

## Chapter 101 Victor Cooked

After raining for the entire day, the rain finally stopped that evening.

While Victor was working on the computer, Ivan reported back to him on how Rachel had decided to deal with Olivia, and how she'd put her clever plan into action. Victor scowled at the screen, then looked up at Ivan. "Have you managed to get the earring back yet?"

"Yes, we got it back." Ivan dug in his pocket and produced a small, transparent evidence bag. He put it on the table for Victor to see. Inside was the earring in question. He continued to explain with his hands held loosely behind his back. "The police caught Olivia in a pawnshop just before she managed to sell it. Now the difficult part about convicting her is the lack of evidence. She said she didn't steal it, but found it. Sadly, there is no surveillance footage we can use as proof to show that she's lying. If she managed to get legal assistance it's possible that her lawyer-

"Well then make the possible into the impossible," Victor coldly cut in.

Ivan blinked rapidly in confusion for a moment and then he said, "Yes, Mr. Sullivan."

"It's starting to get late. You'd best go home," Victor said as he leaned down and picked up the small bag.

Ivan nodded and left the study.

Victor left not long after Ivan did. He stepped out the study and closed the door quietly behind him. He stood in front of the door, staring down the corridor towards where Rachel's bedroom was. After a minute more of hesitation, he went towards her room.

He stopped outside her door and knocked.

Rachel had just opened a bag of crisps and lay down on her bed. She was about to get to work on expanding the search area for Abby when she heard the knock. She quickly shoved her tablet under the blankets, so her guest wouldn't see it and start asking questions. "I'm coming!" she called.

She swung her legs out of bed and slid her feet into her slippers. Then she snatched up the bag of crisps and went to open the door.

She'd been smiling beforehand. But as she cracked the door open she recognized the smell of Victor's cologne. Her smile immediately disappeared.

She wanted to close the door, but Victor wedged his foot between it and the wall. "So you'd rather eat junk food all day than the nutritious dishes especially prepared for you? Don't you know how bad that stuff is for you?"

Victor said coldly and snatched the bag of crisps out of Rachel's hand.

Rachel was irritated, she only just opened the bag and hadn't even had the chance to eat one yet! The force of Victor's violent tug scattered more than half the bag of crisps all over the ground.

Rachel reached forward and snatched the bag back. "Nutritious dishes? You mean that pig slop I'm expected to eat? I don't think it would hurt for that stuff to have a little more flavor. It's disgusting and bland. At least this tastes good."

"Rachel," Victor said irritably, "you're living at the Sue Garden because your baby needs to be properly taken care of. I don't care if the food is bland, you will..." he trailed off as he struggled to control his rising temper. Why did she have to argue about everything? He gritted his teeth and tried to keep the angry expression off his face.

Suddenly, Rachel sneezed. He hadn't even gotten the chance to finish his sentence.

He eyed her skeptically, only now noticing how pale she was. "Are you sick?" he asked with a frown.

Rachel rubbed furiously at the tip of her nose to try and relieve the itch that had started. She had just drawn a breath to speak when she sneezed again. Then she sniffed, only to discover her nose was now blocked. Victor's cold hand pressed against her forehead. It was perhaps a little colder than it should have been, because she was a little warmer than normal.

Rachel looked up at Victor with unhidden surprise.

Victor dropped his hand to his side, his face blank. "It's not good for a pregnant woman to fall ill. I don't want it to affect my baby. The last thing I need is a child born with some chronic illness because the mother didn't take care of herself while she was pregnant." 1

Rachel's blood pressure rose in anger. She clenched her jaw and said through gritted teeth. "Oh, Mr. Sullivan, you don't have to worry about that. I promise I won't bother you with my illness. You can be rest assured that your child will be fine."

She managed to curb her anger before she said something she would regret later. She looked down at the floor and took a deep breath. "Is there anything else? If that's all then-"

"If you don't want to eat what the nutritionist suggests, then what do you want to eat?" Victor cut in.

Rachel gave a small shake of her head, as if something had flown into her ear, then she looked up at Victor in disbelief. "What did you say?"

Victor managed to hide the concern he felt when he had seen Rachel's pale face. He knew he had to be patient with her, no matter how much he wanted to get irritated. He owed her that much at least, especially after he had misunderstood her last time. "I'll ask the nutritionist to redesign your meals. Unfortunately, it's too late to have dinner fixed; it's already been prepared. Seeing as though you're obviously not going to eat it, I'll ask the kitchen staff to prepare something else for you. So, what do you want to eat?"

Rachel stared up at him, blinking like a deer caught in headlights. She could hardly believe her ears.

