

My Beloved Has Risen from Death's Embrace Novel

CHAPTER 61

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Just wait And see.”

“Knock, knock, knock!”

The sudden sound of knocking grabbed everyone’s attention. As they turned to look, they were all stunned by the beauty of the girl who just walked in.

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Who is this **girl**? How can she be so beautiful, even more SO than Isabella?

she in any

of Director Hawthorne’s music **videos**?

“Xanthea?”

stars and celebrated

alike, who would **all**

When Isabella saw Xanthea, she literally dropped the lipstick she was holding.

Xanthea intended to greet everyone warmly, but upon seeing Isabella, her polite hello turned into an airy, “Oh, copycat?”

Not only was her beauty astonishing, but her bold opening remark was even more surprising. Who was

After all, Isabella was a leading lady in the entertainment industry, revered by rising respectfully address her as Isabella.

And here was this newcomer, seemingly out of nowhere, **daring** to challenge her the first time they **met**!

“Who did you just call a copycat?”

she

“Isabella seems to know her.”

Lifg

“Are you here to shoot the music video?” Isabella frowned, a **complex** expression on her face, “Weren’t you always **too** high and mighty for the entertainment industry? Now joining ‘The Masked Singer’ and shooting music videos, planning to debut?”

Still as observant as ever.

Just helping someone out,” Xanthea replied simply.

Just helping **someone** out?

Director Hawthorne’s cultural festival promotional music video, **set** to air during prime time **on** Tomato TV, was a big deal, Celebrities and stars fought tooth and nail for a chance to be featured, and even Judy, known for **her** connections, had struggled to **secure** the **role** of the ‘Queen of Pop’: But **to** Xanthea, **it** was merely a favor?

She was as haughty **and** proud as ever.

Xanthea gave her a sidelong glance, “Worried I might steal your spotlight?”

Isabella’s eyes widened, “In your **dreams!**”

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“Ugh Xanthea sighed as she observed Isabella’s exasperated demeanor, reminiscent of their past.

Both had attended the same high school, but their paths rarely crossed until a school dance competition placed them in direct rivalry. Xanthea had clinched the first prize, leaving Isabella with second place. That sparked a relentless imitation spree from Isabella.

Whatever Xanthea did, Isabella did too. If Xanthea joined the honors program, Isabella would switch to the honors as well. If Xanthea ran for student council

so would Isabella. Xanthea chose science? Isabella did the same. Then came the singing contests, advanced placement, and even topping the class—

Isabella stopped at nothing, hiring a slew of tutors and sinking a fortune into extra lessons!

Eventually, Isabella even started mimicking Xanthea's style of dress, her way of speaking, and her personal likes, to the extent that their classmates joked about them being a couple, much to Xanthea's annoyance.

Whenever they met, Xanthea would scornfully call her a "copycat," but Isabella never ceased her mimicry. It wasn't until after the SATS, when Xanthea scored the top citywide and got into Crestwood Hall Academy, that she finally managed to shake Isabella off her trail.

What puzzled Xanthea was why Isabella, a childhood star with countless fans from her movie days, would ever feel compelled to imitate a relatively unknown like her. The one thing Isabella never copied, though, was Xanthea's crush on Matthew.

Back in her previous life, Matthew was Xanthea's world. So when Isabella replicated every other aspect of her life, Xanthea confronted her furiously, asking if she was going to claim Matthew too.

Isabella had scoffed, claiming she would never stoop so low, which, admittedly, was the one area where Isabella's taste proved superior. "Rumor has it you're about to get engaged?"

"Word travels fast, huh?"

Xanthea was puzzled at how Isabella, even after years apart, seemed to know her every move. Was she still observing and imitating her from afar?

Isabella crossed her arms and chuckled sarcastically, as if watching a fool walk into a trap.

"What's so funny?"

"I find it hilarious that after all these years, **your** taste is still as poor as ever," Isabella taunted.

