Her Riches 281

Chapter 281 Raising A Son

“Good night, Ceddy. I’ll see you tomorrow morning.”

He watched her leave with a heavy heart, and she even thoughtfully closed the door behind her.

Following her departure, it was as if she had taken all the warmth inside the room with her, causing him to feel cold to his core.

For the subsequent week, Cedrick compliantly ate his medication under Nico’s supervision because of the rules Gwendolyn had previously set.

One afternoon, he was dealing with work remotely in his study. Two minutes after the alarm clock rang, Gwendolyn video–called him.

“Ceddy, it’s time to take your medicine.“.

Cedrick concealed his darkened expression and responded gloomily, “All right.”

Before the call ended, Nico attentively came in with warm water and a box of pills. “Boss, here’s your medicine.”

“You’re indeed very dedicated to your duties.” Cedrick glanced at Nico coldly and received the glass of

water.

Then, he put all the pills into his mouth and gulped them in one go. They’re so bitter.

Face ashen and brows furrowed, he fought down a wave of nausea and gave Gwendolyn, on the other side of the screen, a reassuring smile.

Only after seeing him swallow all the pills did she end the video call.

The moment the screen went black, Cedrick immediately rushed to the bathroom sink. He retched in agony but failed to vomit anything.

Every medication had its side effects. Taking too many of these pills would cause him to feel nauseous, suffer from loss of appetite, and have a lingering bitter taste on his tongue.

Nico, watching from the side, felt sorry for Cedrick. “Boss, it won’t do if you keep feeling this uncomfortable after taking your medications each time.”

Cedrick rinsed his mouth. When he swallowed, a faint bitter taste lingered.

The bitterness in his oral cavity was nothing compared to the anguish in his heart. Only the thought of Gwendolyn’s unparalleled beauty could invoke a trace of sweetness in his chest.

He sat back in his office chair and sighed softly. “Do you have a cigarette?”

Nico was taken aback. “Didn’t Ms. Harris forbid you from smoking?”

Cedrick didn’t respond and merely held out his hand.

Nico pulled a pack of cigarettes he had just bought that morning from his pocket. They were so expensive that even he felt reluctant to smoke them. “Boss, I’ll need to be reimbursed!”

Cedrick looked up halfheartedly and murmured in agreement.

Nico opened the pack, pulled out a cigarette, and handed it to Cedrick. However, he hesitated midway.

“Boss, are you sure you want to smoke? If Ms. Harris finds out, she’ll skin you alive, too.”

Cedrick grimaced. “If you continue to babble, you’ll be in trouble right now.”

Nico abandoned all hesitation and immediately handed the cigarette over.

and I’ll be in trouble

He reckoned since Cedrick was only puffing one cigarette, Gwendolyn wouldn’t realize anything, so it shouldn’t be such a big deal.

Besides, Nico understood Cedrick.

Smoking could alleviate sorrow, and Cedrick needed to do something to relieve his mental stress.

However, to his surprise, Cedrick merely asked for the cigarette to do the simplest thing.

Chapter 282 Cedrick Is Playing With Fire

Inside the minimalistic black–and–white study, Cedrick accepted Nico’s cigarette and promptly held it under his nose to smell it.

If someone else had done the same thing, chances were they’d look rather creepy and repulsive.

Cedrick, however, did it with such effortless elegance that it seemed like he was enjoying a glass of champagne.

After inhaling the tobacco fragrance for almost a minute, he tossed the cigarette into the trash can without hesitation.

Nico, who had already prepared his lighter, widened his eyes in shock when he saw the unlit cigarette being thrown away.

“Boss… Aren’t you going to smoke it?”

Cedrick put his hand to his forehead and sighed. “If I do, the cigarette smell will linger on my clothes and around the study. Given how sharp she is, I won’t be able to hide it from her. Besides, smoking isn’t healthy… Taking a whiff of the tobacco is good enough.”

Upon hearing that, Nico nodded thoughtfully.

“By the way, remember to take the trash out when you leave.”

“Yes, Boss.”

Whether it was a form of self–consolation or not, Cedrick had to admit he felt much better after smelling the cigarette.

Say, this method is ingenious! Not only do I get a kick out of it, but I can also easily hide it from Gwendolyn. I should do this more often!

“This cigarette brand smells pretty good. Nico, buy a few packs for me when you’re free this afternoon and hide them in one of the drawers.”

“In the villa?” Nico replied, mouth agape as he drew a sharp breath. “You sure are gutsy, Boss! You’re knowingly breaking the law on Ms. Gwendolyn’s doorstep!”

My goodness… He’s playing with fire!

Cedrick calmly rubbed his temples. “Gwenny’s busy in the day and doesn’t look through the drawers much when she’s home. Just stash the cigarettes away in a secluded corner. She won’t find them.”

Nico, however, remained doubtful. Really? That doesn't sound right… Wait a minute. Is Boss reminding me that he's a masochist and is intentionally looking for ways to be punished? Is he feeling restless because it's been a while since Ms. Gwendolyn disciplined him? Yes, come to think of it, I still remember how I got a pay raise when Boss got beaten up the last time…

With that thought in mind, Nico couldn't help but sigh internally. Well, it's not like I can ask Boss to clarify… There's no way a proud, distinguished man like him will ever admit to being a masochist. Then again, if this is what he likes, I'll do my best to help him! That's what loyalty's all about!

Realizing Nico had yet to answer him, Cedrick turned to him with a raised eyebrow, "Have I not made myself clear enough?"

Nico nodded vigorously. Ah! I saw the way Boss quirked his brows. That must be his way of telling me to take his

hint!

"Don't worry, Boss! As long as you like it, I won't disappoint you! However… Are you sure you've thought it through?" the man said. What if Ms. Gwendolyn gets out of control with the beating, and Boss can't endure the pain? Gosh… I can't stop worrying.

Cedrick, on the other hand, was baffled and merely glared at Nico.

"Okay! I got it! I'll get it done right away!" the latter blurted out before leaving the study and closing the door behind him.

Cedrick stared at the door, a thousand questions running through his mind.

What's wrong with Nico today? Why do I have this bad feeling?

Meanwhile, Jennifer had been busy shooting a new show recently.

It was a female–centric, coming–of–age period drama that boasted an excellent script and a famous director at its helm.

Jennifer had clinched the lead actress role with Treyton's help, and if she could make the most of the opportunity, she'd undoubtedly stand a chance to win at the end–of–year awards show.

Needless to say, Gwendolyn was happy for her friend and decided to visit her at the filming location in Salinsburgh later that afternoon.

By the time she arrived on set, Jennifer was in the midst of her break.

Still dressed in her gorgeous period costume, the latter smiled brightly and waved at Gwendolyn, her bracelets jingling as she did.

Without further ado, Gwendolyn returned the smile and walked over to join her friend.

Before long, the two women had settled into a comfortable conversation.

"Ah. I just remembered something!" Jennifer suddenly exclaimed. "This morning, Papilio Girls received an invitation to Ms. Ferguson's birthday party. The Ferguson family wants us to put on a few performances then. Are you aware of this, Gwendolyn?"

Gwendolyn furrowed her brows. "This morning, huh? Your manager has yet to inform me about it."

Upon hearing that, Jennifer sat deep in thought. "Knowing Eloise's character, going to the Ferguson residence would be like entering the beast's lair. What do you think?"

"Eloise is a snob who has always looked down on those who work in the entertainment industry. The fact that she has taken the initiative to invite you guys to her party can only mean she's targeting you."

Jennifer instantly lowered her head and fell silent, prompting Gwendolyn to give her a reassuring pat on her shoulder.

“Don’t worry. There’s no harm checking it out,” the latter comforted. “Treyton and I will protect you.”

“Yes, I know. I trust you.”

Gwendolyn smiled, but there was a wicked glint in her eyes as she thought of Eloise. “It’s been a while

since I had some fun… If Eloise has the guts to stir up trouble at her party, I’ll return the favor by turning the Ferguson family upside down!”

Jennifer stared intently at Gwendolyn, too mesmerized by the fire in the latter’s eyes to look away.

Just then, Gwendolyn snapped out of her reverie and thought of the situation between Jennifer and Treyton. “Tell me the truth, Jennifer. Do you really like Treyton? Do you truly want to be with him?”

After recalling her agreement with Treyton, Jennifer lowered her gaze and nodded. “I’ll do what he says. If he gives up on us in the future, I’ll follow suit.”

Gwendolyn said nothing more as she sighed.

Dad has always been very strict about us finding a suitable partner of similar social status. I remember how mad he was when I married “Maverick” back in Fairlake, but since he dotes on me the most, he eventually let the matter slide. That said, what if he finds out about Treyton and Jennifer? Will Treyton get a free pass like I did?

After a long day at work, Gwendolyn finally returned to the villa.

Cedrick’s custom–made address stone had already been delivered and placed in the garden, the words “Harrick Villa” engraved on it.