'Since when does Victor care about my opinion?'

"Answer the question," Victor said in his deep, rumbling voice when she stayed quiet for too long.

'Guess I was hoping for too much,' Rachel thought to herself. 'Once an asshole, always an asshole.'

"Am I allowed to eat whatever I want?" she asked.

"Tell me what you want and I'll decide if you can have it," Victor answered.

Rachel pursed her lips in thought. She glanced at the packet of crisps in her hand, then back at Victor. "I want instant noodles."

"No," Victor said almost instantly. "Pick something else."

"Then I want spicy crayfish." Rachel nearly drooled at the thought of it. Now was the best time of year to eat food like that. The cool night breeze would go perfectly with the spicy food, because while the food would make her sweat, the wind would cool her off.

"No."

"Spicy pot."

"No."

Rachel stared at him with a deadpan expression.

'Is he going to turn down everything I want to eat?' She folded her arms angrily and glared at him as she said, "You've said no to everything. What do you think I should eat then?"

Victor frowned. "Rachel, you're pregnant now, Everything you've suggested is unsuitable for a pregnant woman."

Rachel lowered her eyes to the ground and nibbled at her bottom lip.

Victor stared down at her thoughtfully, letting silence fill the space between them before he said, "Come down stairs in 20 minutes for dinner."

"Okay," Rachel said with a large, fake smile. She had told him what she wanted to eat, but he had rejected all her suggestions. The entire conversation had just been a gigantic waste of time. Rachel couldn't help the fact that she felt a little unhappy and disappointed at his words. She stepped back into her room and was about to close her door as Victor turned away, but then he suddenly stopped. He turned back to her and said, "And..."

Rachel was about to ask him what more he wanted to say, but Victor was faster. He reached out a hand and snatched the bag of crisps. "I'm confiscating this," he grumbled.

Rachel half-opened her mouth at the sheer audacity of his action. She had not even eaten a single chip yet!

She sulkily stepped into her room and closed the door. After a short 20 minutes' wait, Rachel made her way to the dining hall.

She didn't know what she'd been expecting when she stepped into the dining hall, but nothing wasn't what she had in mind. She had thought that perhaps there would be more flavorless dishes, but there was nothing. Not even Victor was there.

"Where's Victor?" she said to the maid that was waiting on her.

The maid gave a small, respectful bow before she said, "Mr. Sullivan is in the kitchen."

**In the kitchen?**

Rachel raised her eyebrows in surprise and immediately went towards the kitchen. She cracked the door open so she could peer inside, just in time to see a tall man dishing food out of a frying pan onto a plate.

She could hardly believe her eyes.

She had immediately recognized the figure as Victor.

Victor turned with the plate in his hand and walked out the kitchen. When he saw Rachel standing at the door he paused, looked down at her, then carried on walking to the semi open bar counter. He set the plate down, turned to her and said, "What are you still doing standing there? Come and have dinner."

Rachel came back to her senses and noticed that there were three dishes on the counter. She walked over to him and asked, "Did you cook all these dishes?"

Victor chose not to answer her question. Instead he said, "The nutritionist has agreed to adjust your diet; starting from tomorrow. For tonight, you can eat these."

Rachel just stared at the food in front of her in a state of sheer awe. It smelled and looked delicious; it was basically mouth-watering. As far as she could tell from the old Rachel's memories, Victor had never cooked for her before. Both Shelia and Rachel had no idea that he was even able to cook.

But perhaps a more important question was why? Why had he suddenly decided to cook? His behavior from earlier this afternoon had been easy to understand. He'd wanted to incriminate her so he wouldn't look like the bad guy for punishing Olivia. But now? She just couldn't understand him. She couldn't believe he'd actually prepared food for her.

Rachel made no move to eat. She just stood there, staring blankly in front of her, totally lost in thought.

## Chapter 102 A Request That Ended On A Bad Note

"Are these not to your liking?" Victor asked, noticing that Rachel wasn't moving.

Rachel sat still, while looking at him vigilantly. "Are you going to make me sign another agreement after this dinner?"

'As the saying goes, all that glitters is gold. I refuse to believe that Victor would become nice to me all of a sudden and without asking anything in return,' she thought to herself.

Before he could answer, Rachel picked up her chopsticks again and cut him off. "Forget it. Either way, I don't have a choice, do I? If you really want me to sign a new agreement, I'll do it."

When Victor heard that, his gaze became cold. "You're smart."

Rachel swallowed a mouthful of food while looking at him. She then continued to eat in silence with her head down.

Seeing that she didn't respond to his remark, it made Victor feel annoyed and bored at the same time. "Rachel, when Olivia tried to frame you, why didn't you defend yourself?"

