

After Divorce, She Becomes the Billionaire Heiress

(Sylvia and Cyril) Chapter 11-20

Released on April 19, 2024

Chapter 11 It seems to be her..

“Many expensive gifts were prepared for you today,” Bruce quickly diverted Sylvia’s attention. He didn’t want her preoccupied with that scumbag.

As expected, Sylvia’s focus shifted. After thinking for a bit, she replied, “Since they went through the trouble, log everything and we can reciprocate appropriately later.”

Bruce nodded. It was customary for them to keep track of gifts received and repay equivalently when needed.

Sylvia disliked such ostentatious events. Having faced nothing but fawning sycophancy since young, she found the facade tedious. After marrying Cyril, his cold apathy towards her presence at such functions bred further disinterest. Over time, she lost all taste for them.

As Sylvia descended, gasps echoed among the guests, stunned by her grace and poise which screamed pedigree breeding.

Glancing up, Cyril froze in disbelief. Why did this Ivanov heiress seem so familiar, uncannily resembling his ex-wife? Impossible, he scoffed internally. They were worlds apart, merely his imagination acting up. But the resemblance truly was striking.

Despite his doubts, Cyril remained composed in place.

Seeing Cyril, Stanford pretended he was just another nameless guest. As he introduced his children, pride and joy suffused his voice when Sylvia’s turn came, barely contained. His uncharacteristic delight elicited smiles all around.

With introductions done, Sylvia commenced the opening dance with Bruce. As they whirled across the floor, other couples gradually joined in until the dance floor grew vibrant.

Having completed the required social pleasantries, Sylvia finally retreated from the crowds, gently refusing Bruce’s offer to accompany her. She understood his concerns about running into Cyril but it was unnecessary. She had moved on fully from that chapter of her life. Furthermore, with her masked, Cyril likely wouldn’t even recognize her anyway. To him, she would always be the ugly duckling, not the beautiful swan.

The siblings talked briefly before Stanford suddenly called Bruce away, chiding him for both siblings neglecting their guests. Left with no choice, Bruce quickly headed back after a few final reminders to Sylvia who simply smiled and directed him to send Juliet to find her later when she arrived.

Neither Sylvia nor Juliet enjoyed such events much, often holing up in a room until needed to put in requisite appearances. As a result, they remained elusive figures to most, with few

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knowing their true identities.

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After Bruce left, Sylvia headed towards her room but almost collided into Cyril at the corner.

Seeing him sparked complex feelings inside. Cyril was also surprised to encounter the Ivanov heiress again but before he could react, she had already brushed past him wordlessly with barely a nod. Her lofty demeanor left Cyril momentarily stunned. After attaining success, no one had dared to treat him like that in years.

But she was born into generational wealth spanning back long before Cyril's new money status. Even if she did nothing but eat, drink and play all her life, her inheritance would still last two lifetimes easily.

As he watched her departing figure, Cyril's puzzlement grew. Had he underestimated Sylvia's potential all these years? Why did this heiress seem so eerily reminiscent of her? Especially their gaze during that brief eye contact just now, even their eyes seemed alike.

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Sylvia quickened her pace, reluctant to face Cyril knowing she would likely feel upset. But after a few steps, she halted and looked back again. Cyril had already moved on ahead, the two of them like parallel lines, never to intersect. A sudden sorrow welled up inside.

Despite her mask, those familiar with her would have recognized her instantly. Yet after so many years of marriage, Cyril still failed to identify his own wife. Even if she was the Ivanov heiress now, she remained an ordinary woman who loved him deeply before that. His inability to recognize her cut deeply.

Chiding herself for clinging stubbornly to unrealistic expectations, Sylvia sighed bitterly. She always knew she occupied little place in Cyril's life. Why keep agonizing over pointless hopes?

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Originally planning to rest, seeing Cyril changed Sylvia's mind. She headed to the quieter backyard gardens instead.

With everyone networking inside, the backyard was peaceful and private, just what Sylvia needed. She understood the banquet's real motive despite being held ostensibly in her

honor

– an opportunity for her family's associates to lobby for partnerships and favors.

1 With no desire to entertain such agendas, the isolated backyard suited her perfectly.

Settling down, familiar hurried footsteps soon approached before Juliet's voice rang out. Where have you been? I searched all over but couldn't find you. Hiding out here I see. What's on your mind?"

"Nothing much. Just wanted some quiet time away from the noise. The backyard is nice and peaceful for sitting undisturbed. Weren't you going to rest at home?" Sylvia asked.

"I did go home to rest but when I couldn't find you, I came out searching. Oh by the way, I saw Cyril taking a call, seemingly speaking with that woman," Juliet responded, her tone laced with disdain.

