

Chapter 209 Stay Away From My Son

Nicole was a little hesitant when she received the invitation to the Carter family's banquet.

Since Ian had feelings for her, Nicole subconsciously did not want to get too involved with the Carter family.

However, on second thought, this might just be a polite way to thank her for the painting.

It would be petty of her to overthink things.

When Nicole arrived at the Carter mansion as promised, she unexpectedly saw Chloe Snyder there as well.

Chloe came earlier than she did.

She was laughing with Old Master Carter and Gillian.

Nicole handed over the painting she had gotten, "The Blazing Sun".

Gillian thanked her and took a glance at it.

Her face stiffened slightly, but it only lasted for a moment before she regained composure.

composure.

Nicole did not notice this change.

She went up to greet Old Master Carter.

Ian had been hiding out upstairs until he heard Nicole's voice. He hurriedly came downstairs and smiled in surprise.

"Lil N, come on up! I just flipped through our yearbook and saw that we even wore wedding outfits!"

Nicole froze for a moment.

Although they had always been very casual when she came over to his house, Chloe Snyder was here, so Nicole did not want to seem too close with Ian.

Moreover, Chloe was already very prejudiced against Nicole because of Ian.

Nicole glared at Ian. "That's for a play and it's a costume, not a wedding dress!"

'This dumb*ss!'

Gillian simply placed the painting on the ground and set it aside.

"Ian, don't be rude. Ms. Snyder has been here for a long time, and you haven't come down to greet her..."

come down to greet her...

Chloe looked up at Ian's bright eyes that were like the stars. She felt like she had been zapped.

That glint and passion were so dazzling and eye-catching.

However, they never belonged to her.

Ian was only so gentle, cheerful, and patient when he was with Nicole.

For a moment, Chloe clenched her fists tightly.

Chloe felt like she had fallen into quicksand as she kept sinking endlessly.

She struggled to smile as if nothing had happened, then made excuses for him.

"It's alright. We've known each other for a long time, so there's no need to be polite."

Nicole stood there and could feel it. Chloe's fondness for Ian was a little suffocating.

Ian reluctantly went downstairs and politely said a few words before he got impatient.

He just kept staring at Nicole

impatient.

He just kept staring at Nicole.

Old Master Carter had always loved speaking with Nicole. He just kept asking questions about everything under the sun.

On the other hand, Gillian's attitude was perversely cold, but she was very friendly with Chloe.

After the meal, Chloe offered to make dessert.

Gillian dragged Ian over to help.

Old Master Carter chatted a bit more and went upstairs to rest.

Nicole and Gillian sat face to face. When they were alone, Gillian collected her smile and handed over a check to Nicole.

Seeing this, Nicole was puzzled.

She looked down and saw that it was for ten million dollars.

"This is..."

Gillian laughed and hooked her lips in disdain.

"This is the money for that painting. Although I know that it's not worth so

Although I know that's not worth so much, seeing as we've all known each other for so long, I'll take this loss."

The corners of Nicole's tender lips curved into a cold and restrained arc.

"Mrs. Carter, I don't understand what you mean. How are you suffering a loss when I'm giving you this painting?"

Gillian flipped her hair. She had a contemptuous look on her face.

There was not the slightest bit of warmth or courtesy in her gaze when she glared at Nicole.

"Because I know that this painting is a fake, a reject."

The corners of Nicole's lips stiffened slightly.

The two women stared at each other for more than ten seconds.

Finally, Nicole withdrew her gaze. "This painting is worth more than \$100 million, but she's saying that it's not even worth \$10 million?! How is this a reject?!"

Nicole had a complicated mood and did not know how to describe it.

not know how to describe it.

She lowered her head and smiled gradually.

Her smile was cold.

“So, you took this as a fake?” Her tone was frivolous and somewhat incredulous.

“Nicole, we’re considered family friends. Although your mother died early, I still allowed you to be close to Ian. I know that you’re close friends, but you can’t just fool me like this.”

Gillian spoke indifferently as she tried hard to suppress her anger and pretended to be calm.

At the mention of her late mother, Nicole’s heart inexplicably tightened.

Her gaze turned colder.

The corners of her lips hooked up slightly.

“Since you don’t like this painting, I’ll just take it back. I can’t let you suffer a loss, right?”

‘She’s so blind! These high-society women really don’t have any taste in art...’

