

## Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband Chapter 1651

### Chapter 1651

The four of them were born in the same year but in different months. The eldest among them had just turned twenty, having celebrated his birthday earlier in the year. Marcus, the youngest of the quartet, had his birthday coming in November, which meant he still had two months before he hit the big two-oh. They were all young men, full of vigor and an uncommon maturity for their age.

Marcus, the baby of the group, was ironically the most composed and restrained. Glancing at Zavier, he spoke up with a level tone, "Whatever the reason you got engaged to that girl, you're betrothed now. You ought to treat her right."

Zavier agreed, in principle, yet he harbored his own reservations. "I have no intention of marrying her. This engagement is bound to be broken off sooner or later. If I'm too good to her or give her false hope, it's going to hurt her even more when we call it off."

His words, seemingly considerate, rang hollow upon closer listening.

Steven chimed in with a mischievous grin, "Oh, Zavier, you could've asked anyone for advice, yet you ask Marc? The man's a genius in business but a complete novice when it comes to love. You sure know how to pick 'em."

He turned to Lucas. "For matters of the heart, you should be asking Lucas for guidance. Look at him, with his childhood sweetheart Rosie always singing his praises. Now that's a solid relationship."

Lucas shot Steven a warning look. "Don't joke about Rosie."e2

Steven knew Rosie was a sore spot for Lucas and quickly backpedaled. "I wasn't mocking her, just saying you two are tight."

Just the mention of Rosie made Lucas' eyes soften. "How could we not be? I've looked out for her since we were kids."

Zavier cut in, "Hey, I'm the man of the hour today. Let's keep the focus here."

Lucas retorted, "If you had no plans to marry the girl, you shouldn't have gotten engaged."

Zavier sighed, "What you don't understand is that my grandpa arranged this marriage without me even being present."

Steven scoffed, "Please, you're not fooling anyone. You played a part in this, too."

Zavier fell silent, and Lucas continued, "From what I've heard, the Blue family tree is a tangled mess. Your fiancée's father, the eldest in the Blue family, has only daughters, no sons. And that's not just from his wife but from all his mistresses, too."

Steven spat, "What a scumbag! If my father Kenny ever pulled something like that, my mom would have his head."

Realizing his words might have hit close to home for Marcus, given his family history, Steven quickly added, "Marc, no offense meant, buddy."

Marcus just laughed it off. "If someone's bold enough to do the deed, they're fair game for criticism."

Steven nodded. "That's why the Hartley Group thrives under your leadership. You've got a broad perspective."

Lucas interjected, "Steven, can you ever zip it?"

"Fine, I'll be quiet," Steven conceded.

Lucas went on, "The Blue family won't pass the reins to a family branch with no male heir. So, your fiancée's parents are desperate not to lose their standing and think a marriage alliance with a formidable family might secure their position. But you know as well as I do, Zavier, your fiancée is just a pawn in the Blue family's game..."

He paused before adding, "If you end the engagement, that girl's future might not be so bright."

Zavier knew the logic all too well but was stubborn. "Am I not just a pawn for the Rivera family myself?"

He wasn't the only one; it was the same for his father and his brother. The more he thought about it, the more his mood soured. Wishing to change the subject, Xavier looked over at Marcus. "At least you've got it good, Marc. So young, yet you've already taken the reins of your family's empire without anyone else pulling your strings."

Marcus offered a sly smile and deftly switched topics. "I brought some excellent liquor. How about we have a few drinks?"

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A chorus of voices chimed in unison, "Sounds good. Let's grab a drink..."

The academic year commenced following the opening ceremony. Classes were now in full swing.

Skyler's natural aptitude wasn't anything to write home about, so to keep up, she had to work harder than her peers. Her daily routine was as simple as getting. She attended lectures, studied on her own, and then tutored to make some extra cash.

It was a simple and ordinary life, yet it had its comforts.

