

## Heiress 261

### Chapter 261

Long ago, Justin had heard about the extensive collaboration between the KS Group and the Iverson Group in several major projects both domestically and internationally. The leaders of the two companies had a deep personal relationship, having known each other for over twenty

years.

So, did Bella and Christopher know each other since long ago?

They were so close, as if there was no room for others in their eyes. Presumably, they were childhood sweethearts, inseparable from each other.

Ian sighed with envy in his eyes. "Well, it's not hard to understand. Young Madam's family background is extraordinary. She is the apple of Wyatt Thompson's eye and a rare,

unattainable gem!"

"Look at her suitors. Each one is an exceptional individual. Just look at Neil Lovett's youngest son. He's only worthy of being a lackey for the young madam."

As he spoke, Ian pursed his lips and glanced at his boss. He could not help but feel sorry for Justin. Even though Justin was the president of Salvador Corporation and soon to become the deputy chairman of the board, all these achievements combined were not as impactful as the fact that Bella Thompson was his wife.

If word got out, it would surely make countless men turn green with envy!

Justin's stern jawline tensed, and the veins on his forehead bulged. He raised his hand, supporting himself against the wall as his fingers slowly curled into a fist.

He thought to himself, 'Christopher Iverson? Steven Lovett? What was that woman doing? Collecting men?!'

The man pinched his nose bridge. His voice trembled as he took a breath. "Ian, bring me my painkillers."

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As night fell, an emerald Rolls-Royce silently parked at the entrance of the "dungeons".

The so-called "dungeons" was a dilapidated building on the western outskirts of Savrow that KS Group had acquired in its early years. Despite its remote location, Wyatt Thompson had wild ambitions for the place. At the time, he heard through the grapevine that the western outskirts would be connected by subway in five years. He thought the building would skyrocket in value, so he bought it.

Inside the unfinished building was a dark and damp basement. If someone were to be confined there, no one would be able to hear their cries.

Since Asher knew about this matter, he could not possibly let his sister face it alone. So, he came along with Bella.

"Mr. Asher, Ms. Bella." Two guards standing outside bowed respectfully.

"How is he?" Bella asked in a languid tone, dragging her words.

"Still alive."

These two words carried a peculiar significance.

Bella nodded satisfactorily, walking alongside her eldest brother down the stairs and into the basement. Upon entering, a musty smell hit them, and a mouse scurried past Bella's feet.

However, she remained unfazed. She had experienced far worse conditions during her stint with Doctors Without Borders.

In the dim and flickering light, a man was hung upside down in the center of the basement. His face was battered, bruised, and extremely red and swollen due to the prolonged inversion.

Seeing the Thompson siblings, the man contorted his body like a silkworm. Tears and snot streamed down his face as he pleaded for mercy. "I was wrong... I'm sorry, Ms. Thompson! Spare me, please! I'll do anything! Just let me live!"

When he attacked them earlier, Bella thought this guy was quite good at acting tough. She thought he had a strong backbone, but it only took three days for him to reveal his true colors.

Asher's brows furrowed. As he started to move forward, Bella promptly held him back.

"Ash, we agreed that I would handle this. You have to keep your word."

"Alright." Asher took a deep breath to suppress his anger before taking a step back.

Bella crossed her arms and calmly walked up to Memphis. Lifting her slender and well-toned leg, she used the pointed heel of her stilettos to kick the man's shoulder.

His body swung in mid-air, nearly making him vomit.

"Ms. Thompson... I really didn't know it was you... If I had known... How could I have listened to evil Rosalind's instigation and attacked you?"

Regret filled his heart as his tears overflowed from his eyes. "I'm willing to make amends... I'll do anything! Please... Please spare my life! Even if it means going to jail!"

"If you want to stay alive, just answer a few questions for me." Bella did not want to waste any time and got straight to the point.

“Ask away! I will definitely tell you everything...”

Bella Thompson’s beautiful eyes flashed with a cold light. “As Rosalind’s lover in the Meridan, you know if she has ever given birth?”

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Asher’s eyes narrowed subtly as he shot Bella a deep, scrutinizing look.

This younger sister of his was a real opportunist who did not play by the rules.

A tiny gap was all she needed to flip the situation and catch her opponents off guard.

Memphis’s face went rigid. He had not expected Bella to ask him about this!

“Going by your expression, you definitely know something,” Bella said. Her gaze was cold and cynical.

“I... I do,” Memphis stuttered, swallowing hard. His voice trembled as he confessed, “Because... That child... Is mine and Rosalind’s...”

Both of the Thompson siblings were left bewildered!

Bella’s small hand clenched with excitement. Her gamble with the question paid off handsomely!

“What’s the whole deal? Explain in detail,” Asher demanded, his voice icy and pressing. Memphis explained, “I... I used to work as a fitness coach at a high-end gym in Meridan. I met Rosalind when I was her personal trainer... And, well, things escalated. She was particularly alluring and was quite forward in seducing me. Over time, we ended up together.”

Bella raised an intrigued eyebrow. "Go on.