Hearing about Cyril's call, Sylvia knew without doubt it had to be Caroline. Who else could it possibly be? 1

"What's so great about her?" Juliet complained bitterly, "Just some two-bit actress. For stardom, such entertainment circle people can stoop to anything. Most of those online reports about her are likely true."

Amused, Sylvia corrected, "Actually quite a few of those exposes were arranged by my brother. And they're all bona fide. So it's not 'most likely', but absolutely all true. Anything for fame and fortune but when duplicity backfires, blame is unavoidable."

Juliet fell silent, acknowledging the truth of it. Without actual malfeasance, someone like Caroline could never have risen so high, especially not with her persona of kindness and diligence she flaunted before Cyril to secure his aid.

“How do you feel about everything though?” Juliet finally asked gently, “It is quite unfair you had to divorce over someone like her. We’re all thrilled you finally came to your senses but still, he was your personal choice all those years.”

Caught off guard by the sudden question, Sylvia took time to analyze her true feelings. Initially, Caroline’s intrusiveness left her incredibly furious, often confronting Cyril who remained implacably calm and dismissive. Over time and repeated instances, Sylvia realized her protests were futile, only causing herself more anguish. Eventually she grew numb until

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Caroline’s recent return finally snapped the last thread of patience.

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“Impossible to remain unaffected,” she eventually replied. “I did love him many years so it was upsetting to witness his behavior. But I’ve come to terms with it for a woman he loves deeply enough to act this way, clearly that depth of feeling doesn’t apply to me. So be it. I’ve been slowly letting him go.”

Instantly setting aside complex emotions was impossible after years together. But she was gradually healing and would someday regard Cyril and Caroline with indifference.

Hearing Sylvia’s earnest words, Juliet sighed deeply. “You’re right, quickly abandoning such feelings is difficult. But don’t worry, he doesn’t deserve you anyway. Plenty of better men will treasure you.”

Sylvia had to stifle her amusement at Juliet’s choice of words and odd phrasing-

“Oh by the way!” Juliet suddenly exclaimed, “I overheard your brother mentioning another gift package’ prepared for Cyril despite his distaste at having to keep up appearances. Let’s see what he did!” Taking out her phone excitedly, Juliet navigated to several breaking news articles.

Sylvia leaned over curiously as well. Indeed, Bruce had prepared a massive bombshell for Cyril. After desperately covering for Caroline recently despite evidence exposing her behavior, all his efforts now seemed utterly futile.

Reading the news, glee suffused Juliet. Served him right to understand certain people were simply untouchable, immune from his

power.

The meticulously prepared revelations disseminated rapidly across every major platform. Overnight, the exposé ignited into a sizzling trending topic, leaving the public stunned by this late night twist.

Oblivious at first during the banquet, Cyril only learned about it when his assistant notified him anxiously. The abrupt reversal of tide took him completely by surprise, the evidence ironclad.

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Chapter 13 Video Disclose

Glowering at the news, Cyril didn't even dare open the video. Just reading the director's words felt like a joke making his efforts seem laughable.

Claiming harassment left him no choice but to speak out after resisting it initially to avoid ugliness. But with people insisting on smearing him, he had to defend himself even at the cost of his reputation. All so the public wouldn't be deceived and he could clear his name.

His earnest words roused curiosity over what he would reveal. But few expected much from it, more interested in the promised video itself.

Leaving the banquet, Cyril brooded silently in his car before finally clicking the clip with gritted teeth. It showed a naked entwined couple passionately embracing. From the familiarity displayed, their relationship was clearly intimate. Caroline's face was visible throughout while only the director's voice could be heard, his form always off camera.

Cyril didn't know how he sat through the entire explicit video, Caroline's intermingled noises of pain and pleasure still echoing in his mind. He had assumed her innocence before. Now he realized the truly innocent party was someone else all along.

After ending the video, Cyril sat numbly, lost for words. With no censorship, Caroline would instantly become tabloid fodder.

Commentators focused either on assessing authenticity or critiquing Caroline's figure. The increasingly vulgar discussions disgusted Cyril. He couldn't believe people found entertainment in such things. But regardless of his distaste, he had to see this through.

Before he could collect himself, his phone suddenly rang. Caroline no doubt, having seen the news herself. Suppressing his anger, Cyril answered.

"Cyril, have you seen what they're saying about me? It's all fake, I swear! Please, you have to believe me, my voice was dubbed in..." Caroline pleaded desperately, insisting it wasn't her and she was innocent. Terrified he would believe the video and abandon her.

But Cyril wasn't a fool, quite adept at judging truth from lies.

"Do you

coldly.

take me for an idiot, unable to tell whether videos are authentic?" he retorted

Panicking at his frigid tone, Caroline hastened to explain.

"I was helpless, forced into it! Back then I was a nobody. After getting the lead role, so many people watched my every move! I had no choice, no way out..."

