a few days after my mother was deceived and went missing.”

When Elaine stole Charlie's bank card and transferred all the money to herself, she was later imprisoned and subjected to torture.

However, Elaine had never dared to share the details of what happened during that time with anyone, so she could only use the excuse of being involved in a pyramid scheme to explain her disappearance.

At the time Elaine was being humiliated and tortured in prison, Matilda happened to be in the country. Jacob was overjoyed at the time,

and his biggest dream was to make Elaine disappear completely.

If Elaine knew that Matilda had returned during that time and that Jacob hadn't even come to see her, but had personally gone to pick up

Matilda and invited her to their house for dinner, she would probably unleash her fury upon Jacob.

The reason why Charlie reminded Jacob was to make him realize early on that since he couldn't get rid of Elaine, he shouldn't entertain thoughts of pursuing other women. Otherwise, he would spend his days in misery, unable to confide in Elaine or Claire, and eventually come to Charlie to complain.

Charlie didn't want to be his sounding board.

As expected, when Charlie mentioned this, Jacob became even more panicked, and he quickly asked Charlie, “Good son-in-law, you have

to give me some advice on this matter. if Elaine finds out about it, she'll be furious.

What if she sneaks into my room one night and stabs

me? You know how ruthless she can be when she wants revenge. My mother, my older brother, they were all pushed to their limits by

her”

Charlie spoke up, “I can't help with this matter either. If my mother doesn't receive any news, it's fine. But if she does, the most | can do is

try to persuade her when she's about to attack with a knife.”

He continued, “Here's what you can do, Dad. Just stop coming to the senior university from now on. Take the initiative to distance yourself from Matilda and focus on your calligraphy and painting association. If my mother finds out about Matilda's return, I'll do my best to hide the fact that you went to pick her up and invited her to our house for dinner. This way, if my mother finds out, you can at least deny any connection or contact between the two of you, and there will still be room for mediation.”

Jacob sighed and said, “What about the exchange trip to South Korea? How do I explain that if she finds out?”

Charlie smiled and said, “Just tell her the truth. Say that Matilda went to South Korea for an exchange trip with her boyfriend, Professor Riley. Going to South Korea with her boyfriend is equivalent to Aurous Hill City sponsoring their trip. You're just an extra, and my mother can feel better about it. Besides, she has no way of verifying when they got together.”

After hearing this, Jacob felt uneasy, but he had no other choice but to say, “It seems there's no other way...”

He quickly asked Charlie, “Good son-in-law, can you please avoid taking on any more projects recently? If your mother goes crazy one day, at least you can help restrain her.”

Charlie readily agreed and smiled, “Don't worry, Claire will be back in a few days. With the two of us here, even if my mother finds out, you won't be in any danger. At most, you'll be considered emotionally unfaithful.”

He added, “But if my mother loses control and slaps you a few times or grabs you, just endure it. This storm will pass.”

Jacob was extremely frustrated and complained, “What the hell is this? If I had known, I would have just filed for divorce in court. I would

have openly divorced her! That way, | would definitely have a chance with Matilda, and there would be no need for Professor Riley!”

Charlie heartlessly said, “Dad, you're mistaken if you think that way. If you file for divorce in court, do you know what my mother will do?”

Jacob sneered, “She'll just hit me and curse at me, kick me out of the house. It doesn't matter if | leave with nothing. After all, the house belongs to you, and Elaine and | have no shared assets. | can just find somewhere else to live.”

He regretfully said, "Ah! | should have made this decision long ago! Being the vice president, the income is decent, and Matilda also has some family background. Why can't we live a good life? Now it's all ruined! | should have been resolute from the start! | could have filed for divorce, and even if Elaine kicked me out, | wouldn't have been worse off than now!”

Charlie shook his head and said, “Dad, you're thinking too simplistically. If my mother can hang a row of green hats on the balcony for so long, it proves that she's not someone who can easily move on.”

“You think if you have an affair with Matilda, she'll go to your workplace and cause a scene, go to Matilda's workplace and cause a scene. No matter what the truth is, she will portray you as a modern-day adulterer who abandoned his faithful wife and Matilda as a seductress who broke up a family.”

“And she will probably haunt your residential area day and night, and she might even go to the rooftop of the building where you and Matilda live, pretending to jump off, attracting everyone in the neighborhood, including the fire department, police, and television stations. Have you forgotten that she caused a scene in the neighborhood before? Threatening to cut her wrists with a knife in front of someone's door and let the blood flow into their house. She can go to great lengths when arguing with strangers, let alone with you. She might even go as far as to actually harm herself!”

Jacob's face turned pale, and his body trembled uncontrollably.

Charlie continued, “And now with the popularity of social media, many people love to follow trends and create a buzz. If this information spreads, you and Matilda might face public criticism on the entire internet. It won't just be in Aurous Hil, but anywhere in the country. You'll be pointed at and criticized. if you don't want to be completely disgraced in Aurous Hill, she won't stop. By then, you and Matilda will be ruined, and you won't have a single good day.”

Jacob felt a sense of despair, and Charlie's words painted vivid images in his mind, as if he had experienced them firsthand.

Then, he suddenly heaved a sigh of relief and seemed to come to a realization. He exclaimed, “Damn it, to be honest, | was afraid that she would come after me and cause a big scene, so | didn't dare to confront her in court and file for divorce...”

Charlie knew that what he said was not an exaggeration.

Elaine's behavior was unpredictable, sometimes strong, sometimes weak.

When she was strong, she could slap her aunt Cynthia Wade's face and become a terrifying figure in Bedford Mountain.

When she was weak, she could have her legs broken by Mrs. Wilson and Wendy and couldn't even get a good night's sleep in prison. But once this matter involved Matilda, she would transform into a fearless person and go all out.

If Jacob had been brave enough to take that step back then, Charlie would have found a way to help him and prevent Elaine from causing trouble for him and Matilda. But Matilda had given Jacob an opportunity, and Jacob had proven to be useless.

So now Jacob's best choice was to realize it early on, to understand that he could never be with Matilda. Once he understood this, he would feel much better.

Jacob's character had always been cowardly and stable, so being frightened by Charlie's words made him somewhat sober.

Thinking about it, he couldn't help but sigh, "There is a time for everything in life. If it's not meant to be, it won't happen. I couldn't be with Matilda over thirty years ago, and now it seems impossible. All I can do is hope that Elaine doesn't find out about this. And even if she does, I hope she won't cause any trouble. If she really comes to the calligraphy and painting association to make a scene, I, as the vice president, won't have a face to continue working!"

Charlie nodded and smiled, saying, "Don't worry, Claire will be back soon. If my mother finds out, Claire and I will try to persuade her. I think she'll get over it quickly."

He added, "But Dad, you have to be careful. From now on, keep your distance from Matilda and don't have too much contact. Otherwise, even if Matilda marries Professor Riley, my mother will still think you have feelings for her and consider it emotional infidelity. It will be hard for you."

Jacob didn't hesitate and said, "Don't worry, I won't come to the senior university anymore!"

He crossed his arms in front of his chest and said angrily, "I didn't plan to come after this incident anyway. When I see Matilda, it only upsets me more."

Charlie saw that Jacob had truly given up from the bottom of his heart, and he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief.

For him, he didn't want Jacob to wallow in sighs and complaints, nor did he want Jacob to still harbor thoughts about Matilda and end up causing trouble for the two of them.

The best solution was for everyone to mind their own business. Let the couple enjoy their sweet days, while Jacob continued to be a third wheel in the calligraphy and painting association. This way, Charlie would also have a much easier time and wouldn't have to worry about trouble at home.

At this moment, Jacob nervously asked Charlie, “Good son-in-law, what are the chances of my mother finding out about this?”

Charlie calmly said, “According to Murphy's Law, bad things will happen sooner or later.”

He continued, “This matter is like a ticking time bomb. The key is how to minimize the damage when it explodes. So remember what I just said. If the truth is exposed, try to reduce the impact as much as possible.”

Charlie also didn't want Elaine to cause chaos everywhere. If she embarrassed herself, it would also reflect poorly on him and Claire.

Jacob nodded, feeling relieved, and said, “Good son-in-law, I'll listen to you!”

Chapter 5709

Before Charlie arrived, Jacob was fuming over Matilda's marriage to Mr. Riley. But now, he's only concerned that Matilda will send him an invitation.

Meanwhile, Matilda and Mr. Riley are discussing the guest list for their wedding reception. Although their social circles differ, they share

similar attributes. Most of their friends are in the United States, and they have only a few distant relatives in China.

As for their local friends in Aurous Hill, Matilda has some classmates, but they have little contact, except for Jacob whom they frequently meet. So, they deliberate over whom to invite and whom to exclude.

Matilda suggests, "Let's go through them one by one. Let's start with our friends in the United States. Considering the long distance, | don't think we should notify them. It's not easy for them to travel all the way here. It would seem impolite to burden them with such a journey. What do you think?"

Mr. Riley nods and smiles, *I agree with you... Our friends in the United States have extensive connections and deep friendships, but it's not appropriate to invite them to the wedding. If they decline, we would appear foolish. If they accept, we would feel guilty. So, my suggestion is that after we tie the knot, we should plan a trip to the United States together. You have your social circle, and | have mine. We can introduce each other to our friends during our visit. How does that sound?"

Matilda smiles happily and says, "I agree with you. After the wedding, we can take a trip to the United States and reconnect with our old friends."

Mr. Riley smiles and says, "That's fantastic! Let's make our honeymoon in the United States. What do you say?"

Matilda happily replies. "I'm all for it. The only concern is you. Can you take time off from school?"

"No problem," Mr. Riley says with a smile. "I'll speak to the dean, and taking a week or two off for the honeymoon shouldn't pose an issue."

Mr. Riley continues, "By the way, regarding our colleagues, for the wedding, | suggest inviting the dean and a few colleagues with whom

we have a good rapport. However, since we're both older now, in China, people value reciprocal relationships. Many of our colleagues are already married, so | believe it's best not to accept gifts for the wedding. We can simply invite everyone to witness the ceremony and enjoy a meal together. What do you think?"

Matilda nods and smiles, "Not accepting gifts is a good idea. Accepting gifts may appear overly materialistic."

Mr. Riley asks her, *And what about your colleagues from the senior university?"

Matilda ponders for a moment and says, "Let's invite them. We'll continue working together in the future, and it's important to maintain good relationships. If we don't inform them, they might feel left out."

Mr. Riley nods and hesitates before asking, "What about Mr. Wilson?"

"You mean Jacob," Matilda smiles awkwardly. "When i left the senior university today, he mentioned wanting to treat me to a meal. | told him | didn't have time, but | did mention our marriage. He should already know, so we should invite him."

Mr. Riley asks in surprise, "Jacob wants to treat you to a meal? Did he mention why?"

"No," Matilda smiles. "I suppose it's just a meal between old classmates."

In reality, Matilda is a clever woman.

She discerned Jacob's intentions when he invited her to dine near the university.

So, while politely declining, she mentioned her plan to

marry Mr. Riley to make it clear that she has moved on from their past relationship.

She doesn't want Jacob to harbor any illusions about

her anymore.

However, she doesn't want Mr. Riley to dwell on it either, so she downplays Jacob's possible intentions.

But Mr. Riley is astute as well. He knows about Matilda and Jacob's history and he can't help but feel a twinge of jealousy when thinking about Matilda's lingering emotions for Jacob over the past thirty years. However, intelligent people don't fixate on someone's past, especially when it's unrelated to them.

So, he doesn't show any signs of jealousy. He simply smiles and says, "Since you've already mentioned it to Jacob, it wouldn't be right not to invite him."

Matilda nods and says with a smile, "Not inviting him would indeed be inappropriate, but inviting him is also not ideal. After all, he's a married man with a family. If we invite him, the invitation should include his entire family. But just thinking about his wife, Elaine, gives me a headache. To be honest, I really don't want any further involvement with that woman. So, it's a dilemma. I can't explicitly tell Jacob to come alone, can I? If that information reaches Elaine's ears, it could cause a lot of trouble."

Matilda looks at Mr. Riley and asks, "What do you think?"

Mr. Riley smiles and says, "This is a decision you must make. But you're right. If we want to invite him, we should invite his whole family. Otherwise, given Elaine's personality, it could lead to trouble."

Mr. Riley then ponders for a moment and says earnestly, "Matilda, you should consider this matter yourself. Whatever you decide, I'll support you wholeheartedly."

Matilda nods and says, "Alright, let's put Jacob's invitation on hold for now. I'll message him later to ask for his opinion. I think he also

wants to avoid unnecessary complications. If he chooses not to come, then we won't send him an invitation.”

Mr. Riley asks, “And what if he decides to come?”

Matilda contemplates for a moment and smiles, “I think the chances are very slim. I know Jacob well. He's afraid of Elaine. In this situation, he most likely won't want to let Elaine know. If I let him decide for himself, the probability of him coming is very low.”

Matilda spoke, “Let's set aside this issue for now. We should wait until | inquire about his intentions. Let's proceed. I do not plan to invite my former classmates from Aurous Hill. We encountered them at a class reunion previously, and they tend to be overly competitive and exaggerate too much. | prefer not to engage deeply with them...”

“However, the team members we met during our exchange trip to Korea are genuinely good people with admirable life perspectives. It was mentioned early on that if we were to marry, we should invite them to our wedding banquet. We ought to honor our promise, shouldn't we?”