Memphis continued, "But we both had an unspoken understanding that our relationship was just a casual fling. Rosalind always had other men around her, and I was just one of them. Later, there was a time when we experimented with some drugs. She got high, and we didn't use any contraceptives ...

Even though she took a morning-after pill afterward, it isn't 100% safe. Not long after, she found out she was pregnant."

Bella blinked and thought, 'Well, well... Looks like Rosalind was even into drugs. The more you dig, the more surprises you find!'

She asked, "With Rosalind's ruthless personality, she surely wouldn't have kept the child. So why did she go through with the pregnancy?"

"She claimed she had a naturally weak body and that she wouldn't be able to conceive again if she got an abortion. She said no prestigious family would accept a barren daughter-in-law. So, she reluctantly went ahead and gave birth to the child," Memphis explained.

The topic of children has always been a sensitive one for Bella. This man's words had clearly struck a chord of pain in her, but she quickly composed herself. Her voice was cold as she asked, "Where is that child now?"

"I... I only know she's in a welfare home in the southern province of Meridan. The girl is around two or three years old now... Apart from that, I know nothing else!" Memphis

confessed.

Memphis did not dare to conceal anything further. Unfortunately, he was heartless and had never once bothered to visit his daughter. He could only provide this limited information after racking his brain for details.

“Hah! People like you are the greatest insult to all parents in the world,” Asher angrily declared. “That is your child, and you just discard her like trash without caring to check up on her?”

“Well, it’s not like we completely don’t care... I heard Rosalind’s mother has been privately keeping tabs on my daughter. After all, the moment the child was born, Rosalind’s mother took her away. That woman must know where my daughter is!” Memphis could not bear to be tormented again, so he revealed another crucial piece of information.

Bella’s bright eyes flickered with determination, having made up her mind about something. She turned to look at her eldest brother.

As if with an unspoken understanding, Asher also looked at her. When the siblings locked eyes, they understood each other without saying anything.

At that moment, the door to the basement opened, and a bodyguard hastily entered, holding Memphis’s phone.

“Miss, there’s an incoming call,” the bodyguard reported.

With a cold glance at the screen, Bella took the phone and asked, “Who is Ashley?”

Memphis flinched and swallowed hard, wiping his nose. “It’s... Rosalind...”

“Answer it. You talk to her,” Bella instructed.

Bella leaned down, extending the phone toward him with a frosty gaze. “No tricks, no nonsense. Act like nothing happened. Don’t alert her.”

Memphis nodded frantically, obedient as a dog.

He answered the call. “Hello, Ashley. Why are you calling so late? Did you miss me?”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” Rosalind paused and asked in a low voice, “You haven’t caused me any trouble lately, have you? I told you not to act impulsively and to wait for my instructions. You haven’t messed things up, right?”

Memphis could only grit his teeth and say, “No, since you didn’t give the signal, I didn’t dare to act recklessly.”

Bella lowered her long lashes, a faint smirk playing on her lips.

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Memphis had taken matters into his own hands. He made a move on Bella behind Rosalind’s back, which ultimately led them to their current predicament because he was in dire need of funds. He wanted to quickly resolve this issue to claim a reward from Rosalind.

What a horrible teammate!

Rosalind declared, “Don’t do anything to Bella until I give you the green light. The situation has improved now that I’ve regained Justin’s trust. Gregory has even agreed to our marriage, so we should be announcing our engagement soon.”

Asher thought, ‘Engagement?’

His concerned gaze shifted towards his sister. Bella remained indifferent. Her eyes narrowed as she let out a casual yawn. Asher could not help but smile when he saw his sister’s nonchalant response.

Memphis asked, “Well, now that Justin and you are all sorted, what about the \$5 million...?” Growing irritated, Rosalind retorted dismissively, “Why are you so impatient?!”

She snapped, "Is it really necessary for you to rush me for that small amount of money? I will wire you \$50,000 first. Go ahead and waste it all. Once Justin and I have finalized everything and the engagement ceremony is wrapped up, I'll transfer the balance to you."

Memphis asked, "Do I still need to take action against Bella?"

"Make sure she gets what she deserves," Rosalind replied, brimming with malice. "She has made my life so unbearable. I want the rest of her days to be an endless loop of misery. Even if I can't leave her crippled... I want to ruin that seductive face of hers!"

The call ended, leaving Memphis visibly shaken by Rosalind's spiteful words. In contrast, Bella remained composed and poised, displaying her remarkable mental resilience.

"You've done well. I'll contact you if necessary," Bella calmly stated.

At that moment, Bella's phone rang. It was Steven. She answered it while turning to leave the underground basement.

As Bella left, the atmosphere turned ominous. Memphis' eyes widened in terror as Asher approached him.

Asher was exuding a chill, like he had just come from hell.

He narrowed his eyes and bent down slowly.

Then he produced a silver cross dagger from his suit. Its blade caught the cold light in the basement, flickering with an eerie gleam. It was as if he would cut off Memphis' head in the next second.