But today, just after wrapping up a lecture, her phone buzzed with a call from the Rivera family's stoic butler. His voice, ever so grave and detached from the other end. "Miss Skyler, Mr. Hudson requests your presence, along with Xavier, for dinner at the manor this evening. A driver will pick you from campus at five o'clock sharp."

Skyler didn't want to go but felt she had no choice but to comply. "Yes, I'll be there."e2

The butler went on to provide further instructions, which Skyler listened to intently. She jotted them down in her phone's notes app, worried that a minor oversight on her part might lead to unnecessary complications.

After the call, she stared at her phone with a mind as jumbled as a pot of stew.

Skyler and Xavier were in different departments, and given the size of the university, she had only bumped into him at the opening ceremony a month ago.

She had heard plenty about Xavier since then but never had the chance to meet him again. So, her days had been relatively carefree until now. The thought of meeting that arrogantly insufferable man later in the day made it impossible for Skyler to focus on her afternoon classes.

The last thing she wanted was for her classmates to catch wind of her connection to Xavier. At five, she deliberately avoided familiar faces and headed to the southern gate of the campus. She arrived just in time to find the driver waiting, punctuality personified.

Skyler quickly got into the car. "Hi, we can go now."

The driver said, "Mr. Hudson asked me to pick you up along with Mr. Xavier. He should be arriving shortly; please wait for a moment."

Skyler was stunned. She had felt the spacious limousine shrink instantly upon hearing Xavier would be riding with her. Glancing at Skyler through the rearview mirror, the driver offered some reassurance, "Miss Skyler, no need to be nervous; Mr. Xavier won't bite."

Skyler gave an awkward smile in response. Xavier might not bite, but he was certainly intimidating enough to be just as bad, if not worse.

What was supposed to be a few minutes turned into a full half-hour wait before Xavier finally showed up fashionably late.

Skyler was lost for words. This guy really had no sense of time management. Absolutely infuriating.

Xavier wasn't alone; his entourage of mischievous friends followed him. The only one Skyler recognized was Garrett.

One of them rushed ahead to open the car door for Xavier. "Xavier..."

Before he could finish, his eyes landed on Skyler inside the car, and they bulged like saucers, "Xavier, this..."

Xavier, "What's up?"

His friend stammered, "Nothing, nothing at all."

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There were some things, even when you saw them, you had to play blind. Otherwise, the fallout could be a real nightmare.

Zavier hopped into the car, slammed the door shut, and barked, "Drive."

The chauffeur obeyed instantly, not daring to utter a single word. A stark contrast to his demeanor around Skyler.

As Zavier's car pulled away, the guy who'd just opened the door for him remarked, "Garrett, you won't believe what I just saw." Garrett raised an eyebrow. "What did you see?"

The guy leaned in and whispered, "That knockout freshie who spoke at the opening ceremony with Zavier, was in the car!"

Garrett warned, "You'd better keep that to yourself. Don't let it slip to a third ear."e2

The guy nodded frantically. "Wouldn't dream of it."

Garrett added, "Good to know."

The guy couldn't help but muse, "I'm just curious, wasn't Zavier Mr. No-Strings-Attached? How'd he get cozy with this year's newbie so fast? Mayt finally found a dame that caught his eye, some Southern Port beauty."

Garrett knew more than he could say, "Zip it! Let's bounce!"

They quickly left the scene, and as they did, two girls emerged from a nearby spot.

The one in the lead was Desiree. Her gaze followed Zavier's departing car, and her fists clenched so tightly at her sides that her nails were digging her palms without her even feeling the sting. "That little snake was lying to me!"

The girl trailing her, noticing Desiree's twisted expression, ventured cautiously, "Desiree, want me to take care of that little bitch for you?"

Desiree bit her lip. "Just make sure it's not traced back to us."

The girl assured her, "You can count on me. No one will ever find out..."

"Desiree, hey!" Someone called from behind.

Desiree took a deep breath, turned around, and instantly, her face lit up with a warm smile, "Hey there, need something?"

