

The Formidable Son-In-Law: The Charismatic Lucas Gray

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: Troublemaking Clowns

Chapter 299: Troublemaking Clowns

“Yes, Lucas!” Jordan had long been waiting impatiently at the side for a chance to strike. As soon as he heard Lucas’s instructions, his eyes instantly lit up, and he charged toward the three of them like an aggressive cheetah.

Kyle was a haughty scion himself, so his bodyguards were naturally similar to him. After hearing what Lucas said, they began to get into a defensive stance. But before they could react, they were hit hard in their stomachs by a powerful strike.

“Ah!”

“Argh!”

“Waaa!”

Along with three miserable cries, three figures instantly flew away from Lucas and landed heavily on the ground around five meters away.

The entire process took less than two seconds!

Some of the surrounding onlookers immediately shrieked, while many were still dumbfounded because everything had happened in the blink of an eye. Before they could get a clear glimpse of what happened, Kyle and his strong bodyguards had already been flung far away like rag dolls.

“What... what happened?”

“Oh my god! Kyle Kingston actually got beaten up!”

“Who exactly is that young man... How bold of him! That young man beside him has such terrifying combat skills! I just blinked for a second and missed everything! Can someone tell me how exactly he managed to kick those three men so far away at the same time?”

"I... I just saw him raise his leg, and afterward, Kyle Kingston and his bodyguards were flung far away! He's unbelievably fast!"

...

Gisele, who had looked rather smug just now, gasped in disbelief. After seeing this scene, she almost couldn't believe her eyes.

Kyle may be lousy, but what about his personal bodyguards? Are they wastrels who can't take a beating too?

No, impossible!

This just means the young following that ignorant and ungrateful bastard is much better at fighting than Kyle's bodyguards!

It also means that the real identity of that man I thought was just decent-looking but poor might really be astonishing!

While Gisele was overwhelmed by the shock, Lucas glanced at her coldly, sending a chill down her spine and making her shudder.

When she thought of what she had just said to Lucas and how she had instigated Kyle to deal with him, she was overwhelmed with fear and regret. Her legs turned into jelly, and she fell to the ground. *Oh dear! I've offended someone I shouldn't have!*

But Lucas merely glanced at Gisele before turning away and ignoring her.

In Lucas's opinion, Gisele, Kyle, and others like them were just annoying clowns out to cause trouble. He ignored them because all he wanted to do now was go inside Club Splendor and rescue Gisele.

Lucas and Jordan walked directly to the entrance of Club Splendor, but several security guards stopped them. "Excuse me. Please show your invitation cards."

"Invitation cards?" Jordan frowned. "Isn't this club an entertainment joint? Why do we need an invitation?"

The security guards looked at Lucas and Jordan, and the respect in their eyes turned into contempt. They said impatiently, "The entire Club Splendor has been booked for a grand auction tonight. No one is allowed to enter without an invitation! Please get out of the way and make way for the distinguished guests!"

Jordan was furious and was about to say something to the snobbish security guards when they suddenly heard a derisive voice coming from behind.

“Hey, I was wondering who it is. Isn’t this the famous live-in son-in-law of the Carters? Do you think Club Splendor is like a roadside restaurant you can enter as and when you please?”

“The Carters? Is there such a family in Orange County? Why haven’t I heard of them before?”

“Hah, it’s just a lowly third-rate family that almost went bankrupt recently. It’s not strange that you haven’t heard of them. The puzzling thing is that this shameless live-in son-in-law actually still has the guts to show up here. Doesn’t he know that this isn’t a place for him?”

“Hahaha. Maybe he’s just ignorant and fearless!”

...

These people were taunting and mocking Lucas. But among all of them, the person who spoke the most was someone with whom Lucas was the most familiar.

Lucas sneered and thought, *Why are there so many self-righteous fools who like going around making a nuisance?*

He turned his head and saw three young men walking over from the parking lot not far away.

The young man standing on the far left was about 23 or 24 years old, and he was now staring at Lucas with a resentful expression and a sinister gaze. If the look in his eyes could kill, he would have probably pierced Lucas countless times by now.

This young man was none other than Tristan Parker, from one of the most powerful families in LA, whom Lucas had met before.

When Lena Sawyer had invited Lucas to lunch at a restaurant called The Loft previously, Tristan had appeared out of nowhere and claimed to be Lena’s husband. He had even tried to teach Lucas a lesson.

Of course, his plan of pretending to be impressive ended up backfiring, as Lucas had knocked both his bodyguards away and even made him kneel down to apologize to him.

Lucas didn’t know the other two young men beside Tristan, but he reckoned they should also be rich second-generation heirs of prestigious families since they could hang out with Tristan.

Lucas glanced at him and said indifferently, “Seems like your knees are not hurting anymore, so you’ve gotten more brazen, huh, Mr. Parker?”

Tristan was the first person who started mocking him just now and also the one who mocked him the most, for fear that his friends wouldn't know how 'lowly' Lucas was.

"You!" When he heard Lucas suddenly mention the matter of him kneeling in the restaurant and being forced to apologize to Lucas in public, he immediately felt insulted and humiliated again.

He even vaguely felt a faint, painful sensation in his knees, as if the feeling he felt that day had returned.

The moment he met Lucas's eyes full of indifference, Tristan instantly recalled how Lucas had kicked away both his bodyguards effortlessly and even pinned him firmly to the ground. Regardless of how he had struggled, he hadn't been able to break free.

Yes, he was now full of fear toward Lucas!

In fact, Tristan's knees even began to tremble uncontrollably.

A rich scion beside him seemed to notice the horror within Tristan. He glowered at Lucas hostilely and suddenly said, "Tristan, did this person bully you in the past? Don't worry. I'll get back at him for you!"

Chapter 300: Invitation Card

The person who spoke had a buzz cut and was wearing a tight-fitting sports singlet that exposed his muscles, which were unlike that of typical men. It seemed that he should be a frequent gym goer.

The fact that he worked out regularly was the reason he wanted to taunt Lucas, who had offended his friend, after seeing how lanky he was. He thought that Lucas definitely wouldn't be strong, so he tried to intimidate him with his muscular build.

After hearing what the muscular man with a buzz cut said, the other man laughed and said, "Tristan, rest assured. I'm so muscular, I can easily beat this guy up!"

This man's features were similar to that of the muscular man. But he was less brawny and merely toned. It seemed that they were siblings.

But after Tristan heard the supportive encouragement of his friends, his expression changed again.

His friend was indeed a fitness fanatic, who pumped iron all the time and was also the most muscular one in his social circle. During their outings, he would often attract the attention of the crowd and have compliments showered on him.

But Tristan was well aware that his muscles were only for show and his combat skills were actually inferior to a proper bodyguard.

On the other hand, Lucas had the ability to effortlessly send his bodyguards flying with a single kick and render them immobile. This fact alone was terrifying enough.

In short, there was no way the three of them could do anything to Lucas!

After a series of changes in his expression, Tristan gritted his teeth and said, "Forget it. Let's go and get on with our business. Once we're done, we'll come back to settle scores with him!"

Since Tristan already said so, the muscular man could only say with great regret, "Okay then. We'll let him off for now. That'll save me the hassle of getting all sweaty before the auction starts."

The few of them glowered fiercely at Lucas with warning gazes before walking past him to go to the entrance of Club Splendor.

The security guards who had stopped Lucas just now were all smiling respectfully at Tristan and his friends. But they nevertheless requested to see their invitation cards. "We hope to seek your cooperation. Please show us your invitation card."

The muscular man and Tristan each took out a golden invitation card from their breast pockets and handed it to the security guard. But the man who seemed to be the younger brother of the muscular man didn't do anything.

The security guard leader received the invitation cards respectfully with both hands, and after some careful scrutiny, he returned the invitation cards to them politely. "Mr. Callum Owen, Mr. Tristan Parker, there's nothing wrong with your invitation cards. You may each bring yourself plus one. May I ask if this gentleman next to you is with you two?"

The muscular man, Callum Owen, nodded arrogantly. "Yes, he's my younger brother, Elijah Owen."

The security guards hurriedly greeted them respectfully and invited them in for some rest, treating them as distinguished guests.

Callum took the invitation card back and then suddenly said in an extremely loud voice, "Speaking of which, the auction here in Club Splendor tonight is very important. You guys have to tighten security and not let those hooligans who are unqualified to enter the club have a chance to sneak in!"

Then he turned around and gave Lucas a provocative glance. It was obvious what he was implying.

Since these security guards were arranged to check the invitations at the entrance, they were naturally not fools and were smart enough to catch Callum's hint immediately.

"Rest assured, Mr. Owen. We'll definitely check every invitation card properly and make sure that no hooligans can sneak in!"

Callum, Elijah, and Tristan looked at Lucas with smug and triumphant gazes as if they had won a battle. Then they entered through the glass doors.

Upon seeing this scene, Lucas and Jordan frowned slightly.

It turned out that even prestigious figures like Callum and Tristan had to have their invitation cards checked carefully before they were permitted entry. This just went to show that the rules at the auction in Club Splendor tonight had to be very strict. Or rather, the organizers of the auction had to be from a formidable background, so much so that even those scions dared not offend them and had no choice but to let the security guards check their invitations in accordance with the rules.

"Lucas, it seems it won't be that easy to get into Club Splendor tonight," Jordan whispered to Lucas.

In fact, if they used brute force, they would be able to enter even the heavily guarded Capitol Building if they wanted to, let alone a club guarded by just a few bodyguards!

But the purpose of their trip wasn't to force their way into Club Splendor but to find Grace and rescue her. If this matter escalated, it would affect Lucas and some of his following plans.

At this moment, a security guard saw the two of them and noticed that they had been standing near the entrance without moving for a long time, so he went forward to chase them away.

"What are you still blocking the entrance for? If you don't have an invitation card, hurry up and get lost! Don't get in the way of others! Do you hear me? What are you waiting for? Scram!" the security guard said arrogantly.

A trace of murderous aura flashed in Jordan's eyes, and he suddenly turned around, wanting to teach the security guard with a foul mouth a hard lesson.

"Shut up!" At this moment, a familiar voice full of anger sounded from behind them.

Bruce Hale was holding a cane made of rosewood with some gold details, which was some sort of a status symbol, and walking over at a pace that seemed a little quick for his age. He seemed furious. "Fool, how dare you stop and insult Mr. Gray? Do you have a death wish?"

The security guards were shocked and hurriedly bowed to Bruce. "Mr. Hale!"

But Bruce, the head of the Hales, simply ignored the security guards and quickly walked toward Lucas. Everyone watched in shock as Bruce bent forward a little and said to Lucas with the utmost respect, "Mr. Gray, had I known you were coming, I would have asked my chauffeur to pick you up and take you here!"

Everyone was taken aback by his words!

Everyone knew that the 70-odd-year-old Bruce, the helmsman of the Hales, one of the four major families in Orange County, had been a member of the upper-class circle for numerous years. It was safe to say that nearly no one in high society could compare to him in terms of age and seniority. Even the heads of the other families would have to show him great respect.

But why would such an esteemed and prestigious figure, who commanded great power in Orange County, bow slightly to Lucas, speak to him with so much respect, and even go as far as to chauffeur him over personally? This was way too shocking!

The security guards who had hollered at Lucas and told him to get lost couldn't help but break out in cold sweat now!

If they still didn't know that there had to be something extraordinary about Lucas's identity, they would be complete idiots!

"Mr... Mr. Gray, we're sorry. We... didn't do it on purpose!" the few security guards stammered, their foreheads covered in cold sweat.

Although they had been hired by the Wallaces, the four top families still showed each other adequate respect on the surface. Once Bruce called the Wallaces and informed them that the security guards had offended him, the Wallaces would definitely punish them severely!

At this moment, Jordan asked with raised brows and a derisive smile, "So, do you still want to see our invitation cards now?"

"No, no, no, of course not!" The security guards immediately shook their heads profusely and then exclaimed respectfully, "This way, please!"

Lucas couldn't be bothered to care about these small fries. He simply walked straight into the club while Bruce followed closely behind.

Only after entering the spacious hall did Lucas suddenly ask, "What's the background of the auction tonight?"

After looking around and ensuring that there was no one else near them, Bruce said softly, "Actually, the auction is just a pretext. They're not putting up items for auction tonight. Rather, they're putting up people for auction, and beautiful women at that!"

Chapter 301: Brazen

Lucas's pupils constricted abruptly. *Putting up beautiful women for auction? Aren't they selling humans like objects then?*

They were actually brazenly committing such an illegal and immoral act in public. It seemed that they had no regard for the law at all!

Lucas immediately thought of Grace, who had been abducted and brought to Club Splendor. He reckoned that the reason they had done this wasn't simple, and it was very likely that she might be one of the beauties going to be put up for auction tonight!

The moment he thought of this possibility, Lucas was awash with rage and a desire to kill. "How dare the Wallaces do such a thing?!"

Bruce hurriedly shook his head. "The auction venue may belong to the Wallaces, but as far as I know, this auction is held by the Kingstons."

"The Kingstons? Hmph!" With a cold and terrifying gaze in his eyes, Lucas snapped, "It seems I have to teach them a hard lesson this time, or else they might think I'm a pushover!"

Bruce blinked, unsure of what Lucas meant by that. *Is he... referring to the Kingstons? But Lucas and the Kingstons... don't seem to have had any dealings?*

But Jordan, standing behind Lucas, immediately understood what Lucas meant, and his eyes were full of excitement for some action.

The Kingstons indeed didn't seem to have much to do with Lucas, but he knew that the Kingstons were subordinate to the Huttons!

The person who had sneakily taken photos of Lucas and Charlotte at the amusement park back then was sent by the Kingstons.

The person who had spread the news of Lucas being an abandoned member of the Huttons and that the Stardust Corporation had long been disowned by the Huttons was also instigated by the Kingstons.

The Kingstons were also the ones who had secretly incited many families who owned major corporations and enterprises to create trouble for the Stardust Corporation.

They were just following orders given by the Huttons to suppress Lucas and make sure that he would forever be trapped in the doldrums in Orange County while watching the Stardust Corporation, which he valued the most, go bust.

They were on an invisible battlefield because the Kingstons had been doing these things secretly behind the scenes. If not for the conscientious and quick-witted people Jordan had sent, it would have been very difficult to find any evidence against them.

But just because they didn't openly harm him didn't mean that there wasn't any anger.

If Lucas hadn't responded in time on several occasions and resolved their insidious, scheming tricks, they would have probably gotten what they wanted!

Thus, Jordan genuinely detested the Kingstons for their unruly behavior and the fact that they were leveraging the power of the Huttons to be so arrogant.

But at this moment, Lucas thought of another problem.

The auction today was organized by the Kingstons, and women were going to be put up for auction like they were inanimate objects. Moreover, there was also a mysterious organization that regularly supplied beautiful women to the Ocean Bathhouse, which used to be controlled by the Taylors.

Is there a connection between these two matters?

Do the Kingstons play an important role in the supply chain of beautiful women for the illegal business formerly run in the bathhouse?

In fact, ever since Lucas last communicated with Preston and learned that even the Taylors were clueless about the identity of the organization that provided them with the beautiful women for the business, Lucas had actually already developed some suspicions.

The Taylors were one of the four top families of Orange County, and the fact that even they couldn't find any clues about the origin of the mysterious organization they had worked with for so many years just went to show that they probably weren't from this county. Moreover, they were most likely far more powerful than the four most powerful families in Orange County.

The most likely possibility was that they were one of the eight great families in DC or the top families in the state since they could have so much power and carry out the business with so much confidentiality.

However, the businesses of the eight great families were massive, and they had monopolized many key industries. They generated a massive amount of profit every

single day, and it would be an understatement to say that they were as rich as a country.

Thus, although providing beautiful women was a profitable industry for most, the profits were paltry in the eyes of the eight great families in the capital. Besides, it was too distasteful, and it would make them the laughing stock of the other families and cause them to be mocked for being so lowly that they would make such filthy money.

But such a profitable business meant differently to less prestigious families.

Of course, at present, these were just Lucas's conjectures, and there was no point in speculating further without any concrete evidence.

Besides, in addition to these famous prestigious families, there were also some deeply hidden families who kept extremely low profiles. They were possible suspects too, making the range of speculation even wider.

Lucas narrowed his eyes as he looked at the ostentatious decor of the hall and the guests gathered in pairs or groups of threes he saw through the glass windows.

He said softly to Jordan, "Go look for Grace."

Jordan acknowledged the order and immediately got to it. Soon, he disappeared from the hall.

Jordan had previously met Grace at Logan Hale's villa, so Lucas was not at all worried that Jordan would get the wrong person.

Bruce watched carefully from the side, but he remained silent. Being a smart person, he could tell from Lucas's question that the reason Lucas suddenly came to Club Splendor today was not for the auction but for another agenda.

Of course, Bruce had already pledged allegiance to Lucas together with his family, so he naturally wouldn't say anything else. Even if a conflict broke out between Lucas and someone in the club later, he would still stand firmly on Lucas's side.

"How is the relationship between your family and the Wallaces?"

Bruce was shocked to hear his question. Although he didn't know why Lucas asked him this out of the blue, he nevertheless answered conscientiously, "The Hales and the Wallaces only engage in some ordinary business dealings, and a few distant relatives of the younger generation are married to the Wallaces. But we're not that close to them. It's mostly the same for the four major families. We do have some connections, but we're restrained by the scruples we have for each other, so we tend not to get too close."

"I'm here at the auction today only because I received an invitation from the Kingstons and couldn't think of an appropriate reason to turn them down, so... I-I absolutely have no intention to participate!"

While speaking, Bruce felt that something was amiss, and he immediately broke into a cold sweat.

He knew that Lucas was most disgusted by businesses revolving around vices such as gambling and drugs, as well as prostitution and human trafficking, which he hated the most! If Lucas misunderstood that he was at the auction to buy some beautiful women, Bruce would be in deep trouble!

"Good that you don't!" Lucas finally looked less austere, but he warned again, "You know what my temper is like. I may have handed the businesses of your family back to you to manage, but if I find out one day that you've gotten involved in certain industries I hate, I'll take them back from you immediately!"

Bruce's heart ricocheted, and he hurriedly said, "Rest assured, Mr. Gray. My family and I will eternally remember your admonishments, and we will never get involved in those industries again!"

Lucas finally nodded. "Take me to the auction hall now!"

Chapter 302: Standing Up For You

Soon, Bruce led Lucas to a spacious auction hall situated in the basement floor of Club Splendor.

The auction hall was indeed very secretive. Along the way, they had to pass through several labyrinths of passages and doors guarded by professional security personnel before they finally reached the venue.

Lucas thought, *No wonder the Kingstons chose to hold the auction of beautiful women here in Club Splendor that belongs to the Wallaces. They're probably aware that they should keep their sordid business away from the public eye. No wonder the security at the entrance was so tight.*

If this matter was exposed, the Wallaces and the Kingstons would be in deep trouble!

Although the auction had yet to begin officially, many guests had already gathered in the auction hall. Apart from a small number of people from top families in Orange County whom Lucas had met before, there were many fresh faces.

The eagle-eyed Bruce looked around the hall and then whispered to Lucas, "Apart from some top families of Orange County, many members of wealthy families from other big cities like New York City are among the guests here tonight. Those from families of lower statuses are not even worthy of being invited."

Lucas nodded. *Seems that these fresh faces are members of the top families from other cities.*

In fact, after seeing the fleet of luxury cars worth hundreds of thousands to several million dollars each lined up at the entrance, Lucas already had a rough idea of how wealthy the guests of the auction tonight had to be.

"Hey, Lucas! You're here too!" At this moment, a familiar voice with a tone of surprise came from behind them.

Lucas turned around and saw Lena strutting toward him gracefully. She was clad in an exquisitely-tailored red fishtail gown with a small and dazzling diamond clutch in hand.

She had some makeup on her face, which was appropriate for a ballroom convention and made her look elegant and dignified. Coupled with a complete set of jewelry consisting of sparkling teardrop-shaped diamond earrings, a necklace, and a headpiece, Lena was particularly ravishing and eye-catching tonight.

She was gazing at Lucas with joy in her big, beautiful eyes. Only when she almost reached him did she realize that Bruce was standing near him.

After taking a look at him, she got a great fright.

The esteemed head of the Hale family was actually standing half a step behind Lucas with his back slightly bent forward, looking somewhat respectful and subservient to Lucas.

In fact, Bruce's behavior was actually not that obvious, but Lena had studied micro expressions in psychology when she was pursuing her education abroad. So she could tell from Bruce's subtle expressions and actions that he was deferential and reverent toward Lucas!

This immediately made Lena extremely curious.

"Mr. Hale, you're here too!" Despite her shock and curiosity, Lena still remembered her manners and etiquette.

She held up the corner of her dress and did a little curtsy to bow to Bruce in an elegant and ladylike manner.

Bruce chuckled. "It's you, Lena! It's been some time since we last met, and you're all grown up now! You're getting prettier and prettier! Is your father, Ethan, here today?"

Perhaps because Bruce was giving her a compliment in front of Lucas, Lena somehow blushed coyly for a moment before answering with a smile, "My father has gone on a business trip abroad and couldn't make it back in time. So he asked me to attend the function today on his behalf, and at the same time, get an eye-opener for myself too."

In fact, Lena had interacted with very few people of this circle because of how overprotective Ethan had been of her. She had lived a carefree life overseas as well.

But since the last time Lena and Ethan had a tiff over the matter of her marriage to Tristan, Ethan reflected for a long time and then decided that he should let Lena socialize more often and brush up on her interpersonal social skills. He wanted her to understand that the lives of wealthy families were not always as glamorous as they seemed to be on the surface and that the heirs and heiresses of such families did not enjoy absolute freedom to do whatever they wanted.

While they were chatting, they unknowingly became the focus of attention of many people in the auction hall.

On the one hand, it was because Lena was a stunning beauty bound to steal the limelight wherever she went. On the other hand, it was naturally because of Bruce, the head of one of the four top families of Orange County.

Most people didn't know who Lucas was, and there were also many who were curious as to why Lucas could stand next to Bruce. So there were many curious gazes cast on Lucas.

But Tristan, Callum, and Elijah, who came in before them, were not one of those staring at Lucas with harmless curiosity.

Tristan was standing near them and glaring daggers at Lucas and Lena. In particular, when he saw Lena, who had always been harsh to him, beaming with joy and smiling at Lucas, his expression was terrifyingly sinister and gloomy.

"How did that punk get in?" Callum was sullen too. He had previously instructed the security guards at the entrance not to let Lucas in, but now that Lucas was there, it was a clear insult to Callum because his instructions had been defied.

"Hmph, that bitch must have brought him in! Atrocious!" Tristan gnashed his teeth.

Ever since the previous incident at The Loft where Lena had mercilessly said several times in front of so many people that she wasn't interested in him and didn't want to marry him but then went on to stand on Lucas's side and go against him by calling her

bodyguards over to stop him, Tristan had developed a strong resentment and hatred toward Lena as well.

“Bitch? Do you mean Lena, the daughter of the richest man in Orange County, Ethan Sawyer? She’s the one who’s engaged to you but has been refusing to come back from abroad, right? Is she the one in the red gown over there?” Elijah asked in a gossipy manner.

Tristan nodded sullenly. “Yes, it’s her! She’s clearly engaged to me since a long time ago, but she’s been avoiding me like the plague and refusing to see me! Yet she’s so nice to that live-in son-in-law of the Carters, and she even scolded me for him! They’re a pair of adulterers!”

Tristan spat on the ground, and his face, which was usually handsome, twisted into a grimace.

Elijah patted Tristan on his shoulder with some empathy and sympathy. No man would be able to tolerate such a thing.

“Rest assured. I’ll go deal with that punk and stand up for you now!” he said as though they shared a common enemy.

Then Elijah walked toward Lucas.

Chapter 303: Your Rights

“Wait!” Tristan hurriedly grabbed the arm of Callum, who had been his best friend since they were children. Despite feeling aggrieved, he said truthfully, “Don’t underestimate that punk. He has extremely good combat skills. Previously, he sent two of my personal bodyguards flying several meters away with a single kick, and they couldn’t get back up on their feet for a long time. If not because of that, I wouldn’t have suffered such a great loss. Callum, don’t mistake him for a weakling!”

“Huh? Is that punk really that impressive?”

The muscular Callum was skeptical about it because Lucas was much leaner than him, so he doubted Tristan’s claim that Lucas managed to kick Tristan’s bodyguards several meters away and render them immobile.