Though Asher made no immediate move, Memphis was petrified, as if he had seen the grim reaper.



Asher calmly said, "My sister's arm was injured because of you.

Memphis stuttered, "I... I'm sorry..."

Asher shook his head as he slowly closed his eyes and prayed. "Merciful Lord, please forgive my transgressions. Everything I have done is for the one I love."

Within seconds, a wretched scream echoed in the dungeons as Asher severed the tendon on Memphis' hand.

In an empty field, Steven stood alone, waiting. His clear and smooth face was now haggard and pale with exhaustion

"Steve, why did you come?" Bella asked with concern as she noticed his pale complexion.

Steven looked at Bella with a heavy heart. He muttered with a trembling voice, "Ms. Bella, I'm sorry..."

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"Steve, what's wrong?" Bella asked with concern. Her eyes widened as she saw his disheveled figure. Steven, who was usually composed, stood in front of her with swollen eyes and pale lips, looking extremely pitiful.

Asher asked, "Is this about Shannon?"

Asher walked up from behind Bella, wiping his hands with a handkerchief. Bella looked over and was surprised to find bloodstains on it. Bella sighed at the realization that her brother had once again taken matters into his own hands, robbing her of the opportunity to showcase her talents.

"Sorry... I'm really sorry!" Steven bowed. His apology echoed in the tense air.

Puzzled, Bella glanced at her phone as it rang. Axel's name lit up the screen.

Bella answered, "Axel?"

"Bella, Shannon left my place just a few moments ago." Axel's tone was tinged with helplessness and self-blame.

He continued, "My team has been actively gathering evidence of Shannon's abuse of and bribery for the past few days. Unfortunately, it seems she was well-prepared. All the evidence now points to Zephyr Quarry."

power

Axel added, "Gregory had hired Hunter Lovett, a skilled lawyer known for playing dirty and exploiting every loophole. Since we were lacking evidence, we had no choice but to release Shannon."

Bella replied, "It's okay, Axel. You've done your best. Besides, we've achieved our primary goal. What truly matters is that the project in Baxim remains under our control. We can discuss the rest in due course."

Bella was not as anxious as the men around her. Each one of them seemed ready to skin

Shannon alive.

While Shannon was undoubtedly despicable, Bella understood a fundamental principle that haste often led to mistakes. Gregory's infatuation with Shannon meant that he would spare no effort to save his wife. It was not worth it to escalate the conflict between the two conglomerates over a project.

Axel continued, "By the way, Bella, Steven already called me. The poor guy was almost in tears. Please let him know that this matter has nothing to do with him at all."

Axel sighed. "He's overthinking it for your sake. He was afraid you'd be upset, so he burdened himself excessively."

Bella replied, "Alright..."

Upon ending the call, Bella seemed to have grasped the situation. She looked at Steven with complicated emotions and said, "Steve..."

Steven reproached himself. His eyes were red. "Ms. Bella, this is my family's fault. I am willing to bear any punishment."

Steven found out today that his brother, Hunter Lovett, had taken on Shannon's case. He was

so angry that he ran to Hunter's law firm and had a heated argument with Hunter at the office.

-“Our father was upright and incorruptible. During his tenure, he offended countless people, so as soon as he retired, our enemies started targeting our family and seeking revenge against our father, attempting to frame us for injustice. If it wasn't for Chairman Salvador coming to our aid at that time and hiring our father as the legal advisor so that the conglomerate could protect us, how could our parents have enjoyed their retirement? How could your law firm have become so successful?! Now that Ms. Bella is going against Shannon, how can you represent the Salvadors and help Shannon escape charges?! Isn't this betraying their trust for personal gain?!”

Steven and Hunter had not argued for over two decades, but this time, Steven was putting his foot down for Bella's sake.

“The Thompsons have been kind to us, but that doesn't mean our whole family is indebted to them! Besides, our father has successfully won numerous lawsuits for Wyatt Thompson over the years. Any gratitude owed has already been repaid. I am a professional lawyer. To me, everyone is a potential client. As long as it's a case I can handle, I will take it on. It has nothing to do with any ties to the Salvadors or the Thompsons. Instead, look at you! Our parents painstakingly raised you, provided you with the best education, and invested

considerable effort to see you succeed and achieve greatness, not to have you become a lackey for the Thompsons!”

Hunter’s words pierced Steven’s heart. Despite his heart belonging to Bella, the weight of his family’s expectations held him captive. He felt unworthy to face Bella again.

Bella asked, “Steve, what are you saying?”

Bella’s brow furrowed as she approached him with a tender smile.

She placed her hands on his trembling shoulders and gave him a reassuring pat on the shoulder. “Don’t blame yourself, and let’s not allow this incident to sour our relations with your family. Shannon isn’t worth the trouble. Why should we let it cast a shadow on our families and dampen our spirits?”

“Ms. Bella...” Steven’s voice broke, heavy with guilt.

Bella interjected. “I completely understand why Hunter is taking on Shannon’s case. No hard feelings.”