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"You did have a choice. You could have called me instead of insisting on relying solely on yourself. If this is your capability, I've got nothing more to say."

Cyril's voice remained glacial. He no longer wanted anything to do with Caroline after this, much less hear more excuses.

Sobbing now, Caroline kept insisting her innocence and helplessness against the director too strong for her to resist.

Listening to her cry, Cyril's stance softened slightly. From the video, she did seem overpowered. But the public saw only what they wanted, ignoring subtleties of consent. Unwilling to watch it again, Cyril's thoughts drifted unexpectedly to Sylvia's long ago discovery of photos between himself and Caroline. She had said perceptions of truth and lies depended on personal beliefs – even with proof, denial could twist truths into falsehoods. He hadn't taken her words seriously back then but they now struck him as meaningful wisdom. If he refused to acknowledge the authenticity here, then it simply couldn't be genuine. Not that he personally believed them fakes, but that he **MUST** believe them false, by self-delusion if necessary.

"Don't cry. Whether you did this willingly or not, I will handle it. But we should refrain from contacting each other as much going forward."

Cyril felt strangely weary, the constant Caroline drama lately exhausting him mentally. Just when he thought matters resolved, this new bombshell derailed everything.

Hearing Cyril's words, Caroline immediately ceased sobbing despite still dry-eyed.

"W-why? You really think I did this voluntarily?"

"Whether it was willingness or coercion, you know the truth. And I've always been aware of those photos you sent to lawyers previously despite staying silent until now."

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Chapter 14 Meet in person

Ending the call abruptly, Cyril had no desire to keep listening to Caroline's excuses. He had promised to resolve this issue for her and would handle it even if things somehow still spiraled later. But if she already had too much scandalous history that could be endlessly exploited, then his efforts would be meaningless, exposing him as a perpetual cleanup crew picking up her messes.

The public wasn't stupid. They could discern fact from fiction and constant cover-ups would eventually exhaust all patience. Once that snapped, Caroline's road forward would be permanently blocked.

Just thinking of the impending headaches trying to salvage this gave Cyril a pounding migraine. But he had no choice except to try.

Sitting numbly for awhile after hanging up, his chauffeur finally hurried over anxiously, asking whether to go to the apartment nearby work or his marital home.

After marrying, Cyril seldom returned to the marital home, staying instead at company apartments most times. His driver's sudden query caught him off guard. Glancing at the route, the marital home was actually closer. But the thought of traces of Sylvia still lingering there made Cyril vaguely uncomfortable.

Just then his phone rang. Seeing it was his mother, Cyril hesitated. Her calls usually meant nonstop complaints involving some female issue, which was the last thing he wanted to deal with right now. But he couldn't ignore her either. After letting it ring off once, it promptly rang again. Sighing, Cyril finally answered this time.

The moment he did, Michelle's angry shouts blasted through.

"Why did you take so long to answer? Do you know Sylvia barged in today and took back all the jewelry she gifted me?! Even your sister called to say Sylvia stole her things! Aren't you going to do something?! You're divorced! What right does she have to reclaim gifts? Outrageous!"

"Mother, is it truly that egregious? The divorce agreement she signed was Clean Break. Requesting her possessions back is perfectly reasonable then. If this call is purely to complain about that, I see no need to interfere. We're divorced. She can reclaim whatever

she wants."

Sylvia had insisted on Clean Break, indicating her determination to sever all ties. Getting worked up over her actions now seemed pointless. Though Cyril was surprised by her going to such extremes to cut contact completely.

“Don’t give me that! You’re not even trying to stop her, so of course you can’t! Listen, she has no right to gifts already given. Relinquishing ownership means no take-backs!”

Michelle shrieked.

Listening to her tirade gave Cyril a pounding headache despite the triviality of it all. But his mother clung stubbornly to the issue.

After tonight’s Caroline debacle, Cyril was starting to feel he had wronged Sylvia in many ways. So her current actions sparked no anger in him at all.

“I don’t care what you think! She gave those things away and has no claim over them anymore! Give me a clear response on this! If you don’t, I’m coming down to your company!” Michelle threatened.

She might look down on Sylvia’s inferior birth but the status conferred by Sylvia’s lavish gifts was what Michelle craved most. Wearing those glittering diamond necklaces lent her immense face. Under the admiring queries about their origins, Michelle had preened

delightedly. Unable to bear losing such elevated standing now, she rejected any compromise over returning them.

Too exhausted by his mother’s shrill voice to argue further, Cyril finally acquiesced to inquire about the matter.

Just after ending the call, his phone rang again. This time, it was Sylvia. A nervous tension filled Cyril. In their years together, Sylvia had called often but strangely, none of those calls left him as apprehensive as this one.

“Did

you need something?” he asked brusquely.

