

Heiress 791

Chapter 791

Ralph's voice was icy, his eyes subtly darkening. "So, everything you said earlier about your love for Celeste turning into hatred was bullshit."

Harry's face twisted into a creepy grin. "So what if you found out? I am indeed a fan of Shannon. I'm obsessed with her to the point that I'll do anything for her! Even if it's killing Celeste!"

Ralph's shoulders were shaking with anger. He wished he could charge forward and smash Harry's face.

"But if you're wondering about my relationship with Shannon, well, there's none. We're not even friends. It's just me being delusional. I'm willing to do anything for her, including sacrificing myself and murder. I'm fine without her knowing any of this."

With that, Harry closed his eyes, seeming to have accepted his fate.

Harry only dared make such a bold statement because he knew he could only be charged with intentional harm, or at worst, attempted murder, for his crimes. After all, Justin was fine, and Celeste

remained unharmed. Even if the Thompsons sought revenge, they would be powerless.

He only felt that it was a pity that he couldn't fulfill the task Shannon had entrusted him with.

Ralph was well aware of Harry's thinking. A wave of rage surged within him, and his eyes turned red with fury.

After a while, he instructed his subordinates to leave, then stood up and switched off the recording device.

"Harry, it's just the two of us now. Let's speak freely."

Ralph casually paced around the interrogation room. He sat on the table with his hands in his pockets, staring at Harry coldly. "You volunteered to be Shannon's hitman and do her dirty work. Sure. That's your decision. But imagine if there's something more to your relationship with Shannon. If this were to leak to the media, what would they make of it? What if the Salvadors heard rumors about it? How do you think Chairman Salvador would react?"

"Everyone would assume Shannon sent you to attack Celeste. Chairman Salvador would suspect there's something fishy between the both of you. When that happens and you're tucked away in prison, what about your sweetheart? Her reputation has already taken a hit. If this gets out, she could lose all

respect, right?"

Bella once told him. 'To destroy someone, you must first destroy their

heart!'

When Harry heard this, his body trembled, causing the handcuffs to clink. His eyes were burning

crimson as he glared at Ralph.

"You're a cop! Revealing the details of an ongoing investigation to the media is against the rules! I'll

report you!"

"Do you really believe I'd play by the rules with someone as stubborn and wicked as you?"

Ralph lifted his chin slightly, exuding fearlessness. "Let me make it clear, Harry. You've not only

provoked me, but the entire Thompson family. Since you dare to lay your fingers on Celeste, by all

means, I'll make sure both Shannon and you end up in hell together!"

"That guy is the one who stole it!" Shannon muttered incoherently, her eyes darting around in panic.

"Back then, when I was filming, I left the necklace backstage. When I

came back, it was gone. It must have been him who stole it!"

“Is that so? It was stolen, yet he didn’t sell it for money. Instead, it was carefully kept until now.” Bella couldn’t help but chuckle when she heard her flawed explanation.

“How would I know what he decided to do with it?” Shannon realized she might not be able to outwit Bella’s sharp tongue, so she resorted to acting defiant to the end.

Without concrete evidence, what was Bella capable of doing anyway?

“To be honest, I had someone look into the TS Gem Channel. They talked to people who knew Harry back then, and they all said you two were very close at that time. He didn’t take any money from you, but he was always there for you. He willingly served as your assistant making sure you were safe and helping you out whenever need

“Tell me, for a man so infatuated with you, why would he steal from you? And even if he did, it’s probably because he’s in love with you Mrs. Salvador.”

Bella's beautiful eyes narrowed slightly, revealing a smirk that sent

shivers down Shannon's spine. "So, he's willing to do anything for you, including murder."

"Bella! Shut up!" Shannon was drenched in cold sweat, her voice

trembling.

The gazes of the onlookers gradually became skeptical and complex as they watched her.

Chapter 792

Gregory's gaze fell upon Shannon. It was devoid of any warmth or

emotion.

Bella suddenly changed the subject. "Madam Shannon, did you

secretly instruct Mr. Harry to take advantage of the birthday party and attack Aunt Celeste, which led to

the previous incident?"