Feeling warm and fuzzy in her heart, Gwendolyn instinctively picked up the pace as she strode to the door.

She hadn't seen Cedrick the entire day and was starting to miss him.

The second Gwendolyn opened the door, a strapping figure pulled her into an embrace and rested his chin on her shoulder before she could even register what was happening.

"I missed you, Gwenny…" the man uttered, his voice deep and soothing.

Touched by the gesture, Gwendolyn gently caressed and patted his back. "In that case, I shall take a day off tomorrow and stay home with you. How does that sound?"

Cedrick smiled. "That sounds perfect."

It'd be even better if I could hold her to sleep, but I shall be content with what I can get.

After dinner, the alarm rang, which meant it was time for Cedrick to take his medicines.

Gwendolyn went downstairs to fetch him a glass of water and prepare his medication as prescribed, carefully going through the pile of boxes in the cabinet and taking out the right pills.

All of a sudden, she caught sight of a slightly ajar drawer at the bottom.

Gwendolyn frowned.

There was something inside, but it wasn't something she recognized.

Curious, she opened the drawer.

Huh? Cigarettes?

Chapter 283 Indignance

In the bedroom, Cedrick had been waiting for quite some time, yet there was no sign of Gwendolyn coming upstairs with the box of medicine.

“Gwenny?”

The lights were on downstairs, but no reply came.

Puzzled, Cedrick got out of bed, slipped on his slippers, and proceeded downstairs to investigate.

As he descended the staircase, his gaze fell on Gwendolyn right away. She was standing before a cupboard, holding a pack of cigarettes and examining it carefully.

One of the drawers on the cupboard was open, revealing its contents–packs and packs of cigarettes.

Cedrick’s heart skipped a beat.

His handsome face turned a shade paler.

Nico had only bought the cigarettes earlier that day and told Cedrick where he had put them away. However, Cedrick had been preoccupied with an online meeting that afternoon and hadn’t had a chance. to open the drawer himself.

D*mn it! Gwenny doesn’t usually go through drawers. I’ve got such rotten luck to be caught in the act by her today. And why did Nico buy so many packs?

His body tensed as a wave of turmoil stirred within him.

Gwendolyn, observing his reaction, held the pack of cigarettes and turned around to take a seat on the couch. Her face was devoid of any expression as she emanated a frosty aura.

“Care to explain?” she asked.

Cedrick stood frozen at the foot of the staircase. Without the slightest guilt and hesitation, he denied, “Those aren’t mine. I never use that brand. They must be Nico’s.”

A hint of amusement crossed Gwendolyn’s eyes. She fixed a stare on him, a smirk dancing on her lips.

“So, you’re saying that Nico placed his cigarettes in your villa, in your living room, in the drawer of your cupboard? And why is that? To tempt you to partake and join in the fun?”

Cedrick fell silent as his Adam’s apple bobbed nervously. His eyelashes quivered while his brain churned at lightning speed.

“Penny for your thoughts, Ceddy?” Gwendolyn eyed him intently, a tempest hidden beneath her calm. exterior. Her tone was frigid as she added, “Perhaps you’re thinking of how to concoct a plausible excuse and pull the wool over my eyes?”

With a loud smack, she slapped the cigarette pack onto the coffee table furiously.

At that sudden loud noise, Cedrick instinctively fell to his knees.

He cast his eyes downward, hoping Gwendolyn would go easy on him now that he had admitted his mistake. His obsidian gaze was tinged with guilt. “I was wrong! Please, hear me out!”

Gwendolyn’s frigid gaze flickered at his plea.

When he had fallen to his knees just now, Gwendolyn had clearly heard a dull thud resonating from his kneecaps. Furthermore, he had landed on cold, hard marble tiles.

Her heart ached for him. However, the sight of the cigarette packs on the coffee table made her resist the urge to rush over to help him up and rub his knees.

Then, she gestured at the soft carpet by her feet and said, “Come here.”

The forceful kneel had indeed hurt Cedrick badly.

When he stood up, his eyebrows contracted in a small frown.

He quickly concealed the pain in his eyes and slowly began to move toward Gwendolyn.

She watched him carefully, her eyes taking in every small movement he made.

Just as Cedrick was about to get on his knees again, she said, “Assume military posture and squat.”

Huh? Squat?

Cedrick paused for two heartbeats and didn’t move.

Gwendolyn regarded him coolly. “Didn’t catch that? Do you need me to repeat myself?”

“I heard you,” he replied.

Cedrick immediately assumed the standard military pose–a single knee driven into the earth, thumb aligned with the rest, straightening his back as he squatted.

He appeared imposingly upright in this position, emanating an air of unyielding pride.

However, seeing as he had been caught red–handed in his misdeeds, his aura seemed somewhat diminished, subdued by Gwendolyn's commanding presence.

Her gaze fell on the cigarette pack atop the coffee table. "This is your last chance to explain yourself. Choose your words carefully."

Cedrick nodded obediently. "I appreciate that."

He began to formulate his response, laying out the truth in a forthright manner. "The cigarettes are indeed mine. I had Nico purchase them, but I never intended to smoke."

Fury burned in Gwendolyn's chest.

She took a deep breath and suppressed the boiling rage. "Still not telling the truth? How many times have you secretly done this behind my back? How many cigarettes have you smoked?"

A wave of indignance washed over Cedrick. "I only asked Nico to buy them this afternoon, and by evening you've already caught me. I haven't smoked any."

Once again, Gwendolyn calmed herself and picked up the pack of cigarettes on the coffee table, flipping it open to show Cedrick.

When I came over, the drawer of the cupboard was slightly ajar, like it had been opened just today. It

seemed like you had been so flustered that you'd forgotten to close it properly. Besides, one cigarette is clearly missing from this pack on the top. Are you still trying to deny it?" Gwendolyn pointed out.

Cedrick was rendered speechless.

So this is how I was discovered!

Moreover, Nico had also put the packet missing one cigarette into the drawer.

How could he be so careless? Is he trying to have me killed?

Suppressing the urge to let Nico have a piece of his mind, Cedrick switched from squatting to kneeling.

“I did use one cigarette today, but I only smelled it. I didn’t even light it. If you don’t believe me, you can smell me. I don’t smell of smoke at all. I really haven’t smoked!” Cedrick said.

Gwendolyn narrowed her eyes slightly and sneered. “You could have showered and changed clothes after smoking. Of course, I wouldn’t be able to detect any smell.”

She clearly doesn’t believe me…

Cedrick was so aggrieved that the corners of his eyes turned red. His fingers gingerly clutched at her sleeve, as if it might offer some solace.

“Gwenny, you said that we should trust each other. Everything I’ve said is true. Could you believe me just this once?” Cedrick pleaded.

“But didn’t you deny that the cigarettes were yours just a moment ago? So, which statement should I believe?” Gwendolyn retorted.

Cedrick was at a loss for words. Nico and his own oversight had led him into a ditch.

He bit down hard on his lip, unable to utter a single word of explanation.

Gwendolyn soon noticed the tears welled up in his obsidian eyes. His expression was a mix of sorrow and helplessness.

The imprints of his teeth were visible on his lower lip, forming a bloody streak.

“Stop that!”

Stumped, Gwendolyn’s fingers dug into his cheeks, forcing his mouth to open.

His handsomely pale face bore a look of desolation in his drooping lashes. The vivid red imprints of his teeth formed a desperately pitiful sight.

“You’ve made a mistake, and now you’re playing the victim?” Gwendolyn questioned.

She let out a resigned sigh, her heart aching at the pitiful sight. Gwendolyn leaned down and pressed her lips against his, her tongue gently licking away the pain from his bitten lip.

The faintly metallic taste of his blood was sweet and bitter.

After the kiss, Gwendolyn continued to hold his face, her eyes boring into his at a close distance. Finally, she decided to offer him a way out. “Since you insist that you didn’t smoke, then the intact cigarette should still be around. Find it, and I’ll believe you.”

At last, a glimmer of hope sparkled in Cedrick’s eyes. “All right, it’s in the study-”

His words abruptly halted.

D*mn it! I asked Nico to dispose of the cigarette along with the study’s rubbish bag. Now, where on earth am I supposed to find it?

Gwendolyn’s hand, still clutching his face, exerted a bit more pressure. “Where in the study?”

“I threw it in the trash can, and it was taken away when Nico left…”

Gwendolyn arched her brow. “How convenient.”

It is, indeed… How can I possibly explain myself now?

On the inside, Cedrick was seething. His misty dark eyes stared at Gwendolyn as he said, “I have no evidence to support my claim, but I have a witness. I’ll have Nico prove my innocence!”

+15 Bonus

Gwendolyn haughtily eyed him before releasing her grip on his chin, silently granting her permission.

A minute later, Nico answered the call

Before he could even utter a single word, Cedrick’s temper flared up as he gritted his teeth in fury. “You have fifteen minutes to get your *ss over here, now!”