The bodyguards hired by top families like theirs were not incompetent weaklings but experts hired from professional bodyguard agencies at hefty prices!

Of course, Callum was still mostly surprised and didn’t suspect that Tristan was deliberately putting him down by making Lucas seem impressive.

In that case, it seemed that Lucas Gray was indeed not a simple person!

“Heh, I can make him get lost from here obediently without having to get physical with him!” Elijah sneered and then walked toward Lucas and the others with him.

Since Bruce was an esteemed and prestigious figure, there were naturally many people who kept approaching him to try and strike up a conversation with him.

Irrked by the hypocrisy of the strangers, Lucas couldn't be bothered to entertain them and went straight to a relatively quiet place with fewer people. Lena naturally followed Lucas.

As soon as they sat down, Elijah walked up to the two of them, pointed at Lucas, and hollered, “I saw you forcing your way in at the entrance without an invitation just now! You're just the live-in son-in-law of an insignificant family who sponges off of your wife. You're not qualified to sit here at all! Tell me, how exactly did you manage to sneak in?”

Elijah's voice was extremely loud and clear, and his tone was aggressive as well, thus immediately attracting the attention of many people in the auction hall.

Due to the special nature of the auction held in Club Splendor today, the invited guests were mostly from wealthy top families of various big cities. Even those who came from slightly inferior families wouldn't receive an invitation at all, let alone the live-in son-in-law of a small family of Orange County.

Many of them frowned in disdain, especially after seeing the clothes Lucas, whom Elijah was pointing at, was wearing.

All the scions and members of wealthy families present at the auction were clad in designer suits worth at least tens of thousands of dollars each. And they paired them with exorbitantly priced luxury watches to flaunt their wealth and status.

But Lucas was wearing a simple and casual outfit, which was obviously made with cheap fabric and poor workmanship, in their opinion.

They thought that Elijah's accusations were definitely right and that Lucas had to be someone of a lowly status who had somehow managed to sneak into the auction hall.

Many of them had clear displeasure in their eyes. All of them were of noble status, yet they had to breathe the same air and be on an equal footing at the auction with a penniless man who had somehow sneaked in. This made many of them who had a sense of superiority feel extremely offended.

Seeing that Lucas had almost become the public enemy of the audience because of his words, Elijah was naturally extremely smug and was just waiting for the Kingstons, who

were the organizers of the auction, to kick Lucas out when they found him to be an eyesore.

But Lena was enraged. She sprung up from her seat to stand in front of Lucas and glowered at Elijah. "It's stated clearly on the invitation card that every invited guest is entitled to bring two more guests with them! He's my guest. Is that not allowed?"

Many people frowned.

There was indeed such a clause stated on the invitation cards. But due to the limited number of invitations, each family would basically receive only one invitation card. But it would seem a little too strict if only one other member from each family was allowed to attend the auction. But if there was no limit on the number of extra guests, the auction would be too crowded. So the organizers had decided to settle on this rule.

Elijah sneered and said confidently, "Of course I'm aware of that clause, but it comes with a restriction. In order to avoid making the auction seem low-class and prevent just any Tom, Dick, and Harry from entering, the organizers deliberately specified that the invited guests could only bring members of their own family or a non-family individual whose personal assets exceed fifteen million dollars!"

"Miss Lena Sawyer, this person is obviously not a Sawyer but a live-in son-in-law of a third-rate family that has been on the verge of collapse several times. Therefore, he doesn't meet the criteria to be your guest. Even though you're the daughter of the richest man in Orange County, you're not allowed to bring him in!"

After hearing what Elijah said, many seemed to come to a sudden realization and began to look at Lucas gloatingly with greater contempt, while Lena bit her lower lip tightly with a sullen expression.

Elijah wasn't making things up because there was indeed such a restriction.

Moreover, if Lucas was really just the live-in son-in-law of a lowly family that had been on the verge of bankruptcy several times, it would indeed be impossible for him to own assets worth fifteen million dollars, much less have the right to be here!

At this moment, Lucas suddenly chuckled. "Are you that certain that I don't have fifteen million dollars?"

From the moment Elijah came over to confront and accuse him, Lucas had been keeping a straight face and remaining seated as if he was not the person Elijah was trying to chase out. He was acting as though the matter didn't concern him at all.

At this moment, he finally spoke.

In everyone else's opinion, Lucas was being overly composed, and some even began to speculate whether he had some unexpected trump cards that gave him such confidence. Of course, there were also some who felt that he was putting up a pretense.

Elijah glanced at Lucas in disdain and said derogatorily, "Do you think we're talking about monopoly money here? Even many descendants of top families can't afford to take out so much money!

"You're just the son-in-law of a family that's about to face bankruptcy. Oh, I heard that you've even been kicked out, so you can't rely on them anymore. If you can prove that you have fifteen million dollars, I'll give you my head!

"Also, you're just a lowly and penniless person. What is your motive for trying so hard to force your way into this auction? The organizers of the auction should do a thorough investigation on this punk and make sure he doesn't sneak around to cause trouble!"

After saying this loudly, Elijah glanced at Lucas provocatively with eyes full of malice.

Chapter 304: Checking Assets

Elijah actually intended for the Kingstons, the organizers of the auction, to hear his last sentence.

It wasn't Elijah's first time attending such a secretive auction like the one today, so he knew what the greatest taboo for the organizers of such an auction was.

They were naturally afraid that some people with evil intentions might sneak in and expose the sordid business that went on here.

Indeed, soon after Elijah spoke, a man in his fifties dressed in a tuxedo slowly walked out from behind the curtain of the auction hall.

His face was extremely solemn, and he had his lips pressed tightly together, looking dignified and intimidating.

As soon as the guests in the auction hall saw this man, they immediately seemed astonished and began whispering among themselves.

"It's Russell Duncan! I've only seen him in pictures! I heard that he specializes in handling all matters related to the auctions held by the Kingstons, but he usually works behind the scenes and rarely appears in public!"

"Yeah! My father was the one who told me about Russell Duncan. I finally got to see him in person today!"

“It seems the Kingstons really take this auction tonight very seriously. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have sent Russell Duncan to personally keep an eye on the situation here. Hehe, it seems that there must be some valuable beauties up for auction tonight!”

“Mr. Russell Duncan has already intervened. It looks like that lowly and shameless punk is definitely going to get chased out!”

“Hmph, he deserves to be kicked out. He ought to have realized that this isn’t a place for him!”

...

Russell’s sudden appearance immediately caused a huge commotion in the hall.

Elijah looked at Lucas with malicious intentions and suddenly mocked, “Punk, you’re dead meat! Russell Duncan is not to be trifled with. If you can’t give him a valid reason later, the consequences will be far more severe than just getting kicked out. Hehe!”

With a straight face, Lucas glanced at Elijah indifferently and even stood up fearlessly, as if Elijah wasn’t referring to him at all.

Elijah was extremely disappointed and displeased with Lucas’s composed reaction as he cursed under his breath. “Hmph, punk, go on. Keep pretending! Let’s see if you can keep it up later!”

Lena looked rather worried when she saw Russell walking toward them.

Although she usually stayed out of the affairs between those major families, she had heard of Russell’s name before.

In addition to his meticulousness and conscientiousness, another reason that Russell was put in charge of handling all matters related to the Kingstons’ auctions was that he was very resourceful and authoritative. When necessary, he would be ruthless. So he had managed to occupy an important role in the Kingston family for many years.

Keeping his eyes fixed in front, Russell walked toward Lucas and said, “Sir, I’m Russell Duncan, and I’m in charge of this auction tonight. I understand that you indeed entered this venue without an invitation, so please cooperate and provide valid proof of assets.”

Russell’s tone was very polite, and he didn’t get influenced by Elijah’s words and didn’t treat Lucas like someone of a lower class who came to cause trouble.

Of course, if Lucas really couldn’t prove that he had 15 million dollars in assets and was found out to have a questionable motive, Russell wouldn’t be so cordial toward him.

“Uncle Russell, he’s my friend. Can you be a little more accommodating?” Lena put her palms together and pleaded.

Most people would more or less give in to the request of a beautiful girl like Lena, especially since she was the daughter of the richest man in Orange County.

Unfortunately, Russell didn’t waver and simply said expressionlessly, “My apologies, Miss Sawyer, but these are the rules of the auction. Any accompanying guest of an invited guest who does not belong to a first-rate family must undergo an asset eligibility check. Otherwise, I will have to send someone to ask this gentleman to leave immediately.”

Faced with the strict and impartial Russell, Lena could only panic inwardly.

Although she had witnessed Lucas win over 15 million dollars from Tony Zander within just ten minutes in Little Atlantis City, she heard later that there was internal strife in Little Atlantis City and that Tony had died in a power struggle. So she didn’t know if Lucas had obtained that sum of money or not.

Besides, even if Lucas had gotten the money, it had been more than two weeks since that incident, and he might have already spent it. She thought that it was unlikely that he would keep such a large sum of money in his bank account for others to conduct checks on!

Even she, the daughter of the richest man in Orange County, didn’t have 15 million dollars sitting in her bank account!

This rule was clearly meant to make things hard for others!

“Uncle Russell, this rule is clearly too overbearing...”

Lena frowned and wanted to continue to say something, but Russell’s cold and emotionless voice interrupted her. “Miss Sawyer, this is the rule of the Kingstons’ auctions. Please don’t interfere with our standard protocol! If you continue to do so, don’t blame me for asking you to leave now despite your father’s status.”

Russell didn’t move his brow at all, but the overbearing dominance in his tone was self-explanatory.

Since Russell already said so, Lena naturally couldn’t say anything else. She could only look at Lucas apologetically with some worry in her eyes.

Lucas suddenly developed an interest in Russell, whom he didn’t take seriously at first.

Russell was domineering, but he didn't put on airs or compel others by throwing his weight around. Instead, he was unusually austere and strictly went by the book with no room for compromise.

Lucas believed that Russell was not nitpicking on Lena and that even if the Kingstons pleaded with him, he would likewise follow the rules and turn them down.

People like him were rare to come by.

The commotion over here had attracted almost all the guests in the auction hall. Bruce, who was talking to someone at the other side of the hall, naturally saw what was going on here. Feeling a little worried, he hurriedly walked over and reached his hand out to Russell. "Mr. Duncan, this is Mr. Lucas Gray, who's also my friend. I'm willing to vouch for him..."

Before Bruce could finish his sentence, Russell raised a hand and interrupted him coldly, "Mr. Hale, like I just said, I'm only following the rules of this auction. If anyone else tries to interfere with my execution of the protocol, I will have to ask you to leave, even if you are the head of the Hale family."

Bruce originally thought that Russell would do him a favor since they had met on several occasions, but to his surprise, Russell turned him down without any mercy.

Bruce began to look sullen.

Of course, he was not worried that Lucas wouldn't be able to prove that he had enough money. In fact, even if Lucas needed his help, he wouldn't hesitate to transfer 15 million dollars to him now.

He just didn't want to see Lucas become the target of criticism and nitpicking. After all, the Hales had now pledged allegiance to Lucas, so Bruce naturally didn't want to see him get humiliated by others.

At this moment, the guests standing around also began whispering to each other while looking at Lucas with curiosity and bewilderment.

They were quite confused as to why the daughter of the richest man of Orange County and the head of one of the four most powerful families of Orange County would speak up for Lucas if he was just a nobody as Elijah had said.

Could there be something more to this? They wondered.

Just as Bruce was about to say something else, Lucas sat on a chair and suddenly said, "You want to check my assets? Sure.

“However, if I do meet the criteria, shouldn’t the person who just smeared me and tried to stir trouble by being verbally provocative toward me be punished too?”

2

Chapter 305: Black Diamond Card

When Elijah heard what Lucas said, his expression changed drastically because Lucas was obviously referring to him.

At first, he merely intended to let the matter blow out of proportion so that the person in charge of the Kingstons’ auction would intervene and kick Lucas out. In his opinion, this was the best way he could take revenge for his friend, Tristan.

But it never crossed his mind that if Lucas indeed turned out to be qualified to stay at the auction, all his previous words and actions would be deemed as slander, defamation, and deliberate provocation.

Elijah suddenly began to feel flustered.

Remaining expressionless, Russell nodded. “As long as you meet the qualifying criteria and produce valid proof, it naturally means that you are qualified to stand here. The person who slandered you will be blacklisted immediately for misconduct. He will also be kicked out at once and denied entry for all future auctions I’m in charge of!”

Elijah immediately looked extremely dismayed.

Russell publicly gave Lucas a promise to punish the defamer, should there be one, and the consequences of the punishment were heavy!

Although Russell said that the defamer would only be blacklisted from future auctions that he was in charge of, everyone knew that Russell was in charge of almost all of the somewhat significant large-scale auctions organized by the Kingstons. It would be tantamount to being banned from all of the auctions held by the Kingstons in the future.

At this point, Callum walked to Elijah, patted him on his shoulder, and said softly, “It’s okay. That punk is just pretending. When he fails to produce any proof of owning fifteen million dollars, he will be in deep trouble!”

Hearing this, Elijah finally felt a little relieved, and he glared at Lucas through gritted teeth.

After hearing Russell's affirmative answer, Lucas took out a black card from his pocket with a faint smile on his face and nonchalantly tossed it onto the table at the side. "Go ahead and check it!"

Russell glanced at the black card, and his usually stern, emotionless, and robot-like expression suddenly changed drastically. He grabbed the black card eagerly and began scrutinizing every detail of the card.

The card was almost entirely black, without any card numbers or bank logos. It looked just like an ordinary magnetic card.

But at the top right corner of the card was a golden mark in the shape of an extremely complicated and beautiful diamond!

This was the very mark that made Russell so shocked that he almost lost his composure.

The others standing nearby were somewhat bewildered and confused by Russell's behavior.

In their opinion, it was just an extremely ordinary card that a bank might not even issue. *Does Russell Duncan have to get so worked up?* they wondered.

When Bruce saw the black card, his pupils constricted, and he exclaimed in shock, "The Black Diamond Card!"

"Black Diamond Card?"

The guests present were all from the wealthiest families of various cities. When they heard this, they couldn't help looking astonished in great disbelief.

The Black Diamond Card was a legendary card heard of by many but seen by few. There were even fewer who owned one.

Legend had it that individuals could not apply for the Black Diamond Card, which the International Financial Center issued, because it was specially catered for highly influential business tycoons and celebrities worldwide.

There was no credit limit on the Black Diamond Card, but cardholders could withdraw up to five billion dollars at any time from any bank in the world with it.

In addition, the cardholders would also enjoy countless enviable exclusive privileges and services, such as a massive amount of annual membership bonuses, invitations to some internationally renowned and highly exclusive events and various extremely private auctions and gatherings, and so on. The card would even allow the holders to deploy the local armed forces to a small extent.

The Black Diamond Card could be considered the holy grail of everyone's dreams because it was the symbol of supreme status!

Black Diamond Cards were extremely rare, and there were currently less than 200 cardholders in the world. In the whole of the US, the people who owned a Black Diamond Card were few and far between, and there were definitely no more than ten people!

But Lucas managed to pull such a rare card from his pocket, which was precisely the reason for Russell's astonishment.

As long as it was a genuine card, Lucas would definitely be able to produce a billion dollars, let alone fifteen million.

The question now was whether the Black Diamond Card was genuine or not.

After Elijah saw Lucas take out the seemingly low-key but actually out-of-reach Black Diamond Card, he was just as flabbergasted. But he instinctively thought that it wasn't genuine at all!

"He must have fabricated that card! It must be a trick he specifically uses to deceive others!" Elijah yelled with great certainty while pointing at the card.

The other people around were also skeptical. Although they didn't voice their doubts right there and then like Elijah did, they were truly in disbelief, mainly because mega-rich and powerful families like theirs weren't even qualified to be issued a Black Diamond card. What right did Lucas, this young man they had never seen or heard of, have to own such a card?

Without further ado, Russell solemnly handed the Black Diamond Card to a staff member behind him and ordered in a deep voice, "Bring this card for inspection. Do not make any mistakes!"

"Yes!" After receiving the order, the staff member received the card with both hands and hurriedly left the auction hall under the escort of several bodyguards armed with guns.

During the short duration the staff had gone to check the card, almost everyone in the room had their eyes glued to Lucas.

There were all sorts of gazes being cast on Lucas, which would definitely make any other person feel uneasy and jittery by now. But Lucas remained composed in his seat and looked extremely relaxed, as if he wasn't the center of attention but a totally uninvolved bystander.

Even Russell, who had met countless types of people, couldn't help but secretly take a few more glances at Lucas and praise him in his head.

At the side, Lena was gazing at Lucas with joy and surprise in her eyes.

Of course, when Tristan saw this from a short distance away, he was so enraged that he gnashed his teeth and silently cursed them, calling them an adulterous pair.

Soon, the staff member who just left returned. Holding the Black Diamond Card with both hands, he quickly strode to Russell with a look of excitement and whispered eagerly, "It's genuine!"

A trace of shock appeared on Russell's face!

Soon, he picked up the Black Diamond Card very carefully with both hands, walked to Lucas, and said in an extremely respectful manner, "Mr. Gray, you are our most honored and prestigious guest. I would like to offer my strongest apologies to you with utmost sincerity for our disrespectful behavior toward you just now. I hope to seek your forgiveness!"

Then Russell bent forward to apologize to Lucas with a deep bow.

This scene caused a huge uproar because it meant that Lucas's Black Diamond Card was genuine!

"No, this is impossible!" Elijah's expression changed drastically as he looked at this scene in great disbelief. He suddenly blurted without hesitation, "He's just a good-for-nothing live-in son-in-law who was the laughing stock of everyone in Orange County a few years ago. How can he own a Black Diamond Card?!"

"Besides, even if this card is genuine, there's no way it belongs to Lucas Gray! He might have stolen it from someone or picked it up somewhere!"

Chapter 306: Blacklisted

"Shut up!" Russell hollered furiously while glaring at Elijah. "Are you doubting the Kingstons in addition to slandering Mr. Gray?"

He had just instructed one of the staff members working for the Kingstons to bring Lucas's Black Diamond Card for a check. Apart from verifying the authenticity of the card, he had naturally also checked the name of the account and cardholder, which wasn't something someone could forge casually.

Elijah finally realized that he had a slip of the tongue and said something wrong in a moment of impatience. Shocked by the sudden realization, he hurriedly explained, "No, no, that's not what I meant! I..."

Smack!

Callum gave his younger brother a hard slap on his face and said with a stern expression, "Hurry up and apologize to Mr. Duncan!"

Elijah touched his numb face and immediately lowered his head to apologize to Russell. "Mr. Duncan, I'm so sorry. It was a slip of the tongue. I really wasn't doubting you and the Kingstons!"

Russell snorted coldly and said austerely, "You should be apologizing to Mr. Gray instead!"

Elijah's face immediately became extremely gloomy.

He apologized to Russell only because Russell worked for the Kingstons and held great power, so he didn't dare to offend him.

But in his opinion, Lucas was just a nobody. Even though Lucas had an extremely prestigious-looking Black Diamond Card, he had a preconceived prejudice against him. Besides, Lucas was about the same age as him and didn't have the support of a powerful family, so he wasn't afraid of Lucas at all and felt no need to apologize to him.

Overwhelmed with fury and resentment, Elijah glared at Lucas, who was keeping a straight face, and couldn't bring himself to apologize.

When Russell saw his actions, his face turned gloomy too.

At this moment, someone interjected, "Actually, I don't think Elijah has done anything wrong. There's no need for him to apologize to Lucas Gray at all."

In shock, everyone turned to look at the person who spoke up for Elijah. It was Tristan Parker!

Although Tristan knew that by saying this, he would be blatantly contradicting Russell and would likely cause Russell to be displeased, he couldn't care less about this now.

Elijah had insulted Lucas and attempted to get him kicked out of the auction hall only because he was trying to stand up for Tristan. But he ended up offending Russell and landed in a difficult spot.

If Tristan continued to standby quietly without helping Elijah out, he was certain that Callum and Elijah would definitely sever all ties with him once they left the auction hall today! It might even affect the relationship between the Parkers and the Owens! If that happened, his elders would never spare him!

Therefore, he couldn't care less even though he was temporarily offending Russell.

“What do you mean by that?” Russell’s face was sullen as he stared at Tristan, waiting for him to give a reasonable explanation for what he just said.

Tristan pursed his lips while thinking about an excuse to give. After a while, he finally said, “Actually, you can’t blame Elijah for questioning Lucas Gray’s identity and whether he’s qualified to enter this place or not. Well, because he’s notorious in Orange County!”

Lena stood up and hollered furiously, “Tristan Parker! Shut up!”

Tristan glanced at Lena sneeringly and completely ignored her. He then continued, “Six years ago, Lucas Gray was just a penniless man who just graduated from college! Later on, he resorted to god-knows-what tricks and managed to seduce Cheyenne Carter, who used to be called the most beautiful girl in Orange County. The two of them got involved in a scandal that spread around the entire country, and in the end, he had no choice but to become the live-in son-in-law of the Carters.

“Lucas Gray is just a penniless good-for-nothing who freeloads off of his wife! So, I think it’s completely reasonable for Elijah to have suspicions about Lucas Gray’s identity and his motives for coming here. There’s no need to apologize for that at all!

“Many of the guests here tonight are from Orange County. Mr. Duncan, you can just ask any of them, and you’ll know if what I said is true or not.”

Many of the guests present were indeed the local tycoons of Orange County, who started discussing among themselves after hearing what Tristan said.

“Yes, he’s not making things up. Back then, that scandal indeed caused a huge uproar in the county, and almost everyone knew about it. But I didn’t remember the name of the Carters’ live-in son-in-law, and I only found out today that it’s this young man!”

“The Carters were probably just a second-rate family in Orange County at the time. I heard that’s precisely the reason he chose to become their live-in son-in-law. Unfortunately, none of the Carters’ descendants are competent. They ended up offending one of the big shots of the Stardust Corporation not long ago and almost went bankrupt because of it!”

“Yeah, but I also heard that they nevertheless disowned and kicked Lucas Gray’s wife and her family out even though they were on the verge of bankruptcy! I wonder what intolerable thing they did to warrant that. Logically speaking, it’s impossible for someone like him to have a Black Diamond Card.”

“Yeah, there’s something very fishy about this matter... I don’t believe it either!”

...

The local tycoons of Orange County started mentioning the things that they had heard about one after another, immediately making many of the other tycoons of other cities gasp in amazement and also begin gossiping among themselves.

It was Russell's first time hearing about these things, and he couldn't help but look at Lucas in surprise.

But what surprised him was that despite being the subject of gossip, Lucas still maintained his composure and was rather indifferent. There were no signs of shame or anger on his face at all, which was to the amazement of Russell, who admired Lucas's ability to keep his cool.

But regardless of what Lucas had done and who he used to be in the past, it all meant nothing to Russell.

All Russell knew was that Lucas was a holder of a Black Diamond Card that truly belonged to him. This was enough.

"Be quiet!" Russell raised his voice, and everyone in the auction hall soon fell silent.

They understood that there was a final verdict for the matter.

Russell looked at Tristan and asked, "What is your name, and which family are you from?"

His expression was much calmer than when he was sullen.

Seeing that Russell wasn't angry due to his words and was instead being so courteous to him, Tristan was overjoyed and hurriedly said, "Hello, Mr. Duncan! My name is Tristan Parker, and my grandfather is Damon Parker!"

Russell nodded and then turned to ask Elijah. "How about you?"

Elijah was just as delighted as he hurriedly answered, "I am Elijah Owen from LA."

Russell nodded and asked the rest, "What about you?"

"Mr. Duncan, I am Eric Hank from Orange County."

"My name is Larry Harold."

...

Russell asked eight people for their names, all of whom Russell had heard insult Lucas or speak about him derogatorily just now.

After asking them, Russell said to a staff member behind him, "Have you written down their names?"

"Yes, Mr. Duncan. There are a total of eight of them, and I've written down all their names!"

Just as everyone was bewildered and confused, Russell suddenly announced, "From now on, these eight people will not be allowed to enter the venues of all the auctions that I'm in charge of!"

2

Chapter 307: Obtaining Forgiveness

Russell's words were like a stone leading to a thousand ripples, causing the crowd to be flabbergasted.

Everyone got into an uproar and began discussing among themselves.