Bella’s gaze remained unwavering as she spoke earnestly, “Professionals should stick to their duties, especially lawyers, who must remain impartial. If Hunter has been hired by the Salvador family under suitable conditions, he should handle their case professionally. I’m confident that if we need legal assistance in the future, your family will be there, right?”

Steven nodded shyly and lowered his gaze.

The three of them got into the car. Asher held Bella’s hand, gently caressing her palm as he asked, “Bella, what are your plans moving forward?”

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Bella said, “To find Rosalind’s illegitimate daughter, we will lure them out of hiding.”

Her eyes shined with a subtle gleam. “Memphis let it slip that only Rosalind’s mother knows the whereabouts of that child. So, I say we get Jean to lead us straight to her, sparing us the need for our own investigation.”

Asher chuckled softly and asked with a mysterious smile. “What about Rosalind? How are you going to handle her?”

Bella’s expression turned cryptic. “If you want to bring someone down, you’ve got to make them lose it—drive them mad.”

Bella let out a yawn as she rubbed her eyes. With a hint of weariness in her voice, she said, “She’s almost getting engaged to Justin, right? If we don’t let her bask in the limelight, how can we crush her?”

Asher’s heart stirred as he looked back on the situation. He added, “Speaking of Justin, this guy is truly blind.”

Bella scoffed. “It doesn’t matter if he’s blind or not. I’ve realized my worth. A guy with such flaws doesn’t matter to me anymore.”

Suddenly, Bella’s eyes widened as she remembered something. She swiftly took out her phone and navigated to the gallery, revealing a series of photos she had secretly taken of Christopher.

Bella asked, “Ash, take a look at this person. Do you recognize him?” Her voice was tinged with a mix of curiosity and excitement.

Bella added, “The day Memphis almost got the best of me, this gentleman stepped in just in time. That’s why I only ended up with minor injuries.”

Asher was surprised. “Really? Well, you should express your gratitude to him properly.”

Bella said, “He’s being all mysterious, though.”

She continued with a playful smile on her lips, "I asked him about his identity, but he wouldn't tell me who he is. What's more intriguing is that he actually knows who I am!"

The image of Christopher's handsome, chiseled face popped up in her mind. She was getting increasingly curious.

Under her gentle, youthful exterior, Bella harbored a strong desire for control. She disliked the notion of anything or anyone slipping through her fingers.

Asher leaned in, carefully examining the man in the photo.

Suddenly, his eyes widened in recognition, and he looked at Bella with an astonished gaze.

Asher's tone carried disbelief as he asked, "Bella, do you really not recognize him?"

"Huh?" Bella was bewildered. "Should I know him?"

"When you were little, I distinctly remember that the two of you had a good relationship."

"What?!" Bella exclaimed, her surprise and skepticism evident. She scrutinized the photo and tried hard to recall her memories.

He seemed somewhat familiar, but the memory eluded her at that moment.

Asher continued, "Christopher, from the Iverson family. When he was little, he was a bit introverted and didn't like to talk. You were the only one who was willing to play with him. Have you really forgotten?"

Bella was struck by the realization. "He's Critter?!"

She exclaimed in disbelief, "Wow, what kind of food did he take to have grown so tall?!"

Late at night, Christopher's private club was vibrant.

Under the hazy lights, people were having a grand time. Laughter, clinking glasses, and the occasional passionate kiss filled the air.

Amidst this lively scene, Christopher sat alone in a quiet corner, giving off an air of elegance and poise.

His presence seemed to discourage any woman from approaching. He was infamous for being cold, surly, and mysophobic. He was not an easy person to please, and no one dared provoke him for fear of disappearing from Savrow.

A somewhat tipsy guy stumbled towards Christopher and said, "I can't make it to our yacht party in two days."

The man leaned unsteadily against Christopher. Frustration etched his face as he continued, ' My father wants me to go on a blind date... Burp! What the fuck, right?! Who the hell gets married in their twenties anyway? Only Justin Salvador wants to settle down quickly.'

Christopher sipped some red wine and calmly responded, "If you don't want to go, then just say no."

"But I can't!" The man tugged at his tie in annoyance. "The one I'm set up with is the daughter of the richest man in Hatchbay, Wyatt Thompson! What's her name? Bel-'

Christopher gasped. His eyes flashed, and he quickly said, "I have a perfect solution."

The man was eager to know. "Tell me more!"

Christopher finished his glass of wine. The shifting lights shadowed his facial features, giving him an eerie and mysterious allure.

He proposed, "Why don't you go to the yacht party? And I'll go on the blind date on your behalf."

## Chapter 266

Nearly a week later, Shannon finally emerged from the prosecutor's office, looking visibly fatigued. Stripped of the high-end cosmetics, she appeared pale and haggard, as if she had aged a decade. Several strands of white hair had even appeared.

To avoid the swarm of reporters, Shannon could not bring herself to return home in this ghostly state. She feared that Gregory might catch sight of her like this, causing her carefully maintained image to fall apart.