Upon hearing that, Rachel burst into laughter. She stared at him, intending to say "Why didn't I explain myself? You should already know why."

Rachel was just about to say it before changing her mind. "It makes no difference whether I explain myself or not, so I just brushed it off."

She valued her life now more than ever. Besides, Abby was still in Victor's hands. She knew that she must think twice before saying anything. Still, this man was not satisfied with her answer.

A long silence ensued between them, until Victor finally decided to break it by putting a small bag on the table. "Olivia has been caught. Inside that bag is your earring. The police returned it earlier."

Rachel took one of the earring and examined it. After confirming its legitimacy, she felt relieved. The pair of earrings was left behind by the original Rachel's mother, Elisa.

Things would get complicated if Olivia pawned one of these. Shelia would feel sorry for the old Rachel if that were to happen.

Upon seeing the look on her face, Victor's eyes dimmed. "I'll ask Lukas to return to his previous post in the Sue Garden. I must admit, I made a mistake and misjudged you this time. If there's anything you would like to ask for, just tell me."

Rachel stopped looking at the earring and asked, "What did you just say?"

Victor stared back at her, not saying another word.

"I can ask for anything?" Afterwards, Rachel put down her earring, and looked at him intently.

Chapter 102: A Request  
"You can tell me first." "Telling him what I want is one thing. Whether if he agrees with it is another," Rachel thought to herself.

She then put the earring into her pocket. "Fine, I do have a request. Jack came to me a few days ago, begging me to let Alice back into the Sullivan Group. I've already agreed to it."

"You want to let that woman back into the company?" Victor's eyes glinted with confusion. "What the hell are you up to, Rachel?"

Rachel put a piece of beef into her mouth, innocently blinking. "Nothing. My father came to me asking for help, and as his daughter, I can't really turn him down, can I?"

Victor didn't say anything. Clearly, he didn't believe that explanation.

Rachel smirked and said, "Mr. Sullivan, I think that's a request you can satisfy, is it not?"

Victor's eyes turned sharp as they fell on her grin. "I thought you'd be asking me about the whereabouts of your little maid."

The smile on Rachel's face disappeared, and her grip on the chopsticks tightened. A moment later, she put on a smile again.

"Will you tell me if I ask you nicely?" she said.

"Nope."

Rachel took a deep breath, put down the chopsticks, and restrained her annoyance. "Since you're not going to tell me, why should I even bother to ask? I'd rather avoid doing anything useless. You'd best keep that in mind."

Victor got up, walked around the bar counter, and stood in front of Rachel. He grabbed her chin, and said, "Rachel, you better keep your word."

Silently, she stared back into his eyes, showing no sign of fear.

"I'll ask Ivan to arrange the necessary paperwork for Alice to get back." After pausing for a while, Victor let go of her, and said, "You're not allowed to return to your room unless you finish all the dishes on the table. Once you've returned to your room, pack your things and move back to the guest bedroom!"

Having said that, he left without looking back.

Rachel rubbed her jaw, and suddenly lost her appetite after looking at the dishes on the table. After a heavy downpour of rain, the temperature dropped to around eighteen degrees Celsius. Autumn had finally arrived.

The following day, Lukas came back from abroad via plane. Everyone in the Sue Garden had heard of what happened to Olivia, so they all treated Rachel with more respect; at least that was what they did whenever Rachel was present.

It was early morning when Rachel received a call from Jack. Before she could even get a word in, he shouted, "Rachel! You promised that you'll help Alice get her job back at the Sullivan Group, but what did you do?"

Fortunately, Rachel managed to move her ear away from the phone in time to save herself from Jack's loud voice. She was lying on a recliner when she replied, "Mr. Jenkins, I have no

idea what you're talking about. Hasn't Alice returned to the company? Victor said that he'd ask Ivan to arrange it. I'm fairly certain that Ivan is not an unreliable man, is he?"

Jack was taken aback as he replied, "Well, she has indeed gotten back into the Sullivan Group."

"Then why are you calling me?" Rachel asked lazily.

Jack was livid with anger. "You know full well why I'm calling you! It's true that Alice has now returned to the Sullivan Group, but now she's working as a cleaner. Rachel, are you behind all this? Otherwise, why would Alice end up as a cleaner?"

Rachel chuckled. "Mr. Jenkins, you overestimate my capacity. Alice's job after she comes back to the Sullivan Group isn't up to me. Why are you blaming me for something I clearly have no control over?"

Through gritted teeth, Jack replied, "Rachel, go tell Victor to give Alice her job in the public relations department back! Don't think that I don't know you're behind all of this!"