The eight people whose names Russell had asked for and thought that Russell had been impressed by them just now each had a drastic change of expression, as they couldn't believe what they heard at all!

Soon, a staff member working for the Kingstons walked toward them and asked them to leave hostilely, "Gentlemen, you are no longer welcome at this auction tonight. Please leave immediately!"

After hearing this, the eight of them finally believed that Russell was really blacklisting them and that they were getting chased out immediately!

Tristan was furious and disgruntled. In a moment of pique, he stood out, pointed at Lucas, and bellowed, "Mr. Duncan, why? Shouldn't he be the one getting kicked out?"

But Russell's expression remained unchanged, and he merely glanced at the staff member behind him. "From now on, all the Parkers will be blacklisted and banned from all auctions that I participate in or am in charge of!"

"...!"

Tristan was so furious that he froze right on the spot. He wanted to say something but couldn't bring himself to. *No, I can't say anything else. If I end up provoking Russell Duncan anymore, he might punish me more severely, and I'll be dead meat!*

All the auctions Russell was in charge of basically included all the important large and medium-sized ones organized by the Kingstons. The point of such auctions was not to really buy something but rather about flaunting your assets and family background. They were also opportunities for building and maintaining close relations with other wealthy families.

For example, only top families would receive an invitation to enter an auction like the one held today. Obviously, their statuses were naturally much higher than those of second-rate families. They might even get to meet new people and form connections with other wealthy tycoons to lay the foundation for the development of the businesses of their respective families.

So after receiving the invitation, the Parkers had decided to send Tristan to represent them because they had groomed him well and believed that he could do a good job.

But he had now messed things up in a fit of anger. Not only did he end up on Russell's blacklist, but he even got his entire family implicated and banned from all future auctions held by the Kingstons. If the Parkers learned about this, they definitely wouldn't spare him!

The more Tristan thought about it, the more frightened he was. Deep down, his heart was full of fear and some regret. He could no longer be bothered about his pride and started pleading to Russell miserably, "Mr. Duncan, I know I was wrong to have said that in a moment of anger! Please give me another chance and rescind your orders! Otherwise, my family will definitely kill me!"

Russell looked at him coldly and remained silent.

Seeing this, many people around them sneered and mocked Tristan.

"Wasn't he very arrogant and mighty when he contradicted Mr. Duncan just now? Why is he so cowardly now?"

"Exactly! Actually, weren't they the ones who started this? That young man named Lucas Gray was just sitting there quietly, but those youngsters kicked up a fuss and tried to get him kicked out, leading things to come to this."

"Hah, their plan to bully others clearly backfired. They brought it upon themselves. They clearly deserve it! At first, they weren't aware of Mr. Lucas Gray's identity, but they should have stopped after questioning him a few times. Even after the Kingstons' staff checked the authenticity of the Black Diamond Card and proved that it belonged to Mr. Lucas Gray, they continued harping on the matter and even insulted him. They really deserve it!"

"Yeah, that's right! Besides, Mr. Duncan has always been a man of his word. Since he's already issued those orders, how can he possibly rescind them?"

...

Tristan and Elijah paled when they heard the mockery and remarks of the people around them. Their eyes were even full of despair.

Suddenly, Russell said, "Actually, you haven't offended me, but Mr. Gray. If you can obtain his forgiveness, I will let you off."

Everyone was surprised because they just said that Russell wouldn't change his mind, but his actions now proved otherwise.

Lucas raised his brows and looked at Russell in surprise, only to see the faint smile on his face. Lucas thought about it and soon understood Russell's intentions.

If Russell let the people who had insulted Lucas off the hook, it would be extremely disrespectful to Lucas.

If he insisted on kicking them out, he would be keeping his promise to Lucas and giving him a fair explanation that no one could nitpick.

But the blacklisted and expelled people would target Lucas and settle scores with him because they wouldn't dare to put the blame on Russell!

If not because of Lucas, they wouldn't have been kicked out. That was the logic most people would believe.

But Russell now gave Lucas the chance to deal with these people.

This way, if Lucas chose to let them off, they would naturally be grateful to him for his kindness. Not only would they not form a feud with him, but they might even have some dealings with him.

Of course, if Lucas was really furious and unwilling to spare them, Russell would also blacklist them as Lucas wished. But Lucas would have to bear the ensuing consequences.

Although Lucas didn't know why Russell was being so kind to him, he nevertheless nodded at him.

Logically speaking, Russell indeed gave him a reasonable solution and mediated the matter appropriately. But this request was unacceptable to Tristan and Elijah.

Begging Lucas for forgiveness was worse than having to die!

"Mr. Gray, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have babbled nonsense and slandered you just now. I hope you'll be kind and magnanimous. Please forgive me!"

“Yes, Mr. Gray. It’s all my fault for spouting nonsense despite not knowing the truth. I express my deepest apologies! If you can forgive me, the Harolds will become your cordial partner in the future!”

“Me too! The Hanks are willing to form relations with you. I hope you will forgive us for offending you!”

...

All of a sudden, all six other people besides Elijah and Tristan hurried toward Lucas and apologized to him in a bid to seek his understanding.

Chapter 308: I’ll Handle It

After a fierce inner conflict, Tristan finally decided to swallow his pride and apologize to Lucas.

“Lucas, I shouldn’t have misunderstood you and spoke rudely to you. I hope you can forgive me for my imprudent mistake!” Tristan said through clenched teeth, feeling as though a sharp dagger was stabbing his heart. He felt miserable and humiliated! *I swear I’ll hire some experts and take revenge on this bastard after today. I must make his life a living hell!*

Seeing Tristan lower himself and apologize, Elijah thought of the punishment he might face from his family later and had no choice but to apologize to Lucas reluctantly.

He actually had the same thoughts as Tristan. *I have no choice but to bow down to Lucas Gray today due to the compelling circumstances. After today, we’ll definitely take revenge!*

Seeing that all eight of them had already apologized to him, Lucas didn’t waste his breath on irrelevant things and simply said, “Since you’ve apologized, I’ll let you off.”

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief, feeling as if a giant rock was lifted off their chests, and they hurriedly thanked him, “Thank you, Mr. Gray! Thank you!”

Tristan and Elijah seemed to be overjoyed. But they looked at each other and saw the resentment and disdain they felt toward Lucas in each other’s eyes. *Hmph, so what if he has a Black Diamond Card? He still has to obediently forgive us out of fear of offending us scions of top families.*

But Lucas suddenly raised his hand and pointed at Tristan and Elijah. “I won’t forgive these two.”

Elijah's and Tristan's expressions immediately stiffened.

After realizing what Lucas meant, Tristan flew into a rage and hollered furiously, "Lucas Gray, what the hell do you mean by that? Are you deliberately picking on us?"

Elijah rolled up his sleeves angrily and snapped at Lucas, his and Tristan's common enemy, "Lucas Gray, we apologized to you only for the sake of Mr. Duncan. Don't be shameless and take things too far!"

"Shut up!" Callum, at the side, yelled and slapped Elijah hard on his face. "Do not be rude to Mr. Gray again! If you dare to speak so brashly again, I'll make sure you scam back home and get grounded!"

Elijah placed a hand on his burning cheek while feeling an urge to argue and defend himself after being slapped twice in front of so many people. But when he saw the fury in his brother's eyes, he didn't dare to say anything else.

After all, Callum was his brother and the successor of his family's empire, who had considerable authority in the family. Elijah dared not disobey him.

After Callum stopped his brother from continuing with his foolish behavior, he walked up to Lucas, lowered his head, and bowed to him in apology. "I'm sorry, Mr. Gray. I failed to discipline my brother and allowed him to offend you. Please rest assured. When we get home, I will definitely teach him a good lesson so that he'll never make such a mistake again!"

With that, Callum nodded at Russell and the members of other wealthy families, then dragged the sulky Elijah out from the auction hall.

They had already embarrassed themselves greatly tonight, and Lucas had already explicitly said that he wouldn't forgive them. So instead of shamelessly insisting on staying before eventually getting thrown out, they might as well leave on their own. By doing so, they might get to save themselves from some embarrassment.

It was no wonder that the Owens made Callum the next successor. He was indeed smarter than his younger brother.

Seeing that the Owen brothers had left, Tristan thought that there was no point in staying and continuing to let himself be humiliated further. He stared at Lucas sullenly before turning around to leave as well.

After they left, everyone in the hall looked at Lucas in a different light.

He owned a rare and precious Black Diamond Card, managed to earn the respectful treatment of the person the Kingstons had specifically appointed to take charge of the

auction, and even kicked two core members of top families out of the auction mercilessly. *What exactly is the origin of this young man?* they wondered.

But regardless of what they thought, no one in the hall dared to say anything disrespectful to Lucas now after what happened to Tristan.

“Mr. Gray, are you satisfied with the way we handled things?” Russell asked with a smile.

Lucas nodded and smiled at him too. “Thank you, Mr. Duncan.”

Russell took a look at the time and scanned his surroundings in the hall. “The auction tonight is about to begin soon. Dear guests, please return to your seats and get ready. I hope you will all have a great time and successfully acquire the items you take a liking to.”

Then he turned around to leave and returned backstage.

Just as Lucas sat down, Jordan appeared silently beside him and reported very softly, “Lucas, I found Miss Keller, but she’s locked up with many women, and there’s no way to rescue her without alerting others. But I have confirmed that Miss Keller was abducted by the Wallaces and taken here by force. They’re going to auction her off as a finale item!”

Lucas’s eyes were instantly brimming with murderous intent.

He had actually mentally prepared himself for the possibility that Grace might be sold as an auction item. But he was absolutely disgusted by the fact that the Wallaces were trafficking living humans and selling them like they were objects.

“Lucas, do you want me to...” Jordan slid his hand across his neck. Having worked for Lucas for so many years, he was naturally familiar with Lucas’s preferences and habits. Besides, the Wallaces’ unscrupulous practice was not only challenging the bottom line of morality, but it was also against the law.

“No, go back. I’ll take care of the rest,” Lucas said indifferently with a wave of his hand.

Jordan sighed regretfully. “Okay then. I’ll wait for you outside Club Splendor.”

Then he soon vanished from the auction hall.

Sitting near Lucas, Lena had been watching them quietly. After Jordan left, she finally turned her head over slightly and seemed to be deep in thought.

Although it was the first time Lena saw Jordan, she could tell from Jordan’s agile movements and light footsteps, as well as his subconscious straightening of his back

and the intimidating aura that he was trying to restrain but was still hair-raising, that he was definitely not an ordinary person either. She knew so because she had learned psychology and micro-expressions when pursuing her education abroad.

Besides, it was obvious that he was subordinate to Lucas.

Lena felt that Lucas was like a treasure. The closer she got to him, and the more she learned about him, the more she could feel how impressive and terrifying he was. But at the same time, he was just as attractive! *Lucas Gray, what kind of a person are you exactly?*

At this moment, Elijah was right outside Club Splendor. Feeling extremely frustrated, he kicked a trash can at the entrance with so much force that it flew away.

“Callum, are you sure you can tolerate this and let that punk humiliate us like that?” Elijah barked furiously and got increasingly enraged as he thought about it.

Callum sneered sinisterly, a stark contrast from the image of a noble gentleman he portrayed in the auction hall just now. “Hah, how can I let him off so easily? No matter who he is, I won’t let him off for embarrassing us and humiliating our family in public!”

Chapter 309: Bidding For a Beauty

At this moment, tonight’s auction officially began in the hidden basement of Club Splendor.

An elegant and beautiful woman clad in an exquisite red dress appeared on the auction stage at the front. She was the emcee of the auction.

She had a svelte figure and gorgeous good looks. There was a slit at the side of her body-hugging dress that accentuated her curves and alluring long legs.

As soon as she made her entrance, she sparked a small commotion as people started swooning, and some playful guests even began whistling at her before she could speak.

The beauty in red bowed to the guests on the left, middle, and right with a charming smile on her face. She then said enthusiastically in a provocative voice, “Hello, everyone. I’m Megan, the emcee of the auction tonight. This evening, we will be presenting to you some extremely rare treasures. I hope that you will be able to acquire the treasures that you like! Next, I will introduce the rules of this auction!”

Immediately afterward, she announced the usual rules of the auction. Although everyone was already clear about them, it was mandatory to go through them because it was part of the process.

Lucas patiently listened to everything she had to say. Then it was finally time for the emcee to announce the official start of the auction.

The emcee unveiled the curtain to reveal the first auction item and introduced it with great enthusiasm "Next up, we'll be presenting the first auction item for tonight. It's an antique porcelain bowl that is fine, exquisite, and in pristine condition... The starting bid for this item is 1.2 million dollars! And the minimum bid increment is 15,000 dollars. Bidding begins now!"

But there was a tinge of disappointment in Lucas's eyes.

He thought that the beautiful women would be up for bid right after the auction began. But to his surprise, they put up a smokescreen at the start.

"1.5 million dollars!"

"1.7 million!"

"2 million!"

...

"2.8 million!"

"Okay, Mr. Wales here has offered 2.8 million dollars. Is anyone going to offer a higher price?"

"2.8 million dollars, going once!"

"2.8 million dollars, going twice!"

"2.8 million dollars, going thrice! Congratulations to Mr. Wales for winning the auction for this antique porcelain bowl! Congratulations!"

This first item was auctioned off very smoothly for more than twice the starting bid.

Next, there were auctions for some local and foreign antiques, paintings, exorbitant gems, and other precious items.

The distinguished guests invited tonight were from the top families of various major cities and had strong financial power. There were also many who would spend large amounts of money lavishly to flaunt their wealth and power.

Thus, many collection items were auctioned off at staggering prices. And as the auction proceeded, the beautiful emcee, Megan, sounded increasingly excited and enchanting.

With a tinge of impatience in his eyes, Lucas leaned against the back of the chair while propping his head up.

“Hey, aren’t you interested in any of those items?” asked Lena beside him, who suddenly inched closer.

She was actually not very interested in the auction items either, but she casually bought a few random ones for fun. But she was curious about Lucas’s disinterest in them, as evidenced by the fact that he didn’t place a single bid.

Lucas merely shook his head and didn’t say anything.

During the intermission, the emcee took a break for a while before announcing again, “Now, we’ll move on to the second half of the auction that all of you have been looking forward to the most! We’ll now have the staff members bring Beauty No. 10 up onto the stage!”

The guests in the auction hall got into a huge commotion and began clamoring while staring at the stage with glistening eyes. Almost all of them were interested and full of anticipation.

Lucas, who had been leaning against the chair languidly, suddenly sat up straight and kept his eyes glued onto the display case being pushed out from behind the auction stage by two staff members. The display case was nearly two meters tall and covered with a layer of red satin that concealed the contents inside.

Seeing that Lucas was finally interested but only because the word ‘beauty’ was mentioned, Lena couldn’t help pouting and threatened softly, “How dare you be interested in beautiful women. Watch out. I’ll go back and tell on you to Cheyenne!”

Caught between laughter and tears, Lucas said, “It’s not what you think.”

But he soon stopped talking to Lena because Megan was pulling the red satin cloth away from the display case on the stage. As she did so, she said, “Next, we’ll take a look at what Beauty No. 10 looks like!”

Under the red satin was a glass display case, in which there was a young girl who was scantily clad in clothes that covered only her private areas. She seemed to be only in her twenties, and of course, she was gorgeous.

But at this moment, the girl’s beautiful eyes were full of panic and helplessness. The tears that had been brimming in them rolled down her delicate face.

However, her pitiful appearance not only failed to arouse the sympathy of the guests present, but it made them even more excited as their clamors and whistling got louder.

An intense desire to kill flashed in Lucas's eyes. *How dare they really put up living people for auction like inanimate objects. They really have a death wish!*

At this moment, the emcee began to announce the physical details of Beauty No. 10. "Beauty No. 10 is 19 this year, 1.7 meters tall, and weighs 52 kilograms. Her bust, waist, and hip measurements are 36-24-35 respectively! And she's still a virgin!

"The starting bid is 300,000 dollars, and the minimum bid increment is 15,000 dollars. Bidding starts now!"

As soon as the emcee finished speaking, the guests below began bidding.

"380,000 dollars!"

"450,000!"

"550,000!"

"620,000!"

...

Soon, the bidding price of that beautiful girl soared to more than a million dollars.

"1.1 million dollars!"

"Okay, Mr. Chad here has offered 1.1 million dollars. Any higher bids?"

"1.1 million dollars, going once!"

"1.1 million dollars, going twice!"

"1.1 million dollars, going thrice!"

"1.5 million dollars!" Just a second before the emcee was about to knock the gavel, Lucas suddenly raised the sign in his hand and called out his first bid of the auction.

Moreover, the fact that he raised the price by a whopping 400,000 dollars in one go showed how determined he was!

All of a sudden, all eyes were on Lucas, and everyone stopped bidding.

The beautiful emcee Megan was the only one who looked excited. She exclaimed loudly, "Mr. Gray has offered 1.5 million dollars! Is anyone going to offer a higher amount?"

Chapter 310: Beauty No. 1

The current bid for Beauty No. 10 had already quintupled from 300,000 to 1.5 million dollars. It was indeed quite an enormous amount.

Many of the people in the auction hall actually just wanted to buy a beautiful woman and use her as a plaything, but 1.5 million dollars was too expensive in their opinion.

Besides, she was only the first beauty put up for auction, and there were many more to come. Everyone felt that it wouldn't make sense to spend so much money on a woman when they haven't seen the others yet.

So almost everyone gave up and stopped bidding.

"1.5 million dollars, going once!

"1.5 million dollars, going twice!

"1.5 million dollars, going thrice! Sold! Congratulations, Mr. Gray. You have successfully bought Beauty No. 10!"

Symbolic applause filled the air in the hall, but many were looking at Lucas with bizarre gazes, as if mocking him for being a wealthy but foolish dimwit.

Lena, beside Lucas, also looked at him in extreme disbelief. "You actually spent 1.5 million dollars on a beauty! Cheyenne will definitely be upset with you when she finds out! But that's not the point. What are you going to do to her now that you've bought her? Is she going to be your kept mistress?"

Lucas smiled faintly. "So, are you going to tell Cheyenne about this?"

"Uh..." Lena was stumped after hearing Lucas's righteous tone.

Logically speaking, Lena was Cheyenne's best friend, and now that Lucas had spent so much money to buy a woman, she naturally should tell Cheyenne about it.

But if she really told Cheyenne about it, it would definitely spark a conflict and a heated argument between Lucas and Cheyenne. Worse still, it might even affect their family, which was something that Lena didn't want to see. *What should I do? Should I tell Cheyenne?*

While she was feeling conflicted, another beauty, Beauty No. 9, was pushed onto the auction stage, once again sparking a commotion among the guests.

The reason being was that Beauty No. 9 was much more beautiful than Beauty No. 10.

It seemed that the beauties to be auctioned were arranged in ascending order in terms of their beauty and figures. Each beauty was prettier than the one auctioned before her.

In that case, there should be eight more beauties to be put on display.

“The starting bid for Beauty No. 9 is 300,000 dollars, and the minimum bid increment is 15,000 dollars. Bidding starts now!” the emcee once again exclaimed. The starting bid was the same as that for Beauty No. 10, but the bidding was even more intense.

“450,000!”

“620,000!”

“700,000!”

...

“1.2 million!”

“1.5 million!”

When the bid price went above a million dollars, Lucas once again bid 1.5 million dollars.

Everyone once again looked at Lucas, this time with even more displeasure in their gazes.

He had just bought one beauty, but he actually continued to bid for the second one too!

He seemed to be depriving others of a chance to bid for the beauties.

Of course, the emcee on the stage seemed extremely excited. Since it was an auction, the rule of highest bidder wins naturally applied. To them, it would definitely be better if there were more guests like Lucas who generously offered high prices!

Only when there was fierce competition would the bids go higher. As the auctioneer, they would then be able to make a greater profit!

Because the price Lucas offered was too high, no one placed any more bids after him, and he similarly bought Beauty No. 9.

At this moment, Lena glared at Lucas with a hostile gaze.

“Lucas, you actually bought a second girl! What are you trying to do? Are you trying to be like some of the rich and famous who like having orgies?” Lena questioned angrily.

Lucas looked at Lena speechlessly. *Do I seem like such a person?*

But the auction was still in progress, so he couldn't explain much to her at this point. He decided to keep mum and ignore Lena, who glowered at him furiously before turning to the side.

Sitting on the other side of Lucas, Bruce looked at him with various emotions in his gaze.

Bruce was well aware that Lucas was a morally upright person who would never touch anything related to the vices. And in fact, he even abhorred them to the extent that he barred Bruce from operating any vice-related businesses.

Therefore, he knew that Lucas definitely didn't spend three million dollars so far on those two women for the sake of doing business with the Kingstons.

Next, as Bruce guessed, Lucas not only bought the first two girls, but he bought the next seven put up for auction as well.

There were only ten beauties for auction in total, and Lucas had already bought nine of them!

This made countless people who failed to win any exasperated.

During the process, there were also some who were enraged and tried to raise the price to snatch a beauty from Lucas.

But he kept offering a much higher price than each bid they placed, which far exceeded their limit.

After some time, they had no choice but to give up despite being reluctant to do so.

There was nothing else they could do. They were just as hopeless!

In terms of family assets, they did not necessarily have less than Lucas. But during an auction, what mattered was liquid assets! No one could beat Lucas in this aspect.

Lucas had a Black Diamond Card that entitled him to withdraw five billion dollars from any bank. Who would dare to compete with him in terms of the amount of cash they had on hand?

At this point, Lena finally discovered that something was amiss. Regardless of how lascivious Lucas was, it didn't quite make sense for him to buy nine girls at once.

Wouldn't he be afraid of ruining his...? Lena blushed at the thought, but she was relieved too.

Amid the bizarre tension that arose due to the indignation of many guests, the auction progressed towards its end.

"Next, let us welcome the final beauty of the night, Beauty No. 1!"

As the emcee exclaimed loudly, the last glass display case, similarly covered with satin, was slowly pushed toward the middle of the auction stage.

As the emcee introduced the details and measurements of Beauty No. 1, the red satin slowly slipped onto the ground, revealing the ravishing beauty who was gorgeous and ethereal like a fairy who had descended to the mortal world!

Lucas suddenly narrowed his eyes with a cold and menacing gaze.

The 'auction item' in the last display case was naturally Lucas's target, Grace!

Unlike during the previous two occasions where Lucas had met Grace, she was not barefaced and dressed plainly this time. Grace, now placed in a glass display case like an object for sale, had obviously been dolled up meticulously.

She had exquisite makeup on her face that, coupled with her stunning features, made her look like a classic beauty who walked straight out of a painting. With a flustered and timid look on her face, she looked just like a princess in distress at this moment, and she immediately aroused the desire of all the men present!

"The starting bid for our final beauty, Beauty No. 1, is 1.5 million dollars! The minimum bid increment is 80,000 dollars. The bidding starts now!"

Chapter 311: Unexpected Situation

As soon as the emcee said the starting bid, everyone in the room got into an uproar.

The starting bid of the last beauty was undoubtedly much higher than all the previous ones put up for auction!

With a starting bid of 1.5 million dollars, they could all imagine that the final price for Beauty No. 1 had to be above five million dollars!

Many of the guests began to change their minds about bidding for Beauty No. 1. It was not because they couldn't afford it but because spending millions on a woman was quite foolish and absurd, even if she was extraordinarily gorgeous.

Of course, there were some who were eager to try bidding for her.

After all, Beauty No. 1 was an absolutely stunning rare beauty and one of a kind. If they could reap an enormous profit from using her as a social escort, they would definitely be able to recoup the amount they spent at the auction and perhaps obtain even more profit!

Thus, their gazes became more and more lewd and obscene as they ogled Grace, who was locked in the glass display case.

With an icy cold gaze in his eyes, Lucas suddenly stood up and exclaimed loudly, "Three million dollars!"

Everyone turned around to look at Lucas in astonishment.

During the biddings of the previous girls, Lucas had only placed his bid when they were coming to an end. But this time, he was the first to bid. Moreover, it was double the starting price!

How are we supposed to contend with that? the other guests thought.

Besides, it was just an auction where everyone would remain seated and merely raise the sign marked with their name when they wanted to place a bid. Yet Lucas suddenly stood up. The guests wondered if he was trying to show his determination to win the auction.

In fact, they had really made the wrong guess.

