

CHOSEN 1831

Chapter 1831

Flipping through her contact list, she was somewhat surprised to find that she was still a member of the old school class group chat that had been set up years ago. But her surprise was fleeting, replaced by a sense of indifference.

These group chats tended to linger in the background, mostly ignored by everyone. Muting and hiding the group was practically a rite of passage.

Better to let the chat fade into obscurity than to risk offending someone by booting them out. After all, one more silent member hardly made a difference.

She scrolled through the list of names, her lips curving slightly when she recognized a name that wasn't completely unfamiliar.

Enter title...

Clicking on the chat box, her smile was soft and natural. However, to Alyssa and Elizabeth, watching from across the room, there was something inexplicably unsettling about it.

Elizabeth, clutching Alyssa's hand, leaned in and whispered, "I don't know why, but I can't shake the feeling that I kind of pity Morrison. It's strange, isn't it?"

Alyssa nodded in agreement. "I had the same thought."

Elizabeth's gaze met Alyssa's for a few seconds before they both looked back at Chloe, their hands tightening around each other's.

Indeed, you wouldn't want to cross any woman, particularly Chloe. There was something about her calm, placid smile that was downright unnerving.

Damon walked over from the kitchen, holding a tray with fruits, cakes, and juice on top.

Chloe was busy on her phone, smiling contently, as Damon silently sat beside her and placed the tray on the coffee table. He then gently took her phone away and set it aside.

Chloe's brow creased slightly in a clear display of displeasure.

Alyssa and Elizabeth paused, sitting close together.

Pregnant women experienced significant emotional fluctuations, and

considering Chloe seemed to be dealing with something important at the

moment, could Damon's overbearing actions be hitting the wrong nerve.

In fact, when Chloe got upset, she didn't engage in loud arguments or scenes.

Even if she had a falling out with Damon, she never showed it to others. She

would still maintain her usual cheerful and lively demeanor.

However, the more she acted like this, the more suspicious they became in their

hearts. Could you imagine someone who was laughing with you one second

and then immediately giving a cold or petulant look to someone who had just

irked them.

Chloe glanced to the side, looking displeased at Damon. Her crimson lips

pursed lightly, and her eyes carried a hint of accusation.

"Aren't you having cake?" Damon's voice was casual as his eyes swept over the

tray on the coffee table.

Chloe paused, looked at the cake, and her eyes suddenly lit up. Then she

looked back at Damon and pouted, “Didn’t you say no cake?”

Damon remained silent, taking the fruits and juice off the tray and handing her

the empty tray, leaving only the cake on it. He then handed her a fork.

Chloe had indeed been craving cake, having mentioned it to Damon the night

before, only to be flatly refused.

She had pleaded, but he had promptly listed all the reasons why cake was bad

for pregnant women, leaving her to sleep in a huff of discontent.

Breakfast had been a lingering regret, but now, she saw the cake.

She was ready to dig in, but still felt unsure, “Can I really have some?”

“Go ahead”

A maid came over with a steaming cup of tea and placed it on the table, smiling.

“Don’t worry, missus. The cake was made by the master right after breakfast.

There are no additives, and the cream was hand-whipped by Mr.

Damon for a long time.”

Chloe’s eyes sparkled with gratitude as she turned to Damon. “On behalf of our

little ones, thank you, daddy!"

At that, Damon chuckled softly. "Well, so it's not you who wanted it?"

Chloe scooped up a fluffy piece of cake and savored it blissfully. "Of course not.

It's the babies who wanted it."

Damon reached over and took the tray from her lap. "If it's not for you, then you shouldn't eat."

"Hey, wait..." Chloe reached for the cake that was suddenly being pulled away.

Damon seemed serious, giving her no chance to reach it again. After a few tries,

Chloe looked at him, "Daddy, the babies really want to try your cake."

"They don't deserve it"

Chloe sighed, pouting. "Daddy, you'll break their little hearts. Be careful, or they might not like you later."

"It doesn't matter" Damon said coldly. "As long as you love me, that's enough."

Alyssa and Elizabeth, seated across from them, huddled together.

Alyssa sighed, "I can't stand this anymore. I'm leaving."

Elizabeth chimed in, "I can't either. I suddenly miss my husband"

Damon's blunt words left Chloe red-faced and flustered. As she watched the

cake being held out of reach, her lips parted in a slight pout. "Alright, alright, I

admit it's me who wants it. The babies are innocent."

Damon's lips curved in a teasing smile as he leaned in closer. "Do you love

me?"

Chloe's face reddened further, and she nodded shyly, murmuring, "Yes."

"Then call me hubby."

Chloe's head lowered even more.

"Hmm?" With a light threat from Damon, Chloe's embarrassment deepened.

As he pressed closer, she put a hand on his shoulder, glancing over at the

others.

Alyssa and Elizabeth hurriedly averted their gazes and scurried away from the

domestic battlefield. The maid followed suit.

Damon's dark eyes glanced at the corner, noting their departure, then refocused

on Chloe. "Hmm? Call me hubby, and you can have your cake."

Chloe bit her tip, leaned forward, and pecked him on the lips. "Can we change it

to a kiss instead?"

"No!

"Two kisses?"

"No- "Damon...

Seeing her with that forlorn look, Damon relented, "A hundred kisses, come here

and you'll get your cake."

Chloe sighed, "Hubby."

A hundred kisses would take all night. Who can say what might develop from

this, right? Chloe never let a good opportunity slip by, and right now, the coast

was clear in the living room.

Besides, it was not like they hadn't been close before with an audience. As for

being shameless, well, that was just a matter of getting used to it. She'd always use the babies as an excuse for everything, hiding behind them like a shield, and everyone had grown accustomed to that.

And Damon, well, he'd always played along with her charades. Only, he always seemed to outplay her in the end. He was the master of the game.

"Hand over that cake, now!" she demanded.

Damon smirked and leaned in for a quick, teasing kiss before reluctantly letting her go.

Chloe snatched the cake back, feeling that the playful banter with Damon was totally worth it. She savored every bite alone, in blissful satisfaction.

Watching her indulge, Damon couldn't help but smile as he picked up her phone. "What are you up to now?"

"Well, just checking on Rose's latest product launch. My award-winning design is about to hit the market," she replied, her eyes flicking away momentarily.

Damon raised an eyebrow, not entirely convinced. That smile of hers didn't

seem to be all about the product launch. “Who’s got you so giddy then?”

“Uh. no one.” Chloe mumbled through a mouthful of cake.

Just then, her phone buzzed. Damon looked down at the message popping up on the screen.

“That’s right, it’s me. Hey Chloe, it’s been ages. Let’s grab a bite and catch up?”

Damon’s brow twitched at the sight of the contact’s profile – a graffiti-covered motorcycle. Definitely a guy thing.

Chloe felt his mood darken and her own heart race with uncertainty. “What’s wrong?”

“Some guy wants to take you out for a trip down memory lane; Damon murmured.

Chloe reached for the phone, patting Damon reassuringly on the shoulder.

“Don’t worry. He’s not a suitor”

“If he was, you can kiss these cakes goodbye”

Chloe instinctively hugged the dessert closer to her chest.

After a day of trending online, Rose finally wrapped things up at the company and headed home. She freshened up, changed, and prepared two meals, then took them to the hospital.

One meal went straight to Winston's room, and he didn't hesitate to dig in right

in front of her. Rose's cooking was something he'd always appreciated,

especially after years of dealing with bland cuisine. Her culinary skills were topnotch in his eyes.

"So, what's the plan with your little princess' birthday clashing with the launch?"

Rose winced at the term 'little princess: The thought of calling Morrison a 'little

princess' struck Rose as hilariously amusing.

"Well, the launch obviously takes precedence."

Morrison was clearly about to oppose her again. It was the same as before,

always going against her. Even after so many years, he still had that annoying

habit.

Chapter 1832

Morrison was too angry to speak. He'd shelled out for the top trending spots,

and now he had to remind her that it was actually his birthday that day with a

grand gesture?

Ha! As if he could do something so idiotic.

The hospital room fell into an awkward silence.

Rose sat on the couch, her eyes glued to her phone, seemingly engrossed in

whatever was on the screen. Occasionally, the murmur of male voices could be

heard, which he mistook for some TV show.

Enter title...

After a while, he pulled out a debit card from under his pillow and tossed it at

Rose. Rose picked it up and examined it, "What's this for?"

Morrison gave her a sideways glance, "You don't recognize a debit card?"

Rose pursed her lips, "I mean, why are you giving this to me?"

"A debit card is for spending money. Can you stop asking such dumb

questions?"

"You think I'm short on cash?" Rose's laugh was faint, showing no interest in the

card.

She truly wasn't short on money. Her family might not have provided her with much affection, but they never skimped on material things.

To groom her into a true young lady and then sell her for a good price, they had calculated this deal very thoroughly. Yet, she never rebelled against them for the lack of affection.

They wanted to groom her into a young lady, and she was more than willing.

A girl with looks, figure, refinement, knowledge, and elegance, this was also her personal desire. She wanted and anticipated this – to be a refined and perfect woman. Only then could she confidently appear in front of the man she liked at any time, making it easier for him to fall in love with her. Only then could she truly become herself.

Her desires were clear, so she accepted the Davis family's cultivation without question. They had their motives, and she had her own plans. It was a mutual benefit, nothing more.

And because everything had always gone so smoothly, she had never known financial distress. Now, with Chloe's help, her company was also thriving. So she had everything, especially money.