It was Vivian, Skyler's dorm mate, who was not as close to Skyler as the rest of them were. Desiree had been looking for a way to dig up dirt on Skyle and here was her chance on a silver platter.

Vivian shared, "Desiree, I'm a freshie, and I've heard so much about you, about how kind and helpful you are. I was hoping we could be friends?"  
Desiree asked, "What's your name?"

Vivian replied, "I'm Vivian. Is it cool if I get your contact? I really, really admire you."

Desiree whipped out her phone. "Sure!"

They exchanged details in no time.

Desiree beamed, "We're friends now. If you ever need a hand with anything, just hit me up."

Vivian gushed, "Thanks!"

The other girl whispered just loud enough, "You're one of the good ones, always putting others first, even before your own troubles." Desiree shot her a glare before smiling at Vivian. "I'm all good. Vivian, we were just about to grab some grub at the cafeteria. Wanna join?" Vivian was over the moon to be invited by her admired senior, "Yeah, sure, I was about to eat anyway."

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"Let's hit the road," Desiree said with a smile, but her eyes glinted with sly calculation.

Skyler edged quietly to the left, her small frame nearly plastered against the car door. Xavier, on the other hand, sprawled out in his seat, seemingly unfazed by the addition of another person in the car.

The school and the Rivera mansion were in opposite directions. Now, during the rush hour after work, the cars were stuck in traffic all the way.

Zavier was getting restless. "What's this dinner that's so important?"

The driver, cautious and dutiful, answered, "Mr. Xavier, my job is just to drive."

Zavier asked, "You are not going to eat?"

The driver remained silent.

Zavier, clearly annoyed, tugged at his collar and then pulled out his phone. [Let's see who's up for some gaming.]

Garrett's voice message came quickly, [Yeah, man, been waiting for you to join the game.]

Soon enough, Xavier was deeply engrossed in his game.

Without headphones, the game sounds and conversations filled the confined space, almost giving Skyler a headache.

After mentally preparing herself, Skyler finally mustered the courage to speak up, "Zavier, would you mind using headphones while playing?" Xavier ignored her completely.

Thinking he hadn't heard her, Skyler raised her voice slightly, "Zavier, do you mind-"

But before she could finish, Xavier cut her off sharply, "If you can't handle the noise, don't ride in my car. Get out and hail a cab. Or better yet, buy your own car, drive yourself, and have all the silence you want."

Skyler was at a loss for words. She had thought about taking a cab from school to the Rivera mansion, but the fare would likely cost around two hundred bucks. Every penny was precious to her, and she couldn't bear to waste money on a taxi ride.

Unable to justify the expense, she resigned herself to enduring Xavier's noisy gaming. Fortunately, after a while, Xavier did put on his headphones, though Skyler couldn't tell if it was out of conscience or irritation.

After nearly two hours of traffic, they arrived at the Rivera mansion at seven-thirty in the evening.

October in the Capital was already cold, the autumn breeze chilling to the bone. Skyler, who was particularly sensitive to the cold, was wrapped up like a mummy. Still, when she stepped out of the car, a gust of wind made her shiver.

Zavier, dressed lightly, seemed completely unaffected by the cold. He got out and strode ahead with long, confident steps. Skyler tightened her coat and followed at a distance.

Kalene, Xavier's mother, blocked his path, "Son, wait for Skyler."

Stuck in traffic for so long, Zavier had become quite irritable. Now, having to wait for Skyler, he spoke impatiently to his own mother, "Mom, I don't want to wait for her."

Kalene patted his hand gently, "Son, for your brother's sake, be patient."

At the mention of his brother, Zavier relented. He turned back, glancing coldly at Skyler, "Can you pick up the pace? Your legs aren't short. Why do you move so slowly?"

Skyler hurried to catch up.

It wasn't that she was slow. She knew he didn't like her too close, so she purposefully kept her distance.

As Skyler approached, she greeted Kalene politely

"Good evening, Mrs. Rivera."