“Nothing special. I wanted to inform you to gather up all the jewelry gifts and meet me day after at the cafe under your company building. We can return each other’s things cleanly then and avoid any further need to meet up.” Sylvia stated evenly, an utter stranger’s polite aloofness in her tone.

Her attitude irritated Cyril who had intended to talk things through. But clearly, Sylvia had no interest in giving him that chance.

“That works out well. I had some things to ask too regarding Caroline’s scandals. That was your doing right? You have quite the arsenal of blackmail material on her. You promised to delete it all after the divorce but seems you didn’t keep your word.” Cyril accused, unwilling to back down meekly.

After a brief pause, Sylvia gave an icy laugh. “Even if I deleted them, some things remain beyond my control now. Rather than pestering me pointlessly, perhaps consider who she has offended all these years.”

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With that parting shot, she immediately hung up, leaving Cyril simmering in helpless anger. “To the apartment.” he barked.

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Chapter 15 Relic from Mom

Cyril hadn’t intended to meet Sylvia initially but still decided to go, needing answers regarding Caroline. No matter what, he had to understand exactly what was happening.

Upon seeing Sylvia, he froze in surprise. She now seemed a wholly different person from the wife he knew. At home, Sylvia used to dress plainly with minimal make-up, fresh faced as she went about her day. Aside from the adoring light in her eyes towards him, she seldom behaved improperly.

Now though, divorced and on her own, everything about her exuded striking vibrance as if she had bloomed into a dazzling rose.

“You’re here. Hand me that bracelet I gifted you before.” Sylvia glanced at her watch with no interest in wasting time. She was only passing through the area on errands before needing to return to the company where she had officially started working, albeit in an extremely junior role as her brother’s assistant to learn business operations from scratch.

Hearing Sylvia’s blunt request, Cyril’s brows furrowed slightly. He had assumed they would at least exchange pleasantries but she cut right to the chase.

“You think those gifts actually meant something to me? Just got used to wearing them.” Cyril stated dismissively, roughly sliding off the bracelet to fling it onto the table where it clattered to a stop before Sylvia.

Eyeing it silently for a moment, Sylvia raised her head to face Cyril. “You’re right. Just a matter of habit and convenience, like how you grew accustomed to everything I did for you without a second thought. And conveniently forgot this was my mother’s memento when I gifted it to you.”

Carefully placing the bracelet back into its box, joy had filled Sylvia originally when she gifted it newly restored to Cyril, hopeful for their future then. But time proved certain hopes remained unfulfilled no matter one’s longing.

Worthless to Cyril perhaps but to Sylvia, it was priceless.

Cyril froze as hazy memories surfaced of Sylvia highlighting this bracelet’s origins when she first presented it to him. While financially worthless, its emotional value to her was inestimable as her sole maternal inheritance.

But as days faded into years, such details held little meaning and the bracelet became just another ornament Cyril wore absently out of habit.

“Habits truly are frightening things.” Sylvia shook her head, a mirthless smile touching her

lips. “Don’t worry, I’ll grow accustomed to life without you just as you’ll happily accept Caroline’s constant presence soon enough.”

“After the divorce, I said I’ll refrain from acting against Caroline and you can choose to believe that or not. But fair warning, she has offended far too many over the years. Let’s see if you can actually shield her from them all.”

Sylvia’s mocking gaze reminded Cyril the disparity between their capabilities and connections. If her family desired Caroline’s utter ruin, they had ample means to ensure it. Cyril included.

Having said her piece, Sylvia prepared to leave only for Cyril to stop her.

“Regardless what you’ve gone through, you took my sister’s jewelry. Surely you intend to return them?”

Unwilling to just let her walk away so easily, Cyril felt a spark of frustration. Why should Sylvia get to effortlessly abandon this marriage when she had been the eager one insisting on their union from the start? What right had she to play the victim role now?

Pausing, Sylvia glanced back pensively. “If you bothered investigating your sister properly, you would know I didn’t take those. But as expected, you remain blind to their misdeeds.”

Shaking her head, she sighed softly. “Nevermind, nothing links us anymore. Handle your family matters yourselves.”

Having accomplished her own business, Sylvia departed leaving Cyril sitting numbly as unease stirred inside at her cryptic words. Though their relationship had faded over time, Sylvia never lied. If she denied taking his sister’s jewelry, Cyril was inclined to believe her..

Checking quickly, shock and anger flooded Cyril when he learned Bonnie had actually sold off that million-dollar necklace he gifted her, frittering away the money on partying abroad.

Seething rage filling him, Cyril fought to calm down before deciding to call Bonnie for an explanation. But hearing his sister’s flippant cursing upon answering combined with an unknown man’s voice in the background utterly shattered Cyril’s restraint.

While he expected Bonnie was up to no good abroad, her wanton behavior still caught him off guard. Barely maintaining a steady tone, Cyril snarled for her to return in 3 days or he would personally drag her back.