Xanthea bit her tongue

he couldn't refute that comment.

Isabella mistook her silence for indifference, which infuriated her even more. She swallowed the rest of her intended barbs, thinking vengefully, "Just you wait, Xanthea. You'll regret this."

Suddenly, the dressing room door was kicked open with a loud bang, startling everyone. They turned to see Judy, the diva known for her tantrums, standing furiously at the entrance, flanked by two stagehands trying desperately to calm her.

The role has been decided. Director Hawthorne himself made the call. There's **no** use causing a scene," they pleaded.

"Let **go** of me! I want to see who **dares** to steal my spot!"

Isabella, spotting Judy's rage, gleefully said to Xanthea, "She's here for you."

Judy, **notorious** in the industry for her bratty behavior and powerful sponsors, usually had everyone cowering. But **now**, she was outmatched by Xanthea's snagging the coveted role.

As Judy saw the card on Xanthea's makeup table, she burst into the room, her eyes burning with envy at the sight of Xanthea's stunning **reflection** in the mirror.

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"**Are you** the little tramp who stole my **gig**?"

"Looking all young and **flirty**, must have slept around to bag this opportunity, huh?"

"**Barely out of** school and already selling out in showbiz."

Judy burst into the room spewing filth from her mouth, her words so vile that even the crew of the music video shoot, who were usually thick-skinned, couldn't muster the courage to intervene.

Xanthea had never met her before and was clueless about what was happening. Realizing she was the target, she frowned and her eyes narrowed, "**Excuse** me? What did you say?"

Judy shoved the makeup artist who was busy with her eyebrows. The artist's hand shook, and the pencil streaked a line across Xanthea's jawline, leaving a mark. She bent over repeatedly apologizing, "I'm so sorry, Ms. Nightshade, it wasn't intentional!"

"**I said** you're a slut-

“Slap!”

Judy **couldn't** even finish her sentence before Xanthea, rising abruptly, delivered a fierce slap that skewed Judy's head and sent her staggering back a couple of steps.

A collective gasp filled the makeup room. Everyone was stunned. Judy was known for bullying others, but no one had ever seen her on the receiving end. And here was Xanthea, not just retaliating but landing a slap right across Judy's face.

Xanthea was just a young girl; where did she get the courage and confidence to do that?

Before anyone could recover **from** their shock, an even more astonishing scene unfolded.

Five bright red finger marks quickly appeared on Judy's cheek. She stumbled back, incredulously raising her head to look at Xanthea, almost **snarling** as her face turned red with rage and she screamed, “You little bitch, you dared to hit me!”

“And what if I did?”

Xanthea grabbed a bottle of makeup remover from the table, unscrewed the cap, and walked over to Judy. Towering over her, she grabbed Judy's! poured the entire bottle over her face.

“Consider it a favor, cleaning out that foul mouth of yours.”

She poured the makeup remover onto Judy's face with an expressionless **face**, as casually as if she were watering plants at home. Despite the cruelty of her actions, her poise was elegant and detached, instilling a mix of awe and fear.

Isabella watched the dazzling sharpness that Xanthea exuded and couldn't help feeling alarmed.

This was Xanthea, the young heiress of the Nightshade family, born into luxury and adored by all. Her innate nobility and pride were something Isabella could never emulate, just like in the dance competition where they both performed ‘the Swan Lake’. Even though Isabella danced just as well, all eyes were on Xanthea.

“Ah ah ah!”

Judy was sputtering and choking on the makeup remover, struggling desperately. She lost several strands of hair before finally breaking free from Xanthea's grasp.

Disheveled, with makeup smeared and her haughty demeanor washed away, Judy was visibly shaken by Xanthea's commanding presence. Desperate, she played her **last** card, "You—you dare do this to me! Just wait, my husband is upstairs in a meeting. **Once** he comes down, he'll make you pay!"

Upstairs?