"It wasn't me! Harry acted on his own. I had nothing to do with it!"

Shannon desperately clung onto Gregory's suit, tears blurring her

vision as she defended herself.

"Greg, I have no reason to harm Celeste," Shannon insisted. "I am the

matriarch of the Salvador family. What move would I have against

someone like her, who is merely Wyatt's mistress?!"

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"Shannon! That's enough." Gregory's tone was stern as he interrupted.

"Madam Shannon, you can direct your anger at me, but I won't tolerate you insulting my family."

Bella's eyes flashed with anger as she confronted Shannon.

She raised her finger and pointed directly at Shannon's tearful yet sinister face. "If you dare to insult

Aunt Celeste again, I'll slap you

too!"

A tense silence fell over the room as everyone exchanged uneasy glances.

Logan, who was observing from the sidelines, shook his head

Chapis 792

disapprovingly. "Ms. Thompson's behavior hardly resembles that of a young lady. She's too unruly and

willful."

Ryan shrugged nonchalantly. "It's because she's been spoiled by everyone. Her father, siblings, and

even Justin spoil her! It's no

surprise she behaves so recklessly. You should know that Justin has

never spoiled a woman in his life. Ms. Thompson is the only

exception. No other woman enters his eyes."

Zoe intuitively caught the underlying message in the words, feeling a

slap to her pride.

Justin's gaze shifted to Bella. He found her fierce and aggressive

appearance irresistible, causing his heart to race uncontrollably.

Shannon froze in fear, fully aware of Bella's reputation for following through on her threats.

"Bella... All of this is merely your speculation! You're slandering me without any evidence!" Shannon

protested, convinced that Bella had

no concrete evidence to support her accusations.

Bella smirked, leaving Shannon speechless and embarrassed.

"Could your defensiveness be a sign of guilt?" Bella's smirk lingered as she reclaimed the necklace, her

tone teasing.

“As for the specifics of your relationship,” Bella continued, “I think I should ask Mr. Young again. We’ll have answers soon enough. Try to be patient.”

Shannon’s nerves coiled at the thought of Harry being in the hands of the cops.

“Well, I’ll leave you to your business” Bella said, heading for the door with everyone watching her.

Justin clenched his fists, his intense gaze following her every move. Despite the urge to follow, he suppressed the restless feeling in his

heart, resisting the impulse.

Just as Bella was about to leave, Claire stopped her.

“Ms. Thompson, next time you should handle your family matters at the right time and place. At least give Chairman Salvador and Mr. Salvador a heads-up, so nobody feels awkward.”

“Awkward? I didn’t feel that.” Bella shrugged, smiling casually. “Next

time, toughen up a little, then you won't feel awkward so easily."

Chapter 793

Claire choked at her words, coughing violently.

Bella's words cut through the tension like a knife. "You're not even

half as sharp as Shannon, yet you dare to challenge me?"

"Bella! How dare you speak so rudely to my mother? You're disrespecting your elders!" Zoe's voice

trembled as she hid behind

Logan, using him as a shield while stirring up a commotion.

Justin furrowed his brows as Zoe's words sank in, his expression

betraying his discontent.

"Just because someone is older, are they automatically labeled as an elder? If that's the case, then I'm

your elder too. Is it appropriate for

you to raise your voice at your elders?" Bella towered over Zoe.

Her icy glare caused Zoe's confidence to waver.

Zoe's lips trembled, unable to retort. She dared not speak out anymore, afraid of what would come out

of Bella's mouth next.

Claire knew Logan wouldn't cause trouble for Wyatt's daughter over

such a trivial matter, so she silently signaled to Ryan, urging him to

step in.

Ryan's eyes darted with uncertainty as he cleared his throat softly."

Um, Bella, I..."

Bella's stare intensified as she turned her attention to him. Seeing the

sudden change in Bella's demeanor, Ryan quickly changed his tone

and said, "I'll drive you home. It's not safe this late at night."

"No need. I drove here myself."

With that said, Bella didn't even glance back as she briskly made her way out, with the sharp click of

her high heels echoing through the

villa.

Ryan scratched his head, feeling embarrassed and at a loss for words.