Bonnie’s panicked shrieks confirmed she knew she was in deep trouble. Cyril could almost envision her scrambling in frightened panic at the moment. Good. She deserved to stew in anxiety after everything. At least until he could deal with her face to face.

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Precisely after 3 days, Bonnie returned home, unwilling to test her brother’s patience. His threats were always enacted so she dared not delay.

Surprised to see her daughter back suddenly with no notice, Michelle was nevertheless delighted, fussing over Bonnie immediately while filling her in on recent incidents, including Sylvia daring to reclaim her gifted items.

At that, Bonnie grew agitated. “Where is Sylvia now? I need to settle accounts with her! If not for her tattling, my brother wouldn’t have summoned me back!”

Alarmed by her outburst, Michelle also flared up hearing Sylvia had caused more trouble.

“I’ve no idea where that shameless woman is now! But ever since the divorce, she’s been insufferably arrogant, acting above her station! As if we’ve all forgotten the deceitful means she used to marry into this family!” raged Michelle. Just thinking about it and Caroline and everything recently infuriated her.

That woman was no good either, causing her son endless headaches handling her online scandals which were surely authentic. Why else would they have emerged?

“What did Sylvia do?” whimpered Bonnie, already tearing up. “I don’t know what she told my brother but he insisted I return! And she even took my things worth millions!”

Hearing the value made Michelle gasp despite their wealth now. Still, such extravagance was

unacceptable.

“Outrageous! Call your brother back immediately! We must confront Sylvia! Divorced yet still clinging to our assets. I warned she was up to no good last time but your brother refused to see reason!” Michelle declared, already grabbing her phone despite urging Bonnie

to call.

Secretly thrilled to witness the imminent confrontation with her brother, Bonnie was about

to dissuade her when Cyril’s icy voice cut in.

“Sylvia had nothing to do with summoning you back. Yet here you are, slandering her instantly. If this is what you learned abroad, perhaps you shouldn’t have gone at all.”

Both women jerked in frightened surprise, unaware of Cyril’s silent arrival or how long he had overheard.

Squirming under her brother’s frigid gaze, Bonnie knew she was cornered. As Cyril settled into a solitary seat, his assistant handed over an investigation report.

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“Shall I summarize the findings or would you prefer to make your own confession?” Cyril asked, his domineering tone leaving Bonnie struggling to breathe. Given the options, she naturally feared the revelations in that report more.

Collapsing to her knees, Bonnie clung desperately to Cyril, weeping and insisting on her temporary lack of control abroad compared to Sylvia's theft.

Disgusted by her shamelessness, Cyril shook free his hand and slapped her sharply.

Michelle screamed and rushed to embrace her daughter, casting furious looks at Cyril's callousness especially when he always favored Sylvia. What misdeeds could her precious daughter have possibly committed?

Seeing Michelle coddle Bonnie protectively only aggravated Cyril further. He flung the file contemptuously between them.

"Then you both take a look at exactly what your daughter was up to overseas! And that necklace – don't pretend otherwise! I know you sold it off for millions!"

A million-dollar piece sold for only hundreds of thousands and she dared accuse Sylvia of stealing and pawning it? The implication of what happened to the other lavish gifts over the years was obvious.

Hearing Cyril's accusations, Bonnie knew denial was useless. "Nothing else, just that necklace!" she still insisted. "Who knows if Sylvia orchestrated this herself back when she married in. She never had good intentions..."

"Intentions?" Cyril interrupted derisively. "As if you have anything she would bother scheming for! Every gift she gave you and Mother are worth at least millions. Yet you vilify her for allegedly stealing and selling your tacky necklace?"

After handling Caroline's scandal, Cyril had checked on the value of Sylvia's gifts. Each one, ran over a million easily. Far exceeding what Bonnie had gotten for selling her chain. Yet his sister still dared make such accusations? Preposterous!

Wailing despairingly now before Cyril's stony countenance, Bonnie knew she was doomed.

Seeing her daughter's distress, Michelle didn't dare confront Cyril anymore but began cursing Sylvia instead until Cyril interrupted in dismay.

"Is this how you've been treating her all these years, Mother?"

It had never occurred to Cyril that Sylvia might have suffered such awful treatment from his family. Remembering how she had remained stubbornly adamant about divorcing him, Cyril wondered if there were things he truly failed to understand.

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If even his own mother acted so atrociously, how would outsiders have behaved? But the root cause was his own attitude enabling such toxicity against Sylvia in the first place. If only he had been better to her. Unfortunately, Cyril still lacked that self-awareness even now.

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“What kind of treatment does she expect?! What does she need?!” Michelle raged through angry tears. If not for Sylvia, her daughter wouldn’t be so wronged now yet Cyril completely disregarded Bonnie, eyes filled only with Sylvia. He never cared for her so deeply before the divorce so why the sudden sentimentality?