Morrison gritted his teeth in frustration at her words. For the first time, he realized how damn hard it was to win over a woman.

"You may not need money. But you need the money that comes from me, your husband."

Rose raised an eyebrow but said nothing.

Facing her silence, Morrison added, "Keep it. If you want to buy anything, use this card. The PIN is..."

"I don't want it"

Rose suddenly cut him off, tossing the card disdainfully back onto the hospital bed.

Morrison was about to explode, "You..."

“I don’t want it. If you really want to give me money, just transfer it to my account.’

Morrison’s face twitched, his lips tightened, and a vein in his forehead threatened to burst.

This damn woman!

“Who cares if it’s old-fashioned when you’ve got money to spend? People would kill to have that.’

“I don’t need your money. If I’m going to spend, I need to keep up with the times:

“Since when does a debit card embarrass anyone?! Do you know how much is in there? No one would dare laugh at you. The PIN is..”

“Mr. Witt!” Rose interrupted again, raising her voice, “If you really want to play the domineering CEO trope, please, get with the times. Even CEOs need to evolve. No woman likes a CEO who’s a hillbilly. The young ladies nowadays are romantics at heart. Money is good, and CEOs are great, but a hillbilly CEO is a major turn-off”

The room fell silent, so much so that within seconds, Rose could distinctly hear the grinding of Morrison's teeth. She smirked slightly, "What made you suddenly decide to give me money?"

The grinding stopped abruptly.

Morrison remained silent, his face cold.

Rose pressed her lips together, "Well, since you're done with dinner, I should head home. You'll have a nurse to look after you tonight.

As she prepared to leave, Morrison, who had been silent up to that point, looked up sharply, "Try and leave this room, I dare you."

Rose circled the foot of the bed, looking up at him. "Domineering CEOs aren't supposed to be unreasonable"

"I'd be reasonable if you were less stubborn."

"How does me going home to rest bother you?"

Morrison was silent for a moment, then said gruffly, "I'm bored on my own.

You have to keep me company.

He grabbed her arm fiercely, “Don’t forget that I got hurt because of you.”

Rose: “Jerk...

Rose didn’t want to make a scene. In the end, she stayed, although she did step out to buy some fruit.

Concerned she’d trick him, Morrison kept her bag and phone as “hostages,” only handing her a \$20 bill, enough to buy fruit for the evening. He then headed to the bathroom to freshen up.

Rose followed to the bathroom door, slightly amused.

“Mr. Big Shot CEO, if I decide to splurge a bit, do you think twenty bucks is going to cover it?”

“Apples, bananas, oranges, grapes, cherries, and cherry tomatoes—that’s all you’ve been eating lately. How expensive can it be? Twenty is plenty. And you can keep the change. I should be generous with my wife.” With that, he splashed water on his face.

Rose watched his back and slightly said, “You can hand out a million bucks to

someone else just like that, but twenty dollars is generous for me?”

Morrison looked up, turned off the tap, and stared at her through the mirror,

“What did you say?”

Rose arched an eyebrow, “Nothing. I’m off”

Morrison felt pleased that Rose was finally playing along. No longer at odds with

each other, he settled on the couch and picked up his tablet to catch up on

some work.

With him spending most time dealing with Rose, a backlog of tasks had piled

up.

He was relieved she agreed to stay. He glanced at her bag and phone next to

him, and considered the trivial \$20 in her pocket – she had no chance of

escaping. Feeling better, he finally settled down to tackle his workload.

The sudden knock on the door shattered the brief silence that had just settled in

for a few minutes. Morrison frowned, a subtle irritation flitting across his brow,

but he managed a terse, "Come in."

He returned his gaze to the document he'd been scrutinizing, now peppered

with red annotations. Once he saved the changes, he lifted his eyes.

The figure standing before him drew his eyebrows together even tighter. His

voice took on a chilly edge. "What is it?"

"Since you've been hospitalized for quite a spell, I thought it was only right to

check in on you,' Mona's voice sounded softly, accompanied by a subtle smile

on her face.

Dressed in an ill-fitting hospital gown, she appeared exceptionally delicate and

petite, with a slightly pale complexion, which gave her an unhealthy look.

However, her demeanor suggested that nothing had happened between her and

Morrison the previous night.

Morrison remained silent.

"Morrison, we don't have to be like this. Setting aside our history as lovers, at

the very least, we're old classmates and friends. I admit that I hadn't quite let go

before, but laying it all out there clears the air. You don't love me, and I can't

force you. Everyone has their youthful and reckless moments, times when they

are naive and ignorant about love. I can understand that, just like you.

"But friendship is cultivated over time. After all these years, I don't want to lose

you as a friend. So, you don't need to put up walls around me on account.

"When it comes down to it, who are you, and who am I? If I really did something,

I'd only be hurting myself, right?"

Morrison's brow remained furrowed. "So, what's your point exactly?"

After a brief silence, Mona said, "I won't be staying in town for Christmas"

He placed the tablet on his lap and squinted at her.

Mona's smile carried a tinge of melancholy. "You know, I don't have anyone to

really lean on here. Spending Christmas alone always seems a bit too pitiful."

Morrison's lips pressed into a thin line. "Where you go is your business. Even if I

were the president, I wouldn't have the authority to restrict your movements without cause."

Mona continued unabated, "So you needn't worry, I'll be leaving. But I saw the trending topic today, and you wouldn't mind me attending your birthday party, would you.

"Just as a classmate and friend. Consider it indulging a whim of mine. This is likely the last time I'll celebrate with you. After that, we'll live our separate lives, perhaps never to cross paths again. Is that okay?"

Morrison ran a hand over the tablet's edge. "Is that what you came here for?"

Mona offered a faint smile, "That's the main reason. It's not too much to ask, is it?"

"Mona-' Morrison spoke softly, "I was clear last night. Rose is uncomfortable with you around. Given our past, it's not reassuring for her. I know where I stand and I'm sure there won't be anything more between us, but I can't knowingly provoke he.. She might not misunderstand, but there will still be a thorn in her side, and I

can't ignore that."

Mona's lips twisted slightly. "So what you're saying is that I need her permission to attend your party?"

Morrison coldly looked at her. "I thought I made myself sufficiently clear."

The only response was the sound of the door slamming shut. After a few seconds of staring at the door, Morrison returned his attention to the tablet.

Rose came back carrying a bag of groceries, and outside Morrison's room, she encountered Mona.

Mona made her way over as soon as she spotted Rose. "Rose, let's talk, shail we?" Mona said with a smile, her gaze flicking briefly to Rose's belly. Though

Rose wore a loose winter coat, the subtle swell of her pregnancy was discernible.

"What's there to talk about?"

Rose shifted slightly, her cold gaze resting lightly on Mona. Retrieving her gaze

from Rose's belly, Mona smiled, "Morrison's birthday is on December 22nd. I'm

planning to celebrate with him before I leave R City. I wanted to give you a

Chapter 1833

From early in the morning, Rose had been bustling around the venue for the

press conference.

They had been promoting in every fashion media platform, mobile ads, and

billboards in fashion districts. In the end, they even splurged on promoting a

trend on social media, which linked directly to the ad video shot by Winston.

Winston's influence was, of course, extraordinary. The online views for the ad

soared to over a billion in just one day.

Headlines like "Spotlight Beauty's New Product Launch," "Winston, and "Star

International Design Award" popped up one after another.

Enter title...

"Ms. Rose, we're getting a rousing response from all our promotional efforts."

"With Winston's endorsement and his massive fan base, coupled with the

international influence of Ms. Summers, there's no doubt our new product is a smashing success."

"I bet by no later than next year, our brand will be known worldwide. Spotlight Beauty has done it—the H Country brand has gone international"

The team gathered around Rose, brimming with pride and joy.

"Thanks to Ms. Summers. If it weren't for her, Spotlight Beauty probably wouldn't have reached the current scale for another decade or more."

Chloe was their company's savior. Thank God she was Ms. Rose's good friend, offering her help unconditionally.

Rose smiled, taking in the fully prepared venue before turning to her colleagues with a glass of juice in her hand from a nearby table.

"Chloe has been instrumental, but you all are just as important. It's your wisdom and hard work that has taken Spotlight Beauty this monumental step forward.

"As the CEO of Spotlight Beauty, I thank you all for your dedication, for helping me inch closer to my dreams, and I believe Spotlight Beauty is a platform where

you can achieve your dreams too.

Let's continue to work together for our dreams, for glory, and for ourselves."

Moved by Rose's words, everyone raised their glasses in a toast and drained

them in celebration.

"Just waiting for this success party to wrap up smoothly."

Rose smiled, glancing sideways to ask, "What time is it now?"

"Two o'clock, one more hour until the journalists arrive."

Rose nodded, "Let's do one last check for any oversights."

"Sure thing."

Everyone went back to their posts, ensuring everything was in order. A final

check wouldn't take long.

Before long, they regrouped, and after confirming all was well, they sat down to

rest, each with a phone in hand.

Rose took a seat by the window, gazing out through the blue-tinted glass at the

gloomy, foggy sky outside. In the distance, the top of the tall buildings already had aviation warning lights flashing.

Her juice had been replaced by a thermos, which she now cradled as she gazed distantly, lost in thought.

Meanwhile, her colleagues whispered among themselves.

Rose didn't mind. After days of planning, making snap decisions, setting up the venue, and handling publicity and security, the workload had been heavy.