Logan let out an irritated snort, finding his grandson, who was known for being bold, suddenly acting

meek in front of Bella. It was utterly

humiliating!

“Let’s go!” The Hoffman family followed suit, rushing out of the villa.

“Ahh! My head... I feel so dizzy.” Shannon murmured weakly, leaning against Gregory for support, as if

she barely had any strength left.

Wilma shot an irritated glance at Shannon and muttered under her breath, “Geez, always playing the

victim. With all those acting skills, how did Madam Celeste outshine her for so many years?”

Her every word reached Shannon’s ears. She was so angry that fumes

were coming out of her ears.

Gregory’s expression turned stiff and pale. After a moment of silence, he quietly instructed, “Wilma,

please assist Shannon back to her

room.”

“I’m sorry, Chairman Salvador, I’m only responsible for Young Master Justin’s needs. I need to run the

bath for him now. Perhaps someone else can help take care of Madam Shannon. Besides, she might

not want me to serve her either. It could make her feel uncomfortable,” Wilma replied with a defeated tone before bowing and walking away.

Gregory only stood there in silence, his thoughts disarrayed.

Just like that, Justin was left standing there. His expression revealed a mixture of reluctance and anger, as if he were abandoned.

“Justin! Why are you still standing here?” Ryan rushed over and pushed him urgently.

His face was filled with concern. “Bella’s about to leave. This is your chance to explain everything that happened between you and my sister!”

Justin felt suffocated, as if there were a heavy stone crushing his chest.

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On their journey back, the Hoffmans rode in two cars, with Logan in one and Claire and Zoe in the other.

Inside the second car, Claire was full of resentment. She had always

been shielded since she was young.

In her youth, she found solace in her husband's protection. As

aged, she relied on the steadfast support of her son. When has s

ever faced such humiliation as tonight?

"Mom, Ryan publicly humiliated me in front of the Salvadors and

Grandpa!" Zoe recounted, her voice trembling with anger. "He's

resorting to any means to stop me from marrying Justin!"

Zoe fell into Claire's arms and cried bitterly, "He only cares about his

own happiness. He doesn't care about my life or death at all! Does he still regard me as his sister now?

Am I an enemy in his eyes?

Chapter 794

"Don't worry, Zoe. This matter won't end just like that. Mom has got your back." Claire reassured her

daughter, a cold gleam flashing in

her eyes.

"But Ryan is in charge of everything at home now! Considering he has such a good relationship with

Justin and Bella, what can we possibly

do?"

Claire's voice dripped with bitterness as she exclaimed, "If your big

brother thinks he can control who you love, then he shouldn't even

dream about being together with that Salvador retard. With your grandfather backing us up, he won't

dare to overlook the family's

reputation. He will do everything possible to ensure you end up with

Justin. Mark my words. He will never allow Carrie to join the

Hoffmans!"

"Mom, Ryan has his guard up against us! Won't he see through our

plans?"

Zoe's eyes were red as she screamed in frustration. "He protects tha

little slut, Carrie, like she's his own heart and soul. How are we

supposed to do something when he's watching our every move?"

“There will be opportunities. Even if he’s fawning over Shannon’s silly

daughter, he can’t be with her every waking moment. There will be times when he’s away.”

Claire was truly angry this time.

Normally, she would not bother with such matters. But after

witnessing her own daughter being bullied, and with her reputation at stake, she was determined to

remove all obstacles and ensure her daughter’s marriage with Justin!

At the same time, she also wanted to find a fitting match for Ryan, a daughter-in-law worthy of their

prestigious family.

It certainly wouldn’t be Shannon’s autistic daughter, Carrie.

Bella briskly walked, slipping into her sports car. She stepped on the gas and sped out of Tideview

Manor.

As her car turned out of the gate, her grip tightened on the steering

wheel.

Standing under the dim streetlights, Christopher leaned against his electric blue sports car, looking

elegant and graceful.

It was unclear how long he had been standing there or how long he had been waiting, yet there was not a trace of impatience in his expression.

Seeing Bella's car appear, his eyes suddenly lit up with anticipation and he straightened away from the sports car, his expression eager as he waved at her like a giddy teenager.