“Yes,” Mr. Riley agreed, nodding. “That summarizes our approach. Aside from Charlie, the invitees will include our colleagues and the teammates from our exchange in Korea. We'll see what Mr. Wilson thinks.”

Mr. Riley continued, “Let's discuss matters beyond the wedding. I'll share my thoughts first. Feel free to interrupt me at any time if you have any concerns.”

Matilda nods and looks at him with her chin resting on her hand, smiling, saying, “Go ahead, I'm all ears.” Matilda's eyes sparkle, making Mr. Riley slightly bashful under her gaze. He takes a sip of cold water before continuing, “I think after the wedding, we should start our honeymoon in the United States.”

After speaking, he looks at Matilda, waiting for her response.

Matilda still has her chin resting on her hand, smiling at him, saying, “I have no objections, go on...”

Mr. Riley nods and says, “Our first destination should be New York. It's more convenient for transportation, and we can visit your old colleagues and friends there. And since | have many old friends on Wall Street, we can also meet them after connecting with your colleagues and friends. Then we can rent a car and head to New Haven. It's close to New York, and we can visit your old classmates at Yale...”

“Finally, you can accompany me to Stanford and meet my old classmates. If everything goes smoothly, we can wrap up in six or seven days. The remaining time can be spent unwinding on a warm island.”

Matilda asks curiously, “Why don't we start with Stanford? Flying from Aurous Hill to the West Coast of the United States is closer, so we can go to Stanford first, then to New York, and finally to New Haven. Wouldn't that save more time?”

Mr. Riley looks at Matilda with deep affection and smiles, “When accompanying my wife to the United States, our first stop must be where you used to live. Let's consider it a visit to your hometown.”

Matilda understands Mr. Riley's intentions. His thoughtfulness extends not only to their marriage and love but also to every small detail of their life.

She feels touched and says with a smile, “From now on, you are the head of the family, so | will leave the decision-making to you. I'll follow your lead.”

She then asks, “Do you have any exciting ideas for the remaining vacation time on a warm island?”

Mr. Riley says, “Since we're going to the United States this time, the vacation island should be located between the United States and China. | initially thought about the Maldives, but flying from San Francisco to the Maldives takes too long, at least 24 hours or more. How about Palau? It's closer to China, and we can save a lot of time overall. What do you think?”

Matilda laughs and says, “As | said, you're the head of the family. If you think Palau is suitable, then go ahead and book the tickets. I'll go shopping tomorrow for some fashionable swimstits!”

Chapter 5710

When Charlie drove Jacob back to Thompson First, Jacob's phone received a message on WeChat from Matilda.

Just as they were about to reach the doorstep, Jacob urgently said to Charlie, *Son-in-law, please pull over!”

Charlie parked the car to the side and curiously asked, "What's the matter?”

Jacob said, “Matilda sent a message on WeChat!”

Saying that, he opened the conversation with Matilda in front of Charlie.

Charlie casually glanced at it and saw that Matilda's WeChat nickname was unexpectedly "AAA July Flower Bird Fish Insect Temple Shop.”

He asked in surprise, “Dad, why does Matilda have such a strange WeChat name?”

Jacob cautiously explained, “I changed her nickname. Since her profile picture is an iris flower, | gave her the nickname of a shop that

sells flowers, birds, fish, and insects. Mainly because I'm afraid that Elaine will secretly look at my phone.”

While Jacob was talking, he looked at the message Matilda sent and asked Charlie, “Matilda is asking if I want to attend her and Mr.

Riley's wedding. If I go, she will send me an invitation and invite our whole family to their wedding. Charlie, how should I reply?”

Charlie asked back, “But don't you just not want to go? Just reply that you have a scheduling conflict and can't make it, and then be generous and wish them a happy marriage.”

Jacob hesitated and muttered, “I don't want to go, but if I refuse so readily, wouldn't it be inappropriate? I'm afraid Matilda will think I'm not going because I'm afraid of Elaine.”

Charlie asked him, “But isn't that your true intention?”

Jacob said seriously, “It is my true intention, but at least I shouldn't let others easily figure it out. Otherwise, where would I put my pride in the future?”

Then, Jacob said, “Didn't you see how Matilda phrased it? Inviting our whole family, she probably thinks I'm afraid of Elaine and said it like that”

Charlie sighed helplessly, “Dad, let me advise you, don't worry about your pride at this time. You want to take advantage of the situation, this is the best opportunity. Your best choice is to seize this opportunity and resolve everything at once. Don't stir up any trouble.”

Jacob waved his hand and hummed, “I'm not a fool, why should I give in just because someone gives me an easy way out?”

He continued with a profound look, “Good son-in-law, you don't understand. They say a man needs to save face and can lose to others

but not lose the battle. Although I didn't hold onto Matilda, I definitely can't let them laugh at me behind my back.”

Saying that, he typed while saying to Charlie, “I'll agree first, and when she sends me the invitation, I'll accept it. Then, the day before the wedding, I'll say | have something urgent and can't go.”

Charlie asked, “Aren't you afraid Mom will find out about this?”

“What's there to be afraid of?” Jacob scoffed, “Matilda will never contact her directly. Even if the invitation says it's for our whole family, she will definitely hand the invitation to me. As long as I don't say anything, who will know?”

Charlie shook his head and said, “Dad, | still advise you to be more cautious.”

“Its fine.” Jacob confidently said, “I've already replied to her message, so it's settled.”

Realizing the decision was final, Charlie sighed helplessly and said, *As long as you think it's alright.”

Charlie didn't respond to Jacob but skilfully deleted the entire conversation between him and Matilda. Then he said to Charlie, “Let's go home!”

On the other side...

Matilda looked at Jacob's reply and couldn't understand it for a moment.

She thought that by mentioning inviting Jacob's whole family, Jacob would understand that he just needed to find an excuse to say he couldn't make it on the day of the wedding, which would be the best way to resolve the issue.

But she never expected that Jacob would ignore her and instead reply very decisively, “No problem, our whole family will definitely be there on time!”

She couldn't help but feel confused and wondered, "What does Jacob mean? Does he really want to bring Elaine to our wedding?"

Thinking this, Matilda furrowed her brows.

Mr. Riley, who was writing the invitation, saw Matilda's serious expression and couldn't help but ask, “Matilda, what's wrong?”

Matilda replied truthfully, “Jacob replied to my message. He said he wants to bring his whole family to attend our wedding.”

“Really?” Mr. Riley didn't have Jacob's peculiar way of thinking, so he couldn't understand either. He said, “Based on his fear of his wife, he shouldn't even tell her about this, let alone bring her to our wedding.”

“I don't know...” Matilda sighed, “He has really confused me. | can't figure out what he's thinking.”

Mr. Riley thought for a moment and smiled, “To be honest, | can see that Jacob still has feelings for you. Suddenly, you're going to marry me, and he might be a little resentful. Bringing his whole family to attend our wedding might also be a way of showing his discontent.”

Matilda shook her head and said, “This... | can't make too many assumptions about it.”

Mr. Riley smiled and said, "Actually, Jacob's behavior can be understood. After all, we wil all be living in Aurous Hill in the future. He can't keep hiding your situation from Elaine forever. Maybe he wants to take advantage of this opportunity to confront it head-on and get it over with.”

Matilda bit her lip and said with some doubt, “Based on my understanding of him in the past, he is an absolute ostrich. If a lion wants to

eat him, he will bury his head in the sand, even if he knows the lion might bite him, he doesn't care. But if you want him to face it head-on, that's absolutely impossible.”

Saying that, Matilda continued, “Based on his previous behavior, he would never voluntarily tell Elaine about my return. Whenever Elaine finds out, that's when he'll deal with it. As long as she doesn't know, it's like earning money.”

Mr. Riley frowned and said, “If that's the case, then his decision is indeed strange.”

After that, he asked Matilda, “Should I call Charlie and ask?”

“Forget it.” Matilda waved her hand and said, “After all, Charlie is Jacob's son-in-law. It's not appropriate for us to speculate about Jacob behind his back. Let's just wait and see. There will be many guests at the wedding, and I'm not afraid of Elaine causing trouble. Besides, you invited Charlie to be the officiator, so with Charlie there, I believe Elaine will behave.”

Saying that, Matilda added, “If we can resolve the Elaine issue at this occasion, it wouldn't be a bad thing. I just don't know if Jacob will be confronted by Elaine privately. After the wedding, remember to remind Charlie to keep an eye on it!”

“No problem.” Mr. Riley nodded and agreed, saying, “Then I'll write the invitation and write that we invite Mr. Wilson and his whole family to attend.”

Matilda nodded and said, “Okay, write it like that.”

Mr. Riley then asked, “By the way, how should we give it to him after writing it?”

Matilda said, “I'll take care of it. Jacob has a lecture on modern calligraphy and painting at the Senior University tomorrow. I'll bring it to him then.”

Chapter 5711

The following afternoon, the Senior University's calligraphy and painting lecture experienced a change in speakers. Jacob, the vice president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association, was absent and had sent a substitute teacher from the association in his place.

Matilda, accompanied by Mr. Riley, arrived with an invitation card for Jacob, only to find that he was not present at the lecture.

After the class, Matilda approached the substitute teacher and inquired, "Excuse me, may I ask why Vice President Wilson didn't attend today?"

The substitute teacher replied, "Vice President Wilson has been occupied with the association's affairs recently, so he asked me to give the lecture at the Senior University."

Curiosity piqued, Matilda asked, "Do you know when he will return?"

The substitute teacher responded, "I believe he won't be back for a while. He provided me with the topics for the upcoming classes and asked me to prepare the PowerPoint presentations. It seems I'll be substituting for him indefinitely."

He then asked Matilda, "Is there something you need from Vice President Wilson?"

Matilda nodded and expressed her gratitude, saying, "I'll contact him myself. Thank you."

After leaving the classroom, Matilda dialed Jacob's number.

On the other end of the line, Jacob found himself bored in the office of the Calligraphy and Painting Association. Despite holding the title of executive vice president, he had little actual work to do.

It wasn't because he was excluded by others, but rather due to his lack of skills. During discussions and research on various topics, he either remained silent or resorted to making jokes when he did speak up.

However, because Chairman Price held him in high regard, no one dared to openly ridicule him. Chairman Price was well aware of Jacob's limited abilities, so he refrained from assigning him any substantial tasks.

When Matilda returned to China and became a guest professor at the Senior University, Jacob volunteered to collaborate with the university. Chairman Price saw the Senior University more as a social club for seniors rather than an academic institution, so he agreed. During this time, Jacob had been actively involved with the Senior University. However, today, he had suddenly decided not to attend, leaving him with nothing to do.

Feeling annoyed, he received a phone call from Matilda. His mood instantly soured as he knew the reason behind her call, she must have wanted to give him the invitation card that he hadn't received.

Although he had no intention of attending the wedding, rejecting the invitation card would be inappropriate.

Reluctantly, he answered the phone and said, "Matilda, are you looking for me?"

Matilda responded softly, "Hmm," and asked, "Jacob, you didn't come to the Senior University today. The substitute teacher mentioned

that you may not return in the future. Is that true?"

Jacob quickly replied, "Oh, about that... Its true. The association has been swamped with work lately, and as the executive vice president, it's not easy for me to be at the Senior University every day. Chairman Price called me last night and stressed that the association couldn't function without my assistance. So, I returned to help for a time being and will go back when I have some free time.

Matilda knew that Jacob was making excuses, but she chose not to confront him. Instead, she simply asked, "Then, when will you be available? I can bring the invitation card to you."

Jacob hurriedly replied, "Oh, for just an invitation card, there's no need for you to make a special trip. How about giving it to Stanley Finch? He's the substitute teacher who assisted me. Let him bring it to me when he returns to the association."

Since Jacob insisted, Matilda didn't press the matter further and said, "Alright, I'll give the invitation card to him."

Jacob was in a foul mood and didn't wish to engage in a lengthy conversation with Matilda. He said, "By the way, Matilda, Chairman Price summoned me for a meeting. I have to go now. We'll talk later."

"Alright, you go ahead."

Jacob hung up the phone, threw his mobile onto the table, and sank back into his office chair, feeling weary.

Though his concerns about Elaine had diluted his sadness over Matilda's impending marriage, whenever he had a moment to reflect, unhappiness washed over him.

He even pondered that perhaps it would have been better if Matilda hadn't returned at all.

Feeling frustrated, he suddenly heard a knock on his office door. Before he could respond, Chairman Price pushed the door open and entered.

Chairman Price smiled and said, "Jacob, Jacob, it's a rare sight to see you, the executive vice president. Haven't you been at the Senior University all day long? It's been a while since you returned."

Jacob swiftly removed his legs from the table and politely replied, "Oh, Chairman Price, I've been engrossed in projects with the Senior University lately. But now that I'm back, I'll make it a point to come to the association every day and learn from you, Chairman Price."

Chairman Price waved off the formalities and said with a smile, "No need to be so polite!"

Continuing, he said, "Jacob, since you've just returned, I have a favor to ask. If you can assist me, that would be fantastic. If not, it's alright."

Jacob replied, "Chairman Price, with you as my mentor and leader, I will follow your lead and give my all. If I can handle it, I'll do my utmost. If not, it's not a problem."

Chairman Price was delighted by Jacob's flattery and said, "Jacob, you can speak like that, and as your mentor, I won't hold back either. I have a friend who works in a higher-level department in our province. He is looking to advance his career and wishes to invite key individuals to a dinner..."

"He had arranged a luxurious private room at Heaven Springs through his connections, but the person he entrusted with the task failed to secure it. The golden private room he intended to reserve is no longer available, and they are left with a silver private room..."