Sensing her concern, Bethany accompanied Shannon to a beauty salon first, where she washed up before venturing out to face the world.

As they left the salon, Shannon said, "Let's not go home just yet. Let's go see Rosalind."

She adjusted her hair in the mirror with a gloomy expression and continued, "After all, she is my niece. Having risked half her life, I can't afford not to care. I must uphold my kind and benevolent image for your father."

Shannon thought to herself, 'A meticulously crafted persona for 25 years-it absolutely must not unravel!'

Bethany said, "Mom! Rosalind actually resorted to suicide!"

Although Bethany harbored a dislike for Rosalind, the memory of that blood-soaked bathroom still haunted her. "Let's not even talk about whether Justin will fall for her fake suffering. If her scheme went awry and nobody discovered it in time, she might lose her life. She's truly ruthless, even to herself!"

"Heh, how could anyone not discover it in time?" Shannon said with a playful smile as she put away her mirror.



Bethany was momentarily stunned before a sudden realization dawned on her. She gasped. " Mom! Did you already know..."

Shannon immediately lifted her index finger to her lips, signaling for Bethany to not say another word.

It was Shannon's idea to arouse Justin's sympathy by attempting suicide. Back then, she had used a similar strategy, leveraging it to evoke Gregory's sympathy. It granted her entry into the Salvador family, paving the way for the life she enjoys today.

Justin had also suffered from depression, and it was Rosalind who supported him through that challenging period. Triggering the past trauma would naturally bring back memories of Rosalind's virtues. Despite the significant risk involved, the potential rewards were even more considerable.

"Even if Rosalind isn't an ideal candidate, I can't allow any possibility of a reunion between Justin and that wretched woman, Bella!"

Shannon had endured a lot these past few days dealing with the prosecution, and the mere thought of Bella made her clench her fists. "Bella, how dare you play games with me? I swear, I will fight you to the end! I won't let you get away with it!"

Shannon added, "The Thompson family might be formidable in Hatchbay, but that's just a small town. In Savrow, the Salvador family has the final say."

Bethany said with resentment, "We'll have plenty of chances in the future to deal with that wretched woman!" She was determined to take revenge on Bella for throwing the slippers in her face that day.

Just as Shannon approached the hospital room's door, she learned that both Gregory and Justin were inside. Shannon put on a facade of a virtuous wife and loving mother. She entered the room as tears streamed down her face.

"Rosalind! My dearest Rosalind! Why would you contemplate something so drastic and do such a foolish thing?"

In the presence of the two men, Shannon embraced Rosalind and sobbed uncontrollably." Why must the women in our family endure such misfortune? Framed and tormented by others... If this continues, I won't be able to endure it any longer."

"Aunt Shannon, please don't be like this..." Rosalind wept and skillfully played the role of a distressed victim.

Jean, who was in the room, joined in on their act. The hospital turned into a scene reminiscent of a funeral.

Meanwhile, Justin silently observed them. His face was devoid of any emotion. Rosalind sneakily glanced at him, but the man's indifference sent shivers down her spine. In the past, whenever she cried, he would always be the first to come and comfort her with soothing words.

But now, all that tenderness seemed to have vanished. The affection that once belonged to her was gradually slipping away, and all this was thanks to Bella!

The three women embraced each other in tears, and Gregory's brow remained deeply furrowed.

Gregory said solemnly, "Shannon, Justin, come over here. I have something to say."

A few moments later, in the reception room, Shannon gasped, "Greg!"

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Tears streamed down Shannon's cheeks, she stared at Gregory with pitiful eyes and said, "I thought I would never see you again. These past few days have been like a living hell for me! I was so scared, Greg..."

Gregory sympathized with Shannon. He could see that his beloved wife was in distress.

However, with a heap of troubles that accumulated over the past few days, he lacked the mood to comfort her.

Just then, the television mounted on the wall began broadcasting the news, capturing their attention.

Much to their surprise, the news showed the signing ceremony of the collaboration between Asher, president of the KS Group, and the project leaders of the Baxim development, including Mayor Solloway. In the footage, Asher exchanged contracts with Mayor Solloway, warmly shaking hands. The flashing cameras below captured this significant moment.

Justin stared at the screen intently. His grip tightened around the teacup, so much so that the veins on his forearm were bulging. His usually composed face turned frosty as a feeling of anger arose in his heart.

At the same time, Gregory's expression turned gloomy. He thought, 'That bratty girl snatched away a perfectly good project!'

Shannon's heart skipped a beat. She quickly hugged Gregory's arm and complained bitterly. "This time, Bella has crossed the line! What did our family do to offend her? Not only did she snatch the project, but she also wanted to send me to jail! How can this woman be so ruthless? Throughout her three

years of marriage to Justin, the Salvador family treated her with kindness. How can she repay kindness with enmity?!"

Upon hearing these accusations, Justin felt an unsettling discomfort. He calmly set down his teacup and said, "Is having Bella cook for you for the past three years your so-called kindness?"