At that, everyone **in the** makeup room **gasp**ed.

This building, aside from hosting the cultural festival music video shoot, was also the venue for the **ongoing** executive **meeting of the Crestwood's elite—the Lockwood Group!**

Could it be that

Judy's benefactor was a board member **of** the Lockwood **Group**? No wonder she **was so brazen all the time!**

For **a moment, everyone** looked **at** Xanthea with pity.

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Chapter 64

The Lockwood Group's board members were household names in the world of affluence, each having made a mark on the national **rich** list. They also had control over the leading entertainment empire, Starlight Media, and were credited with catapulting celebrities like Isabella into the limelight. They were the epitome of both wealth and power..

Poor Xanthea was in a tough spot. Even with her solid connections in the entertainment industry, she was no match for them.

"Really? Then tell him to hurry up and get down here; I'm running out of patience."

Xanthea calmly screwed the cap back on her makeup remover, her audacious words sending a shock wave through the room.

Judy had played her trump card, yet Xanthea dared to speak so boldly. She truly was as fearless as a young calf unaware of tigers. Did she even realize the magnitude of facing the Lockwood Group's board?

Judy's backer was a board member of the Group? As the realization sank in, Isabella grasped the gravity of the situation.

At this point, the Lockwood Group's influence was so significant they could single-handedly control Crestwood, let alone a small entertainment sector. Even the well-established Nightshade family couldn't compete. If this escalated, Xanthea could lose everything.

"Xanthea, this is a set for filming a music video, not a place for causing trouble. Since you started the altercation with Judy, you need to apologize to her now," Isabella said as she approached, arms crossed, and turned to Judy. "Judy, she apologizes, and we let this go for today, okay?"

"Why should I?" Judy began, but Isabella cut her off with a nod towards a camera above the makeup room. Judy turned and froze.

There were cameras here?

Had they captured her cursing and her embarrassing moment with the makeup remover? If that footage got out...

Judy glared venomously at Xanthea, teeth clenched, "Fine, as long as she apologizes."

Isabella nodded, satisfied Judy would agree. After all, Judy was an industry insider and needed to maintain her reputation. If the video leaked online, her public image would be ruined, and her bare-faced appearance was indeed pitiful.

Isabella stepping in to defuse the situation puzzled everyone in the makeup room. Why would she help Xanthea after being infuriated by her just moments ago? It was bizarre, almost as if her feelings for Xanthea were a mix of love and hate.

Xanthea four

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ella's intervention odd but didn't dwell on it. Sitting on the sofa, she smirked at Judy, "You want an apology? Fine, but you'll have to kneel to hear it."

Judy was enraged, "You!"

Isabella, seeing Xanthea cross her legs and sit back leisurely like a queen in court, warned, “Xanthea, don’t always be so arrogant. The Lockwood Group isn’t something you can provoke.”

Before Isabella could finish, the elevator at the end of the VIP corridor opened directly across from the kicked-open door of the makeup room. A group of neatly dressed businessmen in suits, all members of the Lockwood Group’s board, stepped out.

Seeing her opportunity, Judy rushed towards one of the men, crying dramatically, “Honey, I’ve been bullied. You have to stand up for

me!

Xanthea watched the scene unfold with a bit of disdain.

This man, with his white hair and old enough to be Judy’s grandfather, was really her husband and not her father-in-law?

“Judy?”

really

Michael was taken aback **by** the woman who threw herself at him. After a closer look **at** the disheveled, frantic woman, he recognized her as Judy.

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Michael didn’t rush to calm her down; instead, he pushed her away in a panic and hissed, “Stop making a scene, the Chairman is here

As soon as he finished speaking, the grand VIP elevator opened to reveal a figure of distinguished and noble stature, surrounded by a crowd of people.

Everyone in the makeup room straightened up and greeted him with bows, “Good morning, Chairman Lockwood!”