Rachel's eyes turned sharp. "Jack, what makes you think I'll agree to that request?"

"Because I'm your father!" Jack growled.

"Mr. Jenkins, your old age is getting to you. Have you forgotten that you're the one who wrote an official document, renouncing me as your daughter a few days ago?" Rachel said coldly, before hanging up the phone and not giving Jack a chance to reply.

When he realized that Rachel had hung up, his chest heaved up and down out of fury. Afterwards, Jack slammed his phone onto the table.

Tears welled up in Alice's eyes when she saw Jack's reaction. "Dad, I don't want to be a cleaner. How could Rachel do this to me?" she cried. "She has already taken your equity of the Bennet Group. How could she go back on her word—" 2

"That's enough! Stop crying!" Jack got annoyed when he saw Alice tearing up. He had been so gentle and kind towards his daughter all this time, but now, he didn't hold back his anger. "You can either stop crying right now or you can get the fuck out of the house!"

The sound of his voice frightened Alice.

"Alice." Caroline had her hand on Alice's arm. Caroline was about to comfort her, but Alice violently brushed off her mother's hand, before running out of the room with tearful eyes.

Caroline went after her, but she failed to catch up with her daughter.

She stood frozen in place, clenching her fists as a sinister gaze appeared in her eyes. Sometime later, Caroline took out her phone and looked for a nameless number on her contact list. It took her a moment of hesitation before she finally pressed the dial button.

'Rachel, I will never allow you to walk all over my daughter! Never!' Caroline exclaimed in her head.

## Chapter 103 Mrs. Maria Sullivan

The old mansion of the Sullivan Group was located on a hillside in the eastern part of Apliaria. The majestic mansion spanned across a vast, lush land.

At this very moment, inside the living room of the main house, a woman was slowly walking down a spiral staircase; her fair hand, trailing slightly along the banister. She was wearing a closely-fitted cheongsam, which fit her beautiful figure like a glove. In reality, she was already near her fifties, but because of how well she maintained her skin, her face remained young and beautiful. In everyone's eyes, she looked like she was still in her thirties.

"Mrs. Sullivan, Miss Schultz is here." A servant approached her, bowing respectfully to the dignified woman.

Once Maria was downstairs, she gently replied, "Have you prepared her favorite fruits and desserts?"

"Yes, they're all ready, Ma'am." Right after the servant finished talking, the sound of high heels strutting across the floor resonated, accompanied by Alicia's sweet voice.

"Aunt Maria!"

Alicia hugged Maria at once. "I really missed you, auntie!"

Maria rubbed her nose and smiled brightly. "I don't think you missed me at all! You haven't visited me even once since you came back to Apliaria this time. If I hadn't called you to invite you here, I'm not sure you would've remembered me."

Alicia stuck her tongue out, holding onto Maria's arm. "How could I forget you? You're my dearest aunt!"

The Schultz family and the Sullivan family were related because Alicia's mother was Maria's cousin, making Alicia Maria's niece. In reality, Maria hadn't had much contact with Alicia in the past, but for Drake's sake, she began taking care of Alicia. That was the reason they grew closer to each other.

As a matter of fact, the Schultz family wasn't as powerful as the Sullivan family, but Maria once wanted his son Odin to marry Alicia, considering the fact that their families were relatives, and that Drake was a fairly influential man.

However, instead of Odin, Alicia had fallen in love with Victor, the illegitimate son of the Sullivan family. That actually drove a wedge between Maria and Alicia. If the Alicia didn't want to visit her, Maria wouldn't bother to ask her to do so.

"You've always been such a sweet girl." Maria chuckled. "Boy, you must've eaten a lot of sweets lately!"

Alicia and Maria walked towards the living room, hand in hand, and sat on the sofa. Alicia grabbed a small plate of cake on the table, and gave it to Maria. "I've eaten plenty of sweets since I was a little girl thanks to you, Auntie Maria. That's probably why I turned out to be



really sweet!"

Maria laughed heartily after hearing Alicia's joke.

Then, Alicia ate a piece of cake herself, and her eyes lit up. "Auntie, I must say, this pineapple cake is heavenly!"

"If you like it so much, I'll ask the housekeeper to pack some for you when you leave!" Maria replied. "It's been so long since I last saw you, my dear Alicia. Look at how you've grown! You're getting more and more beautiful by the day."

"Aww, auntie, stop teasing me!" Alicia felt a bit embarrassed to hear such compliments from Maria.

"I heard that your grandfather's birthday party happened a few days ago. Did Victor attend as well?" Maria asked casually, pretending as though she wasn't that concerned about it.