“It's quite disappointing for my friend, and he invited me to join him. So, I thought, since you have a good relationship with Don Albert Rhodes, could you arrange a better private room? And if possible, negotiate a discount on the meal. My friend doesn't have much money, and though he can afford it, it still pinches the wallet a bit.”

Booking a private room at Heaven Springs had always been a challenge, and often, the private rooms remained unoccupied rather than being made available to the general public.

This wasn't due to Don Albert's aversion to making money, but rather a result of his original intention in establishing Heaven Springs. It wasn't solely for profit, but rather for prestige and socialization.

During his struggles in society, he realized that face mattered greatly to many socialites and influential individuals. They sought the finest and most expensive when it came to wining, dining, and daily expenses.

Furthermore, high society placed great importance on privacy and exclusivity. Heaven Springs ensured a top-notch environment, cuisine, and service while maintaining the exclusivity of its clientele. Similar to underworld kingpins who never frequented the establishments their subordinates patronized, even if they had the means, the subordinates dared not casually visit the same places as their superiors. Such actions would be seen as presumptuous.

Thus, Heaven Springs had stringent requirements, and when there were no customers, they would rather leave the private rooms vacant than admit clients who didn't meet their standards.

This approach had allowed Heaven Springs to maintain its reputation as the most prestigious restaurant in Aurous Hill, unparalleled by any other establishment.

The diamond, gold, silver, and bronze private rooms were designed similarly to airline cabin classes and membership levels.

Due to Don Albert's insistence on maintaining a high threshold, Heaven Springs had become the epitome of fine dining in Aurous Hill.

Jacob couldn't help but question Chairman Price's explanation. "Why would someone agree to this if they can't guarantee the golden box? Sounds like a scam."

Chairman Price offered a bitter smile. "Society's full of these types. 'Better a porcelain doll than none at all,' they say. They'd rather gamble than admit defeat. Take the money first, figure it out later. Works out? Profit. Doesn't? No loss."

"Jacob..." Chairman Price continued, "Beware of those who make casual promises. I had a friend seeking help for his son in the city. He met a fool who claimed a million could secure it. A year later, nothing. When my friend demanded a refund, the guy resisted. Finally, the police were involved, and the money was returned immediately. But..."

Chairman Price scolded. "This kind of idiot is the worst. He had no solution and never intended to help. He just wanted an interest-free loan. When pressed, he'd stall with excuses. Eventually, the money is returned, but a year's worth of interest is lost. You can't call the police, you just suffer the loss of being naive."

"These idiots cast a wide net," Chairman Price elaborated. "They brag and never refuse anyone. A million from this one, a million from that, they do this a few times, and suddenly they have tens of millions. Just sitting on the interest could bring millions in a year!"

Curiosity piqued, Jacob asked, "Chairman Price, how do you know this so well? Have you been fooled?"

Chairman Price sighed. "To be honest, Brother Jacob, my son studied abroad at Pheasant University for years. He returned to the city to

attract talent, but no one recognized him. | didn't even activate his household registration. In the past few years, I've encountered all sorts of pitfalls and Charlatans, but haven't found a truly reliable path.”

Waving his hand dismissively, Chairman Price said, “Enough about that, Jacob. Can you do me a favor and secure the golden box at Heaven Springs?”

Jacob, eager for the golden box, readily patted his chest. “Chairman Price, that's a small matter! I'll ask my son-in-law to speak to Mr. Rhodes. It should be fine!”

Chapter 5712

After hearing Jacob agree so readily, Chairman Price couldn't help but feel an overwhelming sense of joy. He exclaimed, “Oh, Jacob, | am truly grateful to you!”

He quickly added, “Jacob, it's already past four o'clock. These people are accustomed to playing cards in the private room before dinner. Can you swiftly arrange it for them? They will likely be arriving soon.”

After saying this, Chairman Price whispered to Jacob, “Jacob, if you can secure a diamond private room for us like last time, i wil introduce you to some important individuals tonight. The attendees are influential figures from our superiors. If we can establish strong connections with them, there may be opportunities for both of us to advance in the future!”

Jacob had already deduced that Chairman Price was trying to gain favor with his friend. Otherwise, why would he be so concerned about someone else's dinner?

It must be someone with a significant background. Now, hearing Chairman Price's words, everything became clear to him.

He had initially believed that being the vice president was his limit, but now it seemed that if he could collaborate with Chairman Price and foster good relationships with the people from the superior department, when Chairman Price ascended the ladder, he would naturally assume leadership here.

With this in mind, he promptly replied, "A diamond private room? Chairman Price, do not worry, | will take care of it!"

After saying that, he immediately picked up his phone and dialed Charlie.

At this moment, Charlie was at the Elys-Champ Hot Spring Villa, practicing controlling his reiki with Nanako.

When he received a call from his father-in-law, he walked to the courtyard and answered, "Dad, what's up?"

Jacob said, "Good son-in-law, | need a favor."

Charlie replied, "No need to be so formal. Just tell me what you need."

Jacob quickly said, "Can you ask Don Albert if the diamond private room at Heaven Springs is available tonight? If it's not, can he arrange it for a friend of mine? He tried to book a golden private room through connections, but someone else took it. Since he is hosting a dinner tonight and asked for my help, | couldn't refuse."

Upon hearing that it was such a minor matter, Charlie casually responded, "Okay, Dad. Just a moment, | will call the boss and check. As long as the diamond private room hasn't been reserved tonight, there shouldn't be an issue."

Jacob was overjoyed and quickly said, “That would be fantastic! | will await your message, good son-in-law!”

For Charlie, arranging a diamond private room was a simple task. He called Don Albert and inquired about the availability of the diamond private room tonight.

In fact, Don Albert had already canceled reservations for the diamond private room to accommodate any last-minute requests from Charlie. Therefore, the diamond private room at Heaven Springs was naturally vacant. Charlie had Don Albert reserve it in his father-in-law's name.

When Don Albert heard that Charlie's father-in-law was going, he immediately set aside his work and prepared to personally go to Heaven Springs to provide service. He wanted to give enough respect to his esteemed guests.

As Charlie prepared to call his father-in-law, Don Albert cut in.

“Master Wade,” Don Albert said over the phone, “Handle your tasks first. This is a minor matter. I can inform your father-in-law. Someone got his number last time he dined at Heaven Springs...”

“Sounds good,” Charlie replied with a smile. “Just let him know. No need for me to intervene.”

Meanwhile, Chairman Price turned to Jacob, a nervous tremor in his voice. “Jacob, will this work out?”

Jacob confidently patted his chest. “Don't fret, with my son-in-law involved, success is guaranteed.”

Just then, his phone buzzed with an unfamiliar number.

He answered, a voice both familiar and strangely distant greeting him, "Mr. Jacob Wilson, is that you?"

Jacob responded, "Yes, it's me... Who is this?"

Don Albert's voice crackled through the phone, respectful and clear. "Mr. Wilson, this is Don Albert Rhodes, owner of Heaven Springs. Do you happen to recall me?"

Recognition dawned on Jacob as soon as he heard the name. He switched the call to speakerphone, his voice brimming with excitement.

"Hello, Mr. Rhodes! How could I forget?"

Chairman Price's eyes widened at the address "Mr. Rhodes". He leaned in, voice hushed, "Is that Mr. Rhodes?"

Jacob, puffed with sudden importance, nodded vigorously.

Chairman Price's excitement mirrored his own, eagerly approaching to hear the conversation unfold.

Don Albert humbly said, "Mr. Wilson, please do not call me Mr. Rhodes. That's what the youngsters outside call me. Since you are Wade Master's father-in-law, you are my senior. Just call me Albert..."

Chairman Price's jaw dropped. He marveled at Jacob's apparent influence. Don Albert's call and his use of respectful terms toward Jacob amazed Chairman Price.

Jacob was even more proud and quickly asked Don Albert, "Don Albert, did my son-in-law inform you about the private room?"

Jacob had no idea about Charlie's true identity or the master-servant relationship between Don Albert and his son-in-law. Therefore, he didn't dare to address Don Albert by his name.

Don Albert's voice boomed with enthusiasm. "Master Wade informed me I've reserved the diamond box for you tonight. We've prepared the highest- standard banquet, and I'll personally be there at Heaven Springs to welcome you and your friends. Everything's on the house!"

Jacob was flabbergasted. The diamond box and a top-tier banquet easily cost hundreds of thousands, yet Don Albert wanted to waive the bill?

It felt extravagant!

Besides, this dinner wasn't for him. He was accompanying Chairman Price. If Don Albert comped the entire meal, the favor owed wouldn't feel right.

Chairman Price, by his side, couldn't bear to see Jacob take on such a huge favor.

He whispered urgently, "Jacob, my friend's hosting higher-ups tonight. We're just supporting characters just ask Mr. Don Albert for a discount. If he comps the entire meal because of you, the invited guests won't feel indebted to my friend, and his whole dinner will be for nothing..."

Chairman Price elaborated, "If Don Albert offers a discount in your honor, the guests will still feel indebted to your friend. He, in turn, can reciprocate by asking you to book a box with a discount. You accept his favor, he accepts yours... Everyone benefits! This way, you avoid owing Don Albert a huge favor for a meal. It's a win-win!"

Jacob grasped the meaning instantly.

"Don Albert..." he said quickly, "It's my friend who's hosting tonight. I wouldn't want to steal his spotlight. Thank you very much for the discount offer."

Though Don Albert lacked formal education, he excelled in social awareness. He understood the situation immediately.

“Mr. Wilson, don't worry,” Don Albert replied without hesitation. “Consider yourself a friend! You'll get a hefty discount, 50% off everything tonight! Once your guests are settled, I'll personally send over two bottles of fine wine, a small token of appreciation.”

Giving face is a cornerstone of Chinese social etiquette. Striking the right balance is crucial, not too little, not too much.

Imagine a man taking his girlfriend to a friend's restaurant. If the friend, wealthier than the man, comps the meal in front of his girlfriend, it can backfire. The man might insist on paying, suspecting his girlfriend might be swayed by the friend's wealth and generosity.

Similar logic applies tonight. As Jacob is the supporting guest, Don Albert must respect him while ensuring the host doesn't feel overshadowed. Otherwise, despite no expense incurred, the host's family might feel slighted and hold a grudge against Jacob.

Don Albert, of course, navigates this situation flawlessly.

Beaming with satisfaction, Jacob asked with a smile, “Don Albert, can we come over soon?”

“Absolutely, no problem at all!” Don Albert responded eagerly. “You're always welcome! I'm almost at Heaven Springs. I'll be waiting for you and your friends at the door!”

Jacob expressed his thanks and hung up the phone, a hint of reluctance lingering.

During the call, Don Albert's praise struck a surprisingly genuine tone.

An indescribable sense of comfort washed over Jacob. It felt all-encompassing, as if every pore on his skin breathed in fresh, sweet air, leaving him exhilarated.

Chairman Price, now a full-fledged fanboy, enthusiastically shot Jacob a double thumbs-up. "Jacob, you're incredible! Absolutely incredible! The mighty Don Albert himself, acting like your younger brother? That's amazing! Simply amazing!"

"Hey there!" Jacob, basking in the praise, didn't forget to return the favor. "Chairman Price, even if I'm impressive, I'm still just a soldier under your command. You're the real power player here!"

Chairman Price, thoroughly engrossed in this harmonious exchange, couldn't help but reach out and pat Jacob's shoulder in a brotherly gesture.

"Jacob..." he declared earnestly, "If I ever get the chance to move on, the president's seat is yours!"

"Well then, Chairman Price," Jacob replied with a grin, "Let me be the first to wish you a speedy promotion!"

Elated by the turn of events, Jacob craved a victory to erase his romantic woes. Securing the boss' seat would be a crowning achievement.

Chairman Price, brimming with excitement, clapped Jacob on the shoulder. He declared, "Let's go! Heaven Springs awaits! I'll call my friend on the way and urge him to join us quickly!"

"By the way..." he added to Jacob, "We'll be drinking tonight. Why not ditch our cars and avoid the hassle?"

Jacob acknowledged the practicality of Chairman Price's suggestion. While chauffeurs were readily available, for a social dinner involving alcohol, ditching the car was undeniably convenient.

However, Jacob had his own agenda. “Chairman Price, let me drive! My Cullinan’ the perfect showpiece for an occasion like this. Why waste such a chance?”

Chairman Price, readily swayed, beamed. “Alright, alright! Thank you for taking the wheel.”

“No problem at all, that's what friends are for!” they affirmed in unison.

Leaving the building together, their conversation flowed easily as Jacob navigated the car.

Suddenly, his phone rang. It was Stanley Finch, the substitute teacher he'd arranged at the University for the Elderly.

Connecting the call via Bluetooth, Jacob greeted him casually, “Hey Stanley Finch, everything alright?”

“Vice President Wilson,” Stanley Finch reported, “I finished today’s classes.”

Jacob, having lost interest in the university's affairs, replied indifferently, “Oh, alright. Thanks for the update, Stanley Finch. I'm a bit busy right now, so I'll hang up if that's all.”

Sensing his disinterest, Stanley Finch hurried on. “There's one more thing, Vice President Wilson. Professor Matilda, the law professor at the university, sent an invitation through me. Are you still in a meeting? If so, | can make another trip to deliver it.”

Jacob's disgruntlement deepened at the mention of the invitation. “No, no, we can discuss it later. You shouldn't go out of your way just because | made you teach for me.”