Chapter 284 His Explanation Backfired

Since Nico was coming over, Gwendolyn did not want to embarrass him in front of others. She subtly gestured toward the nearby couch with her eyes. “Go and take a seat.”

Cedrick refused to move. He kept his head lowered, breathing heavily in anger, while his cold, dark eyes revealed his murderous intent.

Remembering how he had angina, Gwendolyn gently stroked his cheek to soothe his emotions. “Go and take a seat over there, okay? We might be able to clear your name soon.”

Cedrick suppressed his emotions and sat on the couch on the side.

Fifteen minutes later, Nico arrived.

As he stepped into the house, the intimidating atmosphere caused him to shudder.

After seeing the cigarettes on the coffee table, he instantly knew what to expect.

He was pleased to see how effective his meticulous plan was. I can't believe Boss was caught red–handed so quickly.

With a faint grin on his face, he stood obediently by the coffee table.

Cedrick could not believe Nico still dared to smile in front of him.

Despite that, Cedrick remained composed in front of Gwendolyn as he spoke in a deep voice. "Gwenny saw the cigarettes you placed in the drawer. You better explain everything to her, and don't you dare

utter a single lie. If you do, I'll drag you to the interrogation room and hook you up to a lie detector and a shock device!"

Nico was struck dumb, not daring to give him any response. What the f*ck? How can he be so ruthless? This is not what I expected! Didn't Boss want to be punished? Shouldn't he be happy about being found out?

Gwendolyn knitted her brows before shooting daggers in Cedrick's direction. "Why are you threatening him?"

"N–No, I didn't…" Cedrick instantly toned down his voice.

Instead of continuing with the reprimand, Gwendolyn turned to Nico and asked in a calm tone, "Nico, tell me the truth. Did Cedrick smoke today?"

Nico froze for a moment before instinctively casting a glance at Cedrick.

Cedrick blithely warned him again, “Shock device!”

His words sent chills down Nico’s spine. “Nope, he didn’t! He asked me for a cigarette, but he just took a sniff of it before tossing it away.”

Gwendolyn maintained a composed posture, crossing her arms gracefully, and her facial expression remained stoic. Despite studying their faces intently, she could not fully believe their explanation. “Nico, don’t be scared to tell the truth. As long as I’m here, Cedrick would not dare to lay a finger on you.”

With Gwendolyn’s assurance, Nico breathed a sigh of relief, raised his right hand, and vowed. “Ms. Gwendolyn, every word I said is true!”

“All right then.” Gwendolyn nodded, giving the impression that she believed his words.

Cedrick heaved a sigh of relief.

Yet, seconds later, Gwendolyn continued asking, “How do you explain the cigarettes in the drawer then?”

“Boss asked me to buy the cigarettes for him and told me to hide them inside the drawer,” he answered.

Spotting a keyword in his reply, Gwendolyn narrowed her eyes. “Hide?”

Nico nodded. “Boss said you’re busy during the day and normally wouldn’t go through the drawers. That’s why he instructed me to put the cigarettes in a corner to hide them away from you.”

Gwendolyn let out a cold laugh before shooting Cedrick a meaningful look. “Ah, I sec. So that was all a ploy to keep me from discovering the cigarettes.”

Cedrick was about to explode in rage. F*ck! This b*stard is just making things worse! How am I going to defend myself after this?

He gave Nico a fierce glare before grinding his teeth. “I told you to come and explain the situation, not repeat every single word I said earlier! You’re supposed to come here to clear my name and set things straight!”

Comprehension dawned on Nico when he heard that.

He realized then that he had misunderstood Cedrick. So Boss wasn’t looking forward to being beaten up by Ms. Gwendolyn. He genuinely wanted to keep the truth from her!

In contrast to Cedrick’s anger, Gwendolyn responded with a gentle smile. “You did a great job in providing me with a clearer understanding of the situation. Don’t worry; you can speak freely. I am here to protect you.”

Nevertheless, after realizing the harm he had brought on Cedrick, Nico became uncertain of what to say, but he knew he needed to earnestly think about how to make amends.

Otherwise, his life would be in serious jeopardy. No one, not even Ms. Gwendolyn, can save me if Boss explodes!

After contemplating for a while, Nico spoke with sincerity. “Ms. Gwendolyn, it was not right for Mr. Jenson to keep this from you, but he does remember the plan you customized for him, and he never intended to actually smoke. He has been taking medication three times a day recently. Those pills are bitter and can cause loss of appetite and nausea if taken in excess. He was trying to find a way to alleviate the discomfort caused by the medication. It’s just that he ended up choosing the wrong method.”

Nico gave a heartfelt explanation.

Cedrick’s gloomy expression gradually eased as the person who screwed things up for him finally said something pleasing.

However, Gwendolyn’s face remained deadpan. It was hard to tell if she believed what Nico said.

Nico tested the waters by saying, “So, Ms. Gwendolyn, please don’t be mad at Mr. Jenson anymore.”

Gwendolyn decided not to expose Cedrick in front of Nico for trying to lie to her and sweep things under the carpet.

She glanced at Cedrick and cast a gentle smile at him. “Why should I be mad at him? It’s just a small issue.

Right, Ceddy?”

Cedrick nodded earnestly.

Gwendolyn withdrew her gaze and looked at the cigarettes on the coffee table. “But from now on, let’s not keep these cigarettes. These are just bad stuff. Nico, empty the drawer and sell all the cigarettes at a low price.”

“Low price?” Nico’s eyes widened in shock. Those are imported goods, and they’re all extremely expensive!

Those were his cherished possessions. The thought of selling them at a low price felt like a stab to his heart.

Cedrick glared at him. “Listen to Gwenny. Take all the cigarettes away. I don’t want to see them again!”

Nico’s face showed a mixture of pain and reluctance. “All right, Boss.”

While Nico started clearing the cigarettes in the drawer, Gwendolyn stood up and grabbed Cedrick’s arm. “Come, let’s go upstairs.”

She sounded calm, but Cedrick’s heart skipped a beat. Will she still punish me after all that explaining?

Overwhelmed by complicated emotions, Cedrick felt helpless as Gwendolyn led him to the master bedroom.

“Sit,” she instructed.

Cedrick sat down obediently, even though he had butterflies in his stomach.

He was unsure if Gwendolyn was still angry, but he knew he hated her physical punishments.

If it were not for fear of Gwendolyn getting angry, he would have dumped the ruler and Lego pieces into the ocean so that she would never be able to retrieve them again!

As he was brooding, he saw Gwendolyn turn her head and walk toward the bedside table. She placed her hand on the first drawer as if she was about to open it.

Cedrick knew very well what was lying inside.

Before Gwendolyn could fully open the drawer, he clutched his chest, furrowed his brow, and weakly said, “Gwenny, I feel uncomfortable…”

Gwendolyn ran over to check on him. “Do you feel discomfort in your heart? Is your angina acting up again? By right, you should feel better since you’ve taken the medicine for a week.”

With a pallid complexion and a frail demeanor, he leaned weakly in her embrace, his eyes drooping.

Gwendolyn was deeply concerned. “You shouldn’t bear the pain if you’re having an episode. I’ll fetch the medicine to alleviate your angina attacks!”

“No, it’s okay!” He gripped her wrist just when she was about to stand up.

The grip was remarkably firm and unwavering, in stark contrast to the feeble and trembling hand of the person who had been in agony moments before.

Upon realizing he had overreacted, Cedrick instantly loosened his grip and buried his head in her embrace, speaking softly. “What I meant was, I feel much better with you hugging me…”

Gwendolyn lowered her head and stayed silent.

After narrowing her eyes, she discreetly assessed the man’s behavior and quickly understood his intentions. Not only did he deceive me, but now he’s also putting on a show.

Initially, she had considered forgiving him. That was why she had wanted to retrieve the anti-inflammatory cream from the drawer to apply it to his injured knees.

A corner of her lips quirked up. Looks like someone deserves a punishment, after all!

Chapter 285 The Queen Of Unpredictability

Gwendolyn quietly stroked Cedrick’s back to comfort him.

Several minutes later, she asked, “Are you still uncomfortable?”

The discomfort in Cedrick’s expression barely changed, but he put on a brave face and nodded. “I feel better with you around.”

Gwendolyn was secretly impressed by his charade, though she did not call him out on it. She helped him to sit on the bed, propping some pillows against his back and covering his legs with a blanket.

Then, she said, “There was a half–hour delay. You haven’t even taken your night medication. Wait here; I’ll get them for you.”

“Okay.”

Scarcely two minutes later, Gwendolyn reappeared in the room with warm water and a pill box, which she placed on the bedside table. After that, she closed and locked the room door before returning to Cedrick’s side.

Cedrick pulled a face when he saw the assortment of pills. “Can I at least get Gwenny’s medicine–feeding. service again tonight?”