Now with a moment to rest, she wasn't going to squeeze them even in downtime.

But soon, a pair nudged each other over to her side. Their pushing and shoving broke through Rose's reverie. She turned to them with a gentle smile, "What's up?"

They glanced at each other, relieved by Rose's good mood, then said: "Mrs.

Witt, today is Mr. Witt's birthday. The banquet is almost starting now, and it's held at the Witt family's own hotel. It's super luxurious. Many people have

already started sharing photos online. Are you not going to attend?"

Rose's eyes flickered, "I can't leave this event.'

Some looked disappointed, "But as his wife, is it really okay not to attend Mr.

Witt's birthday party?"

Rose smiled wryly, "Birthdays should be happy occasions. There might be other

not-so-pure motives involved, but my attendance doesn't seem that significant,

and I really am tied up here."

"But you're Mrs. Witt. Your absence will surely cause a stir.'

Rose exhaled softly, her smile tinged with resignation, "Let them enjoy their fun.

We better focus on our tasks here."

Sensing she didn't want to linger on the subject, the others backed off with a

sense of loss.

Everyone had been watching the exchange, and while it seemed unusual for a

wife not to attend her husband's birthday, in R City, the Witt couple's

unorthodoxy was the norm.

“Wow, it’s snowing!”

Minutes later, someone shouted in surprise, and people flocked to the windows.

Returning from the restroom, Rose saw her team pressing their faces to the

glass, their voices filled with excitement.

“The snow’s heavier than last year. It hasn’t been long since the last one.”

“This looks bigger than the first snowfall. It is so beautiful.”

“Ah, makes me want to play outside. It’s been ages since I’ve really enjoyed the

snow.”

“Speaking as a southerner, I’ve never seen snow this heavy:’

Rose’s gaze lifted to the sky, where silent, heavy flakes drifted down. She

watched, lips pressed together in a silent realization.

Sure enough, it was snowing again.

At three o’clock, journalists began to trickle in, and several celebrities from the

fashion world also made appearances. Despite this, many on the guest list were

no-shows, having chosen to attend Morrison's birthday instead.

Though Spotlight Beauty was a promising startup, it was still green behind the ears compared to the established Witt Co. In the world of business, it's the big fish that rule the pond. In R City, you'd be hard-pressed to find someone who wouldn't want to rub shoulders with the Witts.

Journalists were easy to deal with. Their specialties varied, and besides, a magazine agency surely didn't have only one journalist. They could attend the Spotlight Beauty's new product launch, and some else could be sent to attend Morrison's birthday banquet to gain some exposure.

This outcome was predictable.

The launch went live, streaming straight to the web.

Rose, as the company's main executive, took the stage to provide a detailed presentation on the new product. She covered technical aspects, fragrance details, and the philosophy and significance they aimed to convey.

She had light makeup on her face and was dressed in a tank top dress.

Underneath, she wore a white modal base long dress, and over it, a loose, thin, goose-yellow wool cardigan. The outfit was simple and stylish, combining a sense of elegance and chic sophistication while exuding a particularly gentle temperament.

She was four months pregnant, the cardigan offering a cozy shield to her belly, yet there was no hiding the gentle grace of an expectant mother. But beyond that, Rose commanded the room with the poise of a seasoned leader — articulate, composed, and brimming with quiet confidence.

She spoke professional jargon, yet managed to make it comprehensible and evoked anticipation from everyone.

Through the incessant shutter clicks, Rose remained unflappable.

The venue for Morrison's birthday party, arranged by Riley, was the best banquet hall in the entire R City, with the most exquisite decorations.

Opulent and extravagant, the party buzzed with the cream of high society, men

and women alike exuding elegance and charm. Yet the star of the show was conspicuously absent.

Riley stood outside the door, looking conflicted and helpless. “Mr. Witt, the guests are pretty much all here. You really should make an appearance.”

Silence.

Then, from behind the door, a voice barked, “Leave me be!”

Riley cringed but edged closer to the door, curiosity getting the better of him.

A faint voice, possibly Mrs. Witt’s, filtered through.

Mrs. Witt?

He checked the time. Shouldn’t she be in the middle of the launch right now.

It couldn’t be her with Mr. Witt at present.

Pausing, Riley pulled out his phone, tapped into a website, and sure enough, there was a live feed of the Spotlight Beauty launch.

Clicking in, there was Rose, presenting the new product. The tone and the pace

all matched what he'd overheard.

Riley rubbed his temples, his features a tangle of confusion.

All this fanfare for a birthday party, and here Morrison was, holed up, peering at

his wife's presentation through a tiny screen and leaving a horde of quests

hanging?

He just couldn't fathom what this couple was up to. If Morrison wanted to see his

wife, why not do so in the open, maybe even give her launch some extra buzz?

Chapter 1834

"But every villain meets their match, right? Everyone knows Morrison's heart

belonged to Mona. So what if she's pregnant? Morrison still doesn't give her the

time of day. She thought she was so smart and proud. Look at her now, trying to

get the man with a baby. She got what she wanted, but at what cost? She's

made her own bed, but it's the kid I feel sorry for. That child doomed to grow up

without a father's love."

"Pfft. Now that you mention it. Hey, why hasn't Mona shown up yet?"

“What? Is Mona coming?”

Enter title...

“Yeah, she’s in R City. Just got back recently. She was in a car crash and ended up in the same hospital as Morrison, right over his birthday. How could she not show up?”

“True. She’s probably just running late.”

Meanwhile, Mona was just about to leave her rented flat when a stranger blocked her path. “Excuse me, are you Ms. Mona?”

She was startled, eyeing him warily. “Who... who are you?”

“It seems I’ve found the right person.” The man tipped his hat in a gentlemanly gesture, “Please come with me.”

Mona took a step back, “Who are you, and why would I go anywhere with you?”

He looked sharp in his suit, not much older than her, and not the sort to mean her harm. His demeanor was polite, but no matter what, she wouldn’t just wander off with a stranger.

The young man looked surprised, “Aren’t you here for Mr. Witt’s birthday party?”

Mona paused, “You are...?”

“IL was sent to deliver a gown to you and escort you to the stylist. Didn’t you get the message?”

After a few seconds, her eyes lit up with realization, “Did Morrison send you?”

The man didn’t respond, just offered a slight smile and stepped aside to let her pass, “Please, Ms. Mona. The car’s this way.”

Mona smiled back and let her guard down, heading towards the vehicle. She couldn’t think of anyone but Morrison who would go to such lengths.

At Morrison’s birthday party, a group of women continued gossiping.

“Just think about it, Rose’s psychological resilience is impressive. If it were me, I wouldn’t be able to endure being subjected to emotional abuse from my husband while pregnant and still refusing to divorce.”

“It was obvious back in school that Morrison couldn’t stand her. But she always

made sure to flaunt herself in front of him. Once Morrison got a girlfriend, it became clear she was trying to weasel her way into his life, aiming to be the other woman.”

“Now she’s succeeded, hasn’t she? She’s the acknowledged Mrs. Witt”

“Please, ask anyone here, who cares about her title? Everyone knows she is just a joke.”

“If it were me, I’d have the baby aborted and be out of here in a heartbeat. I couldn’t stand the shame.”

In the dim corridor, Morrison stood rigid, his expression darker and more foreboding than ever.

He moved forward, his tall figure emerging from the shadows into the bright light of the banquet hall.

The women spotted him and rose to greet him with smiles.

“Morrison, happy birthday!”

“Happy birthday!”

“Get out.”

The women’s smiles froze, their carefully made-up faces suddenly grotesque.

“Morrison, what... what did you say?”

“Yeah, did you forget us? We’re your classmates, and we used to be friends

with...”

Morrison’s eyes narrowed as he stepped closer, his aura of menace crashing

down upon them. “Rose is my wife. Whatever you think of her, it’s not your place

to gossip or judge. This is the last time I’ll say it: leave now!”

His roar sent the women scrambling, their demeanour crumbling as they ran

out, tears streaking their makeup.

The security guards at the door, alerted by the commotion, arrived swiftly.

“What... what happened?”

“Throw them out!” Morrison ordered, his anger unmasked.

The women scurried away, humiliated and crying, while the guards hesitated

before following them out.

Megan and Molly stood by Morrison, watching his fury. Megan snorted.

“All this should’ve settled with time, but you’ve just fanned the flames, putting

Rose back in the spotlight. Do you think their words are all that’s been said.

Do you think they’re the only ones mocking her? With the help of the Internet, do

you have any idea of the nastier things being said about Rose.

“If you hadn’t been so foolish and let things escalate, none of this would’ve

happened. What right do you have to be angry, Morrison? All of this is on you.

Ask yourself, how did Rose end up pregnant? Do you realize why someone as

proud as her resorted to marrying you through these means.

“Do you understand at all? Why do you keep hurting her like this? How many

times can Rose’s heart break before it’s too much?”

Megan’s voice was filled with emotion, her grip on her walking stick trembling

with force.

Morrison’s stern face twisted with conflicting emotions. He knew the rumors that

had surrounded their marriage.

Using a child to marry him... Yet, that was how their marriage began, it wasn't
alie.

He blamed her for the consequences of her actions, but he hadn't anticipated
the fallout to be so extensive.

Not just those women, but others, even across the internet were criticizing her.

"Emotional abuse...

"A child doomed to grow up without a father's love.."

"The other woman rising to the top..."

"Everyone knows that Mrs. Witt is just a running joke in this town, right?"