“Okay.” Stanley Finch conceded. “I’ll hold onto it then, and give it to you when we meet next.”

As Jacob prepared to end the call, Chairman Price interjected from the passenger seat. “Stanley Finch, it’s Chairman Price here. Recognize my voice?”

“Chairman Price! Of course I do,” Stanley Finch responded on the other end, flustered. “You’re with Vice President Wilson, then?”

“Yes,” Chairman Price confirmed. “Stanley Finch, are you free tonight? | might need a favor.”

Without hesitation, Stanley Finch pledged, “Anything you need, Chairman Price. I’m happy to help!”

Chairman Price chuckled. “Vice President Wilson and | are having dinner with drinks at Heaven Springs tonight. Would you be able to come there and drive Vice President Wilson home afterwards? You’re known for your calm driving, all the women at the meeting raved about how smooth your rides are. Since we’ll both likely be inebriated, you’d be the ideal choice!”

Stanley Finch readily agreed, his voice filled with excitement. “Certainly, Chairman Price, Vice President Wilson! Consider it done. I’ll head straight to Heaven Springs and wait for you!”

“No need to rush,” Chairman Price reassured him. “We’ll probably be late ourselves. We’ll grab a bite first and aim to arrive at Heaven Springs by nine sharp.”

Chairman Price added a final instruction. “Make sure to eat well beforehand. I’ll reimburse you for the meal once you submit the receipt!”

“Sounds good, Chairman Price! I’ll be there at nine o’clock sharp! I’ll also bring Vice President Wilson’s invitation with me!” Stanley Finch concluded excitedly.

Chapter 5713

Jacob didn't pay much mind to the invitation. Whether he received it or not, he had no intention of attending, and he certainly wasn't going to let Elaine know. In that moment, he was consumed by a question.

After ending the call with Stanley Finch, he couldn't help but inquire, "Chairman Price, why did you have Stanley Finch be a designated driver for me when it only costs a few bucks?"

Chairman Price explained, his words carrying depth, "Jacob, when you become a leader in the future, you may not need to understand the ins and outs of business, but you must comprehend social dynamics and workplace etiquette."

He raised his index finger and gestured through the air, a smile playing on his lips as he continued, "Getting closer to your subordinates is an art. You must offer them rewards, but also occasionally reprimand them. It's essential to give them opportunities to do something for you."

"Take Stanley Finch as an example. As a leader, if you invite him to dinner, his fondness for you will increase by 5 points. But if you ask him for help or request him to be your designated driver, his fondness for you will increase by 50 points!"

"If a leader consistently asks their subordinates for small favors, rest assured, that person will become a loyal follower. Even if they aren't already, they soon will be."

"People are strange creatures. They have a tendency to comply and conform. If you only boss them around at work, they will merely feel obligated to obey. But if you occasionally boss them around in private, it satisfies their desire to please and accommodate. Even though

they are doing you a favor, they are happier than you. This is social psychology and the art of managing people. You should study it when you have the chance.”

Jacob asked curiously, “Is that how it works?”

Chairman Price smiled and replied, “I speak from the depths of my heart, my friend. If you don't believe me, just look at us. If | hadn't asked for your help, would we be having such an enjoyable conversation now?”

Jacob's eyes gleamed with understanding as he blurted out, “I get it! | get it, Chairman Price! That's how it works! It's incredible, truly incredible!”

Chairman Price quickly clarified, “Hey, by the way, Jacob, even though | explained these things to you, | didn't mean to manipulate you today. | genuinely needed your help. | wouldn't employ these tactics on you.”

Jacob grinned and replied, “I know, | know... Chairman Price, the fact that you can discuss these matters with me means you consider me a friend!”

“Of course!” Chairman Price exclaimed with a smile. “Sometimes, you have to learn from the experiences of your elders. They learn through trial and error, but we can learn from their experiences without making the same mistakes. If they stumble upon a stumbling stone while testing the waters, we can stop and let someone else continue.”

Jacob expressed his gratitude, saying, “| understand, Chairman Price! Your words are truly enlightening and invaluable to me!”

Chairman Price sighed, “In this society, it's all about exchanging favors. It's like gears meshing together. Different gears interlock and benefit each other. You scratch my back, | scratch yours. This creates synergy. Look, by helping me today, indirectly, you also helped my

friend. If these three gears mesh together, when one gear moves forward, we will all move forward.”

Jacob nodded in agreement and expressed his admiration, “Chairman Price, your experience is incredibly valuable to me!”

Chairman Price nodded affirmatively, replying, “I’ll call my friend and share the news with him. Just wait, he’ll surely be thrilled!”

Jacob eagerly anticipated the other party’s reaction.

Chairman Price retrieved a number and dialed it, activating the speakerphone.

The call promptly connected, and the person on the other end inquired anxiously, “Lester, how’s it going? Those guys are gearing up to leave, | need to give them the box number!”

Chairman Price grinned, reassuring, “Kent, don’t worry. I’ve enlisted the help of our Vice President Wilson.”

In a somewhat mysterious tone, he continued, “Vice President Wilson is a close friend of mine. Once | informed him, he promptly reached out for assistance. Care to guess who he contacted at Heaven Springs?”

The other party hurriedly speculated, “Is it their manager?”

“No,” Chairman Price chuckled, “Guess again...”

Impatiently, the other party exclaimed, “Lester, it’s late, and you’re still making me guess? Yesterday, | informed those people about the golden box, and they were ecstatic. They even mentioned bringing poker and arriving early to crack the eggs. If I delay informing them of the specifics now, I’ll be in trouble!”

Chairman Price grinned and divulged, “Alright, Kent, | won’t keep you in suspense any longer. Our Vice President Wilson contacted Don

Albert of Heaven Springs for you. Don Albert has assured us, ‘The finest diamond box is reserved for you! Additionally, we'll arrange the highest standard banquet!’”

“Wow!” the other party exclaimed, “Is this for real? Can your vice president really reach Don Albert directly?! And resolve the issue of the diamond box?”

Chairman Price replied with confidence, “Brother, considering how well you know me, would | jest about something like this?”

Instantly relieved, the other party expressed gratitude, “Oh, Lester, thank you! You've truly saved me! It took considerable effort to gather these people for dinner. If | mess up again, I'll be kicking myself!”

Just as Chairman Price was about to respond courteously, the other party interjected nervously, “By the way, Lester, with the diamond box in Heaven Springs, given its top-tier status, this meal shouldn't cost less than hundreds of thousands, right? Last time, a friend treated me to dinner on Hong Kong Island. Eight of us dined, and each swallow-winged abalone cost over 200,000. My wallet ached for more than a year, and now even the thought of abalone gives me a headache...”

With a chuckle, he continued, “Lester, could you ask your vice president to help negotiate? If not, perhaps a golden box would suffice. When | informed you, | mentioned a golden box. Its price would be more manageable for me.”

Chairman Price smiled reassuringly, “Kent, don't fret. While the diamond box is indeed pricey, Don Albert has graciously offered a 50% discount on all arrangements for our friend's sake! Even if you opt for the golden box, the bill won't exceed 100,000. Now, with the same budget, you can enjoy the diamond box experience. Remember, it's not just the cost of the banquet that's high, it's also about the prestige

of the diamond box. Once you inform them of the upgrade. their joy will know no bounds.”

“Wow!” the other party exclaimed in disbelief, “Is this for real? A 50% discount?! Can such a good deal actually happen?!” Chairman Price assured him, “Absolutely. | overheard the conversation when Don Albert spoke with our Vice President Wilson.”

Continuing, Chairman Price added, “Moreover, let me share some additional details. Don Albert mentioned that if our Vice President Wilson visits, he'll personally welcome him and arrange for two bottles of fine wine to be delivered to the private room...”

“Upon Vice President Wilson's arrival, Don Albert himself will join. Not only will this elevate your status, but it'll also save you a considerable sum. Think about it, even if those two bottles cost between 10,000 to 20,000 in a prestigious spot like Heaven Springs, it's still a significant saving for you. And if they gift two bottles weighing two kilograms each, you'll save even more, around fifty to sixty thousand!”

“Goodness me!” the other party exclaimed excitedly, “Thank you, Lester! And thank Vice President Wilson for me as well! Please make sure to invite Vice President Wilson!”

Chairman Price grinned, "Don't worry, I've already taken the initiative to invite Vice President Wilson. We're on our way to Heaven Springs.”

“Fantastic! I'm almost there. Let's meet at the entrance later!” the other party responded eagerly.

Listening to their conversation, Jacob felt a sense of joy.

He finally experienced the satisfaction of resolving significant Issues for others during critical moments and receiving praise in return. It was a bit exhilarating, but more so, it filled him with genuine pride.

Chairman Price ended the call, letting out a sigh, “Jacob, you see, this is how relationships work. You help me, I help you. In the future, with this tested camaraderie, regardless of who climbs higher, as long as we're willing to lend each other a hand, our bond will only grow stronger. The ancients often spoke of forming alliances for mutual benefit, isn't this a perfect example?”

Jacob nodded earnestly, “Chairman Price, that's profound wisdom. I'll surely learn a lot from you in the future!”

Chairman Price chuckled, “If you're willing to learn, my friend, I'll impart all I know. But remember, no holding back secrets at tonight's dinner; drink openly with me!”

With a determined pat on his chest, Jacob declared, “Chairman Price, worry not! This Jacob has never been one to shy away from a drink!”

Chapter 5714

‘When Jacob's Cullinan pulled up to Heaven Springs, Don Albert was already waiting at the door.

For Jacob, it was imperative to display great enthusiasm and maintain utmost decorum, understanding Don Albert's penchant for pretense and saving face. Thus, he made sure to extend ample courtesies.

As soon as Jacob halted the car, Don Albert, accompanied by the manager of Heaven Springs, approached to greet him.

Chairman Price, seated beside him, recognized Don Albert and exclaimed, “Look, Jacob, Mr. Don Albert himself has come to welcome us!”

Jacob smiled, replying, “Don Albert holds my son-In-law in high regard, hence such courtesy is expected.”

As they conversed, Don Albert reached the driver's door. He personally opened it for Jacob, stating respectfully, “Greetings, Mr. Wilson. You may leave the car to my valet. He'll assist with parking. Please, come with me and our guest...”

Jacob returned the smile, saying, “Your assistance is much appreciated!”

Tuning to Chairman Price, he added, “Shall we step out of the car?”

“Certainly,” Chairman Price replied with a nod, displaying slight timidity in front of Don Albert as he exited the vehicle.

Upon lighting, Jacob introduced Chairman Price to Don Albert, saying, “Don Albert, this is Chairman Price from our calligraphy and painting association, also a close friend of mine.”

Though Chairman Price felt nervous, being merely the head of a small folk association, he found Don Albert remarkably polite. Don Albert extended his hand willingly, saying with a smile, “Greetings, Chairman Price. | am delighted to make your acquaintance.”

Chairman Price, somewhat flustered, shook hands hastily, expressing, “Don Albert, your courtesy is truly humbling. It's an honor to meet you!”

Don Albert replied graciously, “Since Chairman Price is Mr. Wilson's friend, he is also a friend to me, Don Albert. Should you require any assistance in the future, do not hesitate to ask.”

Chairman Price felt flattered by the gesture.

Don Albert's unexpected politeness exceeded expectations, leaving him pleasantly surprised.

At that moment, an Audi A6 pulled up to the entrance.

Aman emerged from the driver's seat, hastening towards Chairman Price, exclaiming, "Lester!"

Upon spotting the newcomer, Chairman Price greeted him warmly, saying, "Ah, Kent, you're here! Allow me to introduce you. This is Vice President Wilson, whom I've often mentioned to you!"

Chairman Price then turned to Jacob, saying, "Jacob, meet Kent Carter!"

Kent Carter extended his hand to Jacob, expressing his gratitude, "Hello, Mr. Wilson! I've heard a lot about you from Lester. Finally, we meet!"

Jacob reciprocated the gesture politely, while Chairman Price intervened, "Kent, allow Jacob to introduce you to Don Albert, Don Albert. Their camaraderie goes way back, so I'll defer to him."

Gathering his composure, Jacob made the introductions, "Kent, meet Mr. Don Albert, the proprietor of Heaven Springs."

Kent greeted Don Albert with respect, saying, "Master Don Albert, I've long heard of your esteemed reputation. It's an honor to finally meet you in person. Although I've visited Heaven Springs before, our paths haven't crossed until now!"

Don Albert replied warmly, "Since you're a friend of Mr. Wilson, you're a friend of mine as well. Whenever you visit Heaven Springs, consider yourself personally welcomed by me..."

Kent felt elated by the courtesy extended to him.

With everyone acquainted, Don Albert suggested, “Shall we move inside? Let me arrange a comfortable space for you. Our Diamond VIP guests will receive the best service.”

Jacob agreed, "Yes, let's proceed. We can relax and wait inside.”

The others concurred, following Don Albert and Jacob into Heaven Springs's most luxurious diamond box.

After escorting them to the diamond box, Don Albert greeted them with a warm smile. “Please, have a seat and make yourselves comfortable. I'll have someone bring some wine for you to enjoy. You can relax, chat, and sip your tea...”

“Shortly, the waiter will bring the menu for you to peruse and place your orders. I've already instructed the kitchen on what to prepare. Once everyone's settled, we'll start with the cold dishes. If anyone's up for cards, feel free to indulge while you wait. The hot dishes will follow promptly once you're seated.”