Shannon, filled with anger, clenched her teeth. "Bella made that choice voluntarily. No one forced her!"

"Shannon." Gregory, who had remained silent throughout the conversation, suddenly said, "There's something I need to tell you." He continued, "The appointment letter has been issued. From now on, Justin will be the president of the Salvador Corporation and deputy chairman of the board. That's final." Gregory's words exploded in her ears like thunder.

“Greg... What are you saying? Why...” Shannon asked in shock. Her face turned pale in an instant.

Gregory pursed his lips and chose to remain silent for a moment.

Justin squinted, understanding the complex bond between them. Gregory found it difficult to speak on this matter, yet he was willing to shoulder the burden.

Justin interjected, “You’re well aware of the reason, Aunt Shannon. A high-ranking executive who has just undergone a prosecutor’s investigation, carrying charges of bribery, abuse of power, and corruption-how could such an individual hold onto a pivotal role in the company? If this were to be public knowledge, the management of Salvador Corporation

would become a laughingstock in the business circles of Savrow.”

Shannon shouted, “Bella framed me! She used my cousin’s predicament to take revenge and set me up!”

Her eyes were bloodshot as she stood up abruptly. Driven by anger and distress, the world turned dark before her eyes. She exclaimed, “Zephyr orchestrated everything! He has already confessed to it! It has nothing to do with me! Why can’t I be the deputy chairman of the board?!”

Justin smirked as he calmly stood up and left the room. He could not be bothered by the woman before him. Internally, Shannon was madly cursing Justin, ‘Bastard! That heartless bastard!’

She held on tightly to Gregory’s stiff arm and said, “Gregory! I’m innocent... I was

manipulated by that little bitch, Bella! You promised me that position... How could you give it to him?”

“Shannon, though I am the chairman of Salvador Corporation, it is a publicly listed company with shareholders and board members. It’s not solely my decision. In a situation like this, how can I still support you in taking that position?”

Gregory took a deep breath, forcefully withdrawing his arm from her grip, and said, “Also, are you truly innocent?”

“Gregory, are you doubting me? I’m your wife! We’ve been married for 25 years... You know what kind of person I am. How can you believe those rumors and gossip?” Shannon’s heart skipped a beat, attempting to mask her guilt. Gregory frowned and looked at her intensely. He said nothing and left.

His gaze struck Shannon like a sharp bolt of lightning, piercing through her soul. She thought, ‘It’s over. After all the effort and schemes, everything is taken away from me!’

## Chapter 268

In the hospital room, Jean sat by Rosalind’s bedside while comforting her.

“Your uncle has pulled quite a few strings and spent a significant amount of money to hire Hunter for your aunt’s release. It shows that your uncle cares about your aunt deeply.”

Jean spoke with a cheerful tone. “Thanks to Shannon, your marriage with Justin seems almost certain! Didn’t he come to the hospital to visit you whenever he had some free time? He also spoke gently to you. The relationship between you two has clearly improved.”

Jean’s face was brimming with joy at the thought of becoming the mother-in-law of the Salvador Corporation’s president soon. She asked, “You understand Justin’s temper better than I do. If he really disliked you, why would he bother coming to the hospital to accompany you?”

“Although that’s true, I feel vaguely uneasy,” Rosalind replied, her uncertainty evident.

Thinking of Justin’s cold and indifferent gaze, Rosalind could not help but feel apprehensive. “Even though he’s been with me these days and taking care of me, I just feel that he’s different from before.”

Jean replied, "Alright now. Don't scare yourself."

At that moment, the door swung open, and Justin walked in.

Rosalind swiftly took on a frail appearance as if hanging between life and death, tearfully calling out, "Justin..."

He approached her with a stoic expression. She reached out, hoping to touch him, but he unexpectedly stopped. Her hand lingered awkwardly in the air, and her pale cheeks flushed slightly in embarrassment.

"I have to go back to the office for some business. I'll come to see you tonight." Justin's tone was still gentle, but with a chilly edge.

"Justin, I'm sorry." On the trouble... It's all my fault."

verge of tears, Rosalind gazed at him tenderly. "I've caused

you

"Take care of yourself. Don't overthink it." After uttering these words, Justin turned and left the hospital room. Rosalind tightly gripped the bedsheet, holding back the words she wanted to say to him. The present Justin was not the same person who used to pamper and protect her. Sometimes, the way he looked at her made her feel uneasy.

In a hurry, she signaled to Jean, who nodded and quickly chased after Justin.

Jean called out. "Um... Justin!"

Justin stopped in his tracks, giving Jean a cold glance before he asked, "Do you need something?"

“In the past few days, you’ve seen Rosalind’s condition. When you’re around, she seems more clear-headed, but when you’re not, she’s practically tormented by depression. Rosalind has suffered a lot abroad, enduring all the hardships just to return to your side. If you give up on her, my

child’s future will be ruined!” Jean wiped her tears with a handkerchief.

Justin responded, “I’ll take responsibility for Rosalind’s illness. After all, she once saved my

life.”