"If it were me, I'd get rid of the baby without a second thought and skip town.."

Morrison's nerves jangled like snapped guitar strings, his head pounding with a
throbbing pain.

"If you keep on with this foolish charade, you might as well just divorce Rose

and be done with it. Let her go, for heaven's sake, and the kid too—stop ruining their lives.” Megan's voice quivered with a weepy tremble.

Watching Rose endure in silence from the day they married, her heart raced with worry and fear. She was anxious for Morrison to truly understand his feelings and treat Rose better. And she also feared the day Rose would lose all hope and give up on Morrison completely.

“Granny, I married Morrison because I love him. The baby is my only link to him, so I'm aware of what I'm facing ahead. This is my one shot in life, and nothing precious comes easy. I'll work hard to make Morrison fall in love with me, no matter what the pain or cost. I have to try, right? What if it works?”

“And what if it doesn't?”

“Granny, I really do love him. I can bear a regrettable outcome, but what scares me is the thought of someone else not loving Morrison like I do.

What if they don't take good care of him? What then?”

Before the wedding, she had a heart-to-heart with Rose, and these were the

words Rose had said to her.

She asked Rose what she would do if things didn't turn out well. Yet Rose was still worried about Morrison. If that was not love, what was.

On her deathbed, her only regret would probably be this concern: that no one would take care of her beloved grandson as she had.

Such a girl, and what did Morrison ever do to deserve her? In the end, she's hurt by him like this.

Morrison remained silent, and after a long while, he stood up and strode toward the center of the banquet hall.

His aura was fierce, making people instinctively steer clear of his path.

Molly, fearing he'd do something irreversible, quickly followed him. "Where are you going!?"

Morrison kept walking, not saying a word. Molly furrowed her brow, hurriedly stepping in front of him, blocking his way as onlookers cast curious glances in

their direction.

Molly towered her voice, "Morrison, mind the occasion. Don't do anything rash.

You made such a big deal of this party, and look how many people you've drawn

here. Do you want to become an even bigger laughing stock?"

Morrison glanced at her coldly and brushed past, "I'll be back soon."

Molly, clutching the hem of her dress, turned and watched Morrison walk away.

"Morrison!"

He didn't respond, just moved through the crowd that parted for him and left the

building.

For about ten seconds, the grand hall fell silent. Then, a murmuring hubbub

broke out.

"What's going on?"

"Did something happen?"

"He looks really angry."

"I don't know."

Megan slowly approached from behind, looking at Molly's worried face, and said

in a grave tone"

"Just let him go. I want to see what foolish thing he's about to do. If he still can't

see what's important and doesn't know how to make amends or hold on, then

it's his fate. If that's the case, it might be a release for Rose."

Molly's brows knitted together, her expression sorrowful. "But..."

Megan just shook her head in resignation and walked away.

Molly pressed her lips together.

A release? What really counted as being released.

Chapter 1835

"As for Morrison Witt's birthday bash, it had no conflict with my press

conference. I mean, the Spotlight Beauty launch isn't exactly a 24-hour

marathon, right? It's practically wrapping up as we speak."

The reporter piped up, "What about Witt's ex-girlfriend? Her sudden return and

staying at the same hospital—why are both of them hospitalized at the same

time?”

“His ex just got back to town, and now Witt’s throwing this massive birthday shindig. You sure she’s not a factor in this?”

Rose flashed a casual smile. “Just wanted to have a birthday celebration, you know? Sometimes, there isn’t a hidden agenda. My husband and I are solid. I

Enter title...

wish folks wouldn’t read into things too much. Like my colleague just said, today’s all about the new line from Spotlight Beauty. Let’s keep things professional and focus on the product, shall we? Thanks for your support.”

Once these issues were on the table, there was no way the focus would shift back to the company’s new products. For them, gossip was a far juicier story than any product launch.

Handing the mic off to the host, Rose turned with a smile and headed backstage. Only when she was out of sight did her smile fade.d2

A colleague, worried, followed her backstage where she was sipping water from

a thermos. "Mrs. Witt, you okay?" they asked.

Rose set down her cup and smiled, shaking her head. "I'm fine, really."

"But are you and Mr. Witt really all good?"

The questions from the reporters weren't baseless. Spotlight Beauty's launch and Witt's birthday party were the talk of the town in R City. This couple, always so private yet always the talk of the town, suddenly found their high-profile events clashing head-on. It was hard not to pay attention.

Was everything between her and Morrison really okay? She didn't know.

And as for what was happening at Morrison's birthday party, she was in the dark. From the reporters' questions, it was clear Mona hadn't shown up at the party yet. If she had, the reporters' reactions would have been far more intense.

The situation was already tense, but if Mona made an appearance, Rose would be in the eye of the storm. The whispers, the sneers, and the vile comments online would all be amplified by Mona's presence at Morrison's party. She'd

have to face the accusations she'd always tried to ignore, the ones she

pretended didn't bother her:

The homewrecker.

The schemer climbing the social ladder with a child.

The ruthless woman.

—

Standing outside the hotel, Rose watched the heavy snowfall paint the night

white. Passersby seemed to delight in the sudden flurry.

Hands tucked into the pockets of her down jacket, she caressed the velvet

lining, her gaze distant.

Her mind wandered back to a snowy day years ago.

She had worked night shifts for two months at a jewelry counter, all to afford a

platinum bracelet.

Yes, a bracelet for Morrison's birthday. A man wearing a bracelet might seem

absurd to some—a cumbersome accessory, typically feminine. A watch would

be the more conventional choice for a man.

But she felt Morrison suited the bracelet perfectly. His hands were elegant, his wrists artfully slender. A ring would look amazing on him, but where did she stand to gift him that?

His hands, born to luxury, were well-formed, suited to adornment.

A watch was too commonplace, and far beyond her means. Even a year's wages wouldn't buy a watch Morrison would truly appreciate.

She wanted to give him something meaningful, something earned with her own money.

He definitely would use some sarcastic words at that time, but he had always been like that to her anyway. Over time, she had also become accustomed to it.

Their strange relationship looked like mutual disdain, but there was an unspoken understanding between them. They supported each other's social events like "friends." Their dynamic was odd, but as long as there was a

connection, any form would do.

He might scoff at the bracelet, might not treat her kindly, but that didn't mean he wouldn't wear it.

After two months of night shifts and bonuses, she was still short on cash.

Skiping classes and working nonstop, she finally had enough to buy the bracelet the day before his birthday.

On Morrison's birthday, when she arrived at the party, all dressed up, he was nowhere to be found.

He had given her the address himself and invited her to come, albeit grudgingly, but when she got there, she was informed the party had moved.

She didn't want to believe it was a cruel joke on her. She trusted Morrison wasn't that kind of person. Yet, he wouldn't answer her calls.

After several attempts, Mona picked up. "Sorry, Morrison decided to switch up the venue last minute for a new club opening. Where are you? It's getting late—are you still coming? I'll text you the address."

The snow began to fall heavier as she took a cab to the new location. But

Morrison's phone went unanswered.

She stood outside like that for a whole night, and the heavy snow almost buried

her into a snowman. The velvet box in her pocket turned icy cold.

That snowy night became a day she could never forget in her life, something

she couldn't erase from her memory no matter how hard she tried.

It was Morrison's last birthday before leaving school. Afterward, the holiday

break began, and the university emptied.

As the new school year unfolded, the chill in the air between Morrison and Rose

had turned downright glacial. From barbed exchanges and frosty comments, he

had moved to a state of complete indifference.

She became invisible to him, not even warranting a single spoken word. She no

longer had any opportunity to close that growing gap.

And then, graduation came, and they drifted apart, each going their own way.

The birthday present she'd never had the chance to give him remained undelivered.

A gust of cold wind whistled through the trees, sneaking under her collar and making her shiver. Shaking off the chill, Rose blinked and looked down, slowly pulling her hands out of her coat pockets.

In her palm lay a purple, rectangular velvet box. She opened it with her other hand, and the hotel's lights gleamed off the simple platinum bracelet nestled inside.

A single snowflake danced through the air and landed gracefully upon it.

Platinum jewelry had been all the rage back then, and although it had somewhat fallen out of style, it still held a timeless charm.

Morrison had professed his love for her.

Whatever happened in the past, Rose could always turn the page. This year, on his birthday, she wondered if this long-held gift would ever reach him.

Taking a deep breath, she closed the box with a snap and slipped it back into

her pocket. She stepped down from the porch and made her way to the parking

lot.

As she unlocked her car, a beam of light suddenly cut through the darkness.

Shielding her eyes, she was met with the sound of another car door opening.

“Rose.”

A tall figure stood before her, backlit and imposing.

She frowned, lowering her arm to look up at him. “Who are you?”

“Rose, are you here for Mr. Witt’s birthday party?” the stranger inquired.

On her guard, Rose asked, “What about it?”

“Please come with me.”

“Who exactly are you?”

The man did not respond.

—

The Spotlight Beauty product launch was still in full swing, with company reps

tirelessly promoting the new line. However, the buzz among the journalists and guests was all about Morrison and Rose.

Some speculated that Morrison's public opposition to Rose was just a warning, a signal for her to step aside now that an old flame had resurfaced.

The room was abuzz as everyone speculated openly about the fate of the two.

Morrison arrived just as the discussion reached its peak. His sudden appearance, with a stern face, silenced the crowd. They approached to offer pleasantries but recoiled at the aura of hostility emanating from him.