Nicole was just about to stand up and

leave when she heard Gillian’s

just take it back. I can't let you suffer a loss, right?"

'She's so blind! These high-society women really don't have any taste in art...'

Nicole was just about to stand up and leave when she heard Gillian's surprisingly cold voice.

"Also, stay away from my son."

Chapter 210 Kicking You Out

Nicole was slightly surprised when she heard these words.

This was the second time she had heard this warning.

The first time, it was from Quinn before she got married to Eric Ferguson.

Unexpectedly, this time, it was from Ian's mother, Gillian...

Nicole looked back at Gillian's calm and expressionless face.

It felt like all the warmth and familiarity from before were merely a disguise.

Nicole's heart turned cold. She had always treated Gillian as a respected elder.

She did not expect this to happen.

Nicole pulled the corners of her lips.

"Mrs. Carter, are you warning me?"

"It's fine if you want to think of it that way, Nicole. Ian had a hard time taking over the company, but because of you, he threw away fifty billion just to buy that land. He not only got beaten up by his

threw away fifty billion just to buy that land. He not only got eaten up by his grandfather, but he was almost kicked out of the board too. Did you know that?"

Nicole was stunned. She thought that she had made a timely save.

She did not expect Ian to face so much trouble.

Gillian frowned. "Nicole, if you'd have been together at first, I wouldn't have objected to you both. But now, you just got divorced and your scandals are all over the place. Out of so many people pursuing you, Ian is the most unsuitable one among them, don't you think?"

Nicole laughed in exasperation.

Gillian should have just outrightly scolded her for not being good enough for her precious son Ian.

Why such a big roundabout?

Nicole swept a glance at Chloe Snyder, who was in the kitchen.

Then, she looked at Ian, who was standing far away from Chloe looking very impatient.

A thought flashed through her mind.

Although
Nicole seemed to understand something. ‘
She’s kicking me out?’

“It seems that you’ve already chosen a good marriage partner for Ian? Is that why you want to remove any obstacles that might disturb the marriage alliance?”

Gillian did not deny what Nicole said. “Ms. Snyder is very capable. She’s gentle and presentable. Most importantly, she has a clean background. She’s the most suitable candidate as my daughter-in-law.”

Nicole hooked the corner of her lips into a devilish and disdainful smile.

She looked down at Gillian, who was sitting there with an elegant posture and a superficial smile.

“Ian and I are indeed incompatible with each other. After all, a mother’s IQ is hereditary.”

Gillian was stunned. She looked very angry. “Nicole, you’re so rude!”

Nicole smirked and narrowed her eyes.

She still maintained a decent and courteous smile.

courteous smile.

“Mrs. Carter, there is one thing that I hope you’re clear about. I have never provoked Ian. We’ve always been good friends and I’ve never thought of taking our relationship further. Please persuade him to give up on those thoughts. After all, we’ve been friends for so many years, and I don’t want to hurt him.”

Nicole’s experience taught her that a sensible elder represented the happiness of a family.

The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law was truly the most difficult one.

After suffering at the hands of the Fergusons for so many years, Nicole was not stupid enough to repeat the same mistake.

Not to mention, Ian and Nicole were only good friends.

From the moment Ian started liking her, Nicole had already begun to avoid too much contact with him.

This was something that Nicole had a clear conscience on.

clear conscience on.

Nicole was in a terrible mood.

Seeing that it was almost time, Nicole did not want to continue babbling with them.

She picked up her purse and grabbed "The Blazing Sun" painting that was set aside.

"Goodbye then."

Nicole ignored Gillian's shocked expression.

'We're all people, so why should I put up with everyone's crap?'

Nicole went out the door and got into her car. The car engine roared to a start.

Ian hurriedly came out of the house.

"Nicole, why are you leaving so soon? I'll send you back. It's dangerous to drive alone..."

Nicole ignored him, stepped on the gas pedal, and left without a word.

Stanton Corporation.

Nicole had a cold aura as she went to her office.

Before she reached her office door, Logan

However, Nicole was not the slightest bit guilty. Her eyebrows knitted slightly.

“Mr. Ferguson, please come in...”

Before she reached the office door, Logan hurriedly walked over. "President, Mr. Ferguson is here to see you..."

Nicole did not even hesitate and refused. "I don't want to see him. Just say that I'm not here!"

The corners of Logan's lips twitched.