Unamused, Gwendolyn handed a glass of water to him and retorted, “Well, what did you think of your little act tonight? Was it deserving of a reward?”

He lowered his eyes guiltily in response.

As it were, he would already be thanking his lucky stars if he escaped unscathed, let alone expect a reward.

After wiping the sulkiness from his gaze, Cedrick received the glass from Gwendolyn. He stubbornly tried to swallow all the pills at once and erupted into a fit of choking coughs when he glugged too much water.

Gwendolyn patted his back while chiding him, “You fool. You could just swallow a couple of pills at once each time and spare yourself this misery. How can it not be bitter if you stuff everything into your mouth in one go?”

As she spoke, she pulled a packet of caramel sweets from her pocket, which she had bought specifically for Cedrick.

She ripped the packaging open and grabbed a sweet, leaving the rest on the bedside table.

Her pale, slender fingers deftly unwrapped the caramel sweet, which she plopped into Cedrick’s mouth. “Don’t mistreat your body like this again. If you find the pills too bitter, treat yourself to a sweet.

Smoking will not relieve your suffering; it will only make things worse. Don't ever entertain that thought again. Got it?"

"Got it," Cedrick mumbled while sucking on the caramel sweet.

He savored the milky fragrance of the confection, pleasantly surprised to find that it was not sickeningly sweet.

Of course, the fact that Gwendolyn had purchased and fed him the sweet only augmented his delight.

While he slowly ate the sweet, he opened his arms in a silent bid for a hug.

His dark gaze had lost its usual hawkish edge in Gwendolyn's presence. In fact, he even appeared rather adorable with his cheeks puffed up from sucking on the sweet.

Gwendolyn smiled and shook her head. She flicked his forehead lightly and teased, "You're five years older than me, mister, but one sweet has turned you into a toddler. Is it that yummy?"

Cedrick nodded earnestly.

"I'll have a taste too."

She turned toward the bedside table to get a caramel sweet, but Cedrick seized her elbow and pulled her toward him. A second later, he covered her lips with a searing kiss.

The faint, milky scent of the caramel sweet intermingled with their breaths..

Cedrick asked, "Taste good?"

Gwendolyn's lips curved into a seductive smile. "Not bad."

She traced his face with her fingers as her smile grew wicked. “You’ve finished your medicine and tasted that sweet. I guess it’s time to move on to the next thing on the agenda, hmm?”

Cedrick scrunched his brows in confusion. A sense of dread filled his chest as he took in Gwendolyn’s expression.

Alas, she did not give him a chance to react. Instead, she swiftly pulled open the first drawer of the bedside table and took a red wooden ruler out of it.

The wicked smile never left Gwendolyn’s face as she lazily tapped the ruler on her palm.

Cedrick instantly paled with shock when he saw the ruler. The caramel sweet in his mouth suddenly tasted less sweet than he remembered.

Even after all the distractions, it appeared he would not be spared from corporal punishment.

It felt as though he had taken a tumble from heaven and landed straight in hell.

“Gwenny…” He clenched his fists nervously and pleaded, “I messed up…” The poor man was on the verge of an emotional breakdown.

Unmoved, Gwendolyn said, “Since you know you messed up, you must be punished for your wrongdoing, or you’ll never learn. Now, give me your hand.”

Cedrick inhaled shakily but did not offer his hand. I should never have celebrated prematurely if I knew my fate was sealed.

“Your hand? Gwendolyn repeated more sternly.

Under her scrutiny, Cedrick slowly stretched out his left hand. The ruler was immediately placed on his palm, but Gwendolyn seemed to be in no rush to carry out his punishment.

Instead, she drawled, “Hiding cigarettes is one thing. I’m not likely to discover them since I’m usually out in the day. But lying that they belonged to Nico? Plus, you didn’t seem to care that I would be worried and were more intent on weaseling your way out of a punishment. Tell me. How many raps do you deserve?”

Cold dread washed over Cedrick.

Ah, I guess she knew from the start that I was trying to play the victim.

She had recounted every one of his crimes with frightening accuracy.

“Talk. How many?” Gwendolyn tapped the center of his palm and urged him to respond.

+15 Bonus

Cedrick snapped out of his thoughts and bit his lip. He uttered timidly and hesitantly, “Uhm… how about once?”

Gwendolyn’s expression darkened, and she announced coldly, “A hundred!”

His heart clenched in fear, and he attempted to negotiate a lighter punishment. “What about five times?”

Not even a hint of mercy was detectable in Gwendolyn’s expression as she responded, “Fifty.”

She immediately halved the number of

it I think I’m seeing a pattern here.”

He tested the waters and offered, “Ten?”

Gwendolyn paused for several seconds before saying, “Twenty.”

It was lenient enough for Cedrick, and he declared, “Fine. Twenty it is. Go on.”

Gwendolyn did not move and raised a brow in amusement. A devilish smile appeared on her face.

She feigned shock and exclaimed, “Ah, you’re very much mistaken. My rule was to sum up both our proposed number of hits, so that makes forty! What a coincidence! I just determined that you committed four offenses today. We read each other’s mind so perfectly!”

Cedrick was flabbergasted and could only stare at her wordlessly.

What kind of logic is that?

Frustration brewed in his chest, and he asked meekly, “How hard will you hit me?”

If she hits me as hard as she did last time, forty hits could render my left arm permanently impaired!

Gwendolyn replied seriously, “This is a punishment. If I hit you softly, how will you learn your lesson next time?”

That dashed Cedrick’s hopes entirely.

The ruler, which still rested on his left palm and could strike him at any time, filled him with fear.

He lowered his head in utter defeat as his nose inexplicably stung.

Gwenny doesn’t love me anymore…

Amid his morose thoughts, the ruler left his palm and resumed contact with a sharp sting again and again, sparing him no room for reprieve.

Cedrick's fingers quivered, and he clenched his jaw silently, resisting the urge to retract his hand.

He felt aggrieved, but he could only accept his punishment dutifully.

The sounds of Gwendolyn's ruler slapping Cedrick's palm pierced the silence of the night.

Despite her claims that she would not go easy on him, Gwendolyn had, in fact, only used fifty percent of her strength.

Granted, every rap of the ruler hurt, but it was not as painful as the last time she punished him.

By the time she fully doled out the punishment, Cedrick's left palm was swollen and turning red. Still, the forty hits this time were definitely a lighter penalty than the five hits from Gwendolyn in the past.

Cedrick knew she had toned down her strength, but upon recalling her convincing threats earlier, he whined, "I really thought you didn't care about me anymore."

Gwendolyn raised his left hand and planted gentle kisses across his burning palm.

She was using her own ways to lessen his pain.

Chapter 286 The Shameless Nico

Gwendolyn closed her eyes and lovingly kissed Cedrick's palm.

Her quiet concentration moved Cedrick, who could only stare at her in a daze.

When she finally lifted her lips from his palm, she asked, “Docs it still hurt?”

4343%

+15 Bonus

Cedrick almost answered in the negative when he remembered the painful price he had paid for giving the same answer last time.

He swallowed the words on the tip of his tongue and eked out, “It still hurts…”

Approval danced in Gwendolyn’s gaze, and she commented brightly, “Good to see you’ve learned your lesson. That beating did not go to waste.”

She followed it up with more kisses on his palm before standing up. After returning the ruler to its rightful place, she grabbed a tube of anti–inflammatory cream from the same drawer.

Then, she carefully applied the ointment to his palm and knees. From time to time, she blew on the areas to soothe the sting of the ointment.

“Next time, just let me know if you have something on your mind. If you had told me earlier that you hated how bitter the medicine tasted, we could’ve peacefully discussed another solution together. None of this would’ve happened then, don’t you agree?”

Cedrick nodded and shot her a tender gaze. His heart was bursting with joy.

With her around, even every argument left a sweet taste in his mouth.

He was still relishing the loveliness of their banter when Gwendolyn’s next words ruined his mood.

She said, “Actually, I planned to let you off the hook tonight. I only wanted to help you back to the room and apply some ointment to your knees. Who knew you were so into playing the part of a clueless victim! You practically begged for your punishment today.”

Cedrick’s back stiffened. He stared at his left palm in disbelief.

Is she telling me that my acting brought this beating upon myself?

He had never felt more depressed than he did at that moment.

My palm hurts even more now!

Cedrick weakly burrowed into Gwendolyn’s embrace, his expression a mask of sorrow and dejection.. “Don’t go tonight, Gwenny. Sleep with me, okay?”

His request struck Gwendolyn silent for a few moments. She cleaned the ointment off her fingers with a wet tissue before stroking his face and coaxing, “I can’t. We can consider it when you feel better. If you’re so keen on sharing a bed, then take your medication on time and focus on recuperating.”

“But…”

It was almost winter, and judging by the state of his body, Cedrick was already dreading the lonely nights ahead of him till at least spring.