Disappointed, Cyril realized he never considered how Sylvia might have suffered among them. If their roles were reversed, he surely couldn’t have endured it yet Sylvia persisted for years, comporting herself virtuously throughout their marriage.

“She is confined here for self–reflection this month. If I hear of any outside antics, neither of you get a penny of allowance for the next three months.” Cyril declared coldly before leaving, the oppressive atmosphere now giving him a pounding headache. His family was utterly dysfunctional lately.

Left screaming after Cyril hysterically, neither Michelle nor Bonnie could sway his implacable departure. Clearly he had been too lax, especially with Bonnie’s boundless extravagance funded by his money.

Cyril wondered if letting Bonnie study abroad had truly been the right decision. She was completely unrecognizable now, thoroughly bewitched by foreign pleasures.

Reaching the office, Cyril buried himself in work, only reminded later by his assistant about an evening banquet requiring attendance that night. Glancing through the attendee list, Cyril was surprised to spot the Ivanov family included.

“The Ivanovs are participating too? I heard their youngest daughter who recently returned is the true Ivanov successor. Her elder brother Bruce merely executes he she just joined their company officially.” his assistant supplied helpfully.

will. Rumors say

“I see. Then tonight is likely meant to ease her entry into socializing functions.” Cyril murmured. It seemed insignificant so he put it out of mind, focused only on clearing today’s work after forgetting about this banquet earlier.

At the party later, blatant ambition and greed colored the atmosphere as people networked vigorously for connections and potential opportunities.

Strolling around with Bruce, their visual compatibility drew admiring glances. Though unsure if Bruce was truly the Ivanov heir, his status attracted swarms hoping to lobby him. But Bruce only made perfunctory small talk until noticing Cyril's arrival.

Finally intrigued, Bruce remained stationary, certain Cyril would come greet him to lobby for partnerships between their empire and firms. Naturally, Cyril soon approached and

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exchanged pleasantries with others first before facing Bruce, understanding the necessity of building rapport with this profoundly influential figure.

Facing Cyril courteously, Bruce retained an aloofly impassive expression, neither nodding nor shaking his head coldly. His odd attitude confused everyone.

Though Cyril was considered nouveau elite among them after rising meteorically from scratch over the years, the gap between new money and old aristocrats like Bruce remained vastly distant, not just in class but pedigree. Such innate arrogance from Bruce was

unavoidable.

Apparently when Cyril first entered their circle years ago, Bruce made his disdain obvious, subtly obstructing him at times though nothing proven definitively. But Bruce's current attitude hinted at lingering biases.

"I hope your sister is adjusting well to working at your company?" Cyril finally asked politely.

Long accustomed to the arrogant pretensions of such people, Cyril simply ignored Bruce's chilliness though irritation lingered.

Beside Bruce, Juliet bristled instantly at the mention of Sylvia. "She's doing wonderfully now after everything abroad. Living quite prosperously in fact. But I suspect she won't take kindly to being discussed so casually by you like this."

Surprised by her sharp words, everyone glanced between Juliet and Bruce uncertainly when he made no attempts to restrain her audacity. How could any comments about his unknown sister possibly anger her? Even Cyril was confused by her peculiar reaction.

"I heard you got married some years ago." Bruce suddenly mentioned, stunning everyone. Cyril's marital status was kept private with many matchmaking families considering him quite a catch for their daughters. Learning of his existing marriage now came as an unpleasant shock.

“Though rumors say you divorced recently. Any truth to that?” Bruce continued blandly. Frowning slightly, Cyril wondered how Bruce caught wind of such personal information. Aside from themselves, practically no one had known when he and Sylvia registered their marriage initially. For it to now reach Bruce’s ears likely didn’t bode well.

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Awkward silence descended at Bruce’s enigmatic knowledge about such private matters. Cyril’s marriage likely wasn’t a love match but pragmatic. Even estranged couples kept up public pretenses. Yet Cyril had divorced and apparently planned to formally acknowledge this other woman? An open scandal viewed with distaste.

Furthermore, Bruce clearly knew about it which didn’t bode well for Cyril’s ambitions.

Admitting concealment was useless now, Cyril acknowledged it plainly. “Yes we divorced due to irreconcilable differences after years of discord.”

“Ex–wife.” Bruce emphasized coldly. “With how terribly she married down, their failed marriage should be considered the biggest stain of her life.”

Everyone grew intrigued over Bruce’s mysterious connection to Cyril’s ex–wife that he kept defending so staunchly.

Juliet meanwhile smiled brightly. “No wonder. What woman wouldn’t suffer misfortune being tied to such a man? Speaking of which, word is you’ve been busy handling Caroline’s scandals lately. Are those authentic? Because I used to know that director well. He begged desperately for my investment once. Considering what I heard of his proclivities, seems the rumors are factual?”