With that, Justin turned and walked away. Jean was left standing in contemplation, a cold shiver gripping her heart.

In the days that followed, Bella found herself immersed in the hustle and bustle of organizing meetings with the senior management, striving to complete the wedding planning project to perfection.

On this day, while deeply engrossed in discussions with the project team, she received an unexpected call from Wyatt.

Bella answered, “Wyatt, I’m in the middle of something. What’s up?” She tilted her head, holding the phone between her cheek and shoulder while flipping through documents.

‘Wyatt? Wyatt Thompson?!’ The lively atmosphere of the team shifted abruptly upon hearing that the chairman himself was on the line, causing everyone to hold their breath in

anticipation.

This was the kind of top-tier big shot that these ordinary folks could never dream of encountering their entire lives!

In a low, abrupt tone, Wyatt said, “It’s time.”

“Huh?” Bella was bewildered.

Wyatt suddenly raised his voice and said, “It’s time for your blind date! You’d better go, or else!” Bella frowned in disapproval and moved the phone further away from her ears.

As a result, everyone heard Wyatt’s words loud and clear. Every one of them was so shocked that their eyeballs seemed on the verge of popping out!

‘Shocking news! The talented and elegant Bella, whose wealth could rival a nation’s, needs a matchmaker to find a partner?!’

## Chapter 269

Would regular people even have a chance of finding a partner if someone like Bella was having trouble finding one?

“Wyatt, I’m in the middle of a meeting. Let’s discuss pointless topics in private.” Bella was exasperated. She rubbed her temples.

“Pointless? How is choosing a life partner pointless to you?” Wyatt snorted in response. “I am not going to beat around the bush. Just one thing, do you think becoming CEO of KS Group is pointless?”

Bella thought to herself, ‘That cunning old fox! He’s leveraging his position to put pressure on me! Did he learn such a manipulative technique from Justin?’

“Fine, I’ll go, but not today, as I have an important meeting later.” Bella seized every opportunity to find excuses and push it back.

“Fine, go ahead and delay it, but you can’t delay it forever.”

In her mind, Bella felt that Wyatt was belittling her.



As the meeting continued, the air in the room grew tense. Everyone feared offending Bella, well aware of the potential consequences.

When Bella went back to her office, she slumped onto the sofa in frustration, appearing completely drained of energy, as if all life had been sucked out of her.

Steven, with a cup of coffee in hand, walked in and asked with concern, "Ms. Bella, is there a problem with the project?"

Bella complained, "Wyatt, that heartless old schemer!"

Bella laid on the sofa, pouting her lips as she forcefully pounded the couch. She ranted, "I've managed to revamp this chaotic hotel and secure a billion-dollar project for KS Group. Yet he doesn't appreciate my efforts and goes on to bring up the topic of arranged marriage!"

To her annoyance, Bella added, "I wonder if Drew is recruiting people right now. Perhaps I ought to become a spy and let Wyatt be an empty nester!"

"Ms. Bella, I know you are the most filial child. You also know that Chairman Thompson is getting older. As he gradually steps down, he needs his children around to care for him. I believe you will definitely stay with us and look after Chairman Thompson."

Steven's clear eyes were filled with tenderness. He set down the coffee and sat beside Bella. "Moreover, KS Group needs your strategic planning to grow and thrive in Savrow. There are many people in the company who have been eyeing us, and internal struggles have never stopped. I've witnessed how Chairman Thompson has come this far over the years. Frankly, the pressure on him is immense. He doesn't like being the chairman, but everything he does is to support the family."

Bella muttered, "Yes, I know that."

Bella let out a light sigh and casually kicked off her high heels, revealing her feet. Steven hesitated briefly before he grabbed a thin blanket and placed her delicate feet on his lap. He covered her legs with the blanket and started massaging Bella's legs with a practiced hand.

Apart from his mother, Steven had never wholeheartedly cared for anyone else.

As Bella rested her eyes, she said, "I want to take on this responsibility so I can completely free Ash from his burden. Besides, I feel like I'm capable enough to do this."

Not only did she have the capability, but Bella was also naturally ambitious and intrigued by power and politics. If it were not for her marriage with Justin, she would have long been the CEO of KS Group and made a name for herself.

Bella thought to herself, 'I have to work harder to catch up on all the time I wasted on that worthless man.'

Steven responded, "Ms. Bella, the blind date might not be a bad idea. Just think of it as making a new friend. The Chairman didn't say that you must marry them. He just cares too much about you."

Steven reassured her, but deep down, he could not help but feel a twinge of jealousy.

He knew from the beginning that he was unworthy of Bella. 'How could I ever be good enough for the elegant and poised Bella Thompson?'

"You're right. It's just a blind date. Could it be scarier than going to the battlefield?" Bella smiled cunningly as her feet fidgeted under the blanket. She giggled. "He might have his strategies, but I've got my own plans."

Seeing Bella act like a mischievous little girl, Steven's heart felt warm as he asked, "Ms. Bella, what ideas do you have now?"