Eventually, he stopped himself from protesting Gwendolyn’s decision and watched her leave the room.

Because Gwendolyn took the next day off and occupied Cedrick’s attention at the villa, Nico had no opportunity to apologize to Cedrick, and the poor man suffered through two sleepless nights.

Nico’s chance came when Gwendolyn finally returned to work on day three. He was in charge of monitoring Cedrick’s afternoon medication intake.

He knocked on the door to the study uneasily.

“Come in.” Cedrick’s deep voice betrayed no emotion.

Nico took a deep breath and carefully opened the door and the amber, beaded curtains behind it. His legs felt leaden with dread as he approached Cedrick.

Cedrick paused in the middle of typing and shot Nico a frosty stare.

Chills ran down Nico’s spine. He plastered an awkward smile on his face and asked, “Boss, two nights ago, the two of you… was everything okay?”

“Of course. Though, thanks to you, Gwenny struck me forty times on the hand! No big deal!” Cedrick returned darkly, mercilessly pushing the blame on Nico.

Nico’s breathing stuttered. He could almost feel his palm throbbing in pain as he imagined Gwendolyn’s punishment.

Before he could wail and plead for mercy, Cedrick continued, “I recently heard of a small country in Alendor called Bera which is in dire need of coal miners. I think you’re a great fit for the job. Should I get you transferred there?”

“Huh?”

A panic–stricken Nico threw himself at Cedrick’s feet. He hugged the latter’s muscular thigh and howled, “I have sinned, Boss! It’s all my fault. Why don’t you hit me as many times as you please instead? I don’t want to mine coal in Bera! I’ll never leave you even if I become a ghost! Please, I’ve been your loyal follower for years. I may be useless, but considering my efforts, won’t you please give me a chance to redeem myself?”

His eyes even welled with tears. In short, he was a perfect picture of remorse, from his anguished expression down to his cries.

Not this again.

Cedrick was disgusted by Nico's bawling act and tried to free himself from the latter's grip.

"I won't leave! I'll never go to Bera. Boss, why don't you just kill me now? Dying by your hand would be an honor!"

To Cedrick's dismay, Nico tightened his grip and refused to let go. He looked like a leech that was stubbornly holding on to its target.

Cedrick's annoyance was written all over his face. He did not know whether to rage or laugh at Nico's shameless act.

Finally, he roared, "You b*stard! If you don't want to end up at a coal mine in Bera, stay out of my sights for the next two days! Now get lost!"

"Yes! I'll scram now!"

Nico clambered to his feet and almost tripped several times in his haste to leave the study.

Cedrick facepalmed at Nico's comical departure from the room. Surprisingly, most of his rage had dissipated after Nico's shameless begging.

He returned his attention to the computer screen before him, but before he could type a word, something clutched at his calf.

Cedrick looked down and frowned. "Why are you back?"

Sprawled on the floor, Nico replied seriously, "Boss, Nico from the Federal Bureau of Investigation has already fled the room, and the person here is the Nico instructed by Ms. Gwendolyn to make sure you take your medication on time. I am now working under her orders."

“You!” Cedrick gritted his teeth in exasperation.

He grabbed his coffee cup from the table to hit Nico.

Nico covered his head with his hands but did not duck. “Take your anger out on me, Boss! My muscles are strong enough to become your punching bag! Even so, I won’t leave without carrying out Ms. Gwendolyn’s orders. I’m sure you wouldn’t want her to know that you taught me a lesson days after the fact, right?”

Ms. Gwendolyn already gave me a ticket to indemnity that day!

“Hmph! Are you threatening me now because you have her support?”

Cedrick’s murderous aura instantly permeated the room.

Nico swiftly changed tune and sputtered, “I wouldn’t dare! But… Ms. Gwendolyn will think you refuse to admit to your wrongdoing if she knows I left. She’ll assume you pushed the blame onto me, and then she’ll get mad at you!”

He added, “I’m doing all this for your sake, Boss! My loyalty to you knows no bounds!” He crawled closer to Cedrick and even began massaging his boss‘ legs.

Cedrick narrowed his eyes and muttered in disbelief, “How is it possible that you’re becoming more and more shameless every day? Who’s teaching you this?”

“You, of course…” Nico promptly realized his mistake and corrected himself, “Ah, that’s not it! Boss, you have never taught me anything but sensible things, and I was simply born as a shameless man!”

Cedrick was torn between fuming and laughing. In the end, he shook his head resignedly and ignored Nico, deciding to focus on his work.

Meanwhile, Nico remained on his knees in the study, dutifully massaging Cedrick’s legs and knees.

An entire morning of ingratiating barely soothed Cedrick's fury.

Their days of peace flew by, and soon enough, it was time for Eloise's birthday celebration.

Gwendolyn helped Cedrick to put on his tie for the event, though she muttered with a frown, "The weather is getting colder. I don't really want you to attend this Ferguson family affair."

Cedrick covered her hand with his and replied, "It's precisely because it's not a simple party that I have to

I'll be there to hand Gwenny a knife if she wants to kill someone, and if she wants to cause a ruckus, I'll happily lear those nasty Fergusons to shreds!

Chapter 287 Jealous Cedrick Jenson

Gwendolyn remained silent. Her expression was somber with worry.

Cedrick continued, "I've already been recovering at home for the last two weeks. People will start to get suspicious if I don't get out soon."

"All right, fine," Gwendolyn said grudgingly. "You're not allowed to drink any liquor during the party. If I find out you drank anything other than fruit juice, you're never going to hear the end of it from me!"

She glared at him fiercely while letting out a cute snort.

Cedrick threaded his long fingers through her silky raven hair and tilted her head slightly upward before bending down to kiss her gently.

After a long, drawn–out kiss, he pressed his lips together and reveled in the sensation of her soft lips. "Neither juice nor wine tastes as sweet as you, Gwenny."

Gwendolyn put his mask on him and hit his shoulder gently as she cooed, “What a flirt!”

The two of them left the house amidst playful flirting. They then set out to the Ferguson residence in their black Shelby Supercar.

Eloise’s birthday party was scheduled to start at seven in the evening.

Gwendolyn and Cedrick showed up half an hour carly.

There weren’t that many guests around since the party hadn’t technically started yet.

Eloise rolled her eyes at the sight of them holding hands before walking over with a falsely bright smile. “Hi, Ms. Harris! Aren’t you and Mr. Jenson early today!”

Gwendolyn simply smiled in response.

Cedrick, on the other hand, didn’t even glance at Eloise. His dark irises maintained their icy gaze under his mask, which added an extra layer of mystery to his appearance.

Eloise was clearly ruffled at the lack of a response and couldn’t be bothered to put on a front any longer. Turning away, she struck up a conversation with the socialites standing nearby.

Sherman was sitting alone and had been broodily sipping at some liquor. When he heard that Gwendolyn had arrived, he was instantly delighted.

However, she didn’y even look in his direction. After going through the formalities with Wyatt Ferguson and Emma Tovack, Sherman’s parents, she continued hanging around Cedrick as if they had been joined at the hip.

Feeling upset, Sherman quickly approached and greeted her in an attempt to start a conversation. “Hi, Gwendolyn! Long time no see. How have you been?”

Gwendolyn replied mildly, “Good evening, Mr. Ferguson. I’m well.”

Sherman visibly sagged with disappointment. “Why can’t you call me by my name like you used to? What happened between us?”

Gwendolyn frowned at his accusation. He was making it seem like they had been very close before, which

led her to wonder if he was purposely trying to agitate Cedrick.

As expected, Cedrick’s gaze underneath the mask was starting to darken with anger.

+15 Bonus

Gwendolyn quickly reached out to straighten his collar and ran her fingertips across the back of his neck tenderly as she spoke to Sherman.

“You must have misunderstood, Mr. Ferguson. We’ve always been friends and nothing more. Also, my fiancé is quite the jealous type. Please don’t say such misleading words that he might misunderstand.”

Cedrick finally seemed to cool down under her comforting touch and reached out to wrap an arm around her slender waist.

Sherman felt like he had been plunged into icy–cold waters.

The persistent Maverick was gone, but an equally formidable opponent named Cedrick had appeared. He especially couldn’t believe that Gwendolyn had fallen for Cedrick so soon, even to the point of moving in with him.

As someone who had been in love with Gwendolyn for over ten years, he had always thought he was her best match and the one who loved her the most.

He couldn't swallow the fact that he no longer stood a chance. "Gwendolyn, I have something I would like to say to you in private. I won't bother you anymore after that. On behalf of our friendship, can you do that?"

Gwendolyn turned him down without a second thought. "You should know that Mr. Jenson and I were recently on the news. We got crowned the sweetest engaged aristocratic couple. I believe that there will be several press members attending since Ms. Eloise has invited quite a few celebrities. It will be a hassle to explain things if any reporters catch sight of us, don't you think? I think you should say anything you have to say here. There's nothing I wouldn't want Mr. Jenson to hear, anyway."