Alicia paused when she thought of Drake's birthday party. She recalled how Victor and Rachel interacted that night. She then bit her lower lip, looking displeased as she reluctantly answered, "He did."

"What's the matter? Why do you look so upset? Were you not happy to see him? You used to tell me how much you liked Victor. Now that he's divorced, you have a chance to pursue again. So, why do you seem so unhappy?" Maria asked in a soft voice while forming speculations in her mind.

In an aggrieved tone, Alicia replied, "The divorce, you say? Auntie Maria, didn't you hear? Victor took Rachel to my grandfather's birthday party! They're indeed divorced, but Rachel is still pestering him. That night, she's the reason Victor abandoned me on the dance floor! How could I be happy about that?"

"Victor brought Rachel to Drake's party?"

"Auntie, do you not believe me?" Alicia's face turned red with anger.

"Of course, I do, dear." Maria patted the back of her hand to comfort her. "As a matter of fact, I asked you to come here today because I've heard some saddening news. I thought you might know something about it because you have some ties with Victor."

Upon hearing that, Alicia looked at Maria in confusion. "Auntie, what are you talking about?" Maria smiled faintly. "Actually, it's not that big of a deal. It's just a rumor I heard a few days ago. Perhaps it's not true."

Alicia was worried when she heard the word "rumor", and she was especially agitated to know that this rumor was tied to Victor. Anxiously, she said, "Auntie, please don't keep me in suspense. Tell me, is it about Rachel and Victor?"

Maria held Alicia's hand and replied, "It indeed has something to do with Rachel."

"Ugh! It's about her again?" Alicia was visibly annoyed. "I knew it must be her! She just won't stop pestering Victor!"

"I'm afraid it's not going to be an issue whether she pesters him or not." Maria let out a sigh, pretending to look worried.

Upon seeing the look on her aunt's face, Alicia had a bad feeling. "Auntie, what is it?"

Maria stared into her eyes, hesitating for a moment. "I heard that Rachel might be pregnant with Victor's baby."

All of a sudden, Alicia sprang to her feet and raised her voice. "That's impossible!"

"That's what I think as well. Everyone knows that Victor loathes Rachel. He only married her because his grandmother asked him to do so. During their two years of marriage, they never had a child. How could he get Rachel pregnant now that they're divorced?" Gently, Maria continued, "Alicia, I'm sure it's just a silly rumor. You don't have to take it to heart. I just thought you might've heard about it, so I wanted to confirm its legitimacy. I was just being curious. Don't go asking Victor about it!"

"Why can't I ask him?"

"Silly girl, if the rumors are false and you ask Victor about it, he'll definitely be furious, and it's almost certain that he'll throw his anger at you! I'm sure you know that he hates it when others pry into his personal affairs," Maria explained. "Anyway, just don't think too much about it, okay?"

Alicia bit her lip, and remained silent.

After that conversation, they proceeded to talk about another topic. However, Alicia seemed absent-minded throughout their conversation. Once they were finished with lunch, Alicia left in a hurry.

The housekeeper escorted Alicia to the gate and watched until she had left. When the housekeeper returned to the house, she asked Maria, "Mrs. Sullivan, you invited Miss Schultz here because you wanted her to know that Rachel might be pregnant with Mr. Sullivan's child, so why did you stop her from asking him about it? What if she manages to get an answer out of him?"

"You think so?" Maria replied as she fiddled with her pearl necklace. She was no longer as gentle as she was with Alicia. "Do you think that even if Rachel is truly pregnant, Victor will tell Alicia the truth? If Alicia were to ask him directly, that man would suspect that I'm the one who put her up to it. As long as Odin is still abroad, I'll have to endure this bastard's antics and be careful with my every move."

The housekeeper lowered her head in silence.

Every time Maria remembered how her own son was abroad, handling the overseas operations of the Sullivan Group, while Victor, an illegitimate child, was the CEO of the company, she would get furious.

However, she must remain calm.

She was able to marry into the Sullivan family, because she was different from all the other ladies from rich and powerful families. Most of them were narrow-minded, greedy, and easy to read. But not Maria. She was smarter and more cunning. All she needed to do now was to wait for an opportunity to find out Victor's weakness. 'But waiting doesn't mean I'm going to

**tolerate the birth of another little bastard! I'll do anything to get rid of anyone that prevents my son from taking back the Sullivan Group!**

## Chapter 104 Meet Alicia Again On The International Food Festival

As silence pervaded the room, Maria sighed and closed her eyes, stilling her emotions. When she opened her eyes again, the malice in them had vanished; it was as though it had never appeared.