Don Albert meticulously organized every detail, leaving the trio thoroughly satisfied and appreciative. The other two exchanged glances, their eyes carrying a hint of admiration towards Jacob. In their perspective, he resembled a figure akin to Charlie, a concealed big boss. As the banquet guests began arriving, Don Albert ensured Jacob received ample respect. Once everyone was present, he personally delivered two bottles of premium three-pound Maotai to the table.

Taking advantage of the hospitality, Kent ordered two additional one-pound bottles of Moutai Feitian.

With eight guests in total, they enjoyed a generous serving of alcohol, with each person allocated one pound.

Despite some possessing high alcohol tolerance, most struggled with the potent 53-degree Maotai. Jacob, with moderate tolerance, managed half a pound. Yet, amidst the flattering and toasting, he found himself uplifted by the attention, a stark contrast to the pain of Matilda's rejection.

Feeling valued boosted his spirits, healing the wounds in his soul. Moreover, mingling with guests of higher social standing expanded his circle, elevating his status.

Buoyed by the attention, Jacob's alcohol tolerance increased. Amidst the jovial atmosphere, he consumed at least seven taels.

By the end of the banquet, all guests, including Jacob, were visibly intoxicated. Don Albert and the others assisted each other out of the box.

Concerned for Jacob, Don Albert offered, "Mr. Wilson, would you like me to drive you home?" Inebriated, Jacob declined, "Don... Don Albert, you're too kind! I'll just... Take a taxi!"

Chairman Price intervened, "Jacob, why not let Stanley Finch drive you? He's waiting in the lobby. I'll call him..."

Don Albert reassured, "Stanley Finch is indeed waiting. He arrived at eight and informed our staff of his presence. We've arranged for him to await you both in the lobby."

Chairman Price exclaimed, "Excellent! Let Stanley Finch drive!"

Observing their settled arrangements and Stanley Finch's sober demeanor, Don Albert nodded affirmatively. "Alright then, let's head down..."

As they reached the first-floor lobby, Stanley Finch, who had been waiting in the resting area, promptly rose to his feet and hastened over

to Chairman Price and Jacob.

With utmost respect, he inquired, “Chairman Price, Vice President Wilson, | hope neither of you indulged too much in drinks?”

Chairman Price, still jovial, assured, "We're not too drunk, are we? We're enjoying ourselves thoroughly!”

After bidding farewell to those present and exchanging pleasantries, he and Jacob followed Stanley Finch out of Heaven Springs.

Don Albert escorted them all the way to the exit. The manager from Heaven Springs had already pulled up Jacob's Cullinan to the doorstep, handing the keys over to Stanley Finch. After a few final instructions from Don Albert, they bid their farewells and settled into the back of the Rolls-Royce.

As Stanley Finch settled into his seat and fastened his seatbelt, he retrieved an invitation from his pocket, addressing Jacob, “Vice President Wilson, Professor Matilda requested me to pass this invitation to you. Shall | place it in the armrest box for safekeeping?”

In his inebriated state, Jacob waved dismissively, remarking, “What... Such a plain invitation... Matilda's wedding... I... | won't bother attending!”

Recognizing Jacob's state, Stanley Finch simply stowed the invitation into the armrest box, suggesting, “I'll tuck it away for you. You can peruse it when you wake tomorrow.”

Jacob, already halfway into slumber, paid little heed to the conversation, urging impatiently, “Enough... No more chatter... Just drive... Switly...”

Chapter 5715

Jacob was barely conscious as he was brought back home. His eyes were barely open, his face flushed and his expression reminiscent of a lecherous character from a risqué Japanese film.

In a dazed state, Jacob saw Charlie approaching him, sent by Stanley Finch to pick him up.

With a smile, he slurred, “Good... Good son-in-law... | really... Really made your dad proud today!”

Charlie shook his head helplessly and said, “Dad, you've had too much to drink. Go back and rest, don't wake Mom up. If she sees you like this, she'll definitely scold you...”

“Scold me?” Jacob widened his eyes and scoffed, “I... I'll give her the courage!”

Patting his back, Charlie whispered, “Keep your voice down. Mom is already courageous enough, she doesn't need you to give it to her. In your current state, If she decides to take action, you won't stand a chance.”

Achill ran down Jacob's spine, causing him to involuntarily shiver. He quickly changed his tune and said, “Good... A good man doesn't... Fight with a woman! You... You can take me back... Back to my room. Let's keep it low-key!”

Charlie nodded and helped him into the villa, settling him in his room.

After taking care of these matters, Charlie came out of the room and received a phone call from Helena, realizing that Peter's return to China was Imminent. He went back to his room and answered the call.

Helena's voice came through the phone respectfully, "Mr. Wade, | hope I'm not disturbing your rest by calling so late."

~Notat all," Charlie replied with a smile. "How are things going on your ends Helena quickly said, "I called to update you on the recent developments. First, Mr. Cole's identity has been resolved. According to his personal wishes, | have arranged a flight for him tomorrow morning. There are no direct flights from Osu City to Aurous Hill, so he will have to make two transfers. He should arrive in Aurous Hill in the afternoon the day after tomorrow."

Helena continued, "As you requested, | have also arranged a reasonable civilian identity for Mr. Cole. He will not be using a private jet for this trip, as it would attract unnecessary attention. It will be a bit more tiring, but it's better to be safe."

"Alright," Charlie understood and said, "Returning to China is the final step for Uncle Cole to escape this calamity. It's better to endure a little hardship than to risk any complications. Please send me the flight details, and | will go to the airport to pick him up."

Helena hesitated for a moment, then explained, "Mr. Cole would prefer not to share his flight information with you. He believes that you still have a considerable influence in Aurous Hill, and if you go to pick him up or take care of him after he arrives, it will attract additional attention. His plan is to quietly settle down in Aurous Hill first and then find an opportunity to contact you."

After a brief moment of consideration, Charlie nodded.

Although Aurous Hill was not a metropolis, there were still many people who knew about his identity.

Just within Don Albert's subordinates, there were thousands of them. If any of them happened to encounter him while he was at the airport

picking up a stranger, even if they had no ill intentions, they would surely be curious about that person.

Considering this, it would be better not to get involved for now. He would wait until Peter had settled down before contacting him. As long as he quietly protected him in Aurous Hill, Peter would be able to rest assured.

He told Helena, "Since Uncle Cole has made his decision, let's go with his plan."

Helena promptly replied, "Understood, Mr. Wade. Now, let me update you on the AI model. Howard from the Rothschild family has personally delivered the forty thousand graphics cards. Microsoft has also started the handover process at their data center in the Nordic region. They will migrate the data to other data centers as quickly as possible. After that, we can use them normally."

"However, there was a small complication. NVIDIA recently released their latest computing chip, the b100, which outperformed our planned h100 in terms of overall performance. | discussed this with Howard and asked him to take advantage of the fact that the MOD has not yet been officially released to secure a batch from NVIDIA. At the very least, we want to ensure that we can obtain twenty thousand b100 cards within the first quarter after its official release."

Charlie asked, "What did Howard say?"

Helena replied, "He naturally didn't want to do it. The b1 00's computing power is significantly better than the MOD, and many AI and internet companies with strong capabilities have been waiting for it. He said that he already secured so many h100 cards through special connections, so he felt it would be inappropriate to ask for more."

Charlie chuckled, "Why would it be Inappropriate? It's simply because the conditions were already agreed upon in advance, and he doesn't want us to suddenly increase the price."

“Yes,” Helena said, “Howard is the shrewdest businessman in the world. In recent days, they have made a fortune from NVIDIA's stocks. After the b100 is officially released, their profits will skyrocket even further. Getting an extra ten thousand cards is not a big issue for him, but he just doesn't want to negotiate for a higher price.”

Charlie smiled and said, “This can be easily resolved. We can't simply increase the offer, but we can also increase the value of our proposition. Tell him that if he can secure forty thousand b200 cards for us in the Nordic region, we will give him an additional one-fourth of a Life Saving Pill. When you calculate it, he'll have three-fourths of the Elixir.”

Helena smiled sweetly and said, “I believe he will definitely not refuse and will be very proactive.”

Charlie sighed, “But poor Steve, his son. He just arrived in Aurous Hill to pay his respects, and when he returns, he'll find that his old man is still going strong. He'll probably hate me for this.”

Helena quickly asked, “Mr. Wade, won't Steve's desperation pose any risks to you?”

Charlie laughed, “If he's truly desperate, he would try to get rid of his dad rather than me. After all, he's desperate, not suicidal.”

Helena smiled sweetly and said, “Then | can rest assured!”

After Helena's update, she added, “By the way, Mr. Wade, the AI models launch timeline has been confirmed in the latest verification. It's ready to go live within the specified timeframe. There's potential for further acceleration, but | can't guarantee specifics. Implementation will require continuous verification in practice. However, rest assured, I'll oversee the process and ensure the team does their utmost to expedite the launch.”

“Okay,” Charlie sighed, “Thank you for your hard work, Helena.”

Helena quickly responded, “Mr. Wade, your gratitude is appreciated, but it's simply my duty.”

Charlie didn't indulge in excessive politeness with Helena. He believed actions spoke louder than words, tangible rewards were reserved for those who contributed practically and showed goodwill.

With that, Helena added, “By the way, Mr. Wade, Miss Joules gave me the 55 billion US dollars that Howard gave. You haven't given me a receiving account yet. Whenever you're available, please provide me with the account information.”

Charlie smiled, “I don't currently have a need for the money. You can hold onto it for now.”

At that moment, Charlie's mobile phone rang again. Glancing at the caller ID, he noticed it was his wife, Claire.

Politely excusing himself, he addressed Helena, “Helena, pardon me, I need to take another call. We can resume our conversation later...”

With that, he switched over to Claire's call.

Claire's voice burst with excitement as soon as the call connected, “Husband, I've completed everything here! Miss Joules has arranged a flight for me, and I'll be heading back this afternoon!”

Surprised, Charlie couldn't help but ask, “Honey, when do you expect to arrive in Aurous Hill?”

Taking a moment to calculate, Claire responded, “It's late evening here in Aurous Hill. I'll finish packing shortly. Miss Joules will organize a

private plane for my departure once everything's ready. | anticipate arriving almost by tomorrow afternoon!”

Delighted, Charlie exclaimed, “That's wonderful, my dear! I'll be waiting to pick you up at the airport tomorrow!”

Chapter 5716

The next day, Jacob slept in until late morning, enjoying the comfort of his bed.

Meanwhile, Elaine, despite not being a drinker, had developed a recent obsession with watching live streams and short videos on her phone. As a result, she didn't wake up until after 10 o'clock.

Originally, Charlie had planned to continue helping Nanako improve her grasp of reiki at the hot springs villa at Elys-Champ. However, with Claire's arrival in Aurous Hill scheduled for the afternoon, Charlie decided to stay home and wait for her. He intended to go to the airport to pick her up personally.

still groggy from sleep, Elaine rubbed her eyes and held her phone as she walked out of the elevator.

She saw Charlie cleaning the living room and curiously asked, “Hey there, good son-in-law, why aren't you heading out today? Don't you usually meet with clients and discuss business at this time?”

With a hint of concern, she added, *Good son-in-law, has the Feng Shui business been struggling lately? | hope it's not affecting our normal life.”

Charlie smiled and reassured her, “Mom, you're overthinking it. The business is not doing poorly, | just canceled all my appointments for today.”

“Oh my!” Elaine exclaimed, “Good son-in-law, are you having trouble managing the accounts? You have the ability to make tens of millions, even hundreds of millions, just by meeting with clients or making deals. Instead of earning all that money, you're here cleaning the house. Why don't you go out and make your fortune, and give your mom a small cut? A few thousand or tens of thousands would be just fine. | promise to keep the house spotless!”

Charlie chuckled helplessly and replied, "Mom, the reason | didn't go out today is because Claire is coming back this afternoon. | want to clean the house and make sure everything is tidy before she arrives. She's been in the United States for so long, and | don't want her to come home to a messy house.”

Excitement filled Elaine's voice as she heard about Claire's return. “Oh my, Claire is coming back? Really? I've missed her so much!”

Charlie nodded and confirmed, “Claire boarded the plane a few hours ago. It will take another six or seven hours, so she should arrive: around four or five in the afternoon. Just in time for dinner.”

Elaine playfully scolded, “That girl, her heart is only filled with her husband. She didn't even inform her own mother about her return.”

After making her suggestion, Elaine noticed Charlie mopping the floor and quickly approached him. “My dear son-in-law.” she began, “The house has been rather untidy lately. It's entirely my fault for neglecting the cleaning, and that old dog Jacob is no help either. He's out all day, returning late without lifting a finger at home. People might think he's keeping a mistress! Come, dear son-in-law, hand over the mop, and I'll take care of It.”

Charlie intervened, "Morn, why don't you focus on tidying up the kitchen, and I'll handle the living room.”

Elaine agreed, nodding, “Alright, with both of us working together, itll be done in no time.”

Then, she grumbled, “That useless Jacob is out again, isn't he? Always wasting time at that ridiculous calligraphy and painting association. Who knows, he might have a secret family there! And that woman, she's probably his old flame.”

Just then, Jacob came downstairs, looking disheveled and yawning. It was clear that he hadn't fully recovered from his hangover.

Elaine and Jacob had been separated for a considerable time, so she assumed Jacob had left long ago.

When she spotted him descending from upstairs, she couldn't resist a jab, “Well, well, why isn't Vice President Wilson off to the Painting and Calligraphy Association today? Well... You're not usually one to miss out. Did something happen? Did they finally catch on to your lies and kick you out?”