At her words, Cedrick was slowly starting to become less agitated. He interlocked his and Gwendolyn's fingers tightly.

The two of them glanced at each other, smiling so sweetly it would have given anyone a cavity,

The sight severely ticked off Sherman. "I wasn't afraid to go against the Jenson family for you, Gwendolyn. Did you know that every single woman that Old Mr. Jenson finds for Cedrick ends up beaten and has to be carried out while covered in injuries? He's violent and treats women like punching bags. There are countless rumors about him torturing women for fun. He may be pretending to be nice now, or he may also just be worried about the Harris family's reputation. Either way, if you marry him, your life will become a living hell! I've known you since we were kids. I wouldn't hurt you."

Cedrick remained expressionless despite everything Sherman had been spouting about him.

However, he was a little bit curious about how quiet Gwendolyn had been about the rumors despite his apparent notoriety.

Both men looked at Gwendolyn, who chuckled gracefully.

"At the end of the day, they're rumors, after all. You really shouldn't be so gullible, Mr. Ferguson. Besides, knowing Mr. Jenson, he might have spread those rumors deliberately to protect himself from anyone with bad intentions. I'm sure I'm the only woman for him, anyway."

Sherman's expression soured. He had been rendered speechless by Gwendolyn's smooth rebuttal.

She politely said, "The party is almost starting. I'd like to have a little private time with Mr. Jenson before it begins. See you later."

She walked away with Cedrick hand–in–hand and left Sherman standing there looking completely beaten down.

Eloise looked at Sherman with pity from a balcony on the second floor. Her gaze was tinged with hatred as she turned to look at Gwendolyn's retreating figure.

"B*tch!" she hissed.

Evelyn was standing right next to her with a perfectly made–up face. She patted Eloise on the shoulder gently as she looked at Cedrick and Gwendolyn as well. An ambiguous smile was beginning to form on her lips.

"Don't worry. You have a lot of events lined up for later. Take a deep breath and calm down."

Gwendolyn and Cedrick were walking around the villa languidly.

Suddenly, Cedrick asked, "Gwenny, do you really have that much faith in me? Aren't you afraid that I really did do all those cruel things to other women in the six months before we reunited?"

Since there was no one around them, Gwendolyn pinched his ear tightly as she said coldly, "So, you've thought about it before, have you?"

"Ouch! No, I'm just kidding! Watch out for cameras. Tomorrow's headlines are going to be about you abusing me," Cedrick wailed.

Despite his supposed complaints, he had naturally leaned down so that Gwendolyn wouldn't have to keep stretching her arm.

Gwendolyn let go with a smile and gently massaged his ear. "If it really does get on the news, then you're going to have to admit how much you love and listen to me. I don't think I'm getting the short end of the stick."

Cedrick retorted, "No way! I'll make sure to get revenge if that happens."

"Nice try," Gwendolyn said with a sassy eye roll. She knew what he meant by 'revenge' and began walking further ahead.

Cedrick immediately caught up with her and held her hand tightly as if he were afraid that he would lose her.

Even though Gwendolyn didn't ask about the rumors, Cedrick still felt the need to explain as they continued strolling.

"Well, Grandpa did send a woman right into my bed once. I made Nico dress up like a ghost and scare her. She fainted and had to be carried out on a stretcher, which is where the rumors came from. Yael purposely spread them in an attempt to ruin my reputation. However, as all rumors do, they grew more exaggerated as they spread further."

The two of them were in the middle of their conversation when Papilio Girls' assistant suddenly appeared. "Ms. Harris! I've been looking for you. Something happened to Jennifer and the girls backstage. Please come with me!"

Chapter 288 There Is Someone Directing Eloise

In the blink of an eye, a serious expression descended upon Gwendolyn's face.

I'm surprised at how fast Eloise has made her move. She clearly can't wait to have her revenge.

-43%

+15 Bonus

Gwendolyn turned toward Cedrick and suggested, “Ceddy, it wouldn’t be appropriate for you to come backstage since it’s full of girls. I’ll come to see you in a while. Remember not to drink, okay?”

In public, Gwendolyn could only convey her intentions implicitly, yet the dangerous look in her eyes was unmistakable.

Once Cedrick nodded and smiled with his lips pursed, Gwendolyn–her mind put at ease–left with the

assistant.

However, Cedrick’s expression gradually darkened the moment she left.

Shortly after, he called Nico to his side and instructed, “Tell Neville to secretly ensure Gwenny’s safety while you keep an eye on the Ferguson siblings. Report to me the moment they make a move.”

“Yes, Boss!”

Once Nico was gone, Cedrick looked up and narrowed his eyes at the Ferguson villa.

The instant he turned around, he saw Treyton walking in his direction.

The latter had heard from Gwendolyn about Cedrick masquerading as Maverick previously.

Although the look on Treyton’s face didn’t seem friendly, it wasn’t as hostile as Asher’s..

Cedrick would eventually have to gain the approval of all Gwendolyn's brothers since he planned on living the rest of his life with her. There was no avoiding it.

Nonetheless, Treyton was aware of the torment Cedrick and Gwendolyn had suffered in Fairlake, which made him the easiest brother to gain approval from.

With that thought in mind, Cedrick broke into an ingratiating smile. "My future/brother–in–law, did come here to see me?"

you

The address annoyed Treyton. "Who says I'm your brother–in–law? You're only engaged right now. The wedding isn't completed yet."

Cedrick responded with a small grin instead of rebutting. "Shall we talk?"

After following the assistant into the villa, Gwendolyn arrived at the Papilio Girls' makeup room.

Even before she entered, she could already hear sobs and chaotic chatter ringing out from inside.

When the assistant opened the door, they saw the girls huddled in a group with their backs to the entrance, seemingly looking at something.

Gwendolyn approached them and asked, "What's wrong?"

Upon hearing her voice, the girls turned around.

Janet Jameson, the fourth member of Papilio Girls, hurried anxiously to Gwendolyn's side,

"Ms. Harris, look! Jennifer's costume has been ruined, and we only have ten more minutes before the banquet starts. What are we going to do?"

The rest of the girls were equally distraught.

Ever since the establishment of their group, they had always been popular. It wasn't until Lisa was asked to leave after being exposed as a mistress that only six of them were left. The incident caused many of the group's fans to lose interest too.

Even though the performance that evening was an ordinary one, many of Salinsburgh's rich and famous were in attendance. Thus, the girls were hoping to capture the hearts of a young tycoon so that they could marry into a rich family.

Moreover, a single mistake from any one of them during the performance would negatively impact

everyone.

Cognizant of their intentions and concerns, Gwendolyn remained silent as she came forward to examine the costume.

The previously beautiful dress had been cut into tiny pieces, leaving no chance of sewing it back or modifying its design.

As for Jennifer, she was seated on the couch.

In fact, she was the calmest among the members of the group, as if she had expected the act of sabotage.

Gwendolyn turned to look at her. "Jennifer, what do you think?"

She replied, "Since the costume is ruined, I won't be able to perform. You should just inform the organizers that I'm feeling under the weather and let the other five continue."

Janet was the first to object. “No, our performance is a group dance. If we lose one person, we’ll have to rehearse entirely new positions. There’s no way we can accomplish that with the banquet ten minutes away. If we force ourselves to do it, we’ll just end up embarrassing ourselves.”

“That’s right! I would rather not perform than be humiliated. It would be terrible for my reputation!”

“I agree. You have to help us, Ms. Harris!”

After pondering a moment, Gwendolyn had a word with their manager in private. “How much are they being paid by the Ferguson family for their performance?”

“The Ferguson family was generous this time and signed a fifty million contract with us. If we were to break it, the compensation would be tenfold that amount. You have to consider this properly, Ms. Harris!”

Gwendolyn snorted in response. “Who says I’m going to renege on the contract? I’m not going to pay Eloise anything.”

The manager was puzzled. “In that case, what do you plan to do, Ms. Harris?”

Gwendolyn didn’t answer. Instead, she instructed one of the housekeepers in the Ferguson residence, “Bring Eloise here. Tell her that I have something to discuss in person.”

The housekeeper replied, “The banquet is about to start, so Ms. Ferguson is likely in the room touching up her makeup. She doesn’t have time to see anyone.”

“In that case, tell her that I, Gwendolyn Shalders Harris, will hold up the opening of the banquet in front

of all the media and guests until she’s willing to come forward and resolve the problem.”

Well aware that a delay to the opening would be a disaster and intimidated by the sharp glint in Gwendolyn’s eyes, the housekeeper ran upstairs to get Eloise.

In less than a few minutes, Eloise came down.

Arms folded and looking annoyed, she asked, “What is it?”