The staff's mood was soured, having heard so many cutting remarks about their boss. How could they be happy? They knew better than anyone the kind of person Rose was at the company.

They knew the slights Rose had suffered, and now she was belittled and gossiped about behind her back, all thanks to this man.

Even though he was a man not to be trifled with in R City, that didn't change the fact that he was the culprit.

“Where’s Rose?” Morrison asked bluntly, his voice cold.

“We don’t know. She might have been tired and gone home to rest.”

“Yeah, Mr. Witt. Did you come here in person to force the issue after a remote warning didn’t suffice?”

The sarcasm in the voice made Morrison’s expression darken. “What are you implying?”

The person scoffed. “This launch was going fine until your birthday party started drawing all the attention. The press has been all over your marital status and about your beloved ex-girlfriend. Most folks here are betting on when you’ll get divorced.”

“Mr. Witt’s tactics are truly unmatched. Thankfully, you didn’t bring your ex to add insult to injury for Ms. Rose. If you had paraded your ex here to pressure

Chapter 1836

“I want you all to understand, from this moment forward, that Rose didn’t trap me by getting pregnant to marry me. It was I who deliberately gave her that opportunity.

“Even if she initially didn’t plan to keep our baby, I wouldn’t have agreed to let her go. If she hadn’t been carrying my baby, I’d have found another reason to make her my wife.

“The one who’s always harbored ulterior motives has been me. If you’ve got anything to say, say it to my face. But do you have the guts to do that?”

The room fell into a stunned silence.

Enter title...

They didn’t. Morrison was a true force to be reckoned with. The audacity of his speech wasn’t without foundation.

Having said his piece, Morrison swept his gaze over the hushed crowd, a satisfied smirk playing on his lips as he strode out of the room. His footsteps were brisk, and it was all Riley could do to catch up with him in a near jog.

The display was nothing short of shocking for Riley.

Morrison, who never wore his heart on his sleeve, who would grimace at the

sight of other couples wrapped up in their public displays of affection, had made such a bold declaration of love.

Riley had worked with Morrison long enough to know he was a man who despised sappiness. He doubted Morrison would ever be the type to whisper sweet nothings or be particularly kind or tender, even to his own wife.

He had secretly worried about the future of the Witt family line, especially after learning about Morrison's past girlfriend.

Now, there in the meeting room, Morrison's words had been nothing short of explosive. Riley never imagined he'd see the day when Morrison would brazenly confess his love in front of a crowd, shattering his stoic image.

Back at the birthday celebration, despite the heavy snowfall, they made it back to the party in record time.

Molly had been busy hosting the guests when she noticed Morrison's return, accompanied only by Riley. A flicker of disappointment crossed her eyes. She had hoped Morrison would bring Rose back with him and announce to everyone

that she was the one he loved – now and forever.

The birthday bash might have been a bit scandalous, but if Morrison could

publicly affirm Rose's status as Mrs. Witt, it would have salvaged some of

Rose's years of heartache.

Instead, Morrison had left alone and returned alone. What was the point of his

departure then?

Swallowing her frustration, she watched as Morrison approached. Taking a deep

breath, she said, "Let's cut the cake and say a few words, then we can call it a

night."

The crowd was waiting, and they had to go through the motions.

Morrison didn't respond. His eyes scanned the room, and he frowned, "Where's

Rose?"

Molly paused, "Who?"

"Rose," Morrison repeated, his patience wearing thin.

Molly glanced around and shook her head, "I haven't seen her."

Morrison's lips formed a tight line, his displeasure evident.

So he had gone to look for Rose but hadn't found her? Rose must have been

hurt again, hiding somewhere, nursing her pain. Finally, Molly sighed, "Let's just

cut the cake."

She signaled the servers to bring over the grand cake. Taking the knife, she

looked at Morrison.

Morrison glanced at his wrist to check the time, but realizing he wasn't wearing a

watch, he raised an eyebrow.

Riley, amidst the crowd, quickly chimed in, "It's 7:50 PM."

It was still early.

Morrison took the knife from Molly but paused. "Let's wait a bit longer. She

hasn't arrived yet."

He stood by the cake, silently waiting, staring at the entrance. His calls to her

had gone unanswered. He couldn't leave now. What if she arrived just as he

stepped out?

As the minutes ticked by, the guests around the cake began to disperse, raising their glasses and enjoying light-hearted banter.

“It’s obvious he’s waiting for someone, right?”

“Who could it be that has Mr. Witt waiting at his own birthday party?”

“Could it be his wife, Rose?”

“Hard to say, but isn’t it clear that there’s been a falling out between them today?”

“His ex came back into the picture, and they even stayed in the hospital together. Who knows if old flames have been rekindled?”

“Maybe the fight with his wife today is because his ex is forcing Rose out of the picture.”

“Shh. Do you have a death wish, talking like that here?”

“I certainly want to live, but looking at the situation now, I don’t think I’m wrong.”

The woman spoke, gesturing subtly towards the entrance. As everyone turned to look, their expressions varied.

Molly's face darkened at the sight of the figure appearing at the door. The woman who entered was a vision in a burgundy evening gown, with a V-neck design adorned with lace and petals, her long curls cascading over her shoulders, her red lips seductive against her immaculate makeup. She was a stark contrast to the fresh, understated beauty she once was; now, she radiated stunning confidence.

Mona, her lips curved into a confident smile brighter than usual, gracefully walked towards the center of the room.

The whispers continued, but all eyes were on the unfolding drama.

Morrison's frown deepened as Mona approached. Yet, with a radiant smile, she looked up at Morrison. "Happy birthday, Morrison."

His response was cold. "What are you doing here."

"Here's your birthday present."

Mona extended her arm, offering the neatly wrapped box to Morrison, effectively cutting off his mid-sentence mumbles.

Leaning in closer, she unveiled the gift – a sleek, luxurious wristwatch, its design a blend of simplicity and opulence, very much to Morrison’s taste. She took it out and stepped closer, Morrison squinting at her as she approached. “I put a lot of thought into this gift. It took me ages to find the perfect one. This is the last time I’ll celebrate your birthday, and Rose actually agreed to let me come.”

Morrison’s expression chilled instantly. “She agreed to you coming?”

“She didn’t seem to care much.” Mona continued, “Morrison, you know I have no ulterior motives. I’ve given you my best years, and now I don’t expect anything in return. I just wanted to make your birthday memorable, as a fitting farewell. Since I’m here, can’t you allow me this final shred of dignity?”

His face tightened, and he remained silent. His silence made Mona smile because she knew it meant he had agreed.

He agreed to spare her dignity.

They stood close, Mona's voice a hushed whisper, their words lost to anyone else around.

Molly's expression turned sour as she was closest to Morrison and could hear every word Mona said.

She gave him her youth? Bringing this up now, wasn't it just to make Morrison feel guilty?

Preserving her last scrap of dignity? What about Rose?!

With a smile, Mona lifted Morrison's wrist and gently strapped the watch on.

Morrison frowned throughout, only softening when Mona secured the clasp.

"Thank you for coming to celebrate with me. So is this enough now?"

Mona's smile stiffened for a split second, "Aren't you going to cut the cake? After all, since I've given you the present, I should at least get a piece of the birthday cake."

Morrison's eyes narrowed as he watched her, the glint in his eyes turning cold.

“See, I was right, the one he’s been waiting for is this ex-girlfriend.”

“That watch isn’t cheap, and to put it on him personally. What would the real

Mrs. Witt think seeing this display of affection?”

“It’s clear as day. She’s trying to force the Mrs. in power to step aside. Which

woman could stand this?”

“Look at her in that red dress, she must have come as the future Mrs. Witt

tonight.”

“But Rose is a legitimate heiress, treated like this... Mr. Witt is ruthless, sparing

no dignity for her.”

“The headlines tomorrow are going to be wild. I wonder when the news of their

divorce will break.”

“Oh my God!”

Chapter 1837

Rose lifted her eyes to meet his, her expression frosty. “Morrison, this event was

meant to end on a high note, and you just had to go and ruin it.”

Morrison pursed his lips awkwardly. "I didn't think it through at the time."

When Rose pushed against him, he held on tight. In the midst of the bustling crowd, his hands pressed firmly on her waist, drawing her close into his embrace.

Feeling his body against hers in such a public display made Rose's ears burn with embarrassment, but Morrison seemed oblivious to the impropriety, gazing down at her intently. "Where were you just now? I went looking for you at the press conference."

Enter title...

Rose, with her arms braced against his chest, blushed even deeper under his unwavering gaze. "Are you sure you weren't there just to mess with me?"

"Am I really that much of a jerk? To go out of my way to mess things up for you?"d2

Rose raised an eyebrow, meeting his stare. "You think pretty highly of yourself, don't you?"

Morrison nodded confidently. "Of course, how could you love me so much if I

wasn't a good man? To honor your love, I must be worthy."

With a sideways glance and a scoff, Rose remarked, "I didn't realize until now

just how shameless you can be."

Murmurs and gasps echoed from the onlookers.

Morrison's dark eyes never left her. As everyone braced for his temper, he finally

spoke. "Then you'd better get used to it. I'm very shameless."

Rose's lips twitched. "Have you no shame at all?"

Morrison tilted his head with a grunt. "Shame won't get my a kid."

Everyone fell silent. Was this the same man they all feared? And what on earth

was going on? Wasn't it said that this couple was incompatible? That since their

wedding, Mrs. Witt of R City had been subjected to his cold indifference, living

like a widow?