Kalene took Skyler's hand warmly, "My dear, have you been skipping meals? You look like you've lost weight."

Then she turned to her son, "Zavier, you're older than Skyler and the closest thing she has to family in the Capital. You need to look out for her, and make sure she isn't going hungry or cold. Understand?"



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Skyler couldn't quite discern how much of Mrs. Rivera's demeanor was genuine and how much was fake. Even if it was all just for show, Skyler was ha to be on the receiving end of some kindness. "Mrs. Rivera," she beamed, "Zavier is really good to me, you know."

She was sticking up for Zavier, but the boy himself didn't seem to appreciate it. "Good to you? There's just us here- who are you trying to fool with thi act?"

Skyler was taken aback.

"Young man," Kalene intervened with an easy grace, holding onto Skyler with one hand and grabbing Zavier with the other, "Skyler here is trying to be ni and just listen to you! You can't be talking like that when we're in front of Grandpa Hudson."

Zavier fell silent.

Kalene then reassured Skyler, "Don't mind Zavier. He's got a bark worse than his bite. Just ignore him."

Skyler wouldn't dare to argue, "Okay."e2

Nothing much happened that day.

The Rivera clan had a tradition: every three months, no matter where they were or what they were doing, all the Riveras scattered across the globe had 1 return to come back for a meal with Grandpa Hudson. This tradition had never been broken over the years.

According to Hudson, it was sharing meals that kept the family bond strong and prevented rifts. However, greed and ugliness in human nature couldn't always be tamed by a simple dinner.

Skyler, and Zavier were the last to arrive at the gathering after school, having been delayed by traffic.

As soon as Kalene ushered the youngsters through the door, they were greeted by Jillian's teasing voice. "I missed Zavier's engagement party last

time because I was tied up. But I heard that the Blue family's daughter is quite the catch-smooth skin, a beautiful face, legs for days, and a waist so slender, any man would be lucky to hold her. Our Zavier is a fortunate man indeed."

Her words seemed like a joke, but in reality, she was implying that Skyler was merely using her charms to get what she wanted.

Skyler, still young and in someone else's house, blushed crimson and didn't speak up for herself.

Unexpectedly, Zavier spoke up. Perhaps not for her, but because insulting her also insulted him.

"Jillian, don't assume everyone is like you," he said firmly.

Jillian whirled around, her gaze flitting from Zavier to Skyler, "Well, Zavier, and what kind of person do you think I am?"

Zavier could have made a scene right then and there, but Kalene nudged him discreetly and introduced Skyler to Jillian, "Skyler, this is Jillian, Zavier's aunt."

Despite her reservations, Skyler stepped forward politely, "Nice meeting you, Jillian."

"Great to see you too. What a delightful young woman you are," Jillian cooed, taking Skyler's hand and giving it a firm squeeze.

Skyler's hands, calloused from years of practicing various musical instruments, felt rough in Jillian's grasp.

Jillian deliberately squeezed where the calluses were thickest. Skyler winced and tried to pull away, but Jillian's grip only tightened, "My dear, what's with all these calluses on your hands?"

Skyler tried to pull away again without success, "Well, it's from playing musical instruments for many years."

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“We’re decent folks, not some street performers,” Jillian said, releasing Skyler’s hand and giving her waist a pat. “You’ve got a good waist, girl.”

Her hand wandered lower, giving Skyler’s bottom a slap. “And this bottom is so firm and perky. It’s a real piece of work.”

As she spoke and felt Skyler up like a prized piece of merchandise, Skyler’s cheeks flushed with humiliation under the watchful eyes of the onlookers. She cast a pleading glance at Zavier, who was also watching her. But he had no intention of coming to her aid. He was just enjoying the show.

Skyler had always known that no one would help her, that she could only rely on herself. “Jillian, I...

“Darling, they say hands are a woman’s second face,” Jillian interrupted, lowering her voice. “A pretty face and a seductive figure aren’t enough. You’ve got to take care of those hands. You need to think about what men like.”