Before he could speak, the tall, well-built figure on the side stiffened slightly.

A clear voice interrupted them. "Not here?"

Nicole paused in her footsteps and turned to look at the side. 'Eric Ferguson? Why is he here?!'

She glared at Logan.

Logan explained in trepidation, "Mr. Ferguson said that he'll just wait in front of your office..."

'That's why he didn't go to the guest lounge... If you'd listen to the next half of my sentence, it wouldn't be so awkward now...' Logan dared not say this aloud.

However, Nicole was not the slightest bit guilty. Her eyebrows knitted slightly.

Chapter 211 How Is She the Big Picture?

Although Nicole did not want to receive Eric Ferguson, he was already here, so she had to maintain superficial politeness.

Logan held open the door of her office.

Nicole walked in with big strides.

She exuded such a confident and elegant aura and carried such superiority that made her so unattainable that others could only look up to her and sigh in admiration.

Eric watched her back as she pushed the door in and was slightly stunned.

This scene suddenly felt so familiar.

That image deep in his mind surfaced for a while.

In the darkness, the woman in the red dress whose face could not be seen, and the light that pierced through the night.

The light rushed out from the gap in the door and spilled out everywhere with such abruptness. ①

He frowned slightly. That was back when

abruptness. 3

He frowned slightly. That was back when he was in Europe.

'Why did I suddenly remember this?'

.....

"Mr. Ferguson, please come in..."

Logan extended his arm and politely reminded him.

Eric walked in and swept a glance.

The furnishing of Nicole's office was very minimalist.

The details had a little girlish temperament.

There was a sculpture in front of her desk. A pink rose was stuck onto that sculpture's head that made it look playful and vivid.

'So, this is what she looks like when she's working...' Eric thought.

Nicole sat on the large soft sofa and sank inside, looking comfortable and casual.

"Mr. Ferguson, why did you come to see me?"

Nicole looked at him seriously.

If Eric did not have any serious business, she would kick him out.

Eric's gaze was dark and sullen.

"Have you thought about our cooperation for that piece of land?"

Nicole raised her eyebrows. 'That's what he's here for.'

"Is such a small matter worth a personal trip from you, Mr. Ferguson?"

'Does he have nothing better to do?'

Eric's face was sullen and cold. His temperament was calm and cool.

He did not hesitate.

"It's good to make a decision early. We shouldn't delay this."

Nicole's finger tapped lightly on the side of the sofa.

She suddenly thought of that woman who had kicked her out of the Carter family's good graces.

Nicole believed that what just happened had something to do with Chloe Snyder

Nicole believed that what just happened had something to do with Chloe Snyder.

If Nicole's relationship with the Carter family was ruined, the one who would benefit most from this and the most popular candidate for Ian's wife would be Chloe Snyder.

'Hmph...'

After some thought, Nicole looked at Eric. "I'm willing to cooperate, but I have one condition."

Eric's eyes were deep like the dark ocean.

There was not a single crease on that handsome and perfect face.

He would agree to whatever conditions he wanted.

"I don't care what private agreement you've reached with Chloe Snyder. This project can only have me or her."

Nicole's attitude was resolute, and her demand was clear, although it did sound a bit unreasonable.

Who was she to ask Eric to kick out another partner?

another partner.

This was completely irrational.

Eric frowned slightly as he was puzzled. His calm and cool temperament showed a rare trace of confusion.

Nicole laughed and did not hide the coldness on her face. "Eric Ferguson, I know that you're only asking Stanton Corporation to join this time because you more or less want to make amends."

He did not make a sound.

There was silence.

Nicole pursed her lips, picked up the coffee in front of her, and took a sip, then gently put it down.

"I accept your compensation."

Eric looked up abruptly.

He was stunned for a moment.

Her calmness was somewhat unexpected.

"You've thought it through?" Eric's voice was deep.

"But I won't work with Chloe Snyder, so she must be out. Of course, this is also your only chance to make amends."

your only chance to make amends.”

As soon as the project was done, everyone was even.

There was no need to bring out such an unpleasant past and chew on it over and over again.

In the end, the only one suffering was Nicole.

The atmosphere was silent for a while.

It was clear that Eric had the upper hand in this project, but Nicole sounded so righteous while stating her condition.

Apart from Nicole, no one else could speak like this in front of Eric Ferguson.