This wasn't at all like the rumors.

Someone shifted their gaze to Mona, who was standing aside. At first, the appearance of Morrison's ex-girlfriend seemed like a delightful surprise for the birthday boy, and perhaps the two would finally make up. But now, it appeared quite the opposite.

Especially considering what Rose had said. With Rose's online reputation, anyone else would've avoided such a controversial time to appear at the banquet. Undoubtedly, this made everyone believe that she and Morrison were the real deal.

Had Rose not cunningly intervened and married Morrison, none of this would have transpired. That was what everyone had believed.

They believed that Rose was the one who should step aside, and she was the true wrecker of a relationship.

Now, people's perceptions began to subtly shift. The seemingly unobtrusive exgirlfriend now seemed a tad unethical.

Morrison wasn't concerned with what others thought. His heart was overflowing

with joy. For the first time in his life, just seeing her brought him an insane

amount of happiness. No one knew how excited he was deep down right now.

"You still haven't answered me. Where were you just now? Why couldn't I find you at the venue?"

Rose bit her lip. "One has to dress up a bit for a banquet."

Dressing up? Morrison's expression faltered, and he relaxed his hold to scrutinize her from head to toe. His eyes filled with satisfaction.

"You dressed up for me, didn't you?"

Rose's lips curled slightly. "Wishful thinking. I just didn't want to tarnish my own reputation."

"Well, preserving Mrs. Witt's reputation. How thoughtful of you."

Rose looked away, unsure how to respond to Morrison's comment. She lowered her head slightly, her cheeks still flushed.

Morrison's gaze lingered on her. Her hair was styled beautifully, and her white

ball earrings trembled like snowflakes against her smooth skin. She also had a

faint, delicate fragrance, as if she had spritzed on some perfume.

He rarely saw her so meticulously adorned.

From years ago, he found it too easy to be captivated by her, never wanting to

admit that he found her stunning in every way. Her figure and features seemed

tailor-made for his tastes. How else could he explain his growing fondness and

the sense of danger he felt?

He always knew getting too close to her would be his undoing. And now, it

seemed that even maintaining a distance couldn't save him from falling into her

grasp.

After staring at Rose for a while, Morrison lifted her chin to better admire her

face. Rose had nowhere to hide, forced to meet his intense gaze. The emotions

in Morrison's deep gaze caused a sudden shiver in her heart, and her eyes

trembled.

The warmth of his fingers brushed her jawline, tracing the elegant contours of her slender neck. He relished the soft touch under his fingertips.

“You’re beautiful,” he said slowly, his eyes tracing her exquisite face before locking onto hers. Pure and unblemished, her dark eyes reflected nothing but his image.

Rose was momentarily stunned, unable to break away from his gaze.

As the couple stood there, their interaction left the onlookers puzzled.

“Can’t figure out what’s going on. Is this all an act for the Witt family’s image?”

“Do you think Mr. Witt would let a woman he despises call him shameless, even if it’s just an act?”

“Uh. so they’re actually on good terms?”

“It seems that way.”

“Wow...”

A low murmur rippled through the crowd.

Just moments ago, the two were locked in a tender gaze, but now they were

locked in a kiss.

Rose was caught off guard as Morrison leaned in. She had never imagined that one day he would be bold enough to do such a thing in public. It wasn't until his kiss deepened that she blinked out of her stupor, her blood rushing to her face in a hot flush.

The crowd cheered them on, and though she tried to push him away, he was unyielding. Finally, after a firm pull, he seemed satisfied and let her go.

Rose's cheeks were so red they could've steamed. Head lowered, she dared not look at anyone. Her forehead rested unnaturally against Morrison's chest.

Morrison couldn't help but feel a damn, inexplicable sense of achievement as he watched her blush. The same girl who used to butt heads with him every day, never showing signs of backing down, was now showing her shy side.

"Hmph!"

He used to hate anyone flaunting their romances, but he now found himself in

the thick of it without the slightest hint of embarrassment. Instead, he gently nudged Rose's chin upward, noticing the smeared lipstick on her lips and reached out to tidy it up.

Though touched by Morrison's gesture, Rose's warm feelings were quickly chilled by his next words.

"Hope this lipstick isn't toxic. Wouldn't want to be kissed to death."

Rose, who felt as if her heart had been dipped in ice, pushed him away and touched her flushed cheeks. "Kiss you to death? You gotta count yourself lucky."

But Morrison pulled her back in and kissed her again. "Don't worry, it'd be a way to go."

Molly, who had been watching the whole scene with delight, couldn't help but disagree with their banter. As she was about to say something, she was interrupted.

Morrison felt a sharp pain on his back.

"Snap out of it, kid! Do you even realize what day it is, spouting such unlucky

nonsense?” scolded Megan who had appeared out of nowhere, disrupting the lovebirds.

Molly shook her head in resignation at the interruption.

The two were forced to part, and Morrison turned to see Megan, biting his lip in a show of acquiescence.

“Alright, hit me if you must, but go easy, will ya?” he said, keeping one arm around Rose.

“You think you’re the one who gets to be in pain?” Megan snorted. “As if she’d be upset over you. You’re far worse off if you make her sad.”

Morrison glanced at Rose, who remained impassive. The more she withheld, the more suffocated he felt, wishing she would bring up their past so he could apologize properly.

The crowd’s attention, however, quickly shifted to the drama surrounding Mona.

“So, the ex-girlfriend’s grand entrance didn’t quite pan out?”

“Isn’t it obvious? She must have thought the couple was on the rocks and came to stir the pot, putting pressure on Rose in the background.”

“If that’s actually the case, then this fashion showdown is deliciously ironic. That outfit, that ‘queen bee’ vibe, really makes me believe she was going to be the future Mrs. Witt.”

“Now, she seems all too eager to climb the social ladder and get her claws into things that do not belong to her.”

Mona stood at the forefront of the guests, witnessing Morrison and Rose’s public display of affection. Her heart seethed with resentment and humiliation as she clenched her dress, tears welling up in her eyes. “Morrison.” she couldn’t help but speak up, drawing everyone’s attention. “Didn’t you hear what they’re saying?”

Chapter 1838

Mona shook her head, “Nothing, there was a misunderstanding about that thing. I can explain.”

With the way she flustered now, all the unconfirmed suspicions that had haunted

Morrison for years seemed to coalesce into a stark revelation. It was the final blow.

“Sure, since you’re scared of being wronged, you’re welcome to explain. If I’ve indeed wronged you, rest assured, I’ll offer you a sincere apology.”

Rose spoke calmly, her emotions seemingly at bay. Back when she and Chloe used to hang out, she always thought Chloe was too nonchalant when dealing

Enter title...

with certain issues, as if the person being insulted, slandered, or disadvantaged wasn’t her at all.

Now that it was Rose’s turn, she began to understand that indignation was merely amusement for others.

Pain for the loved ones, joy for the foes. And that was exactly what the other party wanted to see. Besides, getting too worked up seemed pointless and beneath her. It made her look like a clown.d2

Most importantly, she had grown accustomed to it. After witnessing so much vile talk, it took a lot to get under her skin. Like now, she was the picture of composure, her mind unusually clear.

But against Rose's tranquil demeanor, Mona was visibly rattled. She glanced at Morrison and caught him staring at her, his narrowed eyes piercing.

Quickly looking away, she pressed her lips together, "We all used to have such good times. I forgot."

Rose's lips twisted into a wry smile, laced with irony. "If that's the reason, then indeed..."

Morrison wasn't deaf to the sarcasm. He wrapped his arm around her, turning her to face him, his brows knitted tightly. "What are you trying to say? That winter of our graduation year... you mean my birthday?"

Something struck a nerve, and he took a deep breath before continuing,

"Speaking of which, Rose, why didn't you come to my birthday that year? Do you know how long I waited for you?!"

A flicker passed through Rose's eyes, "You waited for me?"

Morrison clenched his teeth, "The last birthday before graduation, and you stood me up! You always came before, but why not the last time..."

"Morrison," Rose interjected lightly, his grip on her waist tightening.

He realized something was amiss and quickly loosened his hold, awkwardly rubbing her waist.

Rose looked up, her expression serene, "You changed the venue last minute and didn't tell me."

Morrison's expression froze, then after a long pause, as if recalling something, he turned to Mona. "You didn't tell her?"

Mona suddenly felt a tingling sensation on her scalp. She opened her mouth,

"I... I forgot."

After a few seconds of silence, Morrison's expression turned ferocious. "You said you were going to rehearse the play in the activity room and would tell her

in person!”

Mona trembled, “I really forgot...”

“Forget my ass! You told me not to call her!”

Morrison’s voice rose sharply, its cold fury almost terrifying.

Mona recoiled, tears spinning in her eyes, “I...”

The others were equally frightened into silence.

Rose watched her calmly. “Everyone knew except for me, Mona, if we speak of malice, you’ve always had a head start. Still feel wronged? You can continue to explain.”

Mona bit her lip, her hands clenched, unable to utter a word. She glanced at Morrison, but his gaze had barely lingered on her.

What could she say? It was a direct confrontation with Morrison and Rose. Her actions from back then were impossible to justify now.

Morrison had one hand hooked around Rose’s waist, while the other held onto her slender arm. “So, you went to the original place that day?”

Rose looked at him, her gaze sliding inch by inch across his face, then she

asked in return, "Why did you decide to change the venue suddenly?"