The sports car screeched to a halt, stopping in front of the man.

Bella looked surprised as she stepped out of the car. "Why are you here?"

"I was waiting for you," Christopher replied, a faint smile tugging at the corner of his lips. His gaze was soft.

She was even more puzzled now. "Waiting for me? Why were you waiting for me?"

"I found out that your car was heading toward the Salvadors' manor, so I followed you. I didn't mean

anything else. I was worried that you would be bullied and would have no one around to help.”

With a wry smile, Christopher added, “But it turns out I was being foolish. I couldn’t get in, and even if I came, I wouldn’t be able to help you. But being able to see you now, my efforts weren’t in vain.”

Bella blinked, feeling a mixture of emotions at his words.

She had always been independent and free, unwilling to be watched or controlled by others.

The thought of someone investigating and silently following her made her uncomfortable.

“I’m fine, just sorting out some personal matters,” Bella replied with a forced smile. “The Salvador family isn’t dangerous. I mean, I lived there for three years, coming and going as I pleased.”

‘Three long lonely years of marriage... Christopher felt a wave of bitterness wash over him.

He was about to speak when his expression suddenly darkened. He noticed Justin standing not too far away, his face blank and sad,

blending into the cold, lonely night.

Justin stood silently like a pale and cold sculpture, staring at Bella

without blinking, but Bella was completely oblivious.

“Chris, I...” Bella tried to speak when her vision suddenly blurred.

Before she could react, Christopher pulled her into his arms and

pressed her tightly against his chest

She could even feel his disordered and fiery breath. His arms wrapped around her slender waist, and

he slowly tightened his

embrace.

Chapter 795

“Chris! What are you doing?” Bella exclaimed, flustered. She instinctively pushed against his shoulders.

To Justin, her struggles seemed like ambiguous signals of

acceptance.

Christopher remained silent, only hugging her tighter. He glanced up

once more, locking eyes with Justin.

His expression was filled with blatant mockery and arrogance. No

matter how much Bella struggled, he refused to let her go.

Justin's heart felt like it was being pierced by a thousand knives.

Every nerve in his body was taut as waves of agony washed over him. ut as waves of agony washed over him.

Watching Bella and Christopher embrace felt worse than being

physically stabbed. The pain was far worse compared to the injuries

he suffered as a soldier.

Justin's face drained of color as he turned away, stumbling back as if

he had drunk too much. His body weakened.

At that moment, Christopher's arms loosened, and Bella took the

opportunity to break free. She stepped back, her eyes filled with anger.

"Mr. Iverson, don't ever do this again. Consider this your final warning. Otherwise, we won't even be

friends anymore!"

“I’m sorry, Bella. I truly am.”

Christopher immediately put on an expression of innocence and guilt,

his hands suspended in the air, looking incredibly embarrassed.

“I know you only see me as a friend, and I’ve been trying to remind myself to maintain my boundaries.

But I just lost control at that moment. I promise it won’t happen again. Bella, please forgive me

this time. I was just too emotional.”

Bella rubbed her forehead impatiently, letting out a heavy sigh. “I

really hate it when men other than my brothers touch me. I hope your

remember that.”

Christopher clenched his teeth. His hands awkwardly hung by his

sides with his fists clenched in frustration.

He thought, ‘Do you really hate other men touching you? What about

Justin? You even allow your secretary, Steven, to be near you. Is it

just me that you can’t stand, Bella?’

“Thank you for your concern. It’s late, so I should go back now.”

As she said that, she had a deja vu moment and slowly turned to look behind her, only to be disappointed that there was no one there.

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Justin stumbled back to the villa, dragging his feet.

“Justin!” Ryan was so concerned about his best friend that he didn’t leave with the rest of his family.

When he saw Justin returning alone, looking lost and dejected, he hurriedly approached Justin.

However, Justin did not even notice Ryan and walked forward in a daze.

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asking “Where’s Bella? How did your conversation go Has she

forgiven you?

haven’t done anything wrong

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“Ryan, I’m tired. No matter how hard I try to keep her, I can’t. No

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