

Chapter 24/77

Alyssa followed Jasper into the study.

The door closed behind her with a soft click. She didn't move to switch on the lights or sit down. Instead, she stood quietly in the dim room.

They faced each other, eyes locked. In the darkness, their gazes seemed brighter, charged with emotions that neither could put into words. Whatever stirred within them was tangled and silent—kept at bay by something unspoken, as if a wall had formed between heart and mouth.

After a pause, Alyssa offered a faint smile. Her voice was soft, almost courteous. "Go ahead, Mr. Beckett. I won't be staying long tonight—I've made other arrangements."

It was clear she didn't want to be alone in a room with him.

Jasper's chest tightened, overwhelmed by a surge of emotion he couldn't define. His voice was rough when he finally spoke. "You didn't vote against the motion at today's board meeting. I wanted to know... are we still on the same side?"

Alyssa's gaze lowered, her voice steady and calm. "You didn't object to Justin being named president because you haven't figured him out yet."

"You agreed to his demands temporarily to study him—because only when he's standing in the spotlight will he show his hand. You need that visibility. Otherwise, he stays hidden. A snake in the grass, waiting for the right moment to strike."

Jasper's breath caught. His heart raced, but he forced himself to stay composed.





"Yes," he murmured. "That's exactly it."

And for a fleeting moment, he felt that familiar connection—that rare clarity only Alyssa could bring him. No one else ever saw him as clearly.

But then, he took a step closer, just enough to blur the space between them.

"You are wrong about one thing," he said.

Alyssa's breath hitched. "What was it?"

"Justin will never stop at the presidency," Jasper said, his voice firm. "What he wants... is the entire Beckett Group. Maybe even more than that. He wants Solana City at his feet."

"Justin will never be satisfied even if he becomes the president."

Alyssa's expression hardened slightly as she nodded.

She had always respected ambition—true, bold ambition. If Justin had taken a just path, perhaps she could have admired him or even called him a friend.

But instead, he had crossed a line. He had repeatedly hurt the one person she loved most. That, she could never forgive.

"I heard Sheryl's out on bail," she said.

Jasper's expression darkened. "She's loyal to Justin and hates us both. Ask Sean to stay alert. Your safety comes first."

Alyssa didn't answer. She simply gave a faint smile.

Sean had taken leave—Tatiana was nearing her due date, and Alyssa had



insisted he be there. She wouldn't pull a man from his wife at such a time. She wouldn't put a growing family through more chaos.

She could protect herself. She always had, even before she had Jasper.

Jasper exhaled heavily. Even now, he couldn't help worrying. "If anything happens—if you're ever in danger—call me."

Surprised by the rawness in his voice, Alyssa looked up. Then, slowly, she smiled—a sweet, radiant smile, warm as sunlight on rose petals.

Jasper turned, ready to leave, but paused when she spoke again.

"Mr. Beckett," she said softly, "have you ever questioned Sheryl's true identity?"

"Have you found something?"

"Liana Gardner." A long-forgotten name hung in the air, spoken by Alyssa. "Surely you still remember her?"

A wave of icy dread washed over Jasper, his expression becoming rigid and still.

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Meanwhile, in Justin's private villa, Sheryl stormed up to Justin, eyes blazing. "Mr. Justin, I don't understand what's gotten into Remy lately. He tried to sleep with Amber! Has he gone mad?"

Justin lounged in his wheelchair, fingers tapping thoughtfully against his temple. "Really?" he mused. "Now that's a show I'd watch—the little brother coveting his older brother's wife. How beautifully tragic."



Sheryl was speechless. Justin operated on a plane of logic inaccessible to the average mind.


As she remained silent, Justin flung a document before her.

"A research center in Mosgravia has developed a reliable drug that can relieve the side effects of Crystal Ice, which we previously developed."

Flipping through the document, Sheryl's jaw dropped. "What? That was quick!"

Justin sipped his tea calmly before replying, "Truth be told, a normal person would probably take five to eight years—maybe longer—to develop something like this. But the one behind this formula is a young genius."

"Who is he?" Sheryl asked eagerly.

"No need to rush. First, let me introduce you to an old friend." 



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