She stop touching her pearl necklace and stood up gracefully. Then, she walked out of the living room to the stairs, closely followed by the housekeeper.

When she got to the stairs, she held the banister gently. "Send someone to keep an eye on her," she ordered the housekeeper without looking back.

Although Maria hadn't emphasized who "her" was, the housekeeper was quick to realize that she was referring to Rachel.

"Yes, ma'am," the housekeeper said, bowing respectfully.

—  
In the Sue Garden's dining room.

Exhaustion had plagued Rachel for the duration of the meal. Her pregnancy symptoms weren't easing up as time passed. Drowsiness was one of them, and it had continued to grow stronger over time.

She yawned and put her spoon down on the table. She hadn't seen Victor since their conversation ended in an argument that night. The radio silence actually pleased her; she hadn't bothered to initiate conversation and was happy being alone.

When Lukas noticed she had finished her breakfast, he quickly handed her a glass of warm water and folic acid supplement pills.

Rachel took the warm water and swallowed the pills with it. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she caught a glimpse of the weather outside. "It's a nice day today," she warmly said, looking out the window.

Following her gaze, Lukas also looked out the window and nodded. "Yes, it is. The temperature has dropped steadily for several days. Fortunately, it's pretty warm outside today. Would you like to go out for a walk, Miss Bennet? It must be bustling outside today," he said.

Rachel rarely left her bedroom, though. Not only had she had to deal with drowsiness in this early stage of her pregnancy, but it had also been cold outside recently. For those reasons, she had felt rather lazy and didn't want to go out.

However, she knew staying at home any longer would be bad for her health. Going out for a walk would do her some good, and she could search for clues about Abby's whereabouts.

As this thought crossed her mind, Rachel raised her eyebrows and asked, "It's bustling outside?"

"Yes. Haven't you read the news on the Internet, Miss Bennet? Today is the Apliaria's annual International Food Festival," Lukas explained.

'The International Food Festival?'

Rachel wondered. Suddenly, she remembered the advertisements she saw on the Internet a few days ago. Every year, Apliaria celebrated the International Food Festival to promote the communication of food culture between countries. Shelia had heard Quintin talk about it back when she was still a member of the Red Hackers Alliance. Back then, he had hoped to get her to join him to enjoy some food.

'How did I respond to his offer back then?'

Shelia pondered, looking at the garden outside in thought. Soon, she remembered what she had said to him.

"Quintin, if I hear one more word from that mouth of yours, I'll throw you down," she warned sternly.

Upon hearing that, Quintin hurriedly turned away from Rachel, who was busy cracking a program, and looked down. They were on a three-meter-high open-air balcony.

Quintin was not afraid to jump off the balcony. He was nimble and agile, so he was confident he'd survive.

However, the pond below was home to two crocodiles. They hadn't eaten in a few days and were quite hungry. They were gifts from Rachel's previous client to thank her for fulfilling his order. The crocodiles seemed to feel Quintin's gaze and grew restless. They raised their enormous heads and opened their dangerous mouths at him.

"..." Cold sweat dripped down Quintin's back, and he had quickly ditched his thoughts of celebrating the International Food Festival.

After gathering her thoughts, Rachel stood up and replied, "Since it's bustling, then let's join them."

She wanted to see how the International Food Festival was celebrated. It had to be something worthwhile since Quintin was keen to take part in it.

The Eastern District was the venue for this year's International Food Festival. Hundreds of stalls already filled the district's massive square. These stalls had on display many special snacks for customers to taste.

On the opposite side of the square was the largest shopping mall in the Eastern District. At that moment, two women walked out of the building holding many bags.

"Alicia, people are gathered on the other side of the street. Why don't we check it out?" The other woman said, looking at Alicia, who was walking beside her. Alicia didn't seem to hear her, though, causing the woman to frown, "Alicia?"

"..." Alicia didn't respond still. She just continued walking.

The woman's frown deepened, and she raised her voice. "Alicia!"

The sudden shout startled Alicia. It appeared she had been deep in thought. She looked at

the woman and blankly said, "What's wrong?"

"I should be the one asking that question. Why have you been so absent-minded these past few days? What's going on?"

"Have I?" Alicia asked in a low voice as she silently touched her face.

"Of course! You've been absent-minded since you returned from visiting your aunt," the woman said.

It was the truth. Alicia had been absent-minded a lot in the past few days. She lost her focus even during classes, leading to many mistakes in her experiments. This caused her teachers to criticize her rather strongly. The woman walking with her was her roommate, Lori. Their tutor had just given them a day off, so she took Alicia shopping because she was a little worried about her.