Skyler yanked her hand away, protesting in a whisper, “Jillian, I’m not like that.”

“Not like that? Then what are you like?” Jillian sneered. “Sweetheart, you’re nothing but a plaything the Blue family sent over to Zavier. Don’t play the saint with me.”e2

Skyler’s face turned deathly pale, words failing her. She didn’t want to admit it, but Jillian’s harsh words were undeniably true.

Zavier remained unbothered by the prolonged humiliation of Skyler, which helped Jillian understand her place in his heart. Why would anyone care for something Zavier himself disregarded?

She released Skyler with a smile and said, “Well, look who finally decided to show up. Us Riveras, we pride ourselves on punctuality. It’s only you folks who are late. If it were my son who was late, I bet no one would’ve waited.”

Jillian was just stirring trouble, and Zavier wasn’t having any of it. “Jillian, no one asked you to wait.”

She knew exactly what Zavier’s temper was like. She was deliberately provoking Zavier, hoping to tarnish his reputation in front of Hudson. “Samuel,

Zavier and Brodie are both your flesh and blood. How come their temperaments are so different?”

By mentioning the late Brodie, she subtly jabbed at Xavier, angering their father Samuel, whose health had deteriorated since his son’s passing. Samuel coughed violently, unable to utter a word.

Zavier strode over to Samuel, patting his back soothingly, “Jillian, I’ve been patient with you because you’re my elder. But if you insist on causing trouble, won’t be so courteous.”

“What are you going to do?” Hudson entered, supported by the family butler, just in time to catch Xavier’s words. “Let’s hear you say that again.”

And Xavier did. “I said if Jillian keeps this up and it worsens my dad’s condition, I won’t forgive her.”

Jillian quickly shot a look at her son Joshua. Joshua immediately stepped forward to support Hudson. “Grandpa, Xavier’s always been hot-headed. He means no harm. Don’t take it to heart.”

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“You’re the sensible one,” Hudson said, patting Joshua’s hand, clearly pleased with his grandson’s understanding.

He turned to Xavier. “Look at you, not nearly as sensible as your cousin.”

One grandson was vengeful, while the other was kind, generous, and dutiful. Compared side by side, any ordinary grandfather would favor the kind and dutiful one without hesitation.

But he was Hudson. He controlled the entire Rivera Inc. The stronger they were, the more enemies they had.

The future leader of Rivera Inc. couldn’t afford to be overly kind, otherwise, they wouldn’t be able to protect the company. Someone ruthless like Xavier was more suited to take over Rivera Inc.

Hudson had already made his choice, but the time wasn’t right to reveal it just yet, especially not to the family.

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Hudson leaned on his cane, giving it an assertive tap on the floor as he turned to Xavier with a pointed look, "I'm letting you off the hook today, only because of Joshua and Skyler's sakes. If you keep spouting nonsense in this house, I won't recognize you as my grandson."

Zavier flashed a disarming smile, "Grandpa, you're saying she gets to push me around, but I can't fight back?"

At that, Hudson looked like he wanted to thwack Xavier with his cane. He had just mentioned Skyler, who, having previously retreated to a corner, now felt compelled to step forward, greeting Hudson respectfully, "Good evening, Grandpa."

"Good evening, Skyler." Hudson coaxed with a smile, waving Skyler closer, "Come here, and let me get a good look at you, kiddo."

Skyler approached Hudson promptly. Hudson examined her closely, concern etching his features, "Child, you seem to have thinned out since last month. Tell me, is Xavier not taking good care of you?"

Skyler could tell despite his stern tone, Hudson genuinely cared for her well-being. She didn't want someone who cared about her to worry, "Grandpa, Xavier takes great care of me. He makes sure I have the best of everything."

"But you look like you've lost weight," Hudson persisted.