“Why?” Eric asked. “She and Chloe shouldn’t have much interaction, right?”

Nicole let out a cold laugh and said it as a matter of course, “I just simply hate her as a person, nothing else.”

‘So, don’t even mention the big picture... How is Chloe Snyder the big picture?’

Chapter 212 The Lost Ring

Eric's face was taut. After a moment, he nodded his head in agreement. "Okay."

He unconditionally agreed with the compensation she asked for although dealing with it might be a bit troublesome.

However, Eric finally felt relieved. 'She's willing to accept my compensation, so does that mean our relationship is still salvageable?'

Nicole was not surprised by his agreement.

At that moment, she stood up and walked behind her desk.

"I'll have someone work out the details with Ferguson Corporation. Let's keep this cooperation private and confidential for now..."

Eric had the same thoughts. After all, the project had just started, so it was not appropriate to be too high-profile.

Looking at Nicole's actions, she was probably about to send him out the next second.

Since things between them had just started to ease up, it was better to avoid any unpleasant arguments.

Eric stood up after some thought. "Then... I'll head back..."

Before he could finish his sentence, his eyes were affixed to an adult-height bronze tree sculpture behind Nicole.

His face instantly stiffened.

If he was not mistaken, this bronze tree was designed by a famous sculptor from Sweden that had a modern twist on Central European ornamental sculpture.

It was a unique design in the world, so naturally, it was very expensive.

However, what shocked him most was not the tree.

The branches stuck out diagonally. There was a bright refracted light coming from one of the branches near the window.

It was a diamond that was attached to a ring.

It was his lost wedding ring!

Eric's breathing stopped for a moment

Eric's breathing stopped for a moment.

His face was tense and extremely shocked.

That thing that he felt great remorse after losing appeared here?

Nicole saw that Eric had not left yet and raised her head insouciantly.

"Mr. Ferguson, since we're done talking ..."

Nicole frowned slightly when she saw the expression on his face.

Eric took a few steps forward and stood in front of her. The corners of his lips trembled slightly.

The oppressive feeling in his chest at that moment made him feel so lost and heavy like he was falling into an abyss.

His eyes were deep and dark as he stared at Nicole.

Nicole's subconscious reaction of resistance, doubt, and disgust made his eyes sink slightly.

He stood in front of her and reached out to touch the pair of rings that were hanging on the branches of the bronze

o touch the pair of rings that were hanging on the branches of the bronze tree.

Nicole noticed his movement. Her face instantly became cold and sullen.

Without hesitation, she reached out and pushed him away, which made Eric stumble a few steps back.

His fingers were now further away from the pair of rings.

The man's eyes were deep and sullen with pain and complexity in them.

Nicole's voice turned cold. "Mr. Ferguson, you may leave since we're done discussing."

If he stayed any longer, she was afraid that she would just beat him up.

Her lowly self in that suffocating past was the last thing that Nicole wanted to recall.

She did not want to suffer for the rest of her life just because she fell in love with Eric Ferguson for those few years.

"Nicole, why is my ring here?" His mellow voice was a little hoarse as he asked with difficulty.

asked with difficulty.

'Didn't I lose it? Why is it here?' Eric thought.

Before the elation of finding his lost ring had reached his eyes, Nicole's cold resistance was already mocking his wishful thinking.

"Mr. Ferguson, this is my ring, not yours."

What did he give her for their marriage besides those two documents?

Nicole was the one who bought the ring.

The pain was also hers to bear.

The hope that Nicole handed to him was discarded by him like trash.

Then, what did it have to do with him now?

The corners of Eric's lips were tightly pressed into a straight line.

The deeply hidden pain, remorse, repression, and forbearance in his eyes came flooding out.

"I'm sorry..." ①

It sounded simple and solemn.

Besides this apology, Eric no longer knew how they could overcome the past.

Nicole hooked the corners of her lips in disdain. "There's no need to say these useless things. I've already seen your sincerity when you agree to my conditions."

That was enough for her.

They were all adults, so there was no need to say such sentimental, worthless words.

It was better if they could just settle this with money.

Yvette was right, who would say no to money?

Eric's eyes were filled with complex emotions.

Nicole's indifference pierced his heart.

Eric looked away from Nicole and stared at that somewhat familiar ring.

The pair of rings looked brand new as they shone in the sunlight.

Eric asked again, "How did it end up here?"