However, Alicia's sudden spells of absent-mindedness persisted.

"Is something wrong with your aunt's family?" Lori asked hesitantly.

"No," Alicia replied, frowning. She had gotten annoyed when she recalled Maria's words.

She really wished to know if Rachel was pregnant or not. However, she knew that asking Victor about this wasn't wise. She feared he'd get mad at her if she tried.

However, not knowing the truth left her bitter, angry, and most times, absent-minded. 1

"Tell me what has happened, then. I could help you figure it out. Trust me—I may be able to help you solve your problem,"

Lori said worriedly. Alicia looked at her and hesitated a little, after which she said, "Let's find somewhere we can sit, and I'll tell you all about it."

They walked over to the square and found empty benches in a temporary rest area. When they sat down, Alicia told Lori what had been bothering her.

"Tell me, then. What should I do? I can't put my mind at ease if I don't find out the truth. It took me two years to ensure Victor divorced. However, if Rachel is truly pregnant now, then..."

Alicia paused and gritted her teeth. The longer she thought about this, the angrier she became. She didn't even notice when she ripped the piece of tissue paper in her hand to pieces.

"You just want to know if she's pregnant or not, right? That's simple," Lori said with a smile.

Alicia looked at her in confusion.

Lori leaned in close and whispered in her ear, "Aren't there many things a pregnant woman can't eat? Why not just offer her one? Then from her reaction, you'll get your answer."

Alicia's eyes lit up instantly! "That's genius! Why didn't I think of that?"

Lori leaned back and smiled. "That's why they say, 'Love often makes a person blind.'"

Alicia chuckled with embarrassment. Satisfied that her friend's mood had improved, Lori smiled and rested her chin on her hands. "I've solved a difficult problem for you, so you owe me."

"No problem," Alicia replied. "You couldn't take your eyes off a handbag a short while ago, right? I'll buy that for you."

Lori grinned broadly. "Aww, Alicia, you're so nice! I'm going to use the restroom now, so wait here for me. We can go and buy that handbag when I get back!"

Lori said, giggling. Then, she stood up and hurried to the restroom.

Alicia smiled as she watched Lori hurry off. She felt better now that her roommate had offered her a brilliant solution. In a good mood, she stood up and headed to a stand nearby to buy two cups of ice cream. Something caught her eye suddenly. A Maybach had pulled up nearby. Someone familiar soon came out of the supercar.

When Alicia saw this person, her smile evaporated instantly. She quickly took another look at the Maybach's license plate, and her heart sank. She clenched her fists in rage, and her eyes turned red. Without a second thought, she marched to the car and blocked the path of the new arrival, Rachel, who was just about to enter the square.

"Rachel, why were you in Victor's car?!" Alicia bellowed.

## Chapter 105 Alicia Invited Rachel To Lunch

When Rachel's bodyguards saw Alicia coming towards her, they immediately stood in front of her to protect her.

Rachel was actually surprised to see Alicia here, so she raised her eyebrows with interest. Startled by the bodyguards, Alicia's eyes darkened. "Rachel, what the hell is this? Why did you ask them to attack me?"

When Rachel heard that, the corners of her mouth twitched. 'Why does she think that these men will attack her?'

The passersby around all looked at them because of Alicia's shrill voice.

Rachel immediately kept her distance from Alicia. She didn't want to embarrass herself because of this woman, and besides, she had nothing to say to Alicia. In order to avoid the trouble, Rachel passed her by, and proceeded to the venue.

At this point, Alicia realized that she had overreacted, and embarrassment flashed through her face. Upon seeing that Rachel was about to leave, she grabbed her sleeve when the bodyguards weren't looking. "Rachel, didn't you hear me talking to you? Why didn't you answer my question?"

Displeasure was written on Rachel's face as she shook off Alicia's hand. "Miss Schultz, your words are quite interesting, you know that?"

"Wait... what?"

"I just got off the car when you ambushed me with all your questions! You even slandered me by claiming that my bodyguards were going to attack you. I didn't argue with you because I had no idea what you want to do. I'm worried that if I answer your question, you're going to bombard me with more questions and slanderous claims. So tell me, why should I answer your question?" Rachel looked at Alicia indifferently.

"You..." Alicia was taken aback, but she soon regained her usual arrogance. "Haven't your parents ever taught you to answer questions when you receive one?"

Rachel sneered, "Sorry to disappoint you, but they haven't."

Having said that, she walked away without another word. Meanwhile, Alicia stood frozen before she came to her senses, and her eyes turned red with anger.