Morrison's lips pressed together, and he looked ashamed. "It was my mistake."

Rose pressed him, her gaze intense, "Was it your own decision, or did someone suggest it?"

Morrison looked guilty, "Someone else's idea."

"Who?"

Morrison met her gaze, his voice low, "Asking me to snitch in front of her, you're putting us both in a tough spot, aren't you?"

"So, it was Mona who suggested you change the place last minute, right?"

Morrison's lips twitched, and he gave a barely perceptible nod. His fingers

tightened around her waist, signaling her to help maintain his image.

Rose watched him, a faint smile playing on her lips before she spoke again, her voice soft and distant.

“I did go. I went to the place you initially chose, but no one was there. I couldn’t reach you on your phone. When I finally did get through, it was Mona who answered. She did give me the address but neglected to mention the specific location. I thought she’d have informed the staff, but I was turned away at the door. When I tried calling you again, there was no answer.”

Morrison’s grip paused.

“Do you know why I mentioned that winter of our graduation year? It’s because your birthday back then was just like today, with heavy snowfall. I called you until my phone died, afraid to leave for even a moment in case I missed you, so I waited outside the club the entire night.”

Rose’s voice shook as the suppressed feelings from the past bubbled up, her eyes reddening, a mist forming.

Morrison’s Adam’s apple bobbed, his own emotions swelling in sync with hers. “I did too. I waited all night, afraid that if I left, you wouldn’t find me.”

His words trailed off as he embraced her, kissing her forehead, “I’m sorry.”

“I worked for over two months to get your birthday gift ready, and it never got to you. I fell ill the next day, and didn’t return to school until after the New Year. By the time the new semester started, your attitude had changed drastically. You didn’t give me any explanation, and there was no chance for me to approach you and find out what happened.

“I’ve been wracking my brain, trying to figure out if I did anything to tick you off before your birthday, to make you mess with me like this.”

“I didn’t,” Morrison replied, his voice stiff with the awkwardness of baring his feelings in front of Rose. “It’s just seeing you so calm, not picking fights with me for a change, it would’ve made my day. That’s why I wanted to celebrate my birthday.”

The confession was awkward, especially for Morrison, who was used to their years of constant one-upmanship. Neither had ever shown weakness to the other, and this new vulnerability felt alien.

Yet, here he was, spilling his guts just like he had at her product launch. This

time, though, it felt so much more awkward. But what was the difference? In

front of her, he'd long since lost his shame. Why started being coy now?

Rose clutched at Morrison's shirt, her spirits lifted despite herself at his words.

Morrison planted a few quick kisses on her forehead before stepping back and

extending his hand towards her.

"What's up?" Rose asked, puzzled.

"Where's my present? My birthday gift?"

Rose hesitated, turning away slightly. "I didn't get you anything this time."

Morrison frowned, not with anger but with a hint of hurt on his handsome face. "I

mean, I'm thrilled you showed up for the party, but I'd be over the moon if you

had a birthday gift for me."

Rose was silent.

Morrison, trying to cajole her, pecked her cheek. "You've got something for me,

haven't you? Come on, hand it over."

Rose ducked her head a little more, gripping her purse tightly.

“I really didn’t get anything.”

Morrison’s keen eyes caught her subtle gesture and he snatched her purse right

from her hands, rummaging through it. Aside from car keys, a tube of lipstick,

and a velvet box, there was nothing else that looked remotely like a gift.

He triumphantly pulled out the box, grinning at Rose before opening it without

hesitation. Inside was a platinum bracelet, clearly not meant for a man.

Morrison paused, holding the bracelet up. “This is for me?”

Rose blushed furiously, reaching to snatch it back. “If you don’t like it, give it

back.”

Morrison instinctively lifted his hand higher to keep it out of her reach. “So you

did get this for me?”

She didn’t answer, but her silence said enough. She still made a grab for it, and

he held it even higher out of her reach. The two of them looked every part the

bickering lovebirds.

Morrison's demeanor was like that of a child, playing with the girl's belongings

and teasing her. It was a classic case: the more someone liked another person,

the more they wanted to playfully tease and bully them.

To everyone around, the nature of their relationship couldn't have been clearer.

"Accusing Mrs. Witt of bias because she's an ex-girlfriend, targeting her with

one-sided hostility. Geez, look at what she's done."

"Manipulative since school days, huh? She made someone wait out in the cold

all night."

"She must have been guilty from the start to play such a trick. She's bold, isn't

she? Doesn't she fear being caught?"

"And on his birthday of all days, playing such cruel tricks? Given how much she

used to focus on Mrs. Witt, she must've known about her part-time jobs, right?"

These unabashed comments mostly came from those who had previously

sympathized with Mona. Anger only flared stronger with the sense of being

tricked.

“I’m really curious about what she gave Mr. Witt for his birthday back then.

Maybe she was afraid she couldn’t measure up to Mrs. Witt’s gift, so she

resorted to this scheme.”

“I know,” someone suddenly spoke up. “It was just like today, she gave him a

watch. But unlike today, she didn’t put it on Morrison herself.”

Laughter and surprise echoed through the crowd. “What kind of watch? Given

Mr. Witt’s status, she couldn’t have afforded anything special, right?”

The same person added, “It was a luxury watch, worth a pretty penny back then.

Chapter 1839

With that, Morrison snatched the bracelet from Rose’s hand and slipped it onto

his own wrist. He then thrust his arm toward Rose, flashing a cheeky grin, “You

gotta admit, it fits perfectly.”

Rose couldn’t help but twitch the corners of her mouth, “Looks like I

overestimated the size when I bought it years ago.”

Shaking his head, Morrison wrapped his arms around her, nuzzling her forehead

affectionately, "It's not too big. I just never hit that growth spurt."

His voice was thick with charm, and eventually, Rose's face broke into a smile.

The platinum bracelet glinted under the soft glow of the party lights, adorning his

wrist with casual elegance. It looked just as stunning as she had imagined when

Enter title...

she first picked it out.

"I finally gave out this gift," she murmured, staring at the string of bracelets, her

face wearing a contented smile.d2

"Yeah. I'm really happy," Morrison replied, pulling Rose closer, as if trying to

merge her into his very soul.

After years of awkwardness, for the first time, he found shamelessness

refreshingly easy.

Rose sighed lightly, lifting her gaze to the discarded watch he had tossed aside

with a half-smirk. "Isn't that the one Mona strapped on you herself?"

Morrison's face stiffened, "Well, she insisted, to give her a little credit."

"So giving her 'credit' meant letting her strap a watch on you?"

"Did you ever think about what the headlines would be if I hadn't shown up

tonight? Ex-girlfriend throws a birthday bash for Mr. Morrison? Or maybe, Public

display of affection at the birthday party, is there a new Mrs. Witt in town?"

Morrison's scalp tingled with discomfort. What a mess. Since when did putting

on a watch come with so many implications? Women's thoughts were truly hard

to fathom.

But recalling how Mona's antics had led to him standing Rose up at his own

birthday party years ago, he couldn't help but wonder if they could've avoided all

these complications.

Ultimately, he was the culprit, and Mona wasn't innocent either.

"I never intended to give her a chance, you know that. How stressed have I

been these past few days, trying to prevent you from filing for divorce?"

“We did have a thing back then, but nothing ever happened.” Morrison quickly added, his voice rising, then he continued, “And she came all the way here for my birthday. It didn’t seem right to completely snub her.”

“Besides, when I couldn’t find you just now, my mind was filled with thoughts of you. What if you came and saw her? Would you be unhappy? I just wanted her to finish quickly and leave. I didn’t think about all these unnecessary things.”

Listening to him, Rose found it hard to stay mad. Was this really the Morrison she knew? He was so off-kilter today.

Seeing Rose finally laughing, Morrison’s face softened, his own lips curving into a smile. Their sudden shift in mood had the whole room chuckling. Hands covered mouths as people leaned back with laughter.

“So it turns out it’s Mrs. Witt who’s been gunning for a divorce, not Mr. Witt.”

“Seriously, the way Mr. Witt is clinging to Mrs. Witt, it’s like his survival instinct is off the charts.”

“Ha! I always thought Mr. Witt was the cool, aloof, and untouchable executive

type. Turns out he's more like a lovesick puppy."

"This couple is just too funny, always at each other's throats, visibly irked by each other, yet secretly crushing. It's hilarious."

"In the end, I still think it's Mr. Witt who's being too stubborn."

"But now it's all good, their misunderstandings are finally cleared up."

As the topic of misunderstandings came up, eyes turned to Mona, who had been silent throughout.

"If it weren't for someone stirring the pot and causing trouble, these two wouldn't have had so many misunderstandings."

"Deliberately changing party venues, intentionally ignoring calls, standing someone up in the snow all night, creating pressure for a divorce through public opinion, and even stooping to theft as a birthday gift. She is truly disgraceful."

"Indeed. They say pride doesn't come with poverty, but she's out here trying to punch above her weight with luxury watches."

The crowd's disdain for Mona was unabashed.

Mona stood in place, the hem of her dress crumpled in her clenched fists.

Overwhelming humiliation rushed towards her from all directions, making her feel embarrassed and wronged. The sense of grievance spread through her, but there was nothing she could say. She felt utterly powerless to refute anything.

She had just wanted to attend Morrison's birthday party. She knew about Rose's product launch being scheduled for the same day. She was also aware of the drama Rose and Morrison had been causing these past few days.