Stunned anew by her casually disparaging Caroline too, everyone understood now.

Compared to elite aristocracy like Bruce and Juliet, Caroline and the flashy entertainment circle remained utterly insignificant. Cyril involving himself so deeply indicated an intimacy beyond friendship.

Cyril’s expression darkened. Clearly Bruce and Juliet were deliberately provoking him.

“It’s my private business. Caroline is a friend. Of course I would help resolve unjust accusations.”

Latching onto it, Juliet persisted. “Oh? Which kind of ‘friend’ exactly? Bedmates? Or marriage potential?”

“Either way, it’s not your place to pry into my personal affairs.” Cyril stated curtly. Before Juliet could retort, Bruce quickly led her away, declaring it was improper to create a scene as

visitors here.

Watching them depart, everyone glanced at Cyril curiously, wondering how he had offended- Bruce somehow.

“Bruce usually tolerates quite a bit before truly losing his temper. Last time was five years

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ago when someone tried drugging him. That family faced steep downfall afterwards. So what did you do to provoke his ire?” someone asked Cyril frankly.

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Brooding in frustrated silence over the injustice, Cyril knew the elite aristocracy simply did as they pleased while everyone placated them.

Mingling aimlessly later, Cyril noticed Bruce by the buffet line with Juliet filling a plate angrily while Bruce placated her with desserts and soothing words.

Clearly she was pedigree stock to accompany Bruce publicly. Everything about her screamed doting pampering.

Approaching them, Cyril forged ahead before they could ignore him. “There are some things I’m unsure about and hope Mr Bruce can clarify my confusion.”

Glancing over impassively, Bruce waited.

“Very few people knew about my marriage or divorce. Yet you seem rather hostile over it. May I ask why? Or have I unknowingly offended you personally in some way?”

Just then, several others wandered over to exchange pleasantries. As they chatted amongst themselves, Bruce kept his attention fixed on Cyril.

“Because without your ex–wife, you would be nothing. I suggest not presuming too much self–importance.”

Privately over the years, Bruce had helped Cyril substantially for Sylvia’s sake though it was clearly misplaced effort in hindsight after seeing how terribly his family exploited and mistreated her. Like parasitic worms never displaying an ounce of gratitude.

Bruce's blunt words plunged the area into stunned silence. But before anything else could happen, the host wandered over cheerfully, beaming as he greeted them.

The others quickly smiled back politely. After finishing his rounds, Host Wolford turned to Cyril smilingly.

"I don't see your lovely wife here tonight? We have her to thank for our successful collaboration last time with her brilliant negotiation skills. Why didn't you bring her along?"

Released on April 20, 2024

Chapter 19 Bitchy

Host Wolford sang Sylvia's praises continuously, commending her extensive knowledge and unique insights. Additionally her business acumen had clinched multiple collaborations previously after a brief conversation with her. Wolford declared feeling envious of having such a brilliant wife.

Oblivious to the increasing tension around him, Wolford remained focused solely on complimenting Sylvia who Cyril had only brought along once, reluctantly. He never expected her to make such a profoundly positive impression.

"Truly a pity your wife couldn't join us tonight." Wolford continued enthusiastically. "With Mr Bruce being another exceptional businessman, perhaps she might have enjoyed chatting and even brokered potential partnerships between you."

Only when finished did Wolford finally notice the odd atmosphere and silenced conversations. Bruce took the opportunity to drive his point across once more.

"See? Without her you'd be nothing." A trace of mocking colored his words. His sister's capabilities were precisely why she became the heir. Yet this man had the audacity to mistreat someone of her caliber.

The indignity made Bruce's blood boil. If not for the inappropriateness of acting this instant, he would have happily taught Cyril a physical lesson.

Stunned anew by how Wolford's words clearly verified Bruce's earlier declaration, everyone

understood now.

Exchanging brief pleasantries, Bruce and Juliet soon left, having accomplished their aims. The others quickly dispersed too, not daring to linger around Cyril anymore after the dramatic revelations tonight which certainly gave them much to digest.

Most were even more intrigued by the mysterious ex-wife's identity now, speculating if connections could be cultivated. But with no clues about her, only puzzlement remained.

The ugly scene completely ruined Cyril's mood for remaining. He had no intention to stay behind as a laughingstock.

Pausing on his way out, Cyril suddenly recalled Sylvia enduring distress during that one banquet he made her attend years ago. Yet she hid it perfectly, remaining smilingly by his side the entire event as required.

Considering how upsetting such contempt was even briefly, Cyril could only imagine Sylvia's wretched suffering throughout while concealing it flawlessly. Sudden remorse

Chapter 19 Bitchy

flooded him for putting her through such torment.