The reason Lucas suddenly stood up was that he wanted to let Grace, who was locked in the glass display case, see him so that she could feel slightly more relieved.

Because the glass display case was fully soundproof, the girls inside wouldn't be able to hear anything and could only see the lewd and repulsive gazes of the men gawking at them like they were scrutinizing a sale product. Despite feeling ashamed and humiliated, they had no means to escape and could only remain fearful, uneasy, and worried about their fate in the near future.

Grace felt the same. Even though she usually put on a strong front, she was still just a young woman in her twenties. She was suddenly abducted on the streets and subsequently held captive in this glass display case, where she was being put up for auction like she was merely an object subject to the scrutiny of others. The most terrifying thing was that she was clueless about how things would turn out for her in the

end, and it was possible that she might end up in a situation countless times more agonizing and torturous than death.

So when Grace saw Lucas suddenly stand up, joy immediately appeared all over her face, replacing the panicked expression she had. She burst into tears of joy and lunged forward to lean against the glass and stare at Lucas like he was her savior.

Lucas looked at Grace gently and tried to tell her with his eyes that he would definitely rescue her.

Drops of tears rolled down Grace's cheek continuously, and she nodded while sobbing to express her acknowledgment.

At this moment, Grace felt as if she had been rescued from hell and that Lucas was her pillar of support that gave her an immense sense of relief.

After Lucas called out his bid of a massive three millions dollars and caused a brief commotion, the entire auction hall was once again filled with a bizarre silence and calmness as many people began contemplating if they should bid.

"3.2... million!" At this moment, someone stood up indignantly and bid. Of course, he wasn't as bold as Lucas and only raised the bid by 200,000 dollars.

In fact, it was a common sight and practice during auctions to raise the bid little by little. Placing such high bids to discourage competitors like what Lucas had done was relatively rare.

"Six million dollars!" Lucas immediately bid again resolutely.

Everyone in the auction hall immediately gasped and inhaled sharply.

He doubled his bid again!

The guests were flabbergasted.

The man who bid 3.2 million dollars immediately sulked. His budget for buying Beauty No. 1 was actually six million dollars. But now that Lucas suddenly raised the price to six million dollars, how could he continue bidding?

He looked at Lucas gloomily and had no choice but to give up and return to his seat indignantly.

"Okay! The bidding price for Beauty No. 1 has reached six million dollars! Is anyone going to offer a higher bid?"

The emcee spoke up again excitedly, and she said coercively, "As long as your bid is higher than six million dollars, this rare beauty will be yours!"

Unfortunately, after the emcee asked twice, no one in the entire auction hall bid anymore.

The price had already risen to six million dollars. Since the girls were being sold at such a sordid auction, they couldn't groom Grace and make her a celebrity to earn money for them even if they won the auction. They could only use her as a social escort and make money off her through some secret deals, so it would take them a long time to recoup their capital.

Despite looking disappointed, the emcee could only continue with the standard process of the auction.

"Six million dollars, going once!"

"Six million dollars, going twice!"

"Six million dollars, going thrice..."

"Eight million dollars!"

Just a second before the emcee was about to drop the gavel, a majestic voice interrupted her.

Surprised, everyone looked at the person to whom the majestic voice belonged to see who it was that intervened at the critical moment and placed such a high bid of eight million dollars.

Lucas frowned slightly and looked diagonally at the back, only to meet a pair of familiar-looking eyes that contained a provocative gaze.

"Wow, it's Mr. Liam Wallace!"

"Mr. Liam Wallace is partaking in the auction too? I heard that Club Splendor belongs to the Wallaces!"

"Well, that may be the case, but the organizers of the auction this time are the Kingstons. The Wallaces are merely cooperating with them by providing a venue. Strictly speaking, the Wallaces are also qualified to participate in the auction."

Everyone whispered and discussed among themselves.

The moment Lucas saw Liam, a fleeting trace of killing intent appeared in his eyes. *He failed in pestering Grace, so he simply kidnapped her and put her up for auction at a high price like she's an object. He's worse than a beast!*

Beside Liam, a man and a woman were both glaring at Lucas hostilely.

Lucas sneered. He recognized them to be the ones he had just had a conflict with at the entrance.

The woman was Gisele Taylor, a member of one of the four top families of Orange County. She had tried to use Lucas as her shield earlier, but Lucas had rejected her. Furious and embarrassed, she subsequently went on to slander Lucas and accuse him of outrage of modesty.

And the man was Kyle Kingston, who originally didn't know Lucas but was instigated by Gisele to beat Lucas up to make Lucas kneel and apologize. But he ended up getting kicked away by Jordan.

The three of them are in this together. It seems they have malicious intentions!

Chapter 312: Congratulations on Winning the Auction

"Wow, look. The one at the side is Mr. Kyle Kingston! He's attending the auction in person too."

"I think he just came to take a look. As a member of the organizing family, he can't participate in the bidding!"

"That's for sure. If he had taken a liking to one of those beauties, he could have just kept her aside. Why would he bother competing with us to bid for her?"

"Also, who is that beautiful woman next to them?"

"I know. She's Gisele Taylor, a member of one of the four top families in Orange County."

...

The sudden appearance of these three people caused some commotion in the auction hall. But after Lucas shot them a glance, they quickly looked away and faced the auction stage to bid again.

"Twelve million!"

“Wow!”

There was immediately yet another uproar because of Lucas’s bid.

Twelve million dollars was enough for even the creation of a model of a beautiful woman using pure gold. Yet the bidder intended to buy a woman for twelve million dollars, which was an absurdly high price even if she was as beautiful as a fairy!

Liam glared at Lucas menacingly with a trace of hatred and jealousy in his eyes. He exclaimed slowly, “Fifteen million!”

Boom!

There was an instant upheaval in the auction hall as everyone exclaimed in shock.

Fifteen million dollars could buy a super luxurious mansion, or if it was invested in some businesses, it would bring about massive returns. But it was now about to be spent on a woman. This was excessively extravagant!

Liam stared at Lucas provocatively and giped smugly, “What? Aren’t you rich? Can’t you afford a mere fifteen million dollars?”

The reason he suddenly decided to compete with Lucas for Grace was that he could long tell that Lucas was definitely bent on buying her and taking her away. So he insisted on going against Lucas and raising the price to a staggering amount to make Lucas break the bank.

Otherwise, there was no need for Liam to buy Grace with money at all because he was the one who had sent people to capture her.

Of course, after Lucas spent a tremendous amount of money to buy Grace, Liam was confident that he would still be able to snatch her back and leave Lucas with nothing!

The thought of his plans made Liam smile in pleasure.

As he had expected, Lucas frowned and placed a higher bid. “Twenty-three million!”

“Damn?!”

“Oh my god! He actually raised the bid by eight million dollars! Is he out of his mind?!”

“Even if you’re rich, you shouldn’t squander your money like that! Twenty-three million dollars can buy you dozens of other beauties!”

“Twenty-three million dollars! Oh my gosh! The money has to be paid in cash on the spot. Is he going to throw away so much money just like that?”

“Haha... impressive! All of us here today are from wealthy families, but I can guarantee that there are only a few who can fork out twenty-three million dollars in cash at any time!”

“That’s right! However, Lucas Gray owns a Black Diamond Card, which allows him to withdraw five billion dollars in cash from any bank. I reckon he should be able to afford it.”

“Tsk, tsk, I’m so envious! Who doesn’t want to own a Black Diamond Card?”

...

The emcee on the stage was also shocked by the current bid price and couldn’t help clutching her chest with her hand.

Beside Lucas, Lena looked at him in disbelief. “Are you nuts? It’s twenty-three million dollars we’re talking about! Are you going to spend it all on a woman like her? Let me tell you. I can’t hide this for you. I’ll definitely inform Cheyenne about this!”

Lucas glanced at Lena and merely said indifferently, “It doesn’t matter. Go ahead and let her know.”

“You...!” Lena was so furious that she was speechless.

The fact that Lucas offered an unbelievable price of twenty-three million dollars made all the guests in the hall get into a huge uproar that only gradually calmed down after a long time.

Seeing that Lucas had really fallen for it and was going to waste an extra eight million dollars, Liam was overjoyed and conceited, especially when he saw Lucas’s gloomy expression.

“Hmph, you’re trying to compete with me, huh? Watch how I’ll deal with you! So what if you’re somewhat rich now? I can still turn you into a pauper in no time!”

Liam cursed and called Lucas a fool countless times in his heart before saying calmly, “Thirty million!”

He raised his eyebrows and stared at Lucas provocatively with a smug and contemptuous look.

He was already certain that Lucas would go to all lengths to buy Grace and take her away regardless of what it took. So even if he bid higher, Lucas would have no choice but to increase his bid too because Grace was his weakness!

The other people in the auction hall were completely flabbergasted by Liam's ridiculously high bid!

"What's going on today?"

"They keep placing such high bids, and the amount just gets crazier. No matter how gorgeous that woman is, she's still just a woman who will age and lose her beauty in a few years!"

The guests felt that the bids were simply too exaggerated.

After a burst of exclamations, everyone in the room cast their gazes onto Lucas, the generous man who spent money like it grew on trees, to see how high he would bid this time.

Many people were excited, and they knew that the auction today was bound to reach an extremely high climax. Even though they didn't take part in the bidding, they were spectators who had firsthand experience and would have plenty to talk about regarding this auction in the future.

While everyone was keeping their eyes on Lucas and eagerly waiting for him to bid again, Lucas suddenly waved his hand and said with a smile, "Mr. Wallace, since you fancy this beautiful girl so much, you may have her."

Then Lucas sat down to indicate his withdrawal from the bidding.

His words once again set off an uproar.

No one expected Lucas, who had bought all the other nine beauties put up for auction tonight and was incredibly wealthy, would admit defeat and withdraw from the auction at this juncture!

Some immediately thought that Lucas was smart enough to realize that it wouldn't make any economic sense to continue raising his bid and thus withdrew. They felt that it showed that he was not a reckless man just obsessed with winning.

Of course, there were also many people who were hungry for more drama and excitement. Seeing the exciting bidding come to an end, they all began to criticize Lucas in their heads for being too cowardly with looks of disappointment on their faces.

The other bidder, Liam, was dumbfounded and froze in place when he saw Lucas actually withdraw from the bidding without hesitation! *No! How is this possible? Why would Lucas Gray withdraw from the bidding? Doesn't he want that woman anymore?*

What made Liam even more flustered and horrified was the realization that he would have to pay the sum that he bid now that Lucas had withdrawn!

Thirty million dollars!

How could he possibly fork out so much money?!

“Okay. Now that Mr. Gray has withdrawn from the bidding, the highest bidder so far is Mr. Wallace, who has placed a bid of thirty million dollars! Any higher bids?”

The hall was dead silent because no one would bid any higher.

Liam quickly broke out in a sweat that rolled down his cheeks.

“Thirty million dollars, going once!

“Thirty million dollars, going twice!

“Thirty million dollars, going thrice! Congratulations, Mr. Wallace. You have won the auction for our finale item, Beauty No. 1, with thirty million dollars! Congratulations!”

Chapter 313: Dug His Own Grave

As the emcee lowered the gavel with a crisp and clear sound, a loud round of applause resounded in the auction hall.

They reckoned that he had to be incredibly wealthy since he had spent thirty million dollars on a beautiful woman!

The crowd congratulated Liam, the winner of the auction of the finale item. Some were sincere, but many were of course secretly mocking and criticizing him for being a fool.

He has too much money to spend! What a wastrel!

At this moment, Liam was sulking and feeling so dismayed that he was on the verge of tears even though everyone was congratulating him.

Although he was the scion of the Wallace family, the Wallaces would never let him squander money in such a lavish and unbridled manner. His current disposable assets were less than three million dollars, let alone thirty million!

“Wait a minute! This auction doesn’t count!” Liam’s interjection interrupted the applause and successfully made everyone stunned.

“What does he mean?”

Since Liam already spoke, he no longer bothered about the gazes of bewilderment being cast on him. He said self-righteously, “It’s all his fault for deliberately competing with me, so I bid so high to spite him. It doesn’t count!”

As soon as he said this, everyone was stunned and full of disbelief.

Lucas sneered and stared at Liam like he was a fool.

“That’s how things work at an auction. What does he mean by ‘deliberately raise the price’?”

Moreover, if anyone had deliberately disrupted the bidding with malicious intentions, that person was Liam, who intervened halfway, not Lucas!

Lucas sneered and looked at Liam. When Liam first intervened to compete with him for Grace, he could already tell what Liam was trying to do.

But the amusing thing was that Liam still took Lucas for a fool and let his greed get the better of him, as he was bent on raising the price to empty Lucas’s bank account. But he ended up making a fool of himself and made himself fall into the trap he had created himself.

“In that case, are you planning to deny the outcome of the auction, Mr. Wallace?”

At this moment, a cold and dignified voice spread from the auction stage as Russell appeared in front of everyone with a stern expression on his face.

Following him were several tall bodyguards who worked for the Kingstons, and they were exuding a domineering and terrifying aura.

In all the years that he had worked as a professional and experienced auctioneer, Russell had seen countless people like Liam who got carried away with competing against others to become the highest bidder but subsequently regretted their decision and tried to deny the validity of the auction. Thus, he immediately stepped forth to maintain order in the auction.

Seeing how assertive Russell was, Liam immediately felt a little ashamed and hurriedly said, “No, no, that’s not what I meant. But this bastard indeed deliberately raised the price...”

“Shut up!” Russell bellowed, interrupting Liam. He then said coldly, “An auction is not a market. The rule is that the highest bidder wins. What do you mean by ‘deliberately raise the price’?”

“Besides, if you thought that Mr. Gray was deliberately raising the price, you could have just withdrawn from the bidding. Why did you continue to compete with him? Are your brains fried?”

When Liam heard what Russell said, his face turned pale, and he looked extremely dismayed. But deep down, he was well aware that he was the one who had deliberately raised the price. However, he could only keep it to himself.

But just because Liam didn't admit to it, it didn't mean that others couldn't tell.

After all, he had just suddenly intervened in the bidding of the finale item, Beauty No. 1. Besides, he was also the one who kept raising the bid. Everyone had seen it clearly.

The current outcome was undoubtedly because Lucas was smart enough to withdraw in time, thus causing Liam to fall into the trap he had created himself.

You reap what you sow!

All of a sudden, many people in the auction hall started mocking Liam with disdain while waiting gloatingly to see what would happen next.

A staff member dressed in a black uniform walked up to Liam and asked with a polite but oppressive tone, "Mr. Wallace, please pay for the auction item that you have won the bid for immediately. The total amount is thirty million dollars. Would you like to pay by bank transfer or by check?"

This was often the case at auctions. No arrears were allowed when it came to the payment for the auctioned item. It was also to prevent some people from placing high bids for the sake of the thrill of it, only to end up failing to make the payment and thus aborting the sale of the items.

Liam's face became even more sullen. There was only a little more than 150,000 dollars in the bank account linked to the card he had with him now. How could he afford to pay thirty million dollars?

Liam panicked and looked around anxiously. When he suddenly saw Lucas, who was sitting still, he hurriedly said, "Lucas Gray, aren't you very wealthy? Hurry up and bid for the item again. I promise I definitely won't compete with you again this time! Just add another dollar, and Grace will be yours!"

Remaining seated calmly, Lucas merely smiled flatteringly. "Mr. Wallace, have you gotten all muddled up because of how panicked you are? The minimum bid increment is 80,000 dollars. How can I offer a dollar higher?"

Liam finally recalled the things that the emcee had said before putting Grace up for auction. He gritted his teeth and exclaimed, "I can pay the eighty thousand for you! You just need to pay thirty million!"

He said this through gritted teeth. But he still felt the pinch and also felt that he was giving Lucas an advantage.

Lucas was immediately amused by his expression. "Mr. Wallace, do you take me for a fool? I could have bought the girl for six million, but you raised the price to thirty million. Yet you still want me to help you out of this. How are you so thick-skinned?"

"Haha!" Many people in the auction hall couldn't resist laughing out loud.

Liam's face was burning hot. But when he thought about the thirty million dollars, he could no longer care about his pride.

"Lucas, I know you fancy that woman. Can you bear to give her up just like that?" Liam said furiously as he reached out to point at Grace, who was still locked in the glass display case.

Lucas said indifferently, "Thirty million is enough for me to buy at least a hundred beauties of different shapes and sizes. What makes you think I have to buy her?"

Liam panicked and threatened, "If you don't buy her, she will land in my hands, and I'll turn her into my slave. I'll violate her and humiliate her every day, turning her life into a living hell! Won't you mind that?"

Lucas's eyes were full of an intense murderous intent as he glared daggers at Liam!

Chapter 314: I Disagree

Liam immediately felt as though he was engulfed by a terrifying aura, and he couldn't help shuddering a few times.

Liam's words were indeed very inappropriate, and he was as crude and uncouth as lowly gangsters, which was a huge disgrace to the scions of wealthy and prestigious families. Many of the guests present at the auction began to look displeased.

Russell's face was just as cold and sullen as he berated, "Mr. Wallace, please mind your words and manners! Also, once you've paid the sum of thirty million dollars, Beauty No. 1, who's on the stage now, will belong to you. Until then, you have no right to do anything to her. Now, please make your payment!"

The staff member in the black uniform asked again, "Mr. Wallace, would you like to pay by bank transfer or by check?"

Liam was being forced to the point of being at a loss for what to do, and Lucas refused to fall for his trick. So he could only bite the bullet and say, "I... I don't have so much money on my card now..."

"You don't? Then why didn't you think of that when you were bidding just now?" Russell snorted coldly. "Mr. Wallace, your family is wealthy and prestigious. In fact, even this auction venue we are standing in as we speak belongs to the Wallaces. On account of your grandfather, I'll give you one more chance. Call your father or the senior Mr. Wallace immediately and ask them to bring the money here to make the payment for you!"

Liam's forehead was already covered in sweat. If he had to call his grandfather and inform him that he had just spent thirty million dollars at the auction to purchase a woman who had nothing to offer except a pretty face, he would definitely be beaten to death!

Holding his phone with trembling hands, he couldn't bring himself to dial that familiar number.

"Wait!" At this moment, Kyle suddenly interjected and slowly walked toward Liam from behind.

Russell frowned slightly, but as a subordinate of the Kingstons, he had to be polite. "Mr. Kingston, do you have any objections?"

Kyle glanced at Russell, but he didn't answer him directly. Instead, he turned his head to say to Lucas, "I heard that you were very generous and bought the first nine beauties in a row during the auction tonight. Before Mr. Wallace appeared, you've also offered as high as six million dollars for the last girl. When you were competing with him during the bidding, your final bid was twenty-three million dollars, right?"

Lucas raised his eyebrows. "That's right. So what?"

"Let's put it this way. Since both of you are keen on buying this girl, and Mr. Wallace happens to be short of cash at the moment, let's consider his bid invalid and yours successful. In that case, you shall take the last beauty home for six million dollars," Kyle said self-righteously. Without even asking Lucas if he agreed at all, he instructed the staff member beside him, "Proceed with the arrangements for the payment transfer procedures for Lucas Gray. This matter is settled then."

Russell's face was sullen, and after some hesitation, he said softly, "Mr. Kingston, I'm afraid this is not an appropriate way to handle this matter. After all, Mr. Wallace succeeded in bidding for the last item during the auction, but he's now unable to come up with the money to pay what he bid. If we get this matter over and done with in such a hasty manner, I'm afraid it will damage the reputation of the Kingstons' auctions..."

Kyle glared at Russell scornfully. "I'm the heir of the Kingstons, while you're just a subordinate who works for us. Are you sure you want to contradict me too?"

Having worked for the Kingstons for decades, Russell had always been highly respected by the Kingstons, including the helmsman and staff members. This was the first time that he had ever been publicly rebuked by a junior of the Kingstons.

Although he was indeed working for the Kingstons, Russell still had his own set of principles that he would abide by. For the sake of the Kingstons' reputation, he decided to try and persuade Kyle further, but the latter interrupted him with a look of annoyance.

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"That's enough. I don't want to hear any more nonsense from you. I've already made my mind up regarding this matter. Should there be any consequences, I'll bear full responsibility for them. Will this do?"

When Russell heard Kyle's stubborn insistence, there was nothing else he could say. He could only keep quiet and stand quietly at the side.

After giving these instructions, Kyle turned to Liam. "Mr. Wallace, we're friends after all, so I will help you settle this matter this time. However, you must be careful in the future!"

Overjoyed, Liam hurriedly thanked Kyle, "Thank you so much, Mr. Kingston! I owe you a huge favor for this today. Regardless of what happens to you in the future, I'll definitely go to great lengths to help you at all costs!"

"Haha, sure!" Kyle chuckled and then turned around to face Lucas again. He then ordered Lucas like Lucas was his servant, "Okay, hurry up and pay up! Stop wasting our time here!"

Lucas remained seated, not moving by a single inch. His lips curled into a mirthless smile as he said sneeringly, "What if I don't agree?"

From the beginning, Kyle had never asked for Lucas's opinion and presumptuously exempted Liam from bearing the consequences of his actions. He even used such a disgustingly condescending tone to order Lucas to pay up immediately.

If Liam hadn't interrupted the auction halfway and tried to deal with Lucas, Lucas would indeed have paid the six million dollars for the bid he placed.

Unfortunately, Kyle decided to let Liam off without any consequences. Lucas naturally wouldn't agree to it, especially since Kyle spoke to him in such a rude and snobbish tone.

Lucas wasn't bothered by the fact that he was a Kingston and wouldn't let himself be shortchanged for the sake of pleasing Kyle.

“Punk, I’m being kind enough by not asking you for twenty-three million dollars directly. How dare you turn me down? Seems like you want to do this the hard way! It’s a piece of cake for me to deal with you!” Kyle threatened softly.

They weren’t speaking loudly, and only the few people nearest to them could hear them, such as Lena and Bruce, who were sitting right next to Lucas. Both of them had fury in their eyes.

Lucas sneered and glanced at Kyle, who was putting on airs and acting all high up in the air, before turning to look at Liam, who was looking all smug and conceited. He suddenly said loudly, “I’ve given up on that last bid just now, and yet you’re trying to force me to be the winner of the auction just because Mr. Wallace can’t afford to pay? Is there such logic in this world? It turns out that the rules of the Kingstons are so twisted. I’ve gotten an eyeopener today!”

Only then did the crowd figure out exactly what Kyle Kingston had said to Lucas. They immediately got into an uproar and looked at them with displeasure in their eyes.

There wasn’t a single auction where such a rule applied.

Generally, if the successful bidder didn’t have enough money to pay for what they bid on, it would be deemed as malicious bidding, and they would be required to pay for the goods immediately while also being subject to penalties such as getting blacklisted.

If the bidder really couldn’t afford to pay, he would have to bear severe consequences, and that auction would also be considered invalid. With the permission of the guests, a new round of bidding would then begin.

In short, such a practice where the second-highest bidder was forced to buy the item while the malicious bidder faced zero punishment as if nothing had happened would never occur in auctions.

If that were the case, there would be plenty of malicious bidders in the future, and the rules of the auctions would be thrown into jeopardy.

Everyone discussed. When Kyle saw that Lucas had ruthlessly exposed the truth of this matter, his face turned sullen, and he hollered furiously, “Lucas Gray, are you bent on going against me?! Don’t blame me for being nasty to you then!”

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Chapter 315: Forced With The Rod

Liam mocked Lucas smugly, "Lucas Gray, don't think you're an important person. Kyle is from a prestigious family, and he can easily crush you if he wants! You'd better obey, pay up, and leave. Otherwise, you won't be able to leave even if you want to!"

Now, not only had Liam gotten rid of the terrifying debt of thirty million dollars with Kyle's help, thus saving him from the foolish mistake he had made. Furthermore, he was extremely pleased and smug because he felt that he had built a friendship with Kyle. So he spoke with a huge sense of superiority.

Lucas said indifferently, "What if I just don't want to?"

Their threats meant nothing to him.

If Lucas hadn't thought that those beauties the Kingstons had put up for the auction were most likely related to the origin of those beauties of the Ocean Bathhouse, and he wanted to get to the bottom of the truth, he could have just destroyed the auction hall before going to destroy the Kingstons.

Anyway, the Kingstons were the dogs of the Huttons, and they had repeatedly harassed Lucas, which was already extremely annoying.

Destroying the Kingstons was easy, but Lucas still wanted to get more insider news from them, so he hadn't done anything to them.