The truth was that the recent academic pressures and her side job teaching piano had left her with little time for proper meals, naturally resulting in weight loss. However, Skyler offered a considerate excuse, "I think I'm just not quite used to the Capital yet. I'll be back to normal soon."

Hudson seemed appeased, "Mhm, Butler, make sure to send some extra nourishment to Xavier's place later. Remind Marissa to take good care of Skyler and ensure she gets the proper nourishment."

"Skyler is the granddaughter-in-law I chose myself," Hudson announced firmly. "Anyone who dares to cross her is crossing me."

Though he didn't name names, it was clear he was sending a message to Jillian. The cherished granddaughter-in-law wasn't to be trifled with on his watch.

"Yes, sir, the butler responded dutifully.

Jillian bit her lip, her expression souring.

Zavier, noticing Jillian's discomfort, opened his mouth as if to say something, but Kalene gave him a sharp tug and whispered, "Zavier, mind the occasion." Zavier held back with a smile, biting his tongue.

Then Hudson declared, "Now that everyone's here, let's sit down to have dinner."

And everyone followed after Hudson said that.

The Rivera family gathered for dinner, with seating strictly arranged according to seniority. On either side of Hudson's seat, two spots were reserved: one permanently for his only daughter, Nora. The other seat, however, was left open for the person who demonstrated the best performance over the course of three months.

Today, everyone expected Hudson to call the best-performing Joshua to sit by his side, but to their surprise, he beckoned Skyler as soon as he sat down, "Kiddo, come sit with me."

Nora, being Hudson's only daughter, was adored by him, but even that love wouldn't lead him to hand over Rivera Inc. to her. The brothers understood this, and her sitting next to Hudson was tolerable for them.

But Skyler was a different story. As Zavier's fiancée, she represented Hudson's first son's branch, and Hudson's invitation for her to sit beside him was a clear endorsement of their branch's standing.

Because of this, Skyler's meal was fraught with tension. The glares from the others were palpable, their hostility barely veiled, as if they wanted to tear her apart with their eyes.

Skyler sat there, trying to keep her composure amidst the silent hostility.

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Skyler really didn't want to sit at the head of the table, but when Hudson called her name, she couldn't find an excuse to bail. If she had it her way, she'd have tucked herself into the most inconspicuous corner. Being unnoticed was the best strategy. Yet, Skyler was well aware that as long as she wore the title of Zavier's fiancée, blending into the background was an unattainable wish.

Kalene, sitting close to Skyler, reached over and heaped some roast beef onto her plate. "Skyler, eat up, honey. You need to put some meat on those bones. If your parents saw you this thin, they'd be worried sick."

Skyler managed a polite smile, "Thanks, Mrs. Rivera."

This seemingly normal address, when heard by others, sounded like a mistake. Matthew, with a teasing smirk, chimed in, "Kiddo, you and Zavier are practically hitched, and you're still with the 'Mrs. Rivera'? Sounds a bit cold, doesn't it?"

With Hudson backing Skyler, Kalene had the confidence to speak up, "These young ones today are shy. As long as she holds me dear, she can call me whatever makes her comfortable."

Nora jumped to Kalene's defense, "Matthew, if Kalene doesn't mind the formality, why does a grown man like you take issue?"

Matthew argued, "It's just that sooner or later, Skyler will have to change how she addresses Kalene. Might as well start early."e2

Nora retorted, "Well, they're not married yet."

Skyler felt like a silent spectator to a storm brewing beneath the surface, one she desperately wanted to avoid, yet was inescapably drawn into.

The banter went on without any sign of Hudson wanting to put a stop to it. His intentions remained a mystery.

Skyler stole a glance at him, to which he responded with a reassuring smile, "Sweetheart, just help yourself to whatever you like, no need to be shy."

"Grandpa, I love everything on the table," Skyler replied with genuine enthusiasm.

Then eat your fill, dear,” Hudson encouraged.

By the end of the meal, Skyler felt more exhausted than after a full day of classes and tutoring combined.