She had an inkling about Rose's feelings for Morrison. So Rose was right. Mona had come to celebrate Morrison's birthday, to stir the pot if possible. Even if her presence was purely for celebration, it would surely be a dagger in Rose's heart.

With the relationship between the two of them, one being stubborn and unwilling to face his feelings, and the other constantly shutting everyone out, even if there was any love between them, it was unlikely to be stable.

She had thought about many things, but she never anticipated that she would

clash with Rose from the very beginning today.

From the moment they showed up in identical dresses, the stage was set.

Her presence alongside Rose was bound to draw comparisons, but it wasn't

inevitable.

However, when two people appeared wearing identical dresses, everyone would

inevitably compare them.

Afterward, Morrison's attitude changed, and Rose's calm and indifferent

demeanor completely diverged from her expectations.

Mona didn't even anticipate that Rose would suddenly bring up events from

many years ago, and she had no idea that Mason would suddenly mention the

incident when she gave Morrison a birthday gift.

The sudden confrontation involving the three of them left Mona with no chance

or preparation to lie. She was completely caught off guard. She was ambushed,

and the humiliation was something she was forced to endure without the

opportunity to retort.

Morrison, who had been beaming with joy while looking at Rose, gradually

allowed his smile to fade. Rose, with equal subtlety, concealed her emotions,

lowered her gaze, and delicately brushed her hair behind her ear.

Morrison looped one arm around her waist, gently patting her lower back as he

guided her to turn around. He picked up the watch he had tossed aside earlier,

walked over to Mona, and handed it back to her.

“What are you doing?” Mona asked, her voice trembling.

Morrison’s brow furrowed with a hint of chill, “I never invited you to come to this

birthday party. You deceived Rose behind my back, and that’s unforgivable. But

it’s a good thing that you came tonight. Had you not shown up, I might have

never had the chance to clear the air about the past that’s been haunting me for

years.”

“Unforgivable?” Mona said slowly, her voice trailing off into a bitter laugh.

“Morrison, how can you simplify it like this? Yes, I deceived her, but don’t you

understand why?"

She shifted her gaze to the watch, reaching out to take it. "Do you think this

watch is also bought with stolen money, so you feel dirty and embarrassed?"

She felt a chill running through her entire body, gripping the watch tightly, her

face turning pale. "But who caused all this, Morrison? Sure, I was an ordinary

student, but was it too much to ask for an ordinary life? Why did you have to

drag me into your life to hide your feelings for Rose? You surrounded yourself

with all those rich and powerful people. How was I supposed to stand proudly by

your side, not be the subject of gossip, and be worthy of you? And now, what

have you left me with? Morrison, do you realize you've ruined my life?! All of it!"

Mona's voice crescendoed into hysteria, so loud that everyone instinctively

covered their ears. Rose frowned and unconsciously stepped back. Morrison

reached out to cover her head and shield her ears, pulling her close into his

protective embrace. His actions were tender, causing Rose to pause. Even

though her move was instinctive and not out of fear, Morrison's gesture made her heart skip a beat.

In that moment, she understood Chloe a bit more. Why, despite being so independent and strong, Chloe became completely vulnerable in front of Damon. In the past, Chloe was forced to be independent and had to be strong. Now, she had someone to lean on. Chloe was like that, reserving her tender side only for Damon.

"Mona!" Morrison's first thought was to protect Rose.

Chapter 1840

If it weren't for the fact that someone had decided to pit her against Rose over the same dress, things might not have escalated to this point.

Mason arched an eyebrow and scratched his temple, with a sheepish expression on his face. "Hey, I was just doing a favor for someone."

Who would've thought that a dress-clash could cause such a drama? Indeed, that woman was just as the rumors had said—a real she-devil.

A simple garment had sparked this whole "bloodbath," probably all part of her

wicked plan.

He shivered involuntarily. Terrifying, utterly terrifying.

Enter title...

Rose noticed Mason's words, as well as his subsequent expressions and subtle

actions. She raised an eyebrow, a hint of confusion flashing in her eyes.d2

Doing a favor for someone?

When she first realized her dress clashed with Mona's, she thought it had been

Mona's doing—like she was flaunting her victory.

She'd even worried that someone would make a joke out of the baby bump she

was sporting. After all, a dress-clash was one thing, but with her protruding belly,

it could become a laughingstock.

But now, it seemed the tables had turned in her favor. Who could be behind

this?

Catching Rose's gaze, Mason lifted his head and offered her a small smile and

a nod. She nodded back, smiling.

The hand wrapped around her waist tightened. Snapping back to reality, she

noticed Morrison glaring at her with a furrowed brow. "What's up?"

Morrison pursed his lips. "Stay away from him, he's a creep."

Rose was speechless for a moment before retorting, "Have you seen the state

your Mona's in? And you're worried about others?"

"What are you talking about, when is she mine? Watch your mouth."

Rose chuckled, shrugged off his grip, and ran her fingers through her hair.

"It's not now, but it was before."

With that, she glanced up at him with a raised eyebrow and casually wished him

a "Happy Birthday" before turning and walking toward the exit of the banquet

hall, leaving an agitated Mona behind.

"Where are you going?" Morrison hurried after her.

Rose didn't respond.

"Rose! You haven't had your cake yet."

“I’m skipping it. Sweets are just too cloying for my taste right now. Why are you

following me? There’s a whole crowd waiting to eat your birthday cake.”

“The cake is right there, and whoever wants a piece can help themselves—I’m

not stopping them.”

Rose halted, scanning the surroundings before shifting her gaze to Morrison.

“Are you sure you want to leave all your guests hanging like this?”

Morrison paused, turned, and shouted to Riley: “Order two more cakes, make

sure everyone gets their fill, and thank them for coming.”

The crowd was too stunned to react. This Mr. Witt of R City was hardly the type

to make such announcements. Even Riley was taken aback for a few seconds

before blurting out, somewhat bewildered, “Mr. Witt, are we really sending those

tampons to Mr. Mason as well?”

Morrison glanced at Mason, snorted, and said, “Of course. Although he’s a bit of

a pervert, I’m still very grateful to him for helping Mrs. Witt out of trouble back

then. A mere truckload is not enough to express my gratitude. If Mr. Mason ever runs out, let feel free to ask for more in the future.”

Mason’s lips twitched at the childish remark—it seemed the man would never let things go.

Rose, somewhat helpless, smoothed her forehead and without a word, continued her stride out of the hall.

Morrison quickly followed. “Rose! Isn’t this a bit much? It’s my birthday, and you’re leaving early?”

Without breaking her stride, Rose turned to him. “This isn’t the first time I’ve been acting like this.”

Caught off guard, Morrison stumbled over his words. “I also don’t really like that sickly sweet cake. I hate it, actually.”

“Well, that’s a shame because the vegan cream cake I ordered should be arriving at our place about now.”

Morrison paused mid-stride, watching Rose’s retreating figure. Grinding his

teeth, he caught up to her in a few long steps and suddenly scooped her up

from behind. “Ah...” Rose let out a startled cry, instinctively wrapping her arms around Morrison’s neck.

As the world steadied, she saw Morrison’s face close up, and in frustration, she smacked his shoulder. “You scared me to death! What are you doing?!”

Morrison took large steps forward, holding her in his arms.. “We’re going home to eat cake.”

“But you said you don’t like cake?”

He grunted. “Not only am I going to eat cake, but I’m planning on devouring you with it.”

Rose’s cheeks flushed a sudden shade of crimson.

Molly shook her head with a mix of exasperation and affection. Megan covered her eyes. “Well, that cheeky boy. No shame whatsoever!”

Rose had countless memories of clashing with Morrison, but none were like this

—so shamelessly rogue. And she found herself at a loss on how to handle this version of him.

“I never thought you’d be such a... a brat.”

“Hmph! Thanks for the compliment. I’ll be sure to continue, to embody the perfect brat.”

“Please, have some dignity.”

“Never.”

Behind them, the crowd watched as the two of them disappeared into the distance, their hearts filled with complex emotions.

Meanwhile, Mona stood frozen, her face as pale as snow. Noticing her, people shook their heads.

“Mrs. Witt was right; she really brought it on herself.”

“She could’ve kept it hidden forever, but she had to show up uninvited today and got exposed inside and out.”

“It’s embarrassing. If I were her, I’d want to disappear on the spot.”

Molly watched her coldly. “Mona, I’ll try to keep tonight’s events under wraps.

But I hope what you said is true and you will leave R City for good. Otherwise, it won’t just be the Witt family that can’t stand you, but all of R City.”

Mona, who had been standing rigid as a statue, finally turned her gaze to Molly with a flicker of emotion.

Molly, her expression icy, offered a smile devoid of warmth. “Would you like a piece of cake?”

—

Before leaving the hotel, Morrison fetched Rose’s coat from the concierge, gently draping it over her shoulders. He had intended to carry her out into the snowy night, but Rose resisted.

“I can walk by myself, there’s snow outside.”

Morrison, however, insisted and took her hand, leading her out of the hotel.

The snow was still falling, blanketing the ground in a thick, glistening layer that

sparkled under the hotel's lights—a sight of pure winter wonder.

Rose paused at the entrance, silently gazing into the snowy expanse, her hand

eventually slipping from Morrison's as she lifted her dress slightly and stepped

into the snow.

“Rose.”

Her silence was unfamiliar, and Morrison hesitated to press further, content to

simply call her name softly and watch her retreating figure.

In the center of the courtyard, Rose stretched out her hand, allowing the