Seeing that both Liam and Kyle were angered by what Lucas said and sensing that things were about to go awry, Russell hurriedly stood out and yelled loudly, "Ladies and gentleman, the auction tonight has come to an end. Thank you for attending. Please leave the venue now!"

Russell signaled the surrounding staff members to escort the guests away.

In fact, the matter regarding the last auction item had yet to be settled, so they were all very curious about how it was going to be handled. But the fact that the Kingstons were asking them to leave now showed that they clearly wanted to settle it in private instead of letting everyone find out, probably because of the pride of the Kingstons.

At the thought of this, everyone could only leave reluctantly in order not to offend the Kingstons.

The large auction hall was soon empty again.

But Lena and Bruce, who chose to stay in place, stood out very starkly.

Russell frowned in displeasure. "Why aren't you two leaving yet?"

Bruce also frowned. "Mr. Gray is my friend, so I naturally won't let him stay here alone. Although I don't know what exactly you want to do to him, what Mr. Kingston did just now was clearly inappropriate, wasn't it?"

Lena nodded and expressed her support for Lucas. "Exactly, Liam Wallace clearly tried to go against Lucas by deliberately placing high bids that are way more than what he can afford. In the end, Liam Wallace ended up making a fool out of himself because he couldn't afford to pay what he bid. Why should Lucas be the one to bear the consequences? It's not the first time the Kingstons are holding an auction. Why would you do something like that?"

Kyle rolled his eyes in displeasure. "What does it have to do with you? The auction is organized by my family, and we'll handle it the way I want to. You're in no place to intervene."

Russell also said sternly, "This is a matter between us Kingstons and Mr. Lucas Gray. I hope you won't interfere indiscriminately, lest you get into trouble yourselves!"

Although Russell didn't approve of Kyle's actions, he was still working for the Kingstons, so no matter what, he couldn't reprimand Kyle in front of outsiders.

Russell was obviously threatening them with the future of the Sawyers and the Hales and warning them not to poke their noses into others' business.

As he expected, Lena's face immediately became extremely sullen.

If she was alone, she would naturally go all out and continue to support Lucas without any reservations. But if the future of the Sawyers was at stake, Lena wouldn't dare to act so presumptuously and recklessly.

After all, the last time her father, Ethan, had a talk with her, he had mentioned that the Sawyers were now only glorious on the surface and that they were actually facing many large and small crises at this point. A slight careless mistake could lead to heavy losses, which was also why her father wanted her to marry Tristan and let their families unite.

Thus, she indeed couldn't act willfully at this juncture and cause the Sawyers to suffer severe and immeasurable losses.

Lena bit her lower lip reluctantly and stopped talking.

But Bruce shook his head, straightened his back, and said austere, "Even if you are displeased and decide to harm the Hales, I will face all your attacks!"

He had long seen Lucas's methods of handling things, and now that the Hales had already pledged allegiance to him, they were naturally on his side.

But Bruce also believed that as long as Lucas was around, even the Kingstons wouldn't be able to get any advantages.

Bruce's insistence on supporting Lucas even at the expense of getting his family harmed caught Liam and Russell by surprise. Even Lena's eyes were full of confusion.

Liam narrowed his eyes and threatened with a gloomy expression, "Hmph, since you're bent on protecting Lucas Gray, don't blame us for being unkind to the Hales when the time comes!"

Bruce glanced coldly at Liam, whose family was also one of the four top families just like the Hales. After calling Liam a good-for-nothing in his head, Bruce couldn't be bothered to pay any more attention to him.

After seeing Bruce's behavior, Russell could tell even more that Lucas was extraordinary. *He's a young man who has the full support of the most respected family head among the top four families of Orange County. And he's also the holder of a Black Diamond Card that's extremely rare and precious in the world... How much more is there to him than meets the eye?*

No matter what, Russell was reluctant to become enemies with Lucas.

"Mr. Kingston, since Mr. Wallace can't afford to pay what he has bid, while Mr. Gray is not willing to buy Beauty No. 10 at the last bid price, why don't we just nullify this auction? Neither of you will have to pay, and Beauty No. 10 will be kept by the Kingstons. What do you think?" Russell suggested, wanting to let the matter rest.

Unfortunately, Lucas's purpose in coming to the auction was to rescue Grace and take her away. So how could he possibly leave Grace with the Kingstons, who were just as disgusting as the Wallaces?

Kyle was also against the proposal because, in his opinion, it was too easy of a way out for Lucas and also an insult to him. "Hmph, how can an auction held by the Kingstons be nullified just like that?!"

Kyle chuckled coldly and suddenly said arrogantly while a raised voice, "Since I said that you have to pay for it, you have to obey! I initially wanted to do you a favor and let you pay only six million dollars. But now that you've angered me, I've decided that you must pay the full sum of thirty million dollars and not a single cent less! Otherwise, you will stay in this auction house forever!"

With a sinister smile, he waved his hand, and more than ten fighters dressed in black bodysuits appeared around them. They were all holding various weapons like knives, guns, batons, and so on as they began surrounding Lucas aggressively!

“Hahaha, Lucas Gray, I’ll give you two minutes to make your payment obediently! Otherwise, I can’t guarantee that you can still walk out of this hall in one piece!”

Chapter 316: Who’s Threatening?

Both Lena and Bruce were shocked to see the armed henchmen. Neither of them expected Kyle to threaten Lucas using such a method.

Russell was also a bit surprised. He frowned and said in disapproval, “Mr. Kingston, these people are all experts who only appear when necessary. I’m afraid…”

Kyle rebuked hostilely, “Shut up! I have my own plans!”

Staring at Lucas contemptuously with raised brows, Kyle roared, “Punk, weren’t you very arrogant outside Club Splendor just now? How dare you kick me so hard that my guts still hurt even now?! You’re now on my turf, and these are all my men. Let’s see how you can continue to be arrogant in front of me!”

Only then did Russell understand the reason Kyle bore such a strong hatred for Lucas and was bent on going against him. It wasn’t so much as to help Liam but mostly to take revenge on Lucas.

After hearing what Kyle said, both Lena and Bruce frowned, feeling rather worried. *It seems that Kyle Kingston won’t let Lucas off easily... What should we do now?*

Lena looked at the menacing and murderous-looking henchmen around her. She couldn’t help biting her lower lip as her face turned pale, and she subconsciously hid behind Lucas.

She had always been well protected by Ethan and so had never been in such a dangerous situation before. It was inevitable for her to be nervous and terrified.

“You guys leave first!” Lucas suddenly said to both Lena and Bruce.

“What... what about you then?” Lena asked worriedly.

Lucas comforted her with a light smile. “I’ll be fine.”

“Hmph, things have already come to this, but you’re still boasting! Do you really think that you can escape from my elite subordinates unscathed and in one piece? Also, no one in this hall is allowed to leave until you pay that thirty million dollars!” Kyle said with a menacing expression.

Since that chick from the Sawyers and that old fogey are bent on accompanying Lucas Gray because they're worried about him, I'll show them that anyone who dares to side with Lucas Gray will die a horrible death!

"Hurry up. Two minutes are up. Hurry up and pay me the money! Otherwise, I'll sever both your arms!"

With Kyle's order, the ten-odd armed elite henchmen immediately stepped forward toward Lucas threateningly, ready to pounce on him.

Lena watched nervously, and her body even began to tremble slightly.

Lucas glanced at them and smirked. "Do you really think you can do anything to me?"

Then he stood up and walked toward Kyle, completely ignoring these so-called elite henchmen who worked for the Kingstons.

"Bastard, don't be too arrogant! All it takes for me to rip you apart is a single order from me!" Kyle hollered furiously.

But his heart soon began to palpitate as Lucas approached him, making his hairs subconsciously stand on ends.

"Quick, stop him! Stop him!" Kyle bellowed at the top of his lungs.

But before the elite henchmen could make a single move, Lucas suddenly vanished out of sight!

"Where is he?" Taken aback, Kyle got flustered and hurriedly looked around. But a hand suddenly appeared in front of him and gripped his neck tightly!

"!" Kyle's pupils suddenly constricted as fear overwhelmed him!

A moment ago, Lucas was clearly still several meters away from him, and the elite henchmen of the Kingstons were standing in between them. *How did he break through them and dash toward me in an instant?*

The henchmen were just as astonished. They didn't even get a clear glimpse of Lucas's actions just now. All they felt was a chilly breeze blowing past them, and before they knew it, Lucas had already broken through their siege and strangled Kyle's neck!

What horrifying speed!

"Let... go..." Kyle was strangled to the point of becoming flushed as he desperately tried to reach out and push Lucas's hand away.

But Lucas tightened his grip mercilessly, and Kyle immediately rolled his eyes, unable to say another word.

This move successfully managed to stop the Kingstons' elite henchmen, who wanted to charge toward Lucas and attack him, making them no longer dare to act recklessly.

"Mr. Gray, let's talk things over calmly. Please quickly let go of him!" Russell hurriedly exclaimed in panic.

His forehead was covered in cold sweat as he tried to stop Lucas, fearing that Lucas would strangle Kyle to death in a moment of anger.

Although he also hated Kyle, the scion of the Kingston family, Russell would be in trouble if Kyle really died in the auction he was in charge of, regardless of how much the Kingstons valued Russell.

They were suddenly in a stalemate.

Lena gently covered her mouth because when she saw Lucas moving past those henchmen as quickly as a bolt of lightning, she was reminded of when she had encountered an assassination by a biker charging toward her outside the Sawyers' villa. She initially thought that she would die, but Lucas appeared in the nick of time to rescue her like a god descending from heaven.

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At that time, Lucas was probably as quick as he was just now.

Lena's eyes were full of sweet joy as her heart began beating rapidly.

Kyle was probably the most miserable and terrified person now.

He was now under Lucas's control, and there was a sharp pain in his neck. He couldn't even breathe properly, let alone speak.

He was no longer as arrogant as he was a few seconds ago, and there was nothing but fear on his face.

"You said that you'd get your men to sever my arms and not let me leave this place in one piece if I don't pay that thirty million dollars, right?" Lucas asked contemptuously with a smirk.

But his smile seemed terrifying to Kyle, overwhelming him with so much fear that he began trembling violently.

He shook his head desperately, but Lucas was strangling his neck tightly, rendering him immobile. So shaking his head made the pain in his neck intensify and even harder for him to breathe. His eyes kept rolling backward, and he seemed to be on the verge of dying.

Liam spluttered threateningly, "Lucas Gray, you... Let go! If you dare to harm Mr. Kingston, the Kingstons won't let you off!"

Liam was standing near Kyle, and he was so frightened that he turned as pale as a sheet when he saw with his very own eyes that Lucas was about to strangle Kyle to death.

Russell was enraged and roared at Liam, "Idiot, shut up!"

Judging from Lucas's performance, Russell was certain that Lucas wasn't the type that would relent under threats. Liam's words would only further anger Lucas.

"Mr. Gray! I know Mr. Kingston was at fault just now. He shouldn't have offended you, but please have mercy and let us talk things over calmly! If you end up killing him, it won't do any of us here any good!" Russell hurriedly pleaded. If Lucas continued strangling Kyle, he would die in less than a minute!

Lucas naturally wouldn't kill Kyle just like that. Seeing Kyle begin convulsing, Lucas finally relented and let go of him.

Kyle could no longer stand on his feet. As soon as Lucas let go, he directly collapsed onto the ground. He gasped desperately for fresh air while looking thankful to have survived a near-death encounter.

Lucas kicked Kyle, who was now like a dead dog. He then stepped on his chest with one foot and questioned indifferently, "Now, do you still want me to pay you that thirty million dollars?"

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Chapter 317: A Button

At this point, Kyle had long become terrified of Lucas. He hurriedly shook his head. "No, no, no, I wouldn't dare to make you pay! I'll give you that woman for free. I won't take a single cent!"

If he had known that Lucas was so formidable and terrifying, he would have never tried to provoke him from the start!

“Hurry up and release her now. What are you waiting for?”

“Release her? Oh, oh, yes. I’ll get to it immediately!”

Kyle was a little dazed at this point, and his mind was in a whirlwind, so it took him a while to realize what Lucas meant. He hurriedly hollered at Russell, “Are you deaf? Didn’t you hear what Mr. Gray said? Quickly release that woman on the stage!”

“Yes!” Russell didn’t dare to delay. He sprinted toward the auction stage to personally open the door of the large glass display case that Grace was locked up in. He then brought her to Lucas.

All this while, Grace had been locked in the glass display case and could only watch the auction begin with a commotion, followed by the altercation between some people and Lucas, who was originally supposed to win the auction and take her away. When she saw this, her heart tensed up, and she was terribly scared that something might happen to him.

Later, all the guests were made to leave the auction hall, resulting in Lucas and a few other people being the only ones left. All of a sudden, a bunch of armed henchmen surrounded Lucas, making her even more anxious.

Unfortunately, she was locked in the soundproof glass display case, so she couldn’t hear the noise outside. The fact that she didn’t know what was happening made her even more flustered and anxious as she continuously hit the glass walls of the display case until abrasions formed on the skin of her elbows.

Now that she was brought to Lucas and saw Kyle, whom Lucas was stepping on, she finally learned that Lucas had the upper hand in the conflict this time. She was finally going to be rescued!

“You two, take her away first!” Lucas suddenly said to Lena and Bruce.

Lena immediately looked at Lucas worriedly, as she couldn’t be at ease with him staying here alone.

Bruce hurriedly grabbed Lena’s arm and shook his head. “Lena, I think we’d better listen to him and leave! There’s no point staying here anyway. We might even end up disturbing Mr. Gray.”

Lena also realized that this was indeed the case. So she could only say worriedly with some reluctance, “Be careful on your own then. We’ll wait for you outside.”

Soon, Lena and Bruce brought Grace away from the underground auction venue.

“Mr. Gray, we’ve already let your friends go. Can you please let Mr. Kingston off now?” Russell asked anxiously. He was worried he might further anger Lucas if he said something wrong.

Lucas said calmly, “I didn’t intend to become enemies with the Kingstons today, and I wasn’t the one who started this ruckus either. I can let Kyle Kingston off today, but I hope you will remember that I, Lucas Gray, am no pushover. The reason that I choose not to create trouble is not because I’m afraid. Anyone who plans to provoke me first should consider if they can bear the consequences before doing so!”

“Yes, you are right! We will definitely remember!” Russell hurriedly agreed on Kyle’s behalf.

Kyle was still being stepped on by Lucas, who was still in control of his life. Regardless of how indignant and reluctant he was, he had no choice but to bear with it for now, not daring to show the slightest displeasure on his face.

Lucas moved his foot away from Kyle’s chest and let him off. He then turned around and walked toward the exit of the auction hall.

Kyle stared straight at Lucas’s back, wishing he could kill him immediately. But after thinking about the way Lucas could suddenly appear in front of him like a phantom, he hesitated and dared not take the risk. *Forget it. I’ll let this bastard off for now. When the time comes, I’ll definitely kill him!*

The elite henchmen around him didn’t move either because they hadn’t received any orders from Kyle. They simply watched Lucas walk toward the exit of the auction hall.

Liam stood next to him with a sullen expression. He had planned to make Lucas spend a ton of money today, but the latter managed to slip away like a loach. Not only did he not fall into Liam’s trap, but he even humiliated him and Kyle. Liam was bent on taking revenge on Lucas!

Just as Liam was glaring viciously at Lucas’s back, Lucas suddenly turned around and flicked something from his fingertips that swiftly darted toward Liam like a ray of light.

“Pfft!” The round object instantly penetrated Liam’s throat, and two streams of blood gushed out from the front and back of his neck.

Liam raised his hand and touched his neck in bewilderment, but he was already falling backward. With a loud thud, he collapsed onto the ground.

“Mr. Wallace!” Russell and Kyle were astounded. By the time they rushed forward to squat down beside Liam and take a look at his situation, his pupils had already dilated and lost their luster.

Liam was dead!

“This is... a button!” One of the Kingstons’ subordinates hurriedly picked up a bloodstained golden button from a spot on the ground near Liam and handed it to Russell.

When Russell saw the familiar-looking button, his pupils suddenly constricted, and he turned to look at Kyle’s neck.

Kyle was wearing a designer striped dress shirt, but the topmost button on the collar had already gone missing. The remaining buttons on the shirt were identical to the bloodstained one!

The truth couldn’t be any clearer. Lucas had ripped the button off of Kyle’s collar when he was strangling him. At that time, Kyle was on the verge of death, so he naturally had no time to notice such trivial things.

The tiny object that Lucas had flicked with his fingers when he was standing at the exit of the auction hall was this very button that pierced through Liam’s throat, killing him on the spot!

Everyone’s eyes were full of disbelief.

The door of the auction hall was nearly twenty meters away from Liam’s body!

Given such a great distance, even a bullet might not be shot accurately at the target.

Yet Lucas managed to kill Liam accurately by flicking the tiny button at him. How terrifying was this?!

His actions... were far beyond the abilities of a human!

Bang!

Lucas walked out of the door of the auction hall, and the metal gate slammed shut with a loud bang.

Kyle shivered violently as he broke out in cold sweat that spread all over his body.

Beside him, Russell also raised his hand to wipe the sweat off of his forehead. He said with lingering fears, “Mr. Kyle, this man is too terrifying. He has incredible combat skills and reflexes. He also has an extremely rare Black Diamond Card. You’d better not go against him in the future!”

Looking at Liam’s corpse, Kyle recalled the humiliation he felt when Lucas choked him and stepped on his chest. He said indignantly, “Regardless of how powerful he might

be, his body is still made of flesh and blood! Next time, I'll definitely deploy my family's gun squad to besiege him. Let's see how he can hide then!"

Russell stared at the indignant and furious but frightened Kyle and decided not to persuade him further. *This stubborn fool who was almost just killed is probably going to dig his own grave soon. Why should I bother talking sense into him if he refuses to listen?*

Chapter 318: Asking About the Insider News

Meanwhile, Lucas left Club Splendor without turning back at all. Lena, Grace, and Bruce, who had been waiting outside, immediately went up to him and surrounded him.

"Lucas, are you alright!?" Two almost identical voices sounded at the same time, asking the same question in unison.

Lena and Grace looked at each other and felt a little embarrassed.

Lucas smiled. "What could possibly have happened to me? Don't worry!"

"Those henchmen of the Kingstons were very aggressive and menacing just now. They're both just scared that you might have gotten hurt," Bruce said with a chuckle. As someone who had experienced a lot in life, he immediately realized what was going on.

"It's okay. The Kingstons aren't that scary, and Kyle Kingston is just a wimp. You don't have to bother about him. Also, Grace, Liam Wallace will never be able to pester you again in the future. Rest assured!" Lucas said nonchalantly.

Bruce's eyebrows suddenly twitched. Having lived for decades and accumulated plenty of experience, he could naturally tell the brutality in Lucas's words.

He reckoned that Liam should have already died...

On the other hand, Lena and Grace seemed to fail to hear what Lucas meant. They merely thought that Lucas had just used some methods to deter Liam and stop him from creating trouble again.

Lena carefully looked at Grace's beautiful appearance and suddenly asked, "Lucas, so you knew this beautiful girl prior to this auction? No wonder you were willing to spend so much money to bid for her!"

Her tone contained a subtle tinge of sourness that even she herself failed to notice. She even repeatedly comforted herself that she was just standing up for Cheyenne, her best friend.

Lucas didn't notice the hint of jealousy in Lena's tone and simply said seriously, "Yes, she's my friend who got abducted and brought here forcefully by that bastard Liam Wallace. If Cheyenne didn't see it happen and asked me to save Grace, I'm afraid I wouldn't have known about it. Fortunately, I made it in time."

Only then did Grace realize that Lucas didn't show up at the auction house and rescue her by chance. Instead, he had specifically come here to save her! At the same time, Grace also felt even more grateful to Cheyenne.

Lena now knew why Lucas suddenly showed up at the auction out of the blue. And after learning that Grace and Cheyenne also knew each other, her curiosity was piqued even further.

But this was obviously not a good place to talk. Lucas waved into the distance. Zach, who had driven him to the club and had been waiting at the entrance, immediately ran over.

"Mr. Gray! Are you done handling your matters?"

Lucas nodded and said to Zach, "Send Miss Keller back to the hospital. I have some other matters to attend to."

"Yes, Mr. Gray!" Zach immediately acknowledged.

Although Grace wanted to thank Lucas properly, he clearly had an urgent matter at hand. Moreover, she had just experienced a near-death encounter, so she wanted to go back to the hospital and have a good chat with her mother. So she didn't say anything more and instead just nodded at Lucas before heading back to the hospital with Zach.

Lena also wanted to chat with Lucas for a while more. But when she saw that Lucas seemed to be in a hurry to handle some matters, she bade goodbye to him sensibly. "Lucas, I'll take my leave now. I'll ask you and Cheyenne out for some fun another day!"

"Alright, take care!" Lucas smiled and waved. After seeing Lena leave, he turned around to look at Bruce.

Bruce understood that Lucas had something to say to him, so he took the initiative to ask, "Mr. Gray, I've prepared some fine tea at home. Would you like to come with me to have a taste of the tea?"

"Sure, let's go."

Soon, Lucas went to the Hale residence together with Bruce in the latter's car.

In the guest hall of the Hale residence, Bruce led Lucas to the master seat while Bruce himself sat beside Lucas. After instructing the servants to serve some hot tea, he ordered them to leave so that he and Lucas could be alone.

“What exactly was going on in the Kingstons’ auction tonight?” Lucas asked, cutting straight to the chase.

Bruce’s expression turned solemn. He had long guessed that Lucas would definitely ask him about this matter. After all, openly auctioning off living humans like they were objects was an extremely serious matter, especially since Lucas abhorred such unethical and immoral practices. He would definitely be concerned about the origin of the auction.

Bruce didn’t dare to delay and hurriedly told Lucas everything he knew. “The Kingstons are from San Francisco, and they started off as auctioneers decades ago, so auctions have always been very important to them. In recent years, the Kingstons held more than ten medium-sized auctions every year, and the venues are not limited to San Francisco. For example, they chose to hold one in Orange County this time. There are a large plethora of items they put up for auction each time, and almost anything can be sold at their auctions. There were even heavy firearms in past auctions!

“But as far as I know, they should have started putting up living humans for auction only in recent years.”

Lucas frowned. “In recent years? Roughly when did they start doing so?”

“They should have started about six or seven years ago. I remember that when the Kingstons first started putting beautiful women up for auction, it caused quite an uproar among the scions of wealthy families, so I remember this matter very clearly.”

Lucas tapped his fingertips against the small mahogany coffee table as he fell into deep thought.

He had originally thought that the Kingstons were the ones who supplied beautiful women to the Ocean Bathhouse.

But Preston Taylor mentioned the other time that the Taylors had started running such a business about two decades ago. Yet the Kingstons had only started running the auctions of beautiful women about six to seven years ago. The timeline clearly didn’t tally.

It seemed that the Kingstons probably weren’t the ones who had provided the Ocean Bathhouse with those women.

But no matter what, both families were guilty of illegal trafficking and abduction of women, so there had to be some relation between the two. It could be that the origin of those beauties was from the same source.

“So, do you know any insider information about the beautiful women used as escorts on the top floor of the Ocean Bathhouse?” Lucas asked again.

After all, Bruce was old and also had a high status. Besides, the Hales were also one of the four major families in the county, making them on equal ground as the Taylors. It was entirely possible for him to have heard some insider information.

“I don’t know much about this matter. The Taylors managed to gain a foothold in Orange County by relying on that sordid business they run on the top floor of the Ocean Bathhouse. They eventually developed into one of the top four families of Orange County. I was once curious about the source of their beautiful women too, so I sent some people to investigate it.

“Unfortunately, the mysterious organization supplying those beautiful women was quite careful and powerful enough to kill all the people I sent. We even received a terrifying threat from them, so I decided to give up on investigating the source.

“Furthermore, at the time, other families in Orange County had also sent people to investigate this matter. After all, the Taylors had reaped massive profits from that business, and many were jealous of them. But they faced the same thing as us in the end and were also issued stern warnings. At that time, there were two other families that had developed well. Refusing to believe the threats, they continued to send people to shadow those people. In the end, those two families completely disappeared from Orange County.

“Since then, everyone has treated this matter as an extreme taboo, and no one really mentions it anymore. As far as I know, even the Taylors, who run that business, are unclear of what those people’s origins really are.”