Jacob's expression suddenly turned sour upon hearing Elaine's words. He rubbed his face with both hands and disdainfully replied, “Elaine, you're just looking for trouble, aren't you? Why do you enjoy mocking me?”

Rolling her eyes, Elaine retorted, “How can I be mocking you? I'm just stating the truth. Who knows you better than me, Jacob? Tell me, what real talent and knowledge do you have? Your understanding of calligraphy and painting doesn't even compare to those vendors selling fake antiques on Antique Street. Yet, you have the audacity to be the executive vice president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association!”

“I have no idea how the association's president, who must be blind, allowed a second-rate person like you to be the second-in-command. Once he comes to his senses, you might have to pack up and leave!”

With a proud smile, Jacob replied, “Elaine, your wishful thinking is bound to fail. Our Chairman Price is currently seeking a promotion. Once he moves up, I'll become the president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association. At that time, I won't be the second-in-command anymore, I'll be the boss!”

Elaine sneered, “Phew! Jacob, do you even deserve to be the president of the Calligraphy and Painting Association? Look at yourself first.

Can't you even look at yourself in the mirror?!”

Jacob took a sip of water, shaking his head and swaying as he said, “Just wait and see. Everyone wants me to be the president. Who in the entire Calligraphy and Painting Association would dare to say that I, Jacob, am not worthy? Even Chairman Price wouldn't dare!

Otherwise, why would they have sent me to South Korea for an exchange visit recently? Why didn't they send you, Elaine, to South Korea for an exchange visit?”

Elaine sneered, “It's because you, Jacob, are interested in that circle. If I were also interested, the Aurous Hill organization would have sent me to South Korea for the exchange visit too!”

Jacob raised an eyebrow and asked, “Just you? If they sent you to South Korea, what would you communicate with the Koreans? Would you exchange insults with Korean women? You don't even speak the language! Just think about it, what advantage do you have in exchanging insults with Korean women? Besides being able to say ‘Assi’, what else can you say?”

Elaine retorted, “I can also say ‘Baga yalu!’”

Jacob scoffed, “Tsk, that's Japanese, you moron!”

Elaine became angry and grabbed the broom from Charlie's hand, swinging it at Jacob.

Jacob narrowly dodged it and walked away, cursing, “Crazy woman, | won't argue with you. I'm going to the association to have tea!”

Elaine scolded, “Jacob, come back here!”

Jacob walked away, saying, “I won't listen to you, bye!”

Elaine gritted her teeth and said, “Our daughter is coming back this afternoon, and you're running off. Do you plan to abandon this family?”

Surprised, Jacob paused and asked, “Our daughter is coming back this afternoon? Is it true?”

Elaine said, “Of course it's true. Didn't you see that our good son-in-law didn't go out today?”

Jacob nodded and turned to Charlie, asking, “Good son-in-law, when will Claire arrive in Aurous Hill?”

Charlie replied, “Around four-thirty or five in the afternoon.”

Jacob said, “That's still early. I'll go to the association first, and then I'll come back in the early afternoon to pick you up. We can all go to the airport together.”

Charlie suggested, “Dad, if you have something to do, go ahead. I can go pick up Claire by myself in the afternoon.”

Elaine immediately interjected, “No! After Claire has been away for so long, we must all go to the airport to pick her up!”

Reluctantly, Jacob said, “Then let's do what | just said. I'll go to the association first, and around three or four in the afternoon, I'll come back to pick you up. We can all go to the airport together.”

Elaine's anger flared as she confronted Jacob, “Jacob, no matter what excuses you conjure up, it won't wash, will it? You're insistent on

going to that dingy Painting and Calligraphy Association today, aren't you? Well, if you're set on going, then I'll accompany you. After all, you're the executive deputy president, soon to be promoted to president! As your current vice-president's wife and the future president's spouse, there's no harm in me attending, is there?"

Jacob's nerves jolted at the thought of Elaine insisting on joining him at the association. He dreaded the prospect of Elaine causing a scene and tamishing his reputation among his peers.

How could he endure the gossip about why such a good man like him ended up with such a shrewish wife?

Reluctantly, he responded, "Forget it, I won't go then. Is that acceptable? We'll just stay home twiddling our thumbs until four in the afternoon, then we can head to the airport together. Isn't that fine?"

Elaine pressed him, "What's the problem? Is it so difficult to take me along to your meeting? Am I that much of a burden?"

Jacob felt defeated and blurted out, "Oh, come on! Why do you always have to stir up trouble? It's never-ending with you, is it? I agreed to stay home as you asked, isn't that enough to satisfy you?"

Elaine's tone turned icy, "What's with the attitude? Are you getting impatient with me? Well, I'll have you know, I'm soon to be president.

It's not the time for you to cower and risk being mocked by the likes of old Lady Wilson's family. So, are you deliberately avoiding eye contact with me now? Are you cooperating with them to hold me back?"

Jacob attempted to defend himself awkwardly, "I didn't intend it that way. You were the one who said it."

Elaine demanded, "Then what exactly do you mean?"

Feeling overwhelmed, Jacob's head spun as he blurted out, "I don't mean anything! I'm simply saying I won't attend the meeting and will

wait at home to pick up our daughter from the airport.”

Elaine crossed her arms and scoffed, “Oh! So now you think it's pointless and you're giving up, is that it?”

Under the onslaught of Elaine’s accusations, Jacob felt on the verge of tears. He hastily clarified, “I... | didn't mean that. What did | say?”

Looking at Charlie with a mix of grievance and anger, Elaine said, “Good son-in-law, you be the judge. What good days have | had with Jacob all these years? Now that he's becoming powerful and about to become the president, he feels like I'm holding him back. What is his problem?”

Even Charlie couldn't handle the situation, feeling overwhelmed himself.

He quickly said, “Mom, | just remembered that | have something urgent to take care of. How about this, you and Dad rest at home, and I'll go take care of it. | won't come back in the afternoon, I'll just take a taxi to the airport. When the time comes, Dad can drive you to the airport to meet me, and we can all go back together.”

As he spoke, Charlie had already walked quickly to the front door.

Seeing Charlie about to leave, Jacob became even more panicked and said, “Good son-in-law, please don't go. Stay here with us!”

“I can't, Dad. It really is an urgent matter,” Charlie replied as he changed his shoes and turned back to say, “By the way, don't cook dinner tonight. Let's go out to eat! That's settled, see you at the airport this afternoon!”

Chapter 5717

Elaine and Jacob are quite eccentric individuals. Though Charlie is no longer surprised by their behavior, being caught in the middle of

their whirlwind is still highly uncomfortable, even causing physical unease. Therefore, it is best for him to leave at this moment.

Charlie departed from home, feeling suddenly adrift with nowhere to go. Going to Elys-Champ is too far and would consume too much time.

Feeling bored, he suddenly thought of Maria and decided to give her a call.

When Maria answered the phone, she curiously asked, “Why did you call me during lunch time? Did you want to invite me to join you for a meal?”

Charlie smiled and said, “I don't have any lunch plans either. Since you mentioned it, let's have lunch together!”

Maria laughed and said, “Since you're free, why not come to my place? It's getting colder, and I was planning to have a hot pot in the courtyard. If you come, I'll have my servant set an extra place and prepare more ingredients.”

“Alright!” Charlie agreed without hesitation. “It's also an opportunity for me to return the car I borrowed from you. Wait for me, I'll be there soon!”

After hanging up the phone, Charlie drove the Rolls-Royce he had taken from Zillan Mountain Villa and left Thompson First.

When he arrived at Maria's small courtyard, Michelle had just brought the ingredients and was about to leave.

Seeing Charlie, she respectfully said, “Mr. Wade, hello!”

Charlie nodded slightly and handed the car keys to Michelle, saying, “Michelle, I've brought the car back. It's parked in the parking lot at the entrance. Here are the keys.”

Michelle said, “Mr. Wade, if you need to use it again, there's no need to bring it back.”

Charlie smiled and said, “I'm still not used to driving such an expensive car. It's a bit too flashy.”

Michelle didn't say much after hearing that. She accepted the car keys and respectfully said to Charlie, “Mr. Wade, your tableware and ingredients are ready. | won't disturb your meal with Miss Clark.”

Charlie nodded, saying, “Thank you, Michelle.”

Michelle walked away, and Charlie saw Maria and the tableware she had prepared in the courtyard.

The beautiful solid wood table, paired with two Rosewood chairs, and the neatly arranged high-end Ingredients on the table and the small cabinet next to it, all fit perfectly in this quaint courtyard.

Looking at the impeccable scene in front of him, Charlie couldn't help but sigh, “Miss Clark has impeccable taste. If she were to open a restaurant, even without food, the ambiance alone could probably earn her a Michelin star.”

“Just one star?” Maria stuck out her tongue and then giggled. “Master, please take a seat. It's almost time to start eating.”

Charlie nodded and sat down across from her.

Maria took the empty bowl in front of Charlie and filled it with soup, saying with concern, “Charlie, this is Fish Roe ,Chicken Soup. Drink it while it's hot.”

Charlie took the bowl! and thanked her before asking, “Maria, why are you so leisurely, today?”

Maria smiled and said, "I have nothing to do every day, so | enjoy doing things that pass the time."

She then asked Charlie, "You're well-connected in Aurous Hill. Why didn't you have anywhere to eat lunch today?"

Charlie explained, "My father-in-law and mother-in-law were arguing at home, and it was really affecting my mood, so | decided to go out."

"I see..." Maria nodded and then asked, "By the way, did you go to Elys-Champ today?"

Charlie replied, "My wife Is coming back this afternoon, so | have to go to the airport to pick her up. If | made a detour to Elys-Champ, it would take too much time."

Upon hearing that Claire was coming back, Maria felt a bit disappointed.

She knew that in the future, Charlie would have fewer opportunities to come to Zillan Mountain Villa, and naturally, her chances of meeting him would be greatly reduced.

However, she didn't show It and casually asked, "I wonder how things are going at Elys-Champ? Are the martial artists making progress and living up to your standards?"

Charlie explained, "Most of them are progressing at a normal pace."

Then, he suddenly remembered Nanako Ito and said, "By the way, there's something I forgot to mention. Do you know Nanako Ito?"

Maria laughed and said, "Yes, the Japanese girl by your side. What about her?"

Charlie said, "Nanako achieved enlightenment a few days ago."

"Enlightenment?" Maria was slightly surprised and asked, "Enlightenment in what? Is it related to martial arts or spiritual growth?"

Martial arts are about mastering physical techniques, while spiritual growth pertains to the inner journey of self-discovery. However, both paths begin with a moment of enlightenment.

Charlie replied, "Nanako has mastered reiki..."

Maria couldn't help but exclaim, "She has mastered reiki? Is that true?"

Charlie confidently said, "It's true."

Maria looked envious and sighed, "That Miss to is so young, I didn't expect her to have the talent for spiritual growth. What's even more surprising is that she is Japanese."

She then asked Charlie, "Did you help her achieve enlightenment?"

Charlie shook his head and said, "I didn't help her. A high-ranking monk from Lama Temple guided her. He recognized Nanako's talent and provided guidance."

"Lama Temple's high-ranking monk?"

When Maria heard this, she immediately thought of the fake teacher she had encountered twice.

Originally, Maria contemplated informing Charlie about her encounter with the other individual, but upon careful consideration, she couldn't even discern the person's identity. Directly informing Charlie might only burden him with unnecessary psychological pressure and trouble. Thus, she decided it was better to remain silent than to potentially complicate matters.

Unaware that Maria had already visited Lama Temple and encountered the false teacher at Shivan Mountain, Charlie responded to her query, "A Few days back, a sage visited Lama Temple. He possessed profound knowledge of Buddhism and had attained enlightenment."

Nanako happened to seek an amulet from him during her visit to the temple. Upon observing her keen spiritual potential, he assisted her.”

Feigning curiosity, Maria inquired, “An enlightened sage? This is the first I've heard of it. Do you happen to know the sage’s name?”

Charlie replied, “The sage goes by the name of Master Geoffrey. It's said that he holds the deepest understanding of Buddhism in recent years.”

“Mm, Master Geoffrey...” Maria nodded thoughtfully. Although she remained uncertain about the identity of the sage, the name ‘Master Geoffrey’ seemed authentic enough.

Internally, Maria felt a surge of excitement. She doubted that a spontaneously enlightened monk would suddenly take Nanako under his wing to guide her towards enlightenment. It must have been orchestrated.

Unable to trace the true identity of the false teacher through Taihe, Marla considered Master Geoffrey a promising lead to uncovering the mastermind behind the deception.

Chapter 5718

Investigating the true identity of the fake nun was a thought deeply buried within Maria's heart.

She kept it to herself, not even confiding in Charlie. Instead, she smiled and sighed, “Miss Ito is truly fortunate. It's not just her luck, but also the Young Master's. The Young Master has never had anyone by his side who could understand and control reiki. Now that Miss Ito has successfully comprehended it, with time, she will undoubtedly be a great asset to the Young Master...”

Charlie smiled and calmly replied, “I don't expect her to do anything for me. It's just that after she comprehended it, i couldn't help but feel

excited to have a companion in the dark forest when I'm walking alone.”

Maria nodded in understanding and whispered, “I have lived for so many years, and it wasn't until | opened my heart to the Young Master that | experienced the feelings he described.”

A hint of desolation flickered across her face as she spoke.

Before meeting Charlie, she had never anticipated enlightenment. In her earlier years, she still harbored hopes of avenging her father. But as time went on, she no longer expected to be able to kill Morgana.