The manager came forward to explain, “Ms. Ferguson, one of the costumes has been ruined. As they were provided by your side for this particular banquet, could you have them—”

Before she could finish, Eloise cut her off. “The costumes were tailor–made and handed to you a long time ago. I’m surprised you have the cheek to seek me out when you’re the ones who ruined it.”

After letting out an arrogant snort, she shot Gwendolyn a challenging look. “If you’re unable to perform, get out of my house and pay me the compensation for breaking the contract.”

“Um…”

At a loss for words, the manager turned to Gwendolyn for help.

The smirking Gwendolyn grabbed the costume that had been cut into pieces and threw it at Eloise.

The latter’s expression drastically changed as she staggered back. “Gwendolyn! Do you know how expensive my gown is? I’m going to make you pay if you dirty it!”

As the sneer on her face deepened, Gwendolyn insinuated, “Oh? It seems you’re aware that the costume has been smeared with red dye.”

Eloise was briefly stunned before regaining her composure. “How would I know that? Even if there’s no red dye, this dirty piece of cloth will still sully my dress!”

By the end of her sentence, Eloise was gritting her teeth while giving Jennifer an insidious look.

Gwendolyn's expression darkened in response. Not wanting to waste any more time, she raised her phone to show Eloise the screen.

The video that was playing showed the girls huddled around the ruined costume. All of them acted out the script Gwendolyn prepared, looking helpless and distraught while doing so.

Eloise was baffled by what she saw. "What's the meaning of this?"

The corner of Gwendolyn's lips curled. "We have ten minutes before the opening performance for the evening. If the Ferguson family is unable to provide a replacement costume, this video will be played on the big screen in the courtyard and uploaded onto the internet. On top of that, I've already ordered articles accusing the Ferguson family of wrongdoing to be authored."

Despite those words, Eloise let out a defiant snort.

Cutting Jennifer's costume into shreds was just the appetizer of her scheme. The main course she had planned for had yet to be revealed.

After celebrating her birthday for more than twenty years, she had long grown bored of it. Thus, she decided to liven it up this year by using it to teach her enemies a lesson.

"Gwendolyn, you underestimate me. Do you think I really care about all this? So what if the stock of the Ferguson family's company drops for a few days? The money lost by my family will be easily made back in the blink of an eye!"

Thrusting her chin in the air, Eloise continued smugly, "My staff has already handed the costume over. It's not my fault your people didn't take good care of it. If you don't want Jennifer to embarrass herself

on stage, you should just cancel the contract!"

Gwendolyn's brows furrowed in the face of Eloise's response.

She seems to be a lot shrewder compared to half a year ago. Is there someone guiding her behind the scenes? Who can it be?

Chapter 289 Gwendolyn Pretends To Take The Bait

For some reason, Evelyn's face emerged in Gwendolyn's mind, for the latter seemed to know everything about Gwendolyn's past in Fairlake.

Faced with Gwendolyn's silence, Eloise gloated, "What's it going to be, Gwendolyn? Are you panicking because you realize your harsh methods don't work on me anymore?"

In spite of the taunt, Gwendolyn remained unfazed as a grin emerged on her face.

"I've always enjoyed a challenge. Since you don't care about the consequences, I'll just blow the matter up. I'm sure your parents and brother won't be as nonchalant about it as you are."

After glancing at her watch, Gwendolyn continued, "There are still eight minutes left. Let's see how much your parents really love you when your birthday banquet ends up becoming the laughingstock of the city's high society."

"You… You really want to challenge me, don't you!"

Eloise's face contorted in fury beneath her makeup.

Both of them were subsequently locked in a stalemate, neither wanting to back down.

After all, Eloise couldn't show weakness in front of the assistant and manager from Angle.

It wasn't until Sherman's voice rang out from the corridor that the impasse was interrupted.

"Eloise, Gwendolyn, what's going on?"

Wearing an indifferent expression, Gwendolyn leaned elegantly against the door.

When Sherman shifted his gaze to Eloise, the latter kept mum.

In the end, it was the manager who came forward to explain the situation.

Upon learning of what happened, Sherman broke into a gentle smile while exuding a debonair aura.

“This is a trivial matter. There’s no need to kick up a fuss on Eloise’s birthday. I remember that she had extra costumes made and kept them in the storeroom.”

He subsequently instructed the housekeeper, “Go to the storeroom and get the group changed into their new outfits. Be quick about it.”

“Yes, Mr. Ferguson.”

Upset by the turn of events, Eloise folded her arms and rolled her eyes before turning to leave.

Nevertheless, the smile on Sherman’s face was just as warm. Being the gentleman that he was, he apologized to the girls in the room, “I’m sorry for the Ferguson family’s lack of hospitality. Let me make for it by apologizing over a toast later.”

“Thank you, Mr. Ferguson. That’s really kind of you.”

Other than Jennifer, all the other girls nodded shyly as the goodwill they felt toward him increased significantly.

Now that Sherman had mediated a conclusion to the matter, Gwendolyn turned and left, as she had nothing more to say.

However, Sherman quickly caught up from behind. “I’m glad to be able to speak to you in private, Gwendolyn.”

Ignoring his words, Gwendolyn picked up her pace.

As the Ferguson residence was huge, both their footsteps echoed through the quiet corridor.

It was there that Sherman took a deep breath to steel himself before blocking her way.

“Gwendolyn, I swear that this is the last time. I just feel indignant over the fact that you rejected me outright. At the very least, I deserve an explanation. I admit that I’m inferior to Cedrick when it comes to power and position. That said, my character and family background is superior to his, so why did you still choose him over me after your divorce?”

Gwendolyn had always hated the clingy type. It didn’t help that she had explained the situation to him countless times.

Thus, she had no choice but to snuff out whatever hope he had left once and for all.

“Sherman, stop comparing yourself to Cedrick. You don’t even come close. Besides, I don’t love you, and neither do you me! I have no doubt in my mind that the feelings you have for me are nothing more than a sense of stubborn familiarity, and you’re just numbing yourself with it. Besides, even if Cedrick didn’t exist, we would never be a couple. If you continue to pester me, I won’t be able to stay friends with you anymore.”

Her scathing words left a stunned look on Sherman’s face. The devastation they wrought within him filled him with dejection and rendered him speechless.

Although Gwendolyn took note of his reaction, there was nothing but iciness in her eyes.

Just as she was about to leave, she could hear the sound of hurried footsteps approaching. A male housekeeper from the banquet hall suddenly came up to her.

“Ms. Harris, Mr. Jenson was just looking for you. He says it’s urgent, so please come with me.”

Despite his words, Gwendolyn stayed where she was as she scrutinized the housekeeper from head to toe. Thereafter, her lips curled into a slight smile while the amusement in her eyes intensified,

If Cedrick ever wanted to see her, he would never send a member of the Ferguson residence staff.

What does Eloise plan to do to me in the Ferguson residence? This is getting interesting

Breaking into a mischievous yet alluring smile, Gwendolyn turned around to glance at Sherman. He was still frozen to the spot, devastated by her earlier words.

“All right, lead the way.”

The housekeeper bowed slightly before ushering Gwendolyn forward with his hand. “This way, please.”

Holding the train of her dress elegantly, Gwendolyn walked on ahead.

All of a sudden, a threatening aura crept up on her from behind.

Scoffing internally, Gwendolyn didn’t bother reacting.

As the housekeeper softened his footsteps, his long arms suddenly reached around her neck before covering her mouth with a drugged handkerchief.

After a momentary struggle, Gwendolyn felt her vision go dark.

Meanwhile, the devastated Sherman, who had witnessed how the housekeeper was trying to drag the unconscious Gwendolyn away, dashed forward to save her.

“What are you doing? Let go of her!”

When the housekeeper ignored his cries, Sherman came forward to wrest Gwendolyn from the former’s

arms.

All of a sudden, Eloise emerged behind him and held him back. “Sherman, this is my doing. Don’t get in my way.”

“Eloise, have you gone mad? If anything happens to her in the Ferguson residence, our family will be in deep trouble! Do you know that?”

Eloise replied with conviction, “I do, but it’s not like I’m going to kill her here, so calm yourself down. I know you like Gwendolyn a lot. Haven’t you thought of making her yours?”

The question caused Sherman to freeze as a sense of dread crept into him. “What are you saying?”

“I had someone drug her so that she could be brought to your room.”

“How could you do something like that?”

Sherman stared at her in disbelief.

I can’t believe how wicked my sister is!

“You’re a girl too. How could something like rape even cross your mind?”

Eloise sneered, “What other choice is there? This is the only way you can have her, Sherman. Once you have slept with her, Cedrick will abandon her. On top of that, no one else will marry her once word of it gets out. She will then have no choice but to be with you.”

Shocked by her plan, Sherman couldn't bear to look at the sister he had loved so dearly.

"This is ridiculous!"

For the very first time, eyes that were bloodshot with rage appeared on his usually calm and gentle face.

He then raised his hand in an attempt to slap Eloise.