The information Bruce provided Lucas was much more detailed than what Preston had told him, but it made Lucas frown even more.

The power of that mysterious organization seemed to be even greater than what he had previously thought.

“So, do you think that there are any secret dealings between the Taylors and the Kingstons?” Lucas asked.

Chapter 319: One Step Further

After hearing Lucas's question, Bruce immediately understood what he meant. "Are you suspecting that... those beautiful women at the Ocean Bathhouse, when the Taylors owned it, were provided by the Kingstons?"

Lucas nodded. "So, is there such a possibility?"

Bruce smiled as he answered with great certainty, "There have actually been some conflicts between the Taylors and the Kingstons, and there was once a major dispute. So it's impossible that the Kingstons would secretly supply those beautiful women to the Taylors to help them develop and expand their businesses."

Lucas raised his brows with great interest. "Oh, is that so?"

He didn't quite know much about the grudges and feuds between those top families. Besides, the Taylors and the Kingstons were in different cities, so it hadn't crossed Lucas's mind that there had been a major dispute.

But Lucas had also noticed that among the guests of the Kingstons' auction tonight, there were core members of other top families of Orange County. But the only two direct descendants of the Taylors, Preston and Scott, hadn't attended the auction. The only Taylor present was Gisele, who had appeared only for a short while and entered together with Kyle.

So it seemed that it was true that the Kingstons and the Taylors didn't get along with each other.

Bruce explained, "More than ten years ago, one of Kyle Kingston's aunts, who was very beautiful, was arranged by the Kingstons to marry a man from one of the top eight families of DC. But she fell in love with the son of the family head of the Taylors and refused to comply with the marriage arrangements her family set for her. She couldn't convince the Taylors to change their minds, so she ended up eloping with her lover.

"Afterward, the Kingstons were enraged and nabbed the both of them before subsequently forcing them to break up. During the scuffle, one of the Kingstons accidentally killed the son of the Taylors' helmsman, which led to the suicide of Kyle's aunt. As a result, the Kingstons lost the opportunity to build connections with the wealthy families in DC, and since then, they formed a major feud with the Taylors and haven't been in contact with each other for many years.

"So, those escorts were definitely not supplied by the Kingstons."

Lucas nodded. *Seems these two families have a strong feud with each other. In that case, I'll have to investigate both families separately.*

After explaining the feud between the two families to Lucas, Bruce said worriedly again, "Mr. Gray, since you strangled Kyle Kingston at the auction tonight, the Kingstons

definitely won't let you off even though they were at fault to begin with. They're very protective of their family members, so they absolutely won't let the matter go just like that. You have to be more careful!"

Lucas smiled nonchalantly. "It's just the Kingstons. They don't mean anything to me."

Lucas spoke with great confidence and nonchalance because he really didn't take them seriously.

Bruce was slightly surprised, but he soon smiled.

Previously, Lucas had shown his ability to easily annihilate the Hales. But no one knew how much more power Lucas had but was still concealing.

For instance, the Black Diamond Card that Lucas had taken out at the auction in Club Splendor tonight had made everyone taken aback because it was far beyond their expectations.

Now that the Hales had already pledged their allegiance to Lucas, there was no doubt that the Hales would naturally receive greater benefits if Lucas became stronger in the future.

Lucas took a sip of tea and suddenly asked, "I'd like to ask you something. Do you hope for the Hales to remain at the status quo now, or do you want to take a step further and become the strongest family in Orange County, or even surpass those top families in other cities?"

Bruce immediately froze in shock. After he processed Lucas's words, joy instantly appeared all over his wrinkled face.

"Mr. Gray, do you... do you mean that... you can help the Hales become even more powerful and be on par with the families currently superior to us?" Bruce asked eagerly in a shaky voice.

Taking your family to greater heights and leading them to become stronger while earning prestige and the respect of others was almost the holy grail of every responsible and ambitious family head. Bruce was no exception.

Under his leadership, the Hales had managed to grow from a mid-tier family to become one of the four top families of Orange County. It was certainly something that he was proud of, but that was all. They had been stagnating at the status quo for more than a decade without making any more progress.

After all, the competition between families was extremely stiff, especially at their level. For them, progressing a step further was a Herculean task.

But Bruce believed that Lucas was an extraordinary person who definitely meant what he said!

Looking at Bruce's excited expression, Lucas smiled calmly. "Don't rejoice too soon. Given the current strength of the Hales, you are still far from reaching that goal."

The excitement and agitation in Bruce's eyes reduced a little, and his rationality made him trust that Lucas was right. The Hales definitely still had a long way to go before they could progress.

"It's alright, Mr. Gray. We'll surely make up for what we lack! I believe that as long as you are here, the Hales will reach that stage sooner or later!" Bruce said with a firm and determined gaze.

Only then did Lucas smile faintly. "Okay. Select some young and trustworthy people from your family tonight. They have to be under the age of thirty, physically fit, hardworking, willing to take hardship, and most importantly, loyal enough to the Hales! After you've chosen the candidates, I will send someone over to your place tomorrow to train them properly."

Thinking about Lucas's terrifying combat skills and the fact that Hans, the martial arts expert the Hales had spent a lot of money to hire, couldn't even strike Lucas once, Bruce reckoned that the younger members of his family would certainly become elite fighters if Lucas personally sent someone to teach and train them!

Even if they wouldn't be able to hold a candle to Lucas, they would definitely be countless times better than the elite guards they had hired in the past!

Bruce was so excited that he nodded profusely. "Yes! Thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to be groomed by you!"

Lucas smiled faintly. If he wasn't touched by Bruce insisting on speaking up for him at the expense of offending the Kingstons at the auction tonight, he might have never thought of giving the Hales this opportunity.

"Okay, I should get going." Lucas stood up.

Bruce hurriedly stood up and said solicitously, "I'll send you back immediately."

"It's alright. Go get busy with what your own matters. You can just arrange for someone to send me to the hospital." Lucas didn't want Bruce, who was advanced in years, to personally send him to his destination late at night. Lucas wasn't the type of person who put on airs either.

"Yes!"

Although Lucas said so, Bruce wouldn't be negligent and casually arrange a random driver for him.

Soon, a tall and lanky young man entered the guest hall.

When he entered and saw Lucas on the master seat, his pupils suddenly constricted, and his body trembled. Even his foot froze in midair.

Lucas raised his brows when he saw him as well.

The young man who entered was none other than Bruce's eldest grandson, Connor Hale.

Back then, Lucas had confronted the Hales and caused a stir at their home because Logan had colluded with Scarlet to abduct Amelia. At that time, Lucas had dealt with Connor harshly for making nasty remarks, causing him to suffer many losses.

When Lucas captured all the Hales overnight and put them on the verge of destruction, Connor suffered even more torment in prison.

If Lucas hadn't decided to pardon them and allow them to go home, Connor would have probably died by now.

Thus, Connor felt extremely complicated regarding Lucas. When he saw Lucas, he was full of fear and respect.

"Why are you still standing there at the door? Hurry up and come here to greet Mr. Gray!" Bruce hollered at his incompetent grandson furiously.

The reason he asked Connor to come over was so that he could appear more in front of Lucas and hopefully change Lucas's opinion of him.

After all, Bruce was already in his seventies, and he didn't know how much longer he would live. Once he kicked the bucket, the great business empire of the Hales would be handed over to Connor.

Bruce would be at ease if Connor could be on good terms with Lucas.

Connor suppressed the fear within him as he walked toward Lucas. He greeted respectfully, "Hello, Mr. Gray!"

Lucas chuckled when he saw the large droplets of sweat on Connor's forehead and the way his legs seemed to be trembling a little. "Hello."

Connor heaved a sigh of relief when he heard the friendly tone of Lucas's voice.

Bruce ordered, "Connor, drive Mr. Gray to Orange Coast Medical Center now."

"Yes, Grandpa." Connor hurriedly nodded before quickly going to the garage. He then drove the best car they had to the entrance of the guest hall to pick Lucas up.

Bruce stood at the door and watched the car leave the residence before heaving a long sigh of relief.

"Gather everyone here for a meeting now!" After he issued this order, all the people in the family began to get busy.

...

Meanwhile, Connor sent Lucas to Orange Coast Medical Center while making sure to drive carefully throughout the journey. "Mr. Gray, we're here..."

When Lucas opened the car door and was about to get out, Connor thought he could finally relax and calm his nerves, which had been tense all this time.

"Oh, by the way..." Lucas suddenly turned around, giving Connor such a huge fright that he shuddered.

Lucas was a little speechless. "Go home and tell your grandfather that I want him to find a place to settle down the nine women I bought at the auction in Club Splendor. Make sure no one can harm them again."

Connor nodded repeatedly. "Okay, Mr. Gray, don't worry. I will definitely relay every single word of yours to Grandpa."

"Okay." Lucas nodded, pushed open the car door, and got out.

Sitting in the driver's seat in the car, Connor completely relaxed his mind and leaned back against the seat. He felt that his back was already drenched in cold sweat.

When Lucas walked into the hospital, he called Jordan and said, "Call Stanley Ray and ask him how things are going over in LA. Tell him to come over immediately if he's free because I'd like for him to go to the Hales and train some of them into capable fighters."

Jordan immediately replied in a much louder voice, "Lucas, let me do it! I happen to have a lot of time on my hands lately. I've been so idle that my skills are getting rusty! Let me go train those newbies! I guarantee I'll be able to put them through tough and arduous training and turn them into elite fighters!"

Lucas was speechless. "I actually have some other tasks I want you to do, but since you want to be their trainer, go ahead. But I still want you to ask Stanley to come over. I have some things for him to handle."

Jordan immediately agreed, but he soon smacked his lips and asked in puzzlement, "Lucas, you're trying to help the Hales become stronger, right? Actually, with your power, you can easily conquer all of Orange County. Why do you still bother going to such great lengths?"

With Lucas's status, he could easily conquer Orange County and even some other counties.

Lucas replied calmly, "Wouldn't that be meaningless? I want to build my power with my own abilities and make it grow to the point that I can confront the Huttons in DC!"

After hearing this, Jordan immediately felt zeal and ardor coursing through his veins. "Okay, Lucas. I promise to make all of those newbies improve by leaps and bounds within a month!"

After ending the call, Lucas thought about it and called Joe, followed by Flynn. He instructed each of them to pick a few trustworthy people and send them to the Hales for training.

Lucas had taken both of them in as trusted subordinates, so he hoped that they could have some capable underlings who could be of help to them.

After all, no one would mind having too many competent and able subordinates.

After giving these instructions, Lucas walked to William's ward.

But to his surprise, Cheyenne wasn't the only one in the ward. Grace was also present and was currently chatting with Cheyenne.

When they saw Lucas enter, both of them beamed with joy and surprise.

"You're back!" Cheyenne immediately stood up and walked quickly toward Lucas. She sized him up and finally heaved a sigh of relief after confirming that he was unharmed.

Grace couldn't leap over and check on Lucas like Cheyenne did, but she stared at Lucas with great concern in her beautiful eyes for a long time. After seeing no visible injuries or dirty stains on his body, she finally felt relieved as well.

Although they had a lot to ask Lucas now, they glanced at each other and tacitly decided not to say anything, lest William became worried after finding out what had happened.

...

In the Wallaces' manor in the southern district of Orange County...

At this moment, there were dozens of people standing around the entrance of the most luxurious villa in the middle.

In the middle of the crowd, there was a corpse lying motionless on the ground.

The corpse belonged to a young man of about 25 or 26 years old. There was a distinct hole in his throat, and his neck was covered with some dried blood.

The eyes of the corpse were still wide open, out of focus and fixed on the starry sky above. He seemed to be confused, as if he hadn't figured out how he died even during his last moments.

"Liam! My poor son, you've died such a tragic death! Who killed you?!" a woman in her late forties shrieked at the top of her lungs as she leaped toward the corpse on the ground.

Many of the Wallaces, standing at the side, seemed to be furious and grief-stricken.

"Who was it? Who the hell had the audacity to do such a vicious thing to a Wallace!?" a few reckless and impulsive young men hollered in rage.

Kyle stood beside the group of Wallaces and said with a look of grief on his face, "I'm sorry. It's all my fault for failing to protect Liam well and ended up letting some villain scheme against him, causing him to die at such a young age. Mr. Wallace, please punish me!"

He had a polite attitude and was even hanging his head a little low.

Liam's grandfather, Pierre Wallace, had anger written all over his face as he glared with his eyes wide open and full of fury.

Although Liam wasn't too competent, he was still Pierre's grandson, whom he had watched grow up. Yet Liam ended up dying tragically on their own turf in Orange County. No matter what, he would never let the culprit off the hook! "Mr. Kingston, please tell us who killed my grandson."

Chapter 321: Not Releasing A Single One

Looking sullen and grief-stricken, Kyle said, "I think everyone knows about the auction we Kingstons held in Club Splendor tonight. During the auction, a young man named Lucas Gray got into a conflict with Liam over a beauty put up for auction as the finale item. I tried to mediate the conflict, but I didn't expect Lucas Gray to suddenly get physical and kill Liam a second before he left the auction hall!"

“I wanted to nab the culprit and bring him here to take revenge for Liam, but Lucas Gray is extremely good at fighting. Even the guards working for my family couldn’t hold him back, and even I almost got killed by him. If he hadn’t been deterred by the power of my family at the last moment, I would have died like Liam.”

As Kyle spoke, he raised his head to reveal the purplish-green welts on his neck from being strangled by Lucas.

Pierre Wallace and the other Wallaces were initially somewhat doubtful about Kyle’s words, but the fingerprint-shaped bruises on his neck were indeed real. Only then did they believe that even Kyle was almost killed by the person who murdered Liam. Clearly, the murderer was indeed brutal and menacing!

“Lucas Gray? As far as I know, there isn’t a top family in Orange County that bears the family name Gray. Which city is his family from?” Pierre asked with a frown.

The Wallaces began pondering over it, but none of them could figure out if there was a powerful family with the name Gray.

Kyle shook his head. “Lucas Gray isn’t a member of a powerful family from another city. I heard that he’s from Orange County, and he’s actually quite well-known here too.”

“What?! He’s from Orange County?” The Wallaces were extremely surprised.

“Could it be that this Lucas Gray you mentioned is that infamous good-for-nothing son-in-law of the Carters, who married Cheyenne Carter, who was formerly known as the most beautiful girl in the county, due to a scandal?” A few of the younger Wallaces blurted because they suddenly found the name ‘Lucas Gray’ extremely familiar.

Kyle nodded and said with a look of agony, “Yes, it’s him! I didn’t expect a lowly live-in son-in-law like him to actually have the audacity to attack Liam and me.”

“Damn it! Lucas Gray is nothing but a piece of garbage that everyone despises. How dare he provoke and challenge the Wallaces?!” After hearing about Lucas’s past, several young men of the Wallace family began cursing and clamoring about immediately going to settle scores with Lucas.

“There’s also one more thing I think I should tell you guys. Lucas Gray seems to be very close to the Hales, which is also one of the four most powerful families of Orange County. At the auction venue earlier, Bruce Hale, the head of the Hale family, kept defending Lucas Gray. If Bruce Hale hadn’t tried to stop me, Lucas Gray would probably have been caught by my family guards!” Kyle deliberately told the Wallaces about an incident he had fabricated.

After all, at the time, all the other guests in the auction venue had been made to leave, and Lucas, Kyle, Russell, Liam, and the Kingstons' ten-odd experts were the only ones around.

Apart from them, no one saw what had happened, so even if Kyle made things up, no one could verify the claims he made nor expose his lies.

"The Hales, Bruce Hale!" There was anger written all over Pierre's old and wrinkled face. He gritted his teeth and bellowed, "I, Pierre Wallace, swear that the Wallaces will steer clear from the Hales from now on and never be on good terms with them again!"

With a subtle glint in his eyes, Kyle asked concernedly again, "Mr. Wallace, how do you guys plan to deal with that bastard Lucas Gray? My family can also give you some help."

Pierre glanced at Kyle and said coldly, "This is a feud between the Wallaces and him, so we will naturally be the ones to take revenge! We won't bother you for now. Please take your leave, Mr. Kingston!"

Seeing that Pierre was austere and upset, Kyle could only purse his lips and leave as he was told. "In that case, I'll get going now. I offer you my deepest condolences. Goodbye!"

After Kyle left the Wallaces residence with both his personal bodyguards, Pierre's face turned sullen, and he snorted furiously. "Hah, Kyle Kingston isn't a decent person either! Trust him to think that I'd fall for his pretense and his tricks. He's such a greenhorn!"

Pierre's eldest son, Bryant Wallace, was standing right beside him. When he heard what Pierre said, he couldn't help being stunned. "Dad, are you saying that that brat was lying to us on purpose just now?"

"Hmph, he might not necessarily be lying about everything, but there must be some falsehoods! Why would Liam get into a conflict with that Lucas Gray out of nowhere, and how did things escalate to such an extent?"

"From what you've said, Lucas Gray should only be a lowly live-in son-in-law of the Carters. How could he have had the guts to do something like that? This matter must have something to do with that punk Kyle Kingston!"

"Besides, the Kingstons used Club Splendor as the venue for their auction of some secretive items tonight, which they clearly stated are to be kept hidden from the public eye. So the Kingstons must have sent plenty of their guards and henchmen to guard the place both inside and outside!"

“In the end, the altercation broke out on our property, but none of our subordinates were allowed to stay at the venue. As a result, we don’t even know what exactly happened at the auction! The Kingstons can’t shirk responsibility for this!”

The more Pierre thought about it, the angrier he got. He ordered Bryant coldly, “Send someone to investigate immediately. We must get to the bottom of the truth! I don’t care who Lucas Gray is. As long as he’s related to Liam’s death, we won’t spare him!”

After hearing what Pierre said, Bryant, Liam’s biological father, exclaimed ruthlessly with reddened eyes, “Yes! We’ll definitely avenge Liam and get ahold of every single person who caused his death!”

Soon, the news of Liam Wallace’s murder spread like wildfire throughout Orange County.

After all, the Wallaces were one of the four most powerful families in Orange County, and the victim this time was the grandson of the Wallaces’ helmsman. The news was especially shocking because it was said that Liam had been killed during a brawl.

Someone actually dared to lay their hand on a direct descendant of a top family in Orange County. How brazen!

Bruce received the news early the next morning, and his eyelids couldn’t help but twitch.

The first thing that came to his mind was the words that Lucas said to Grace outside Club Splendor yesterday—“Liam Wallace will never pester you again.”

Bruce was almost 100% certain that Liam’s death was related to Lucas.

After hesitating for a long time, Bruce nevertheless called Lucas. “Mr. Gray, the top families of Orange County have received a message this morning regarding Liam Wallace’s... demise.”

At this moment, Lucas was on the way to the hospital to visit William after sending Cheyenne to work and dropping Amelia off at the kindergarten.

Upon receiving Bruce’s call, he immediately understood what Bruce was worried about and thus said straightforwardly, “I killed Liam Wallace yesterday in front of Kyle Kingston.”

Chapter 322: Getting Discharged and Going Home

Although Bruce had already guessed it, he was still stunned by Lucas’s ability to remain composed and speak calmly. After all, the person he killed wasn’t an ordinary person

but a direct descendant of the Wallaces, one of Orange County's four most powerful families!

In particular, Lucas had killed Liam right in front of Kyle and the Kingstons' employees. This was truly shocking!

"Mr. Gray, according to the information I received, Kyle Kingston personally delivered Liam Wallace's corpse back to the Wallace residence last night and even said a lot to them. He must have smeared you and made extremely unfavorable allegations about you. The Wallaces should bear a grudge against you now, and they'll surely confront you soon. They also declared that they would steer clear of the Hales and swore to be at odds with us from now on."

Bruce said solemnly, "The Hales aren't intimidated, and I'm not worried that they'll try to deal with you either. But I'm a little worried that the Wallaces might harm the people around you. You have to be careful and keep your guard up!"

The Wallaces would resort to extreme methods at times. And if they really attacked the people related to Lucas, they would definitely resort to some despicable means that could result in fatal consequences.

Lucas sneered. "If they have the audacity to do that, I can guarantee that the Wallaces will definitely vanish from Orange County immediately!"

Lucas's family was his Achilles' heel, and anyone who dared to harm them would die, regardless of who they were!

"I have my own arrangements for this matter. Don't worry. Since the Wallaces have now declared war on the Hales, can you cope with it?" Lucas asked.

Bruce was very confident about this. "The Wallaces and the Hales are similar in status, and in fact, in some aspects, they're inferior to us. So they can go ahead and declare war on us all they want. I doubt they can do anything to us.

"Of course, if the Kingstons join them and stand on their side, it might be a little difficult to handle them..."

Bruce wasn't blindly confident in himself. Last night in Club Splendor, he represented the Hales and stood on Lucas's side, so he reckoned that Kyle must have formed a grudge against the Hales. There was a high possibility that he would secretly collude with the Wallaces to deal with the Hales.

"Okay, inform me immediately if the Kingstons start attacking you," Lucas instructed.

Bruce immediately felt relieved. He said with a smile, "Alright. Thank you, Mr. Gray!"

After hanging up the phone, Lucas continued to drive to the hospital.

Regarding the safety of the people related to him, as Bruce mentioned, Lucas had actually made arrangements to protect them last night.

He had long arranged for Wade to stay by Charlotte's side to protect her at all times. When he called Jordan last night, he had already instructed Jordan to tell Stanley to come back from LA. Then he gave Stanley the task of secretly protecting Cheyenne at all times.

As for Amelia, Lucas would send her to and from the kindergarten every day, so her safety was guaranteed.

Soon, Lucas arrived at the Orange Coast Medical Center and took the familiar route to William's ward.

"Lucas, I've been lying alone in the hospital for two days. The boredom is killing me! Hurry up and let me get discharged from the hospital!"

Lucas heard William complaining as soon as Lucas stepped into the ward.

Lucas said helplessly, "You were still unconscious when you were transported to the hospital yesterday. Your injuries are quite severe, so it's better for you to rest and recuperate here for a few days."

"Hey, they're just some superficial wounds! There aren't any serious issues with my health. I've been hospitalized for more than a day, and I'm almost fully recovered! I didn't suffer any fractures or anything, so why do I need to continue being hospitalized?" William deliberately jumped twice on the ground to prove to Lucas that his injuries were not serious.

Lucas sighed and shrugged with his palms spread open. "There's no point in asking me to help you get discharged, William. You have to get Cheyenne and Charlotte's approval."

William had no choice but to call his daughters again and plead as hard as he could to convince them. He even asked his attending physician to prove that his injuries were not severe and that he was indeed ready to be discharged from the hospital.

Due to William's insistence, Cheyenne and Charlotte could only agree to let him be discharged and go home for recuperation.

After William's things were packed, Lucas planned to take William back to the villa for a short stay of a couple of days so that everyone could take care of him. But William insisted that Lucas send him back to his rented apartment in Golden Garden Estate.

1

“Since we’ve already moved out, just send me back to my apartment. Otherwise, if Karen finds out, she’ll definitely kick up a fuss and go to your place to argue with you guys. Just drop me off at the estate. Karen’s home. She’ll take care of me.”

Lucas sighed.

He knew that one of the main reasons that William insisted on moving out of the villa was actually that he wanted to prevent Karen from insulting Lucas and making malicious remarks about him all the time, lest she disrupted their pleasant and peaceful life.

Lucas sent William to Block 26 of Golden Garden Estate and accompanied him up to the apartment on the fifth floor. When they entered the apartment, they saw Karen sprawled across the couch in the living room and watching television. There were food wrappers, empty bags of chips, empty bottles, and other trash all over the floor. It was a huge mess and filthy everywhere. But Karen merely lay on the couch and continued watching TV as if she hadn’t seen the garbage and mess she had created.

1

Even when she saw William and Lucas walking in, she merely turned to glance at them nonchalantly before looking away and ignoring them, let alone ask about William’s injuries.

William was instantly disappointed.

He had been treating Karen well all these years. And apart from the time he had gotten into a physical fight with Karen in a drunken stupor, he had never laid a hand on her or lashed out at her before. He would bear with her tantrums and scoldings every day and even let her be in charge of the pursestrings.

This time, he had gotten beaten up at the door of his apartment and ended up hospitalized. Even Lucas, his son-in-law, had made several trips to the hospital to visit him. Yet Karen, his wife of decades, didn’t give him a single call, much less visit him at the hospital.