She simply wished to live out her five hundred years of life and not disappoint her father's expectations. But after meeting Charlie, a faint hope and expectation of enlightenment began to grow secretly within her.

Yet, she was well aware that she lacked the talent for enlightenment. Even the Eternal Green Pill had failed to help her make any progress. She realized that enlightenment in this lifetime was a hopeless dream. And it was precisely because of this realization that she felt desolate in her heart

To prevent Charlie from noticing her inner turmoil, she deliberately changed the subject and asked, “Young Master, how is the progress with the AI model in Northern Europe?”

Charlie responded, "Howard has resolved the issues with the graphics card and data center. Helena is currently in talks with him regarding the latest generation of NVIDIA chips. If they can reach an agreement, this AI model may be the first to adopt NVIDIA's most powerful chips on a large scale.”

Maria nodded lightly and smiled, “Once this model is implemented, | would like to request permission from the Young Master to use AI for some calculations.”

Charlie replied without hesitation, “No problem, as soon as it's implemented, | will grant you permission.”

Maria smiled softly, “Then | thank the Young Master in advance!”

After enjoying a lavish hotpot meal with Maria in the courtyard, Charlie received a WeChat message from Claire on the plane. She informed him that the plane would land about an hour and a half earlier than scheduled, around three o'clock in the afternoon.

So, Charlie bid farewell to Maria at Zilian Mountain Villa and hailed a taxi to the airport.

As he sat in the taxi, Charlie sent a message to Jacob, informing him that Claire's plane would land around three o'clock and asking him and Elaine to be ready to leave by one o'clock.

Jacob swiftly replied with a voice message, “Alright, good son-in-law. We'll leave home at two o'clock.”

As per the arrangement made between Jacob and Elaine, they agreed to drive the Cullinan from home to the airport. Once there, the three of them would wait together for Claire's arrival, pick her up, and return to the city for dinner.

Although he was uncertain if Jacob and Elaine were still quarreling, Charlie believed that they shouldn't delay picking up Claire, so he didn't inquire further about their current state.

Meanwhile, Jacob and Elaine were seated at separate tables in the restaurant, finishing their respective takeout meals. Thankfully, their quarrel had remained at a stable level of mutual sarcasm and hadn't escalated any further. Overall, Elaine had a slight advantage, but it fell within Jacob's tolerance.

After finishing his lunch, Jacob set down his chopsticks and packed up the lunch box.

Without lifting his head, he mentioned, "My son-in-law sent a message, saying that my daughters plane will land at three o'clock, so we'll leave at two."

Elaine grumbled, "Why are we leaving so early? Our daughter is returning from abroad. Customs clearance might take a while after she disembarks. It'll be lucky if she's out by 3,30. I'll go upstairs for a nap. Let's reconvene at half past two."

With that, Elaine walked out of the restaurant without a backward glance, adding, "Take away my leftovers and dispose of them together."

Despite harboring numerous complaints, Jacob remained silent. He lowered his head and discarded Elaine's unfinished meal into the trash can.

With Elaine gone, Jacob sat alone on the sofa. The hangover was gradually fading, and his mood worsened as the effects of the alcohol wore off.

He couldn't help but reminisce about the time when Matilda first returned to the country. During that period, Elaine seemed to vanish, and Jacob not only went to the airport to pick up Matilda but also shared meals, attended class reunions, and revisited their alma mater together. He even invited her to have a meal at their home.

Back then, Jacob and Matilda were quite close, and if it weren't for their children being present, the kitchen might have turned into a fierce battleground.

Thinking of this, Jacob spread his hands and repeatedly patted his knees with the back of his hand. His expression twisted, resembling that of someone who had bitten into a lemon, his features contorted with sadness.

Finally, after enduring until half past two, Elaine changed her clothes and emerged from the elevator. She spotted Jacob still sitting on the sofa, looking disheveled.

She immediately exclaimed, “Jacob, why haven't you freshened up and changed your clothes? We're going to pick up our daughter!”

Jacob came back to his senses, his tone defeated. “Why fuss so much about picking up our daughter? Just leave it.”

Elaine cursed under her breath, “What's gotten into you these past days? You act like you've lost your mind. Are you wasting your time outside doing something useless?”

Jacob immediately retorted, “What nonsense are you talking about? | have nothing going on that | don't need.”

Muttering to herself, Elaine added, “I don't think you have the guts.”

With a glance at the time, she urged, "Alright, let's go quickly. We don't want to be late picking up our daughter!”

Jacob stood up, grabbed the car keys, and followed Elaine out.

Upon reaching the Cullinan, Elaine automatically took the passenger seat.

After Jacob entered the car, he activated the navigation system and selected the fastest route to the airport.

As they drove out of the community and onto the expressway, traffic was relatively smooth since it wasn't yet rush hour.

Elaine, seated in the passenger seat, found herself unusually content. With Claire absent from home, she often felt lonely. Charlie's long hours at work and Jacob's indifference made little difference whether she was there or not.

Jacob, however, was preoccupied with thoughts of Matilda's impending marriage, lost in a daze.

Suddenly, his phone rang, connected to the car's Bluetooth system. Glancing at the dashboard, he saw the caller ID displayed as Stanley Finch from the Painting and Calligraphy Association.

Having overindulged the previous night and now struggling to recall the events, Jacob had completely forgotten about Stanley Finch delivering Matilda's wedding invitation to him. Without much thought, he pressed the answer button on the steering wheel.

On the other end, Stanley Finch's obsequious voice greeted him, “Vice President Wilson, it's Stanley Finch. Why didn't you show up today? Did you have a rough night?”

Jacob grumbled, “I had a lot to drink last night, and I still have a headache. What's the matter? Is there something urgent at the meeting?”

“No, everything's fine.” Stanley Finch reassured quickly. “I just wanted to check on you in case you were feeling unwell after drinking. If you're having trouble driving today and need me to take the wheel, just say the word!”

Before Jacob could respond, Stanley Finch continued eagerly, “Oh, and Vice President Wilson, my wife has some homemade herbal remedies for sobering up and liver nourishment, similar to what you mentioned. Regular drinkers like us need to take care of our livers. If you don't mind, I'll ask her to prepare the decoction and deliver it to your place later!”

Although Stanley Finch hadn't attended the dinner the previous night, he had driven Chairman Price and Jacob home and overheard their conversation. The two, inebriated and lacking companionship, confided in each other during the ride.

From their conversation, Stanley Finch learned that Chairman Price sought promotion and that Executive Vice President Jacob was a

prime candidate for the next presidency.

Backed by Chairman Price, Jacob's chances were high. Moreover, Stanley Finch had dropped Jacob off at the luxurious Thompson first-class villa, offering a glimpse into Jacob's financial status.

Qualifications and expertise weren't crucial for the presidency of the Painting and Calligraphy Association. Social connections and financial strength held more weight. Considering the association's limited funds, having a wealthy president could alleviate financial strain.

In Stanley Finch's view, Jacob's presidency was inevitable. He seized the opportunity to curry favor, anticipating benefits once Jacob assumed office.

Jacob, not oblivious to Stanley Finch's transparent flattery, played along. To relish the praise, he said without hesitation, “Stanley, I appreciate your concern. I'm about to head out to pick up my daughter. We'll be dining out as a family tonight. How about bringing the remedies to my place after ten?”

Knowing Chairman Price's manipulative tactics well, Jacob intentionally gave Stanley Finch an opportunity to serve and delayed the delivery time to test Stanley Finch's loyalty.

Delighted, Stanley Finch responded, “Of course, Vice President. I'll be there. You go ahead and take care of your business. I'll contact you after ten at Thompson.”

Elaine, overhearing the conversation, was both shocked and outraged. Her eyes nearly rolled to the back of her head as she thought, “This Jacob is rising in the ranks of the Calligraphy and Painting Association and licking boots! If he becomes president, why won't he look down on me?”

Savoring Stanley Finch's flattery, Jacob noticed Elaine's reaction and decided to play up the act.

With a dismissive hum, he remarked, “Well, if there's nothing else, I'll hang up now.”

Respectfully, Stanley Finch replied, “Of course, President Wilson. Goodbye!”

As Jacob moved to end the call, Stanley Finch remembered something and blurted out, “Wait, President Wilson, one more thing!”

Casually, Jacob prompted, “Go ahead...”

Hastily, Stanley Finch continued, “You were quite intoxicated when I dropped you off last night. placed Professor Matilda invitation in the armrest compartment. Don't forget it!”

Chapter 5719

When Stanley Finch mentioned Professor Marks’ invitation, Jacob's mind went blank and his thoughts exploded into chaos.

Feeling guilty, he hastily said to Stanley Finch on the phone, “Alright, alright, got it... Nothing else, so I'll hang up now!”

After saying that, he quickly pressed the end call button.

Curious, Elaine asked, “Professor Matilda? Who's this Professor Matilda?”

If Jacob had better mental resilience, he would have casually mentioned that Professor Matilda, was a colleague from the senior university, and the matter would probably have been forgotten. But his nerves always failed him in critical moments. Elaine asked casually, but he started sweating on his forehead.

So, he nervously glanced at Elaine while struggling to control his stutter, “No... Nobody...”

Elaine sensed something was wrong and furrowed her brows, “What do you mean ‘nobody’ when | asked about Professor Matilda? Who is this? What kind of invitation did they send you? What are you being invited to do?”

As he spoke, Elaine noticed beads of cold sweat trickling down Jacob's ears and temples. She immediately inquired, “Jacob, why are you nervous? What are you hiding from me?”

Seeing this, Jacob became even more flustered but had to explain, *I really have nothing to hide from you... Why would I hide anything from you...”

Elaine stared intently at Jacob, but he didn't dare meet her gaze and could only pretend to focus on the road ahead.

At that moment, Elaine spoke again, “Jacob, why are you so nervous? What are you hiding from me?!”

After uttering those words, she promptly reached to open the armrest box to inspect its contents.

Jacob, apprehensive of her discovery, dared not allow her a glimpse. Though he hadn't yet unsealed the invitation to view its contents, he knew the names of the bride and groom would undoubtedly be inscribed.

If Elaine were to lay eyes on the name words “Matilda Marks”, the situation would escalate beyond control.

Thus, he resorted to pressing the armrest box firmly with his elbow, determined to prevent Elaine from uncovering its contents. Despite his silence, his actions only served to heighten Elaine's suspicion and intensify her curiosity.

In a fit of frustration, she clenched her teeth and directed a stern admonition at Jacob. “I'm warning you, Jacob! If you have any inkling of what's happening, remove your arm this instant and allow me to see what's inside! Otherwise, mark my words, | won't let today's events slide!”

Jacob, anxious and afraid, continued to grip the armrest and stubbornly resisted, “Oh... It's really nothing, just a colleague's wedding

invitation. What's so interesting about a wedding invitation...”

Elaine retorted sharply, “It's just a wedding invitation, so why can't I see it?! | want to see it today, so let go of your arm and show it to me!”

Jacob shook his head repeatedly, “Don't look at it, it's really just a wedding invitation...”

~~ Elaine, determined to find out, suddenly leaned over and bit his right arm.

Jacob exclaimed and instinctively pulled his hand back, causing his left hand to shake as well, making the car swerve on the highway.

Startled, Jacob quickly corrected the direction and returned the car to its original lane, cursing, “Are you crazy?! Don't you know we're on the highway?! Are you trying to get us killed?!”

Ignoring him, Elaine opened the armrest and pulled out a red wedding invitation.

While opening the invitation, she muttered to herself, “It really is a wedding invitation... Damn it, Jacob, you're really boring. Someone invites you to a wedding, isn't that normal? What are you hiding from me? I could even suspect that you're having an affair with the bride if see how nervous you are!”

With that, she unfolded the invitation.

Elaine had life experience and knew to look at the signature first when reading an invitation. The main content of the invitation was just the usual polite words, the time, and place of the wedding, which she wasn't interested in.

She only cared about this Professor Matilda and why Jacob was so nervous about it. So, she only took a second to open the invitation,

and she saw two names, John Riley and Matilda Marks!

Seeing those that name, Elaine felt as if knives were stabbing her eyes. And Jacob found himself equally determined.

Aware of the impending confrontation, he clung to the last shred of hope. Within a mere moment of Elaine's poised action to open the invitation, he swiftly reached out and seized it from her grasp, akin to a venomous serpent striking its prey.

Snatching it away, he promptly lowered the driver's side window and hurled the invitation into the wind.

The Cullinan surged ahead on the highway, clocking speeds exceeding 100 kilometers per hour. With the invitation cast out of the window, it vanished in an instant.

Jacob surmised that within such a fleeting moment, Elaine would likely have not even glimpsed the finality of the contents.

With the invitation now flung from the vehicle, it was considered null and void.

In that moment, Elaine snapped back to reality from the abrupt chaos.

Witnessing the discarded invitation, she shook her head slowly and uttered with a smile, “Oh, Jacob, you truly are intriguing. It's merely an invitation after all. Isn't it customary to receive wedding invitations? What could you possibly be concealing from me?”

Jacob, thinking Elaine hadn't noticed the signature, hastily interjected, “Let me clarify. | have no affinity with the couple tying the knot, so attending is out of the question!”

Following this, Jacob added, “I never intended to accept the invitation in the first place. Stanley Finch from our club assumed the initiative to acquire it on my behalf and placed it in my car. Honestly, | had considered feigning ignorance to avoid any implications. There's no purpose in keeping an unwanted invitation, so why not discard it?”