As she watched Rachel walk away, she clenched her fists. She remembered what Maria told her when she saw Rachel's belly. A few seconds later, determination appeared on her face, as though she had made up her mind. She then caught up to Rachel, and stopped her again.

"Hang on!" Alicia strutted briskly and soon caught up to Rachel, grabbing the latter's arm.

Out of the corner of her eye, Alicia glanced at the stalls around her, and then turned her gaze back to Rachel. "Look, I'm sorry. It was my fault."

'She's apologizing, huh?'



Rachel's eyes narrowed as she looked into Alicia's. She hadn't had much contact with this woman, but according to the old Rachel's memories, and considering their interaction in Yaprye last time, she was a hundred percent sure that Alicia saw her as her number one rival in love. 'I'm positive this woman will find fault in me every chance she gets.

So why the hell is she apologizing? It's so unlike her!

"Hey! Why are you not responding to me, Rachel?" Alicia said with a frown. Obviously, she was annoyed that Rachel wasn't responding to her apology.

Rachel's eyes lingered on Alicia for a while before she looked away and said, "Oh, okay."

Alicia's eyes widened in disbelief.

Ever since she was a child, everyone had spoiled her, and there were very few people she would lower her pride enough to apologize to. 'In the past, any person that I apologize to would be flattered. But, not Rachel...

This bitch has the gall to treat it like it was nothing!

Alicia gritted her teeth. Truthfully, she wanted to turn around and walk away right now, but she remembered the decision she made just now, so she took a deep breath and said, "Since you've accepted my apology, you wouldn't mind having lunch with me, would you?"

The look on Rachel's face right now made it hard for Alicia to tell what she was thinking.

Right before Alicia had grown tired of waiting for her answer, Rachel finally said, "Yes, I would mind." Afterwards, she walked past Alicia.

"You!" cried Alicia. She never imagined that even though she had lowered her pride so much, Rachel would still be so indifferent towards her. This time, she was really frustrated. "I've already apologized to you. What else do you want me to do?"

However, she still received no response. Rachel turned a deaf ear to her.

Through gritted teeth, Alicia shouted as Rachel walked away, "Are you that afraid of me?"

That remark successfully halted Rachel in her tracks, and turned around to look at Alicia.

Upon seeing Rachel react, Alicia move forward until she was standing face to face with Rachel. "Rachel, you won't even have the common decency to have a meal with me. Are you afraid that I'll find out your secret?" she said while raising her chin proudly.

"My secret?" Rachel's eyes glinted with curiosity.

Alicia's eyes fell on Rachel's abdomen inadvertently, and jealousy flashed through her eyes.

"Why don't you agree to have lunch with me? If you don't have any secrets to hide, you wouldn't mind, right? Believe me, I won't do anything to you."

Alicia thought she had hidden her ulterior motives well, but Rachel noticed them all.

First, she apologized, and then she invited Rachel to lunch. And because of that, Rachel instantly figured out that Alicia was up to something. 'I can tell she's provoking me. I suppose Alicia thinks she can coerce me into accepting her invitation because of this.

Unfortunately for her, I've seen too much of this kind of trick, and I've become immune to provocations.

However, I am interested to know this 'secret' that Alicia blurted out, and I do want to know why she's so eager to have lunch with me.'

"Fine, I'll have lunch with you," Rachel replied as her eyes glinted.

After a while, they found a nice, quiet restaurant in the shopping mall and found a table by the window.

"One of this, this, and this." Alicia must've ordered five or six items on the menu before handing it back to the waiter. She then turned to Rachel and said, "I'm familiar with the food in this restaurant, so I took it upon myself to order for us. Is that okay with you?"

Rachel took a sip of lemonade and answered, "It's not a problem."

Alicia's face relaxed a little, and she gestured the waiter to start preparing the dishes.

Rachel rested her elbows on the table, and rested her chin on her hands. Silently, she turned her gaze towards the window.

From time to time, Alicia glanced at Rachel's flat abdomen. No matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't tell whether Rachel was indeed pregnant or not.

After a while, the dishes that she had ordered were finally served on the table.

Rachel glanced at the dishes and her eyes suddenly dimmed. In stark contrast to Rachel's reaction, Alicia had an imperceptible smile on her face. She studied Rachel's expression carefully.

There was a garlic amaranth, red bean and barley porridge, stewed turtle soup, cashew nut with shrimp, and king crab.

It was a culmination of both meats and vegetables. All these dishes looked scrumptious, and they smelled really good.

However, they both knew that each of these dishes contained something that pregnant women shouldn't eat.

"The dishes are ready, Rachel. Let's eat!" Alicia looked at Rachel tensely, eager to know whether the latter would eat these dishes or not.