Bella stood up quickly and walked toward the desk with her bare feet. Steven knew how important it was for girls to keep their feet warm, so he hurriedly picked up her high heels and caught up to her. Steven kneeled beside her and urged gently. "Put your shoes on quickly so you don't get cold feet."

Bella lifted her foot, letting Steven help her put on the heels. She picked up a pen and jotted something down on a piece of paper.

Soon, a list was prepared. She passed the list to Steven and said, "Here, help me gather everything on this list by the end of the day."

Steven took it, glanced down, and could not help but chuckle. "Ms. Bella, you're so mischievous."

## Chapter 270

Under Chairman Thompson's meticulous arrangements, the blind dates were swiftly scheduled.

Bella applied her makeup in the restroom while Steven stood outside, holding an iPad and briefing her on the schedule for the day.

"11:30 a.m. lunch with Mr. Zimmer from H Group. 1:30 p.m. afternoon tea with the eldest son of Chairman Walter from S Group. 3:30 p.m. private screening of a musical with the second son of Chairman Lee from Z Group."

"Okay, two hours each." Bella shrugged. She thought to herself, 'Even animals destined for the slaughterhouse aren't rushed this way!'

After a while, the bathroom door opened. When Bella appeared in front of Steven, he could not help but burst into laughter.

Steven laughed. "Ms. Bella, you've really outdone yourself!"

She had painted freckles all over her face and wore a wig, resembling the shape of a chicken's nest. There were black smudges below her nose that looked like a mustache. She appeared completely ridiculous with her left hand on the door frame and her right hand pretending to pick her nose.

"Do you think this is enough? I was thinking of adding a couple of scars to my face!" Bella grinned, showing her blackened tooth as she waved to Steven.

Steven, who was trained to remain composed as the chief secretary, rarely laughed at work. But this time, he could not stop himself from bursting into laughter.

Bella seemed to have a knack for mischief. She took a selfie with her phone and sent it to the group chat with her brothers.

In a split second, the group chat was flooded with messages.

[Asher: ...Excuse me. Who is this?]

[Bella: Hey there, handsome! Why don't you take a guess!]

[Drew: Hahaha, I'm laughing so hard I'm about to lose my mind! Bella, this is hilarious!]

[Axel: Holy crap! You almost scared me to death this early in the morning! I almost peed my pants when I saw the picture!]

[Declan: Bella, even if you want to get into cosplay, shouldn't you choose something a little more fitting to your image?]

[Drew: Why don't you cosplay as Juliet? I'll play Romeo! We can be star-crossed lovers!]

Drew even sent a hugging gif, to which Axel responded with a kicking gif.

The group chat was quickly filled with stickers and gifs by the two brothers. Although they could not meet in person due to the nature of Drew's work, they squabble with each other in this virtual space.

[Bella: Gentlemen, in your opinion as straight men, what are the odds of my blind date falling

for me when I look like this?]

[Axel: 0%!]

[Asher: True beauty resides within, not on the surface. Once someone gets to know you better, they will naturally be captivated by your charming personality, Bella.)

[Declan: I can't really differentiate faces, so physical beauty is all the same to me, but finding an intriguing soul is rare. Bella, with your exceptional personality and talent, those men will

nately be drawn to you.]

1

[Drew: You know, Bella. I'm not focused on looks. I'm more into legs! (7) Axel, as a public servant, how can you judge someone by their appearance?]

[Axel: Oh, come on! Are you the only one who's allowed to have an opinion?!]

Bella scrolled through the conversation and burst into a hearty laugh.

Bella thought to herself, 'Axel always speaks his mind. Being too straightforward often leads to loss.'

[Bella: Wish me luck! I'm about to meet my first victim.]

[Asher: May the Lord bless you and your blind date.]

[Axel: Bella, if you go out with this wig on your head and some wealthy young man takes a liking to you, you should seriously consider him. There's an 80% chance it could be true love It means he's just like us. He doesn't care about physical appearances but values inner

for

you. beauty!]

[Bella: Hehe, if someone falls for me today with this look, I'll give him a free Thompson Hospital medical card, so that he can get a free checkup for glaucoma or cataracts!]

Meanwhile, Steven's phone continued to vibrate.

Seizing the moment while Bella was engrossed somewhere, he pulled out his phone for a quick glance. He received private messages from all four of Bella's brothers, almost simultaneously. The gist was more or less the same.

[Thompson Brothers: Watch Bella. If there's a problem, contact us immediately.]

[Steven: Don't worry, I will definitely protect Bella and ensure her safety.]

[Thompson Brothers: Who said we were concerned about her? We're more worried about her date!]

Steven smiled slyly. He was sure that they were all blood-related siblings.

The ill-fated blind dating game officially began.

Bella was an efficient person. Since she had come this far, she decided to treat it like a game and see all the eligible men in one day so that she could conclude this as soon as possible.

Despite her ghostly and alarming appearance, these wealthy and privileged young men remained unfazed. To her surprise, they stayed composed and relaxed. They even exchanged laughter, as if nothing could rattle them.