Instead of trying to avoid it, Eloise thrust her chin forward to taunt him. "Can you really bear to lay a finger on me, your own sister? I'm doing this all for you, and this is how you repay me? In that case, go ahead and hit me!"

Intimidated by Eloise's defiance, Sherman couldn't bring his palm down upon her. All he could do was stand idly by and watch the male housekeeper carry the unconscious Gwendolyn upstairs.

Eloise subsequently placed a hand on his shoulder and softened her tone. "I know that you're a kind-

hearted person, Sherman. You won't be able to do anything morally wrong while you still have your wits with you. That's why I have a plan to help you."

While speaking, she picked up a glass of champagne from the tray of a passing housekeeper.

She then brazenly dropped a white pill into the drink right in front of Sherman. Upon giving the glass a shake, the pill gradually dissolved into the drink.

Thereafter, she handed the glass to Sherman as she continued persuading him. "Trust me, Sherman. I'm doing this for your own good. This is your final opportunity. As long as you take this step forward, Gwendolyn will be yours! She has not just looked down upon you but also the Ferguson family. Even though you have loved her for more than ten years, she doesn't care about you at all. Can you really accept that? Why don't you just give it a try?"

As Sherman stared at the champagne glass in her hand, his heart began to waver.

Chapter 290 Tricks

The birthday banquet was about to begin.

The garden was lively and filled with guests. The melodious sound of violins and a piano reverberated in the air.

Meanwhile, inside the villa, Sherman was standing in a quiet corridor, facing a tough decision.

Eloise decided to egg him further, “Sherman, drink it. I’ve already set things in motion, so you have no way out. How do you think Cedrick and Treyton will take revenge against the Ferguson family if they find out in advance?

“However, if you succeed, Cedrick will disdain Gwendolyn and break off their engagement. The Harris family will also feel embarrassed and won’t dare to confront the Ferguson family, and we will have the upper hand. By then, won’t Gwendolyn be at your mercy? Sherman!”

Sherman was backed into a corner with no way out. The expression in his eyes gradually grew resolute.

He received the glass of champagne handed to him by Eloise and gulped the content.

Satisfied, Eloise grinned in delight. “Hurry up and go upstairs. She belongs only to you tonight. Enjoy yourself!”

Mixed emotions churned within Sherman as he moved slowly up the stairs, holding onto the rail for support.

Taking in his retreating figure, Eloise quietly took out her phone and sent a message: It’s a success.

Then, she added: Check the drugs prepared for Jennifer again. Proceed as planned later. I want her reputation to be ruined!

Meanwhile, Gwendolyn was being carried to Sherman's room.

The male housekeeper placed her on the large bed and was about to remove her gown.

Before he could touch her, a pair of slender hands grasped his wrist.

The male housekeeper was stunned. He looked up and noticed Gwendolyn had awakened.

Her eyes, reflecting the colorful lights from the garden outside, shone brightly and emanated intense coldness.

She curled her glamorous red lips into a wide smile.

"W–When did you wake up? You weren't affected by ecstasy?"

The male/housekeeper was momentarily dazed before swiftly regaining his senses. A malicious look flashed across his eyes as he hastily yanked his right arm free. Pressing his fingers together, he aimed his hand at her neck, planning to knock her unconscious.

Gwendolyn narrowed her eyes and was ready to retaliate, but someone was faster than her.

A thud rang out, and the male housekeeper was knocked out from behind without any warning.

Half of his body collapsed onto the bed as he passed out cold.

As he fell, Neville's radiant and delicate face was revealed.

Gwendolyn was a little taken aback. “Neville? Why are you here? Did Ceddy send you to follow me?”

Neville nodded. He crouched beside the bed to examine her condition. Noticing the faint red marks on her neck, he panicked.

“I’m done for! Did I show up too late? I can’t believe you’re hurt. Ahh! Boss will kill me!”

Gwendolyn was amused by his frantic demeanor.

“I’m not hurt. These red marks will fade in a little while. You arrived just in time. Help me with something.”

Neville scratched his head. “What are you planning to do?”

Gwendolyn arched her brow, wearing a meaningful look on her countenance. “You’ll see.”

Meanwhile, inside the garden, the banquet had already begun.

Wyatt was giving a speech on the stage while Cedrick sat alone at a table.

His brows were knitted, and he gave off a spine–chilling and intimidating aura. As a result, no one dared to sit with him. The party is starting, yet Gwendolyn hasn’t returned even after being gone for so

long. There’s no word from Neville either.

He was restless as tumultuous emotions churned within him.

Not long after, someone pulled out the chair next to him.

“Gwenny…” When he turned his head around, his expression instantly froze.

Cedrick asked gloomily, “Why are you here?”

Evelyn was dressed in an extravagant, custom–made gown from a branded clothing outlet. Her exquisite makeup and flawless skin gave her a highly captivating appearance.

Many scions from various wealthy families were unable to take their eyes off her from the moment she showed up. However, they were immediately disheartened when they saw her sitting beside Cedrick.

Yet, as breathtaking as she was, Cedrick didn’t bother sparing her a glance.

Evelyn was a popular actress, to begin with. As she took the seat beside Cedrick, many reporters in the surroundings pointed their cameras at her and furiously clicked on the shutter

Despite having multiple cameras trained on her, she remained composed and wore a gentle smile. Evelyn whispered, Mr. Jenson, the cameras are pointed at us. Don’t look so grim.”

Cedrick pursed his lips and ignored her.

She didn’t feel awkward and even poured herself a glass of red wine. Then, she clinked her glass lightly with Cedrick’s glass filled with fruit juice, producing a crisp sound.

“Are you looking for Ms. Harris, Mr. Jenson? I saw her earlier.” She elegantly took a sip of red wine before continuing, “She was talking with Mr. Ferguson in the corridor.”s

Cedrick, whose eyes were dark and pensive, disregarded her entirely.

“Do you really trust her that much, Mr. Jenson? She told you she wouldn’t be alone with Mr. Ferguson to avoid

any misunderstandings, but she’s now secretly meeting him. Moreover, the two seemed to have gone upstairs together. Aren’t you curious about what they’re doing up there?”

Cedrick's expression gradually turned frosty. He glared at Evelyn with his sharp gaze and uttered mockingly, "I cannot tolerate people I don't like. I've tried all your pretentious tricks on Gwendolyn. How cliché."

Evelyn froze.

He couldn't be bothered with her, so he got to his feet and strode toward the villa.

1. 1.

At that moment, Nico happened to jog over in his direction and whispered something next to his ear.

From the moment he stood up, many cameras had followed his movements, and so they clearly captured the increasingly icy expression under his mask.

Cedrick's fury intensified the more he heard. He picked up a wine glass from the table and smashed it on the ground.

Crack!

The piercing noise startled everyone.

Wyatt, who had been giving a speech on the stage, also had his attention drawn by the sound.

The music and conversations in the garden ceased abruptly as everyone stared blankly at Cedrick, not daring to speak.

Cedrick riveted his frosty and wrathful gaze on Wyatt. "How dare you, Fergusons!"

Wyatt and Emma were utterly baffled.

Sensing his overwhelming rage, the other guests were frightened to the extent of pot daring to breathe. Is he planning to cause a scene at an event hosted by the Ferguson family?

A sense of foreboding surged within Eloise. Before Nico could speak, she quickly shot a look at the female housekeeper near her.

The housekeeper rushed out from the villa. “Oh no! This is terrible! Oh my!”

She even tripped and fell to the ground because she ran too hastily.

Eloise feigned ignorance and asked, “What’s going on? Today is my birthday. It’s a wonderful day. How dare you say it’s terrible?”

The housekeeper stuttered, “Ms. Ferguson, Ms. Harris drank too much earlier and went into Mr. Sherman’s room. S–She’s b–bedded Mr. Sherman!”

“What?”

Wyatt, Emma, and Treyton exclaimed in unison.

Everyone instantly shifted their eyes onto Cedrick.

Cedrick grimaced. His aura turned hostile like a brewing storm and was laced with murderous intent as he strode into the villa with Nico to catch Gwendolyn and Sherman in the act of cheating.

Treyton trod on their heels. Eloise, leading a few brawny bodyguards, also trailed behind.

Subsequently, pandemonium reigned in the crowd.

Wyatt and Emma were forced to stay behind to appease the guests. They braced themselves and put on a show, trying to divert everyone's attention.

Evelyn was the calmest.

She sipped on her red wine in amusement as if waiting for a drama to unfold.

Cedrick and Nico headed straight for Sherman's bedroom.

The soundproofing of the room was excellent, as no sound came from within. Nonetheless, the closed door gave the impression that something untoward was happening inside.

Arriving at the door, Cedrick paused for a few moments until he heard the hurried footsteps mixed with the clicking sound of high heels coming from the stairwell.

Only then did he narrow his eyes and instruct Nico, "Barge in!"

"Wait!"