Now that he had come home, she still didn’t show him any concern and simply pretended like she didn’t see him. This made William feel truly heartbroken.

When William saw the mess in the living room, which now looked like a dumpster, he no longer wanted to stay here. After placing the items that he was holding back inside his room, William immediately left.

When they walked to the square below the apartment block, William complained to Lucas with a glum expression, "Hey, Lucas, to be honest with you, I really don't want to continue living with this woman anymore!"

1

Chapter 323: The Arrogant Subordinate

Lucas looked at him sympathetically and sighed without saying a single word.

In fact, Lucas was in awe of William's ability to tolerate Karen's detestable character for so many years.

If he were in William's shoes, he would have long left Karen because he couldn't stand her at all. He would rather live alone than continue living with a horrid woman like her.

But no matter what, Karen was still Cheyenne and Charlotte's biological mother, so Lucas naturally wouldn't persuade William to divorce her.

"Ah, forget it. Let's stop talking about her. The mention of that woman makes me feel terrible. I'm going to go to the office to take a look," William said.

The company he was referring to was naturally the Orange County branch of the Solar Corporation, which Lucas had him manage some time ago.

The Orange County branch of the Solar Corporation originally belonged to the Brookes from LA. But Aston and Andrew had previously transferred 49% of the shares of the Orange County branch to Lucas in order to gain his support while feigning allegiance to him. In exchange, they wanted an opportunity to expand their family business in Orange County.

Later on, the Brookes repeatedly committed acts of betrayal against Lucas, which ultimately led to their fall. Lucas then acquired all of the businesses formerly owned by the Brookes at market price, which naturally included the Orange County branch of the Solar Corporation.

But after Lucas acquired this company, he didn't have enough manpower to spare for managing it, so he had no choice but to let William take on the role of the general manager and be fully in charge of all affairs related to the company in Orange County. Lucas hadn't even gone to the company to take a look yet, not even once.

Hearing that William wanted to go and take a look at the office, Lucas thought about it and decided to go with him.

On the one hand, he wanted to send William there. On the other hand, he also wanted to see for himself the current operation and situation of the company.

After all, William had just taken over the responsibility of managing the company a few days ago, and most of the current employees had been working there even before Lucas acquired it. He wondered if they would have any dissatisfaction or refusal to obey William's orders.

The Solar Corporation office building was only a short distance away from Golden Garden Estate, so it only took them a ten-minute drive to get there.

Lucas followed William into the office building, which had rather grand and presentable decor.

"Hey, aren't you the new general manager of our company, Mr. Carter? You're actually at the office today. Pigs can fly! I heard that you fell sick and were hospitalized, right? You recovered so soon!"

Just as the two of them stepped into the office, they heard a sarcastic remark.

Lucas turned around and saw a middle-aged man in his forties with a huge beer belly speaking to William with contempt and derision.

"Hah, Mr. Carter has someone powerful backing him up. Even if he continues being on medical leave for a long time, he'd still be our general manager. Such treatment isn't something we hardworking employees can enjoy!" Another middle-aged man with a gaunt and long face was standing beside the man with the beer belly.

Lucas had sharp eyesight, and he saw at a glance the metal nameplates on both of their chests. The words 'Deputy General Manager: Adrian Hill' were on the nameplate of the middle-aged man with the beer belly. While on the thin middle-aged man with a long face were the words 'Directory of the Business Department: Jimmy Brown'.

Lucas immediately frowned.

Both of them were obviously senior executives of the Solar Corporation branch in Orange County. But they were both very sarcastic and snide when speaking to William, even though he was the general manager. They didn't show him the slightest respect and even displayed a lot of animosity toward him.

Their voices were rather loud when they were mocking William, so many people in the office area suddenly turned over to look at them.

William's face turned sullen.

Lucas had given him full authority to manage the company. But when Lucas came to inspect the operations of the office for the first time, he was greeted with this distasteful scene of William being publicly humiliated by his subordinates.

It not only meant that William didn't hold any significant authority in the company, but it also reflected the disorderly management of the company. Strictly speaking, it was considered William's dereliction of duty.

William took a glance at Adrian Hill and Jimmy Brown before looking at the other employees in the office, who were looking at them with peculiar gazes. He ordered sternly, "All of you, stop what you're doing immediately and gather in the conference hall on the first floor! I have something to say!"

After hearing William's order, all the employees didn't get up immediately as ordered. But instead, they subconsciously turned to look at the deputy general manager, Adrian, to see what he intended for them to do.

Adrian said nonchalantly with a smug expression, "Mr. Carter, it's unfortunate that I happen to have an appointment with a client at this time. I'll give your meeting a pass! In addition, I advise you to give notice at least a few days in advance when you decide to hold a meeting again. Who has the time to attend your impromptu meeting?"

Then he scanned his surroundings.

"Mr. Carter, I'm sorry, but I have an errand to run, so I have to be out of the office. I'll have to miss your meeting!" Jimmy, the director of the business department, said with a smile on his long face.

"That's right! The next time you want to hold a meeting, please inform all of us in advance. Such an impromptu meeting is really disrupting our work rhythm!"

"Haha, Mr. Carter doesn't even care about the situation of the company. He obviously doesn't give a hoot about whether your work rhythm is disrupted or not! Our lives are so hard. We get so overwrought and caught up with working every day, but we still have to attend some nonsensical meeting! Who has time for that?!"

"Exactly! I happen to have an important project to follow up on. I won't be attending the meeting either."

...

All of a sudden, several senior executives of the company declined to attend the meeting and even wanted to leave the office altogether. The remaining employees looked around to observe the situation and stayed silent while feigning ignorance.

“All of you, shut up!” William suddenly hollered and immediately told all of them to stop in their tracks. Everyone turned to look at him.

William was so enraged that his face was flushed. Although he knew that many of the long-tenured employees of the company ostracized him and would obey his instructions perfunctorily without actually putting them into action, he didn't expect them to be so disrespectful to him. It was a blatant insult to him!

If he couldn't find a way to subdue them today, he wouldn't have the cheek to call himself the general manager again from now on, for he had no power or authority and was getting trampled on by everyone. What a huge joke he would become!

“Haha, what's the matter? Mr. Carter, are you going to put on airs as the general manager in front of us?” Adrian sneered. What he meant was that he didn't take William seriously at all, even though he was the general manager.

Chapter 324: Those Who Oppose

In fact, Adrian had been extremely hostile to William since he had joined the company a few days ago.

The reason was very simple—before William became the general manager of the Solar Corporation's Orange County branch, Adrian was the person in charge of the entire branch office!

The Orange County branch of the Solar Corporation originally belonged to the Brookes, so the former general manager was one of their distant relatives.

But since the sudden fall of the Brookes, all of them had left LA, and their remaining businesses were acquired by Lucas. Adrian and the other long-tenured employees remained in the Solar Corporation's Orange County branch instead of leaving with the Brookes.

In their opinion, the Brookes were just the owners of the company they worked for, so there was no need for them to go down together with the Brookes.

Because Lucas hadn't had the time to manage the company himself, he allowed the existing employees to remain in their current positions and didn't do any shuffling of duties.

Adrian, who had been the deputy general manager of the company for a long time, became the most senior employee and held the highest position in the company. In his opinion, the position of general manager would definitely belong to him once the higher-ups from headquarters issued the next appointment letter!

But Adrian never expected that headquarters would transfer someone over to become the general manager just as he was happily and conceitedly preparing to be appointed as the general manager!

To make matters worse, the newcomer was far inferior to him in terms of seniority, experience, and prestige. How could Adrian stomach this?

So from the very first day William joined the company, he had become an eyesore and a thorn in the side of Adrian, who was often sarcastic and defiant to his orders.

Furthermore, the other senior executives of the company were also unconvinced of William's abilities and were indignant about his takeover as general manager. As a result, everyone disrespected William and even ostracized him unanimously.

Previously, William felt that it would be inappropriate to be harsh with them since he had just joined the company. He had been adopting the mindset of maintaining peace as far as possible as he tried his best to speak to them amicably.

But it now seemed that his tolerance and compromises had made him seem like a weak and vulnerable pushover no one took seriously.

William said coldly with a dark expression, "I repeat. I want all of you to gather in the conference hall on the first floor within five minutes. No one is allowed to be absent from the meeting! Those who do not arrive at the conference hall within five minutes will be regarded as being absent from work without reason, and there will be a company notice of your misconduct!"

William turned to his secretary and gave a stern order.

The secretary immediately seemed extremely conflicted.

Although he was the secretary of the general manager, those who openly ostracized William included the deputy general manager and the directors of the business department, human resources department, and finance department. Meanwhile, he was just the secretary of a powerless general manager whose authority could be overridden at any time. So the secretary was at a loss because he felt that he didn't have the power to carry out William's instructions.

"What? Are you, my secretary, going to disobey me too?" William narrowed his eyes.

Although he hadn't worked in a corporate office for many years, he had at least held a managerial position before. Now that Lucas was beside him too, he sounded extremely domineering and dignified, exuding the assertive aura of a superior figure.

The secretary was flabbergasted and hurriedly nodded. "Yes, Mr. Carter!"

Adrian turned gloomy. He glared at the secretary in a threatening manner. "Louis, you have to think this through carefully. Don't take sides without considering the consequences. It might be too late for regrets when the time comes! If you don't want to continue working for this company, I can grant your wish at any time!"

Adrian was extremely arrogant for blatantly threatening the secretary.

Louis, the secretary, immediately pulled a long face, feeling glum and conflicted as he was caught in between two big bosses at odds against each other. Regardless of who he obeyed, he would end up offending the other person. He was truly vexed.

Lucas had been standing quietly by the side without saying anything, though his face was incredibly grim and obviously displeased.

Seeing Adrian's arrogance, William stared at him composedly before suddenly saying, "Adrian Hill, do you think I'm really afraid of you and that I won't dare to do anything to you?"

Adrian sneered. "Haha, who doesn't know that our general manager, Mr. Carter, was transferred from headquarters and has someone powerful behind him? Even if you try to suppress me with your backer, it won't work! After all, I have been in the industry for so many years, and I have far better business skills, experience, and connections than you do! To put it bluntly, even if the two of us get into a heated dispute and blow things up to the extent that the higher-ups of headquarters have to choose between the two of us, I will be the one to stay! What else do you think you can use to suppress me?"

William sneered too. "I know that many of you are displeased with the fact that I've suddenly become the general manager of this company. Those who want me to step down from the position of the general manager, come forward!"

Everyone fell silent at once.

Many people looked at one another while watching the two most authoritative leaders of the company argue with each other.

For ordinary employees, it actually didn't matter who the higher-ups were. Of course, they weren't in any place to be concerned either because it wasn't the level they could reach anyway.

Thus, the people whose interests were directly concerned were naturally those who held the top managerial roles of each department.

"As long as I'm around, none of you will need to worry. Feel free to voice your opinion," Adrian guaranteed as he looked around at the employees.

After two seconds of silence, Jimmy, the director of the business department, stood out and made his stand clear. "I'm not willing to accept you as the general manager. In my humble opinion, Adrian is the most suitable candidate for being the general manager!"

After Jimmy took the lead, several other people proceeded to stand out too.

"I too am unwilling to submit to you. You shouldn't be the general manager!"

"Same for me! Mr. Hill has better qualifications and experience than you do, and he has served this company for much longer than you have. Why should he be subordinate to you?"

"Exactly! When you were part of the Carters the past few decades, you barely participated in any corporate work for the Carter Corporation. So you don't have any experience or concept of the operations of modern companies. If you continue to be in charge of leading the entire company, the company's prospects will definitely be bleak! So I'm not willing to accept you as the general manager either!"

...

In addition to Adrian, a total of six other senior executives stood out to oppose William.

Looking at the few people standing in front of him, William took a deep breath and asked again, "Is there anyone else who shares the same thoughts as them?"

"..."

After several seconds, no one else moved.

The seven of them had basically already accounted for half of all the top executives of the Solar Corporation branch in Orange County.

But Adrian was still extremely dissatisfied with the result, and he glowered at the other few top executives who didn't stand out against William.

He was expecting everyone to stand on his side and launch a major boycott against William!

But at the end of the day, William was directly appointed by the higher-ups of headquarters to be the general manager, and the way he spoke with gusto and authority had also shocked some of them, deterring them from taking sides without consideration.

William glanced at the seven of them and suddenly said to Louis, "Louis, take down the names of these people and draft seven letters of dismissal. Hand one to each of them! From this moment on, you seven are fired!"

“What? Fired?!”

As soon as everyone heard William’s decision, their eyes widened in disbelief.

He wants to dismiss half of the senior executives, including the deputy general manager, Adrian Hill, all at once?!

That’s too exaggerated!

Staring at William in disbelief, Adrian suddenly sneered. “William Carter, what nonsense are you spouting? Your position is only one level higher than mine, and you haven’t even secured a foothold in this company yet. What right do you have to fire me?”

“On the basis that I’m senior to you and that I’m the general manager of the Solar Corporation, who has to be fully responsible for all the company’s affairs! Since you don’t want to obey my decisions, and you insist on going against me all the time, you people will only be unnecessary scourges of the company if I continue to let you stay. Am I supposed to be subservient to you instead of firing you?” William retorted hostilely.

Since these people had openly stood out to oppose his leadership, there was no need for him to be kind to them.

Adrian and the others instantly choked in shock. They wanted to use this method to manipulate William, but they didn’t expect him to suppress them using his position as the general manager.

But they thought, *Who does William Carter think he is? How dare he dismiss so many of us at once?*

“William Carter, you must have gone mad from being obsessed with being the general manager. We’re all pillars of the company and long-tenured employees. It can be said that all of the achievements that the company has made in Orange County couldn’t have been possible without us! Without us, the company will immediately fall into jeopardy! Can you afford to be responsible for this?”

“Besides, we refuse to comply with you, so your dismissal has no effect! If you have the guts, come with us to see the chairman at headquarters, and we’ll see who’s going to be dismissed!” Adrian said adamantly and aggressively.

Given his personal qualifications and the contributions he had made to the company, he was certain that William would be the one who got dismissed once they got the higher-ups of headquarters involved.

“Exactly, without the chairman’s approval, we won’t leave the company! Who do you think you are?!”

“That’s right. If you have what it takes, let’s all go to the chairman and let him decide who’s fired and kicked out of the company!”

The few senior executives standing on Adrian’s side voiced their refusal to comply too.

William looked at these people and suddenly said, “Will you leave immediately once the chairman agrees?”

“Hmph, of course! Well, you have to get the chairman’s approval before anything else!” Adrian said sneeringly with folded arms.

“Okay then.” William immediately turned around and looked at Lucas beside him. He said seriously, “Mr. Chairman, can I dismiss them now?”

Lucas, who had watched the entire process from the side, naturally nodded. “They’re arrogant, unbridled, snobbish, presumptuous, disrespectful, and defiant toward their superior. They’re only going to be the scourges of the company if they stay behind. Of course they have to be dismissed!”

Adrian, Jimmy, and the rest were indeed astonished when they heard William calling Lucas the chairman.

But when they saw that the person standing opposite them was just a young man of around 27 or 28 years old, they simply felt that it was absurd.

“Hahahaha, William Carter, do you take us for fools? You found a random person to come here with you and tried to use him to deceive us. You must be dreaming! I can say that I’m the chairman’s father. Would you believe me?”

The others immediately burst into laughter.

They were all aware that the Solar Corporation branch in Orange County was now under the Stardust Corporation. The chairman of the Stardust Corporation had always been very mysterious, and very few people had seen him in person.

But no matter what, he was still a big shot. While Lucas, the young man dressed in ordinary clothes in front of them, had been following behind William ever since he entered. They felt that it was impossible that he was the chairman of the Stardust Corporation.

Lucas narrowed his eyes threateningly as he exuded a cold aura.

But Adrian didn’t detect the danger. He was now smiling smugly, as if he was holding a powerful piece of evidence against William.

“Haha, how dare you impersonate the chairman of the Stardust Corporation? You two are dead meat!” Adrian pulled out his cell phone impatiently and tapped on Flynn’s number.

“Mr. Davis, I’m sorry to bother you. I’m Adrian, the deputy general manager of the Solar Corporation branch in Orange County. Just a short while ago, William Carter, the newly appointed general manager who joined us just a few days ago, brought a young man in his twenties with him to the office and tried to deceive us by making the young man pretend to be the chairman of the Stardust Corporation. He even misused the chairman’s authority to dismiss us and kick us out of the company!

“This is absolutely intolerable. What do you say we should do about this?”

Flynn, who was still dealing with the work at hand in LA, was initially rather patient as he listened to what Adrian, the deputy general manager of a mere branch office, had to say. But after hearing everything, he received a great shock and sprung up from his chair in the office.

“What did you say?!” Flynn hollered furiously.

Adrian thought that Flynn was also enraged by the fact that someone had the audacity to pretend to be the chairman of the Stardust Corporation and assume his authority to dismiss the old-tenured employees. So he glanced at William and Lucas provocatively before explaining everything once more with additional details that he made up.

Afterward, he asked fawningly, “Mr. Davis, should I immediately call the police and have both of them arrested?”

“Obviously no!” Flynn’s deafening roar came from Adrian’s phone, and it was so loud that even those a couple of meters away could hear the obvious anger in Flynn’s tone.

The deafening roar of fury immediately made the smile on the face of Adrian, who was waiting to claim credit, stiffen.

The rest of the people on his side also seemed bewildered and anxious.

At this moment, Flynn was almost frightened and angered to death by Adrian’s words!

Flynn knew that William was Lucas’s father-in-law, and he was also the one who informed his subordinates to announce the news of William being appointed as the general manager of the Solar Corporation’s branch office in Orange County.

The young man in his twenties standing beside William that Adrian Hill mentioned is definitely Lucas!

Impersonate the chairman my foot. He’s the actual chairman!

Based on the tone of Adrian Hill's voice, he must have offended Lucas terribly, and that must be why he's getting the sack!

Yet this idiot had the audacity to come complaining to me?

He even said that someone impersonated the chairman of the Stardust Corporation and is trying to throw the company into jeopardy?

This is absurd. The Stardust Corporation isn't that incompetent!

After not hearing Flynn respond for a long time, Adrian bit the bullet and asked, "Mr... Mr. Davis?"

He was confused as to why Flynn hollered at him just now!

"You dimwit! That young man is indeed the chairman of the Stardust Corporation, and he has the final say! If you dare to offend him, I'll get someone to kill you immediately! Do you hear me?!"

Flynn's deafening voice penetrated through the phone, making Adrian's eardrums tremble. Everyone else standing around also heard it clearly.

In an instant, everyone seemed to be in extreme disbelief as they merely stood in place and stared at Lucas with a deadpan expression.

In particular, Adrian and the six senior executives beside him had exceptionally interesting expressions.

What did we just hear?

The young man in front of us who seems too young to hold such a high position turns out to really be the chairman of headquarters who rarely makes an appearance?!

Did we just kick up such a huge stir right in front of the chairman?!

We even called him an impostor?

Oh God! What have we done?!

If there was a cure for regret in this world, they would go back in time to ten minutes ago and never let themselves behave so stupidly again!

Unfortunately, there is no way to turn back time. And regardless of how regretful they were, there was nothing they could do except face the harsh reality.

Adrian was the first to chicken out as he hurriedly lowered his head and apologized to Lucas. "I'm... I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman! I didn't know that you're the chairman just now... I really didn't mean to offend you. Please forgive me!"

He had been leveraging on his seniority to disobey William. But now that he was facing the person with the highest authority in the company, he knew that he would really be chased out of the company if he still didn't admit to his mistakes!

He was at least the deputy general manager of the company now, who drew a high salary each month and received plenty of bonuses each year too. More importantly, he could obtain lots of benefits too, making his net income much higher than the salary he was getting on the surface!

If he was really fired from his job and got kicked out of the company, he would no longer enjoy these benefits. Furthermore, he was already in his forties. It would be extremely difficult for him to get a similar job elsewhere, especially if the reason for his departure from the company was a unilateral dismissal because other companies wouldn't dare to hire him.

Thus, it was no big deal even if he had to swallow his pride and bow down to Lucas to apologize to him and seek his forgiveness.

The other six senior executives also quickly reacted after recovering from the shock and hurriedly apologized to Lucas.

"Mr. Chairman, w-we just made an unintentional mistake. We didn't intend to offend you. Please forgive us!"

"Yes, that's right. Mr. Chairman, we were wrong..."

...

Lucas stood still without moving and merely sneered. "You may not have been aware of my identity, but you were very clear that Mr. Carter is the general manager! I saw how sharp-tongued and aggressive you were just now. You people openly defied Mr. Carter and expressed your unwillingness to obey him. I almost thought you were the chairman of the Stardust Corporation!"

Lucas's derisive scolding immediately made the senior executives, who had just apologized, speechless as their faces became flushed.

Everyone knew that William was the general manager of the company and their direct superior. But they were still disrespectful to him nevertheless. Actually, it had nothing to do with whether they were aware of his identity or not. It just showed that they thought that William was a pushover because he was transferred here to be the general manager.

“Mr. Carter, from now on, all employees who disobey you and deliberately cause trouble in the company will be fired!” Lucas suddenly said to William.

“Yes, Mr. Chairman!” William didn’t want to reveal his relationship with Lucas in front of the company’s employees, so he was rather respectful when speaking to Lucas.

Adrian’s face was extremely sullen. Seeing William’s secretary about to turn around to prepare the dismissal letters, he was overwhelmed with anxiety, and he finally couldn’t help standing out and protesting loudly, “Mr. Chairman, you can’t just fire me like this! I was one of the first few employees of the company, and I’ve been around since its establishment. I won’t dare to say that I deserve great credit for the rapid development of the company over the years, but I’ve at least committed a lot of effort, sweat, and tears to make it possible!

“Even till now, I’m in charge of many of the company’s key projects, and I’m also responsible for keeping in contact with many of our clients. If you dismiss me now, it will definitely result in major losses incurred by the company. It will also cause the displeasure of our clients! I don’t think any of us wants to see that happen, right?” While informing Lucas of his contributions, he was also somewhat threatening him.

Unfortunately, Lucas would never succumb to threats. “Do you think that the company can’t continue operating without you? As for those so-called contributions you mentioned, don’t go talking about them to me. I know better than you do.”

The Orange County branch office of the Solar Corporation was brought back to life and put on track with Lucas’s help. In terms of the clientele and expansion, the Stardust Corporation had given the Solar Corporation a great push too.

Furthermore, the company was relatively new and was thus still receiving lots of resources and help from the Stardust Corporation. Adrian had claimed credit to the wrong person.

Adrian wanted to play the sympathy card again but to no avail after hearing what Lucas said.

The other six executives gritted their teeth when they saw this and said, “Mr. Chairman, we didn’t intend to go against Mr. Carter! We really... Well, Adrian Hill is the deputy general manager and holds great authority. He insisted that we boycott Mr. Carter together with him and threatened to deal with us if we didn’t. We really didn’t have a choice!”

“Yes! Before Mr. Carter came, Adrian Hill had been calling the shots in the office. Being employees who lack authority, we didn’t dare to disobey him!”

“Yes, we didn’t want to go against Mr. Carter either! In fact, who the general manager is makes no difference to us employees. Adrian Hill forced us!”

“Mr. Chairman, Mr. Carter, please don’t fire us! We are all in our forties and fifties, have families to feed, and loans and bills to pay. If we get dismissed, how are we supposed to keep on living? We promise that we’ll obey Mr. Carter and never defy him again!”

...

They all pushed the blame onto Adrian and tearfully claimed that he had forced them to offend William. They even pleaded to Lucas and William to forgive them and not kick them out of the company.

“You! You people...!” Enraged by their open betrayal, Adrian turned beet red, but he couldn’t bring himself to say a single word.

William intended to ignore them at first, but he had previously also personally experienced the difficulties of finding a job as someone in their fifties. So he couldn’t help but become softhearted and relent a little.

“Luc... Mr. Chairman, they seem quite pitiful. Why don’t we let them stay?” William whispered to Lucas with sympathy in his eyes.

As soon as Lucas saw the look in William’s eyes, he knew that William must have empathized with these people. But Lucas felt otherwise and instead shook his head with certainty. “A person who has been disloyal once should never be trusted again. They ostracized you for the sake of sucking up to Adrian Hill, and now, they’re pushing the blame onto him for their own benefit. Next time, they might not even hesitate to sell the entire company for their personal interests!