Elaine's realization dawned as she nodded, remarking, “So, the invitation came from someone unfamiliar. It does seem peculiar for you to receive it. Are they soliciting contributions?”

Jacob slapped his thigh, conceding, “Exactly! What else could be their motive? It's merely a ploy for monetary gain.”

Elaine concurred, “This individual is truly shameless. Even at your age, they dare to extend an invitation, insinuating the possibility of

future reimbursements?”

With a sigh, Elaine continued, “Perhaps there's a glimmer of hope. Haven't you always entertained thoughts of divorce? Once free from me, you may find another suitor. Who knows, there might even be a wedding awaiting you.”

Jacob waved off the notion in embarrassment. “Enough, dear. Stop making fun of me. My prior mention of divorce was said in frustration, and you didn't entertain the notion. After three decades together, how could we possibly part ways?”

Unbeknownst to Jacob, Elaine was deliberately setting a trap. Though he had entertained thoughts of divorcing Elaine previously, her fierce demeanor always deterred him.

With Matilda waiting in the wings, he lacked the courage to initiate a separation. Now, with Matilda poised for marriage, the prospect of divorce would only result in losing both his wife and his social standing.

Under the circumstances, revisiting the topic of divorce was inconceivable. Even if Elaine entertained the idea, he couldn't possibly agree. Elaine sneered, “So, Jacob, you don't plan to divorce me?”

Jacob quickly responded, “We've been married for so long, dear. Divorce at our age would be quite absurd, don't you think? People might even laugh at us:

Elaine retorted sarcastically, “Hmm, then I'm puzzled. Matilda, at her age, has been divorced and remarried. Doesn't she fear being ridiculed?”

Jacob, almost reflexively, murmured, “Well, Matilda is a widow...”

As soon as the words left his lips, Jacob's face drained of color, and his heart, which had just begun to ease, sank once more. He asked nervously, “Darling, why did you bring her up?”

Elaine dropped the pretense and scolded angrily, “Jacob, don't play dumb with me! it's obvious you're trying to act oblivious. That invitation had her name printed on it clear as day. Did you think wouldn't notice?”

Jacob's heart raced, sinking deeper into despair. Trembling, he said, “Elaine, please listen to me. I didn't mean to hide anything from you. I

just didn't want to upset you. You know how sensitive you can be...”

Elaine turned to him, slapping him across the face. “Enough with your nonsense! Why hide things from me if it won't affect me?!”

She demanded angrily, “Tell me, when did Matilda return? When did you two reconnect?”

Jacob winced as Elaine's hand made contact with his cheek, feeling a mixture of anger and fear surge within him. With his daughter and

son-in-law absent from the car, there was no one to intervene in the escalating conflict. Furthermore, he hesitated to retaliate against

Elaine; the consequences of such an action would only worsen their situation, especially while navigating the highway. In a desperate attempt to explain himself, Jacob covered his face, his voice laced with sorrow. “Darling, you witnessed it...

Just now. | |

received a wedding invitation. Matilda, she... She's engaged. They're getting married next week. It's all innocent, I assure you. Why else |

would they send me an invitation? And I know her fiance, he's a professor at our Aurous Hill University of Finance and Economics...” |

“Innocent?” Elaine's voice cut through, her tone laced with accusation. “You shared countless moments with her thirty years ago. You, |

shameless as you are, even ventured into the woods on the lovers' slope of the school. Do you think I'm unaware? Your sordid history with

her speaks volumes, yet you have the audacity to claim innocence? Who in their right mind would believe such nonsense?!”

Jacob's discomfort grew, his words faltering. “You... Who told you... It's all a misunderstanding...” |

Elaine's hand struck again, her voice rising to a hysterical pitch. “Do you take me for a fool? Matilda confessed everything to me herself,

and yet you still deny it?”

Ignoring the pain, Jacob's nerves were frayed as he responded, “This... It can't be true... How would she even...”

Elaine scoffed, her voice dripping with disdain. “Remember, Matilda and I were close friends in college. She couldn't conceal a thing back then. Her innocence was palpable. And as for your escapades, I overheard enough in our dormitory. I spared you the humiliation of bringing it up until now, assuming she had moved on after going to the United States. But this invitation brought it all back, leaving a bitter taste in my mouth!”

Elaine's fists clenched, her anger palpable as she continued, “This incident lays bare your deception! You've never been honest with me!

Tell me, when did your affair with her begin? When did she return? Did you waste any time rekindling your affair with that wretched Matilda?”

Jacob, knowing he was coward, dared not respond. Instead, he shifted away, attempting to avoid another blow.

Seeing his silence, Elaine's fury escalated. Unbuckling her seatbelt in a frenzy, she lunged at Jacob, her hands like claws, ready to unleash her fury upon him.

“You despicable man! You dare to betray me? I won't stand for it!”

Chapter 5720

Elaine lived her life with fierce determination and unwavering confidence. Yet, beneath her strong exterior, she harbored deep insecurities and a sensitivity that consumed her. She was afraid of being judged and rejected by others, and her greatest source of self-doubt stemmed from Matilda.

During their school days, Matilda stood out from the crowd, drawing attention wherever she went. Being close to Elaine, she often attracted the attention of boys who had ulterior motives. They only sought Elaine's company in order to get closer to Matilda.

Coming from a poor rural family, Elaine always felt inferior in Matilda's presence. But this sense of inferiority fueled her determination to surpass her.

Elaine believed that the ultimate victory in her life would be stealing Jacob away from Matilda. She believed that by doing so, she could finally face Matilda as a triumphant winner.

However, after marrying Jacob, Elaine was subjected to constant mockery and ridicule from Jacob's grandmother. She was labeled as a conniving woman who used her body to climb the social ladder. Jacob's grandmother even went as far as to say that Elaine wasn't even worthy of comparing to Matilda's toenails. Over the years, Matilda became a sensitive and painful subject for Elaine.

Now, with the sudden realization that Matilda had returned to Aurous Hill without her knowledge, Elaine's sensitive side was immediately triggered. The overwhelming sense of inferiority ignited a fiery anger within her.

What made matters worse was the fact that her husband had been aware of Matilda's return but had kept it a secret from her. And so, she lost control.

Elaine didn't care about the consequences as she swung her arms wildly, attacking Jacob on the highway. In that moment, the highway became irrelevant. She fought without any technique or restraint, fueled solely by her rage and desperation.

Jacob couldn't believe that Elaine would actually assault him on the highway.

In order to avoid an accident, he abruptly hit the brakes and brought the car to a stop in the fast lane. He dodged Elaine's flailing hands and shouted, "Wife, please calm down! We're on the highway, you're risking your life!"

Elaine's eyes were bloodshot, her teeth gritted as she responded, "Risking my life?! What does life even mean to me? You've betrayed me with Matilda, so what's the point of my life anymore? Let's both die! Let the car crash and kill us!"

Jacob couldn't believe that Elaine, who had always threatened to fight him, was actually serious. He pleaded desperately, "Oh, wife! | really didn't do anything with her!"

At that moment, the sound of urgent braking came from behind. A small car desperately slowed down and swerved around their car from the right side.

The driver rolled down the window and cursed, "What the hell are you doing? Why did you stop on the highway?!"

still consumed by rage, Elaine rolled down her window and shouted angrily at the driver, "I don't want to live anymore! Why the hell did you brake? Why didn't you just crash into us and kill us?!"

The driver was taken aback, never having encountered someone like Elaine before. Instinctively, he responded, "If my car hit yours? If you die, | might die too... Idiot!"

Elaine immediately replied, "Perfect! Let's switch then. You drive this car and crash into us, okay? Or we can get out of the car and let you crash into us. I'm already tired of living. If you don't crash into me today, I'll make sure to sell this car and use the money to hire someone to kill you!"

The driver, who had seen all sorts of things, had never encountered someone as ruthless as Elaine.

Scared and trembling, he apologized, "I'm sorry, Auntie... It was my impulsive behavior. You're driving a Rolls-Royce, and I'm driving a

Honda Civic. Those red stickers on my car only cost fifty each. You don't need to stoop down to my level... It's all my fault, please don't take it to heart... | have a family to support, | really can't afford to offend someone like you. Please spare me..."

Elaine looked at the driver's nervous and panicked appearance, knowing that her aggressive tactics had once again succeeded. She didn't want to waste her time arguing with a stranger, so she simply scolded him, "Just get lost"

The driver, feeling pardoned, quickly said, "I'm leaving, I'm leaving!"

With that, he stepped on the gas pedal and slowly drove away.

Once the driver was gone, Elaine immediately refocused her attention on Jacob. She slammed her fist on the dashboard and angrily shouted, "Jacob, you better tell me the truth! When did Matilda come back?!"

Jacob found himself both shocked and frightened, his voice trembling as he tried to explain, "I...truly had no idea... simply encountered her at the University for the Elderly, where she was a professor, and realized she was back. When did she return? | swear, | had no knowledge of it whatsoever!"

"You're lying!" Elaine snapped through clenched teeth, her frustration evident. "Matilda has been absent for so many years, yet she didn't even reach out to you when she returned to Aurous Hill?"

With a guilty conscience, Jacob continued to fabricate his story, "I'm telling you the truth. Our meeting was entirely coincidental at the University for the Elderly. And as | mentioned before, she has a partner and they're on the brink of marriage. There's nothing between her and me!"

Furrowing her brow, Elaine retreated into her thoughts for a moment. Then, as if struck by sudden realization, she exclaimed, "I've got it"

Pointing an accusatory finger at Jacob, she seethed, "Throughout all the years we've been together, you've initiated divorce proceedings

against me twice. Once when | lost all my money in a card game, and the other when | got caught up in a pyramid scheme and ended up in jail”

As she recounted their tumultuous history, Elaine's voice turned cold and analytical, “Let's set aside the card game incident for now. It was admittedly my fault. But the MLM debacle caused me so much suffering. You were ready to divorce me the moment | was released. Since then, we've been sleeping in separate rooms, living more like strangers than a married couple. Tell me the truth, did Matilda return during the period | was incarcerated?”

Caught off guard, Jacob felt a sudden surge of fear, his body breaking out into a cold sweat.

Jacob's face turned pale with fear. He never expected Elaine to connect the dots in this way. He couldn't help but wonder, “Is this still Elaine? Does she possess such strong analytical abilities?”

However, Jacob didn't dare to disclose the timing, so he fibbed, his voice strained, “Darling, it's not as you think... During that period, Charlie and | were tirelessly searching Aurous Hill to find you. | had no opportunity to meet anyone else! If you doubt me, ask Charlie yourself when you arrive at the airport!”

Jacob was certain that Charlie would support his deception. After all, he had accompanied him when they went to welcome Matilda.

Charlie knew the situation and would keep the secret safe.

Unexpectedly, Elaine didn't buy into his words this time. She retorted icily, "Why should | ask you? If | have questions, I'll ask Matilda! Isn't she about to get married? Fine! On her wedding day, I'll go there in person and confront her about trying to seduce my husband, Jacob!”

Jacob paled with dread!

If Elaine disrupted Matilda and Mr. Riley's wedding, with Matilda's son and possibly some old classmates present, wouldn't their secret be exposed instantly?

Furthermore, if Elaine indeed caused a scene at the wedding, she would have no dignity left to stay in Aurous Hill thereafter.

Terrified, Jacob could only implore, “Please, my dear, trust me this time! Let's not say anything, let's just focus on the fact that they're getting married. There's no possibility between Matilda and me! Just by looking at that, you can see I'm innocent!”

Elaine's anger flared, “If Matilda returned during my time in jail, it's been ages! What could have happened in all that time? Just because she's getting married now doesn't absolve her of any past involvement with you! Maybe you two got together while | was detained, and when you wanted a divorce, she moved on and married someone else!”

Jacob's heart trembled in fear. “Is Elaine channeling Sherlock Holmes? Is this the case solved?”

Seeing Jacob's silence, Elaine's suspicions deepened. She erupted in fury, clawing at Jacob while hurling insults, “Alright! Your silence confirms it, doesn't it? Jacob, you heartless scoundrel! While | was suffering at the hands of your mother and Wendy in jail, with my legs broken, you were out there, having an affair with Matilda! Look, I'll tear your face apart and gouge out your eyes!”

With that, Elaine descended into a frenzy, assaulting Jacob relentlessly.

Jacob felt searing pain across his face. Desperate, he contemplated fleeing the car when suddenly, a siren blared behind them. Then, a voice over the loudspeaker barked, “What's that vehicle doing, blocking the highway?! Pull over to the emergency lane immediately!”

Hearing the approaching police, Jacob wasted no time. Whether it was a traffic officer or a civilian, he flung open the car door and bolted.

When he saw a police car closing in, he dashed toward it, wailing for help, “Officer, please help!”

The traffic police swiftly halted in front of him, advancing to inquire, "What's the matter?!"

Jacob sobbed, "My wife wants to gouge out my eyes..."

"Wife?" The traffic officer frowned instinctively, "Did you two stop and brawl on the highway?"

Jacob whimpered, "She attacked me, but I didn't retaliate..."

Meanwhile, Elaine also emerged from the car, rushing to the traffic police,

"Officer, don't believe his lies! He cheated on his ex-lover and cheated on me! I'll fight him!"

The traffic policeman, torn between exasperation and amusement, sternly stated,

"You both seem to treat the highway like your home! If you don't value your lives, others won't either!"

Then, turning to Jacob, he instructed, "Bring the car keys here. Our colleagues will escort you to the police station. Follow our car and accept the consequences!"