She had hoped to return to her dormitory after dinner, but her expectations were dashed when she found out she and Xavier were to share a room for the night at the old Rivera family estate.

She was Xavier’s fiancée, and since they hadn’t gotten married yet, technically they shouldn’t be assigned to the same room. However, with Aunt Nora in charge of the arrangements, Skyler had no choice but to comply.

Once the rooms were sorted, Nora went to Kalene, “I’ve been tracking the calendar, and it seems we’re right in the middle of Skyler’s fertile window. If those two young ones can’t keep their hands off each other, we might just see the next Rivera heir sooner rather than later.”

Kalene voiced her concern, “Xavier told me he doesn’t care for the girl, and he certainly doesn’t want children with someone he doesn’t love. Pushing this might just push him away.”

Nora was unphased, “All we’ve done is put them in the same room. We haven’t meddled beyond that. If Xavier can’t control himself, that’s hardly on us.”

Their conspiratorial chatter was interrupted by the sound of laughter, Jillian stepped out from the shadows, with a smirk on her face, “My dear sister-in-law, always so calculating in your schemes.”

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Kalene retorted with a cold laugh, “And you’re any different?”

They were all seasoned players in this game, none foolish enough to be outwitted by the other.

Jillian pressed on, “And Nora, your eldest brother may be your flesh and blood, but aren’t Matthew and Owen also your brothers? After all they’ve done for you, you still side with your eldest. If they were to find out, imagine how hurt they would be.”



Nora calmly replied, "I know who's truly good to me and who isn't, Jillian."

"So, you're saying Zavier and Owen aren't truly good to you?" Jillian prodded.

"I never said that. It seems you're the one admitting to it," Nora shot back with a sly grin..

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Jillian cast another look at Kalene, "Kalene, you really know how to play the game. Trying to outfox you is like a cub going up against a wily old wolf."

"Hey now, Jillian, don't start slinging mud without cause. You and your family know exactly what you've been up to all these years," Kalene retorted with growing fervor. "If I find out that you had a hand in Brodie's death, I swear I'll make you regret it."

There was nothing more tragic in life than a parent burying their child.

At Kalene's words, Jillian bristled. "What did you just say? Repeat that, if you dare."

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Kalene's gaze was icy. "Was I not clear enough?"

Jillian was fuming, her filter gone. "Your son was a lost cause, made money but never got to enjoy it. Don't you dare drag my son into this."

No mother can stand to hear such things about her child. Kalene lost all pretense of composure and slapped Jillian hard across the face. "Take back what you said about my son, or I swear I'll rip those words out of your mouth."e2

Jillian wasn't used to such humiliation and raised her hand to strike back.

Quick as a flash, Nora caught Jillian's hand. "Jillian, if Hudson knew you just called Brodie a lost cause, do you think he'd ever forgive you?"

It was common knowledge in the Rivera family that Hudson adored his grandson Brodie. Brodie had been groomed to be the heir from birth, but fate had other plans. His death had hit Hudson just as hard as it had hit Kalene and her husband. If Hudson heard someone speaking ill of his beloved grandson, there would be hell to pay.

Jillian suddenly realized the gravity of her words. "I... I..."

In hopes of calming the waters, she had to take the slap without returning it. "Kalene, I spoke out of turn. I apologize to you and Brodie."

Kalene was unimpressed. "You think a simple apology is enough?"

If not for Hudson's sake, Jillian would never have apologized. Now she had crossed a line and had no choice. "Wwhat do you want from me?"

Kalene wanted revenge for her son but lacked evidence. "No matter what Skyler's status was in the Blue family, she's now part of the Rivera family, and she is Zavier's fiancée. So, please show her some respect."

Jillian snorted, "Zavier himself doesn't seem to care much for his fiancée, but as his mother, you seem to be extremely concerned. Are you so sure Skyler will get pregnant? And even if she does, can you be sure it'll be a boy?"