“Besides, there are so many employees in this company, and they’re not the only senior executives here. Why weren’t the rest forced to go against you? So that’s not a valid reason at all.

“Each and every person in this world has to take responsibility and pay the price for their own choices and decisions!”

In the military, the most shameless type of people were traitors because they were despicable by nature and would easily destroy the efforts that countless people had guarded with their lives for the sake of their own benefits. Lucas would never allow such people to stay in his company.

After Lucas said these words with a straight face, even William shuddered, let alone the other senior executives who bore the brunt of it. They almost knelt down immediately!

Chapter 327: Joint Conspiracy

After hearing what Lucas said, William felt that he had a point. Employees with poor character like them indeed couldn’t continue staying in the company, let alone remain in

their positions as senior executives. He had merely relented a little out of impulsiveness just now.

William ordered sternly, "Louis, go type out the dismissal letters for the seven of them immediately. From now on, they're no longer employees of the company! We will decide who to fill the vacancies in the next meeting!"

This meant that the seven senior executives who had been arrogantly ignoring William just now were about to be officially dismissed from the company.

"Yes, Mr. Carter!" Louis agreed loudly and immediately hurried back to his office to draft the letters and documents.

In contrast, Adrian, Jimmy, and the other five former senior executives had turned pale and were overwhelmed with dejection. They stood rooted to the ground and stubbornly refused to leave. They even continued to plead with William and Lucas while promising that they would never make any mistake again, in hopes that they would withdraw their orders.

With some annoyance in his eyes, Lucas said impatiently, "If you continue pestering us here, I'll have someone put up a public notice and expose your misdeeds to the entire county!"

Adrian and the others immediately stopped what they were doing, not daring to continue acting indiscriminately.

Although it was extremely humiliating to be dismissed, they would be completely embarrassed if the company put up a public notice to inform the public of what they had done. It would then be almost impossible for them to gain a strong foothold in Orange County.

Thinking of that possibility, Adrian and the other six no longer dared to kick up a ruckus and had no choice but to grit their teeth, pack up, and immediately leave in dismay.

As the few of them left in miserable states, the remaining people in the office all had a clear idea that in the power struggle for the position of general manager, William had obtained the support of the chairman of headquarters. Thus, William's position in the company was firm.

The employees who didn't take sides in the beginning were in a better plight. But many of them who had wavered just now were feeling extremely thankful that they hadn't foolishly followed the crowd and stood against William. Otherwise, they would have probably been dismissed too.

"Everyone, as per my previous instructions, gather in the conference hall on the first floor within five minutes!" William ordered once again.

But this time, all of them answered loudly, "Yes!" Then they immediately took action, with none of them daring to oppose again.

William led Lucas to his office for some rest.

"William, why didn't you tell me that you were ostracized and bullied by those people in the office?" Lucas asked helplessly.

It had been some time since he had appointed William as the general manager of the Orange County branch office of the Solar Corporation. But whenever he asked William about the company and whether or not there were any defiant employees, William would just tell him that everything was fine. So Lucas hadn't paid much attention to this branch office.

But to Lucas's surprise, he had witnessed with his very own eyes how lawlessly arrogant those former senior executives were, so much so that they didn't show William any respect at all. Who knows how terribly they would have continued to bully William if Lucas, the chairman, hadn't been present.

William had a trace of bitterness and embarrassment on his face. "I just thought that it'd be inevitable to encounter some problems since I just joined the company. I intended to handle those issues on my own, lest I keep making you guys worried. But I didn't expect them to be so brazen as to openly contradict me and boycott me. Ah, I've embarrassed myself in front of you today. It's all because of my failure to discipline the employees well."

As William spoke, he began to look a little glum.

He had indeed not managed a company for years and thus failed to suppress those employees with malicious intentions, causing them to gradually become more and more brazen. Moreover, he had even almost made another grave mistake out of sympathy for them. In conclusion, he felt somewhat ashamed to face Lucas, who had handed the company over to him to manage.

Lucas patted William's shoulder encouragingly, "William, since I've handed the company over to you, it means that I trust your abilities, so you don't have to doubt yourself. With your level of competency, you're definitely capable of managing this company well for me! But you don't have to feel embarrassed to tell me about any problems you face, if any, in the future. We're all a family. If you encounter any trouble, feel free to tell me!"

William nodded and smiled. "Alright, I won't stand on ceremony then."

"You didn't have to stand on ceremony with me in the first place. Just let me know if you encounter any problems. It's about time for the meeting to begin. I'll go with you. I'll just

stay at the side and listen in so that I'll have an understanding of the current development of the company."

"Okay then. Let's go together!"

William stood up and led Lucas to the large conference hall on the first floor, where he announced the start of the first proper meeting he had ever held since he joined the company. During the meeting, he picked out a few suitable candidates among the employees and appointed them to appropriate positions while also filling the vacancies of the seven dismissed senior executives. He also introduced some competitive rules, reward schemes, and punishment systems, which gave hope to many employees who hadn't been promoted or given a raise in a long time.

All of a sudden, all the employees, be it those who were promoted or had the potential of being promoted in the future, were all motivated and full of zeal. The atmosphere in the entire branch office of the Solar Corporation became much more positive and lively.

Almost everyone admired William and was pleased that he was their new general manager.

Of course, those who had just been given the sack and driven out were in drastically different moods.

At this moment, the seven of them were sitting in a private room of a restaurant near the Orange County branch office.

Just now, they were glaring furiously at Adrian with their personal belongings in hand and planning to just leave. But Adrian suddenly stopped them and brought them to the restaurant.

"Why did you ask us to come here?" Jimmy questioned coldly.

Jimmy was full of hatred for Adrian now. He had been doing well as the director of the business department and had a relatively easy job scope. There was basically nothing for him to do, but he would still get a considerable amount of sales commission and kickbacks each month. Life was pretty good for him.

But he had chosen to believe Adrian and thought that William would definitely investigate him once he got used to being the general manager. Adrian had even tempted him by offering to give him more benefits if he supported the idea of making Adrian the general manager. Adrian even promised to let Jimmy take over his position as the deputy general manager then.

But what happened in the end? He didn't get a single benefit but instead suffered a double loss and even ended up losing his job!

The rest were also in a similar situation. If Adrian hadn't tempted them by promising to give them lots of future benefits, they wouldn't have bothered to go against William.

Therefore, the few of them glared at Adrian hostilely.

As if he didn't notice the hatred in their eyes, Adrian said with a faint smile, "Don't look at me like that. It's not that I don't want to fulfill my promises to you. Well, I'm now in the same plight as you. I got fired too! However, are you willing to be driven away just like that and never have a chance to succeed again?"

Jimmy frowned slightly, as he could sense that there was a hidden meaning to Adrian's words. He couldn't help saying in annoyance, "What exactly do you want to say? Just get straight to the point!"

"Exactly. Stop keeping us in suspense when things have already come to this point! Just hurry up and tell us straight!" the rest chimed in.

Only then did Adrian smile and drawl, "I have a plan in mind, and as long as we execute it successfully, I can guarantee that William Carter will beg us to return to the company! But I'll need all of you to put in equal effort in order to make this plan work. Are you interested?"

The other six people looked at each other.

Were they interested? Of course they were!

Who would be willing to be fired from their jobs?

"Will it really work?"

"What's the plan?"

"What do we need to do?"

...

The six of them immediately started asking.

After successfully arousing their curiosity, Adrian said with a mysterious smile on his face, "I'm sure you guys have heard of Charlie Franco, haven't you?"

"Charlie Franco? Are you planning to ask him for help?" Jimmy asked with shock written all over his face.

"Charlie Franco? Who's that?" Of course, the rest hadn't heard of this name before, so they hurriedly asked Jimmy about it.

Jimmy frowned and said in disbelief, "I've only heard of this person's name, but I haven't met him in person, nor do I plan to cross paths with him. I just heard that Franco is the owner of Snowflake Entertainment and has plenty of underlings who often do dirty deeds for him. Besides, Franco is very ruthless. He's an ex-convict who has caused grievous harm to many people. Most people don't dare to offend him."

His words made everyone's heart skip a beat.

One of the former senior executives said without hesitation, "Adrian, are you planning to..." He slid his palm across his neck. "... hire someone to kill William Carter?"

The rest immediately looked at Adrian with bizarre gazes.

Indeed, Adrian naturally hated William to the core and wished that he would die sooner, especially since William was now the general manager of the Solar Corporation's Orange County branch office; while he, the former deputy general manager, had been driven out of the company!

Although they would usually accept bribes and fabricate false business expense claims out of greed for money, they would never dare to hire a hitman!

Besides, getting William killed would only allow Adrian to vent his anger and wouldn't bring them any benefits at all. Only a fool would be willing to follow Adrian's plan!

Seeing everyone looking at him in horror, as though they had seen a terrifying existence, Adrian pursed his lips and hurriedly explained, "No, no, you've got the wrong idea! Why would I hire a hitman to kill William Carter? Even if we kill him, we won't be able to go back to the company, and it won't benefit us in any way. Why would I bring up such a suggestion?"

Everyone finally looked more relieved.

"What's the plan you're talking about then? Hurry up and tell us!"

"That's right. Stop being so wishy-washy and making us guess! What are you planning regarding Franco?"

Two impatient people urged.

"Don't be in such a hurry and hear me out. Franco is indeed a ruthless and troublesome person, but he's not as terrifying as the rumors make him out to be. Although Franco is now the person in charge of Snowflake Entertainment, Snowflake Entertainment belongs to the Taylors, one of the four most powerful families in this county. In other words, Franco is now working for the Taylors. Even if I want to hire him to kill someone for me, he definitely wouldn't agree to it. So don't get the wrong idea.

“However, we can hire Franco to work for us. Once he can help us block the warehouse and export outlet of the branch office for a period of time and demand that I be present before he stops, I can guarantee that that scoundrel William Carter will definitely be at a loss for what to do. When the time comes, he will naturally beg me to go back to the company!

“As soon as I return to the company and become the general manager, I’ll be able to immediately hire all of you again. Not only will you be able to return to your original positions, but I can also fulfill all the promises I’ve made to you before!”

After listening to Adrian’s explanation, they seemed to be interested in his plan.

2

The Solar Corporation’s Orange County branch office was mainly operating a logistics and transportation business. So the warehouse was the most important aspect. If people blocked it for just half a day, it would result in extremely severe consequences, let alone a day!

Adrian’s plan seemed quite a good idea in their opinion.

“Will that bastard William Carter give up the position of general manager to you and ask you to return to the company?” someone asked doubtfully.

Adrian said with certainty, “Given William Carter’s capability, he’s definitely no match for Franco. If Franco refuses to give in, there’s nothing William Carter can do. And once he fails to solve the problem, the company will suffer major losses. At that time, he will have to resign and leave the company disgracefully. He might even have to compensate the company for the massive losses incurred!

“If he comes to me for help and lets me become the general manager, I might be kind enough to give him a job. I believe he won’t turn me down as long as he isn’t a fool!”

Everyone finally suddenly realized that Adrian was planning to force William into stepping down.

His plan seemed somewhat feasible.

“However, the Solar Corporation is under the Stardust Corporation, and the chairman of the Stardust Corporation was on William Carter’s side today. If William Carter seeks help from him, I’m afraid your plan won’t work out,” Jimmy said worriedly after some thought.

Adrian remained composed. “Don’t worry. The Stardust Corporation is no longer as influential as it used to be. Everyone used to respect them because they were supported by the powerful Hutton family. Who would dare offend them? But the Stardust

Corporation has already been abandoned by the Huttons, and it's now just an ordinary large enterprise that's incomparable to the top four families of the county!

"Moreover, I heard that this chairman is also at odds with the Huttons. Why should we be afraid of him then?"

"Another reason I've decided to seek help from Franco is because he's backed by the Taylors. Even if the chairman of the Stardust Corporation wants to help William Carter, will he dare to stand against the Taylors?"

Adrian smiled smugly while the remaining six people secretly admired him for his conscientiousness.

It turned out that he was just planning to have someone block the warehouse of the company. But Adrian had put so much thought into it without missing a single detail, and he even made sure to leave no stones unturned. They were thoroughly in awe of him!

"So, what about it? Do you want to join me?" Seeing the looks on their faces, Adrian smirked with a look of determination.

"Okay. As long as you can hire someone to carry it out flawlessly and let us return to the company, we'll obey you! Tell us what you need us to do!"

Jimmy and the others thought about it for a while and finally agreed to work with Adrian to carry out his plan.

"First things first, it's very expensive to hire someone as powerful as Franco. We need 450 grand in total to hire Franco. Each of you will just need to chip in 60 grand each, and I'll cover the remaining 90 grand," Adrian said smilingly as if he was being very generous.

"What? We have to chip in 60 grand each!?"

"That's too much money! That's more than what I took home each year when I worked at the company!"

"If I can come up with so much cash right now, why would I bother trying to return to the company?"

"Exactly! Are you kidding us?"

They were all aghast to hear the amount of money Adrian wanted each of them to contribute.

Sixty grand in cash wasn't a small sum for the six of them.

It wasn't that they really couldn't afford so much cash. But rather, they didn't think that it would be worth it to spend so much money just to get their jobs back.

Adrian had long expected them to react this way. He snorted coldly. "All of you were senior executives, so you have to consider things long term! It's just sixty grand from each of you. Once we return to the office, I promise you can earn this sum of money back within two months. Even surpass it!

"Think about it. Franco is such a powerful person, so how can we hire him without enough money? Franco is not only impressive, but he even has the Taylors to back him up. Do you think random gangsters who charge a cheap price can get the job done well?"

Hearing this, everyone was speechless.

Indeed, hiring gangsters at a cheap price to block the warehouse definitely wouldn't work. But the cost of hiring such a powerful person like Franco was too high for them!

In case things didn't work out in the end, they would have made ducks and drakes with their money.

But if it worked out, they would be able to get their jobs back. And according to Adrian, he could give each of them a five-figure monthly salary. That would make their investment worth their while, as the returns were very promising!

They were all caught in a dilemma as to whether or not to fork out the sixty grand each.

Adrian deliberately let out a long sigh. "In fact, I can very well afford the full sum of 450 grand on my own, but I just thought that I should count you guys in on this since we're friends after all. If none of you are willing to fork out the money, just take it that I didn't say anything today!

"However, I want to make things clear beforehand. If I come up with the entire sum of money and gain the position as general manager, don't be envious of me once I make loads of money every day!"

Then Adrian put down his teacup and stood up to leave.

"Wait! Adrian, count me in! Damn it. It's just sixty grand. I'll go all out and take on this gamble with you!" Jimmy stood up and exclaimed while gritting his teeth.

If it didn't work out, he would lose at most sixty grand. But if it did, he would be able to make several times that amount within just a year. So he was willing to give it a shot!

Everyone was hesitant and conflicted at first. Now that someone took the lead, they seemed motivated too. So they made up their minds, and one of them said, "Fine, I'll join you guys too!"

"Well... I'll come up with sixty grand too!"

"Forget it. I've decided not to buy the new car I was saving for. I'll join you guys!"

...

Soon, all six of them agreed to come up with sixty grand each to support Adrian's plan.

Adrian patted his chest and said righteously, "Great. Brothers, since you have so much faith in me, you have my word. I guarantee that I won't let you regret your decision!"

He was the only person who knew what his true intentions were.

By the afternoon, all six of them had transferred the total of \$360,000 to Adrian's bank account.

Adrian looked at the account balance shown on his mobile banking app with derision in his eyes. He then grabbed his bank card and drove to Snowflake Entertainment.

In a luxurious private room on the fifth floor of Snowflake Entertainment, a burly man with a buzz cut and a square-shaped face covered with some scars was leaning comfortably against the backrest of a soft and cozy couch while enjoying the service of a beautiful, scantily-clad woman feeding him grapes.

He casually spat out a grape seed and said to the person in front of him disinterestedly, "You crook, what are you here for?"

This muscular man with scars on his face was none other than Charlie Franco.

Adrian smiled and stood in front of Franco respectfully. He said courteously, "Mr. Franco, I came here today because I have a favor to ask of you."

Franco narrowed his eyes. "You need a favor from me? That depends on whether you can afford to pay the price! I'm sure you know what my rules are."

Adrian hurriedly said, "I naturally do! Don't worry. It's just a small favor, and there won't be any bloodshed, nor do I need anyone killed. I just need to borrow your reputation and a few of your underlings. I can offer you this much money."

Adrian stretched out five of his fingers.

When Franco heard Adrian say that there wouldn't be any bloodshed or murder involved, he knew that it was definitely a trivial matter. He reckoned that Adrian just needed him to appear and deter Adrian's insignificant rivals.

Such a trivial task wouldn't cost much money.

Just as he was about to turn Adrian down, he saw Adrian's fingers.

It naturally couldn't be just five grand, so he reckoned that it should be fifty.

If he could earn fifty grand just by taking a few of his subordinates out for a spin, it would be quite a good deal.

Franco reached out and pushed away the beautiful girl beside him.

When only the two of them were left in the room, Franco said leisurely, "You want me to do you a favor for only fifty thousand? You're belittling me! Give me three hundred thousand, or you can forget about it!"

Adrian was the one asking him for a favor now, so he naturally had to play hard to get and bargain for a higher price.

Adrian cursed in his heart before pretending to be put in a difficult spot. "I'm naturally willing to pay such a high price for a favor from you, given how famous you are. But I'm now in trouble, as I just got fired from my job. I really can't afford to come up with so much money..."

"If you can't afford it, cut the crap! Are you wasting my time?" Charlie spat onto the ground and glowered at Adrian menacingly.

Adrian was frightened and hurriedly said, "No, no, no, I wouldn't dare to do that, Mr. Franco. I mean, I only have fifty thousand in cash now. But as long as you help me out this time, I'll pay you the remaining two hundred and fifty thousand once I return to the company and become the general manager. What do you think?"

Franco said in annoyance, "Wait for you to become the general manager? God knows when that'll happen!"

"Mr. Franco, don't be impatient. You'll understand after you hear me out."

Adrian smiled and briefly told him the plan that he had told the six senior executives previously. "The plan is simple. I just need you to take your subordinates with you to the large warehouse of the Solar Corporation's Orange County branch office and stay there for a day or so. Then tell them that you'll leave only if I'm there. That good-for-nothing William Carter will have no choice but to come and beg me. As soon as tomorrow, I'll be able to become the general manager of the company. When the time comes, I'll

definitely transfer the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to you from the company funds. You can use the money for a feast!"

Adrian's eyes were full of confidence and certainty.

Franco glared daggers at Adrian for a long time before laughing out loud. "Hahahaha, like I said, you're a crook. You're really full of evil ideas! Okay, I can accept fifty thousand from you upfront and deal with that fool for you. But once the job is done, you have to give me another five hundred thousand!"

Before Adrian could respond, Franco said, "Don't try playing games with me. That money is going to come out of your company's funds. You don't need to fork out a single cent from your own pocket. I'm already doing you a favor! What do you think?"

Chapter 330: Blocking the Warehouse

What else could Adrian say? He could only grit his teeth and comply.

Anyway, he got a total of \$360,000 from Jimmy and the other five executives. After giving Franco \$50,000, he would get to pocket the remaining \$310,000.

He would deduct the remaining \$500,000 he had to pay Franco from the company's funds. Since he wouldn't have to use his own money, he naturally wouldn't feel the pinch.

Franco was also very pleased with the deal this time because all he had to do was take his underlings with him to block the doors of a warehouse, and he would easily earn \$550,000, which was way higher than the annual wage he drew from working at Snowflake Entertainment.

The two were extremely satisfied with the deal and soon agreed on the time and details of the operation.

The next morning, many cargo trucks parked in front of the entrance of the warehouse of Solar Corporation's Orange County branch. Many movers and sorters were getting busy too.

Logistics workers would work continuously round the clock almost without stopping. They were especially busy today because there were a few trucks of very important goods to be loaded immediately and sent to another city in the afternoon.

"Everyone, work faster. These goods have to be expedited. Speed up, guys!" A supervisor standing next to the trucks instructed loudly.

“You have to give us a bonus this month!” someone said to the supervisor smilingly.

“Haha, sure. I’ll apply for it from the higher-ups!”

They joked around for a while before speeding up moving the goods.

Boom!

Boom!

Suddenly, a series of roars coming from vehicles came from outside the warehouse.

Everyone raised their heads to look over, only to see more than twenty shiny black motorcycles. One by one, they pulled over in front of the warehouse with the screeching sounds of the brakes.

The roguish riders of the motorcycles were burly men with dyed hair and tattoos. They started crowding around the entrance of the warehouse with menacing expressions and steel rods in their hands.

The supervisor, Tom, tensed up and hurriedly took out a box of premium cigarettes from his pocket. He walked forward and said with a deferential smile, “You are...?”

“Get lost!” Before Tom could finish speaking, the leader, whose face was covered in scars, pushed him away and hollered, “Block all the doors of this warehouse! No cargo is allowed to leave here today!”

“Okay!” The gangsters carrying steel rods answered loudly and soon guarded the doors of the warehouse tightly.

The workers had never seen such a scene before. When they saw these people charging over aggressively, they hurriedly dropped the goods they were carrying and left.

Although the workers outnumbered the gangsters, they were just ordinary people and obviously didn’t dare to fight these gangsters wielding steel rods.

Seeing this, Tom was so frightened that he started shuddering. But since he was the supervisor, he couldn’t run away like the others. He could only muster his courage and ask fearfully, “Gentlemen... Um... did someone offend you?”

Franco spat saliva onto the ground and shot a glance at the red-haired underling beside him.

The red-haired underling immediately stepped forward, grabbed the horrified Tom by his collar, and dragged him toward Franco.

“Sir, please spare me! I-I didn’t do anything!” Tom shuddered uncontrollably. He was so flustered that he began tearing up.

“Hmph, call your general manager, William Carter, and get him to come here!” Franco said furiously while sitting on a box of goods with one leg crossed over the other.

“Yes, yes! I’ll call Mr. Carter right away!”

Soon, William, who was still going about his daily duties in the office, received a report from his secretary.

“Bad news, Mr. Carter. We just received news that someone leading a gang of more than twenty people has blocked the doors of our company’s warehouse. They refuse to let any goods be transported in or out!”

William Carter immediately frowned.

This was the first time he encountered such a thing since he took over the company.

“Let’s go check out the situation.” William stood up and instructed his secretary to go to the warehouse with him.

These types of things would happen either due to personal feuds or blackmail. Regardless of the reason, William was obliged to solve the matter, as it was part of his duties as the general manager of the company.

Of course, William was not foolish enough to go there only with his secretary. He instructed some of the security guards of the company to go with them to the large warehouse near the harbor on the outskirts of the county.

Soon, William arrived at the warehouse with his men, only to see the conspicuous convoy of motorcycles at the entrance and the twenty-odd burly men blocking the entrances and exits of the warehouse. He also saw the scarf-faced Franco sitting on a box of goods and smoking some cigarettes.

William didn’t know who Franco was, but he could tell from his domineering aura and posture that he was the leader of these gangsters. So William walked toward Franco and said courteously, “Sir, I am the general manager of this company. Why are you doing this? Did one of us offend you?”

Franco puffed out a ring of smoke and glanced at William nonchalantly. He asked in disdain, “Are you the new general manager, the bastard I’m looking for?”

William’s face turned a little sullen, but he nevertheless said courteously, “My name is William Carter. How should I address you?”

“You’re not fit to know my name.” Franco glared at William hostilely, and the hideous scars on his face made him look even more menacing.

William received a great shock and turned as pale as a sheet.

He forced himself to calm down and tried to negotiate with Franco. “Sir, can we talk things over calmly? There’s a café nearby. How about we have a chat there?”

“To hell with that! I’m telling you, you’re in no place to speak to me. Get Adrian Hill to come here! I’ll speak to him instead!” Franco said ferociously.

Seeing that Franco knew who Adrian was, William immediately felt uneasy and wondered if Franco was Adrian’s enemy or accomplice.

But no matter what, William continued to speak in a courteous tone, “Adrian Hill... was already dismissed by the company yesterday. He’s no longer an employee of our company, so if there’s anything you need to tell him, you can just let me know...”

“Bullshit!” Franco hollered furiously. He stepped forward and gave William a hard slap on his face! “Bastard, I said Adrian Hill is the only person I’m going to speak to. Do you not understand what I said?”