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Hastening his exit, Cyril intended to apologize to Sylvia somehow before stopping short at the sight of her standing with Bruce and Juliet. Even more disagreeably, Bruce was ruffling her hair affectionately.

An involuntary sourness rose in Cyril at witnessing their easy intimacy. He couldn't resist intruding.

"Getting rather handsy when you have a date here, Mr Bruce."

Glancing back at Sylvia wordlessly, neither Bruce nor Juliet bothered responding. Sylvia's smile had already frozen into a disgusted scowl before she stalked past Cyril.

"Who I interact with is none of your business. Leave if you've got nothing to say."

After snapping at Cyril, Sylvia bade Bruce and Juliet farewell before heading towards the parking area. Neither glanced Cyril's way either as they departed separately.

Standing numbly for several moments, Cyril quickly shook himself out of his stupor and rushed after Sylvia, grabbing her wrist just as she took out her car keys.

"Barely divorced yet already so wanton. Don't presume Bruce would actually want you." He spat out derisively. "Don't disgrace yourself trying anything vulgar and embarrass me!"

Wincing slightly from his painful grip, Sylvia nevertheless ignored it, meeting his glare steadily.

“Normal dating constitutes vulgarity now?” She smiled coldly. “Let me make things clear. We share no ties anymore. Whether I embarrass you is irrelevant. In any case, you have no right to demand anything of me when Caroline clings shamelessly to you yet you feel no mortification over that.”

Twisting her hand free, Sylvia regarded him contemptuously.

“Don’t overestimate your significance. Marrying you was the biggest mistake ever. If I could redo things, I would never have suggested it. I almost lost myself trying to please you. Finding me now to soothe your ego after divorce only validates leaving was right.”

Striding quickly to her expensive car, Sylvia drove off before Cyril could react, still struggling to process her blunt words.

Clenching his fists tightly, Cyril didn’t know what to make of the tumultuous feelings clamoring inside.

Released on April 21, 2024

Chapter 20 Inquisition

Caroline’s scandal kept worsening despite Cyril’s initial confidence that sufficient money and connections could smooth it over. But seeing the intensifying public ire made him realize the severity. This was beyond trivial resolving.

Reading the incensed commentaries, Cyril knew parts had to be authentic to provoke such reactions. And his own extensive investigations uncovered no hints of fabrication. Reluctantly, he accepted the legitimacy of the accusations.

Numerous times, Cyril almost called Caroline to demand explanations but kept hesitating whenever he recalled their history, putting his phone down again undecidedly. This entire mess was giving him a pounding headache however. He never expected things to spiral so wildly out of control.

Just then, an email notification distracted him. Though sent anonymously, Cyril’s instincts blared warnings it would provide clarity the moment he opened it.

Indeed, detailed timelines about the entire screenplay theft scandal emerged. Meticulous and irrefutable. Similarly exhaustive documentation regarding all the other online scandals followed. Plus confidential disclosures absent from any public reports. Undeniably, everything had been intentionally leaked to him specifically.

Cyril wasn’t foolish, quite shrewd in fact to have conquered the commercial world. One look and he knew everything was true. Someone else had simply refrained from publicizing it.

Unsure how to process this flood of revelations, Cyril impulsively dialed Caroline, unsurprised when she picked up despite the late hour. Injuries or not, current events made rest impossible.

Her gentle concern for his late night call left Cyril unmoved however, irritated she still pretended obliviousness when clearly aware of the tumult somehow.

Did she presume Cyril would continually handle the fallouts unconditionally as long she herself denied all involvement?

“I received a rather interesting email and wanted your thoughts.” Cyril remarked neutrally. The sudden tension from Caroline made it obvious she easily guessed the contents. Yet she

still avoided speaking first.

“Seems you can already surmise what it entails so I won’t elaborate needlessly.”

Panicked into finally responding, Caroline insisted desperately it was all fake, forced against her will every time. Did exposing truths mean losing Cyril’s support and affections forever?

Chapter 20 Inquisition

She had no choice in going along back then!

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Hearing her shrill voice, Cyril just felt tired, realizing she had lied to him repeatedly over the years. He had shielded her previously without questioning veracity, simply believing in her virtue blindly. But matters clearly weren’t that simple.

The more fervently she denied everything, the more convinced of her guilt Cyril became.

“Don’t treat everyone like fools, Caroline. You know the truth best whether you did those deeds willingly or not. This is the last time I step in. Once it’s resolved, leave the country for good. Return and I won’t hesitate to deport you immediately.”

Pausing briefly, Cyril then added. “Consider it the final way out I’m offering you.”

About to protest further, Caroline understood from Cyril’s implacable tone that his decision was final. No more chances remained for her.

“Ruthlessly cold after all my years helping you, never once questioning anything before,” she accused bitterly. “What changed to make you suddenly believe it all? Did Sylvia orchestrate this? Why does she hate me so much to target me like this?”