Kalene dismissed her concerns. "You needn't worry about that. Just remember what I've said."

Jillian nodded, "Alright, I'll be more considerate. I won't say another disrespectful word in public again."

Kalene gave her leave, "You may go now."

As Jillian walked away, she muttered under her breath, "Just you wait, Kalene! When my family takes over Rivera Inc., I'll make sure you regret everything."

Watching Jillian's retreating figure, Kalene couldn't help but worry. "Nora, do you think she'll go running to Hudson?"

Nora was confident, "She wouldn't dare. She's the one in the wrong. Kalene, it's obvious Hudson favors Zavier. If Dustin or Joshua had done half of what he's done, they'd have been punished by now."

Kalene breathed a sigh of relief but was still concerned. “Nora, what if Skyler doesn’t get pregnant tonight, or what if the baby isn’t a boy?”

Nora reassured her with a gentle pat on the hand, “Just follow my lead, and everything will work out. If not tonight, there’s still time. We have six months.”

**"Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband"** What’s better than a classic

Chapter 1660

Zavier and Skyler are young, and there aren’t any health issues. As long as they do it, it’s quite likely for Skyler to get pregnant.

Once Skyler is pregnant, it’s guaranteed to be a boy. There’s no possibility of having a girl.”

When Kalene caught the drift of Nora’s implication, her eyes widened in realization. “Nora, is this really the right thing to do? Afterall, it’s Zavier’s own flesh and blood we’re talking about.”

Nora fixed her with a look that was both steely and shrewd. “Those who aim to achieve great things must be willing to sacrifice the trivial. If you can’t stomach that much, then you’re doomed to watch Rivera Inc. slip into Matthew and Owen’s hands, and Brodie’s true cause of death will remain forever a mystery to you.”

She paused, letting each word sink in before adding, “Unless, of course, you don’t actually want to know how Brodie really died.”

Kalene thought about it, and she thought hard. The obsession was nearly driving her mad. “Alright, I’m in. I’ll do whatever it takes to uncover the truth behind Brodie’s death. He won’t have died in vain.”

Nora seemed pleased, patting Kalene’s shoulder reassuringly. “Kalene, it’s getting late. Let’s get some rest. We’ll see if there’s good news come morning.”e2

“Mhm.” Kalene looked up, gazing at the second-floor window of the quaint little cottage where Zavier’s room was. The light was still on – were the young lovebirds moving in the direction of their plans?

She could only hope. All her hopes were now pinned on whatever was growing in Skyler's belly.

Meanwhile, in Xavier's room.

Zavier's face was a storm cloud as he entered, silent as the grave. Skyler didn't know whether to stand or sit, feeling out of place and tense. "Zavier, the door's locked, and I can't leave. Could I crash on the sofa in the study for the night?"

Zavier took in her flushed face and slender figure. His eyebrows involuntarily lifted higher. The woman was too weak, so feeble that she seemed incapable of self-preservation. If she truly became his wife, not only would she be unable to stand by his side through thick and thin, but she'd also be a stumbling block on his road to success. She was all wrong for him, yet Hudson had insisted on pairing them up – the ulterior motives were glaringly

obvious.

Whether or not Rivera Inc. ended up in his hands was of lesser concern to him. What mattered was uncovering the real reasons behind his brother's death, which meant starting from the inside.

Zavier's piercing gaze never left her, and his silence was downright terrifying. Skyler, feeling the weight of his stare, shrank back instinctively. "If you're not cool with me using the sofa, I won't. Just lend me a little corner. I can just curl up there for the night."

This woman, as timid as a mouse!

Zavier recalled the way she'd blushed furiously yet remained silent under Jillian's verbal abuse. "I'm curious," he said with a sneer, "what exactly did they teach you in the Blue family?"

Skyler missed the underlying sarcasm in Zavier's question and answered earnestly, "My family hired the best tutors in music, chess, and painting – all private lessons, just for me."

Zavier let out a derisive laugh. "Is that what I asked?"

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