Orion stepped out of the elevator, and his gaze immediately landed on Xanthea, who was leisurely lounging in the makeup room, her legs crossed and a playful expression on her face as though she were watching a show. His usually calm eyes stirred with a ripple of disturbance.

Caught off guard by his presence, Xanthea blinked in surprise and then realized that Judy's husband must be an employee at Lockwood Group—no wonder Judy was so arrogant.

She had been ready to put Judy's delusions to rest, but now that Orion was involved.

"I don't care!" Judy ignored Michael's attempts to calm her down and began to create a scene publicly. "I've been terribly insulted today, bullied by some brash young girl, and you need to defend my honor!"

Her noisy complaints shattered the brief silence. Orion's brow furrowed slightly, his tone icy, "What's going on?"

Seeing Michael, usually so imposing, now retreating like a scared turtle, not standing up for her, Judy was livid. Her face was flushed with anger when she heard the chairman of Lockwood Group speak and quickly shook Michael off.

Michael, a veteran member of the Lockwood Group board, had his family member bullied—surely the chairman would intervene, right?

If such a high-profile figure took action, this disrespectful girl was doomed!

"Mr. Chairman, I am Michael's wife, and I was personally selected by Director Hawthorne to play the lead in the music video." Judy said, tears streaming down her face as she pointed at the young girl in the makeup room.

"But she used her connections to steal the opportunity from me! Not only that, when I confronted her, she insulted me, slapped me,

face!" pulled my hair, and poured makeup remover all over my

To prove her point, she exposed her swollen left cheek to everyone present.

Xanthea watched

tearful, vivid display, thinking that Judy was indeed more suited for the role of a drama queen—her acting skills were impeccable.

“What’s going *on* here?”

“Is she his family member? She looks different from the last one I saw.”

“Anyway, this shouldn’t be happening here.”

Amidst Judy’s exaggerated tale, the board members whispered among themselves, trying to piece together the truth.

Michael glared at Judy. Seeing Orion’s expression grow colder, he couldn’t tell if it was because of Judy’s words or because Judy had pointed at the girl in the makeup room.

Orion approached the makeup room.

From a distance, Xanthea could feel the chill emanating from him. She licked her lips nervously—had he believed Judy’s nonsense? Whether he believed it or not, Judy was still a family member of a board member of Lockwood Group. Given her husband’s senior position, it was logical for Orion to protect them. Since he had stepped forward to handle the situation, Xanthea was prepared to give him an explanation.

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Xanthea uncrossed her legs and stood up from the couch. Before she could even open her mouth, the man approaching her lowered his gaze to her right hand and asked, “Does your hand hurt?”

As he said this, everyone in the room was stunned, staring with their mouths agape as if they couldn’t believe their ears.

They had assumed that with Chairman Lockwood stepping in, Xanthea was done for, beyond rescue even by the highest powers. But instead of confronting her, Chairman Lockwood was gently asking if her hand hurt from hitting Judy?

His expression was tender and caring, much like a parent concerned about their injured child!

Judy, who was standing outside, was dumbfounded. Isabella, who had been somewhat uneasy, suddenly looked shocked.

Did Xanthea know Chairman Lockwood?

And judging by Lockwood’s demeanor and tone, their relationship was unmistakably deep!

Xanthea had thought he came to reprimand her on behalf of Judy, but his unexpectedly caring question caught her off guard, and she just shook her head.

Hurt?

Judy should be the one hurting, why would she?

She had never encountered anyone asking if hitting someone's face made your own hand hurt. Orion was as enigmatic as ever

As Xanthea shook her head, a small drop of dried blood, where her jaw had been nicked by an eyebrow pencil, caught Orion's eye like a sharp needle, stinging deep emotions within him.

He instinctively reached out, and just as he was about to touch her cheek, Xanthea dodged slightly, stopping him in his tracks, "What happened here?"

Orion's icy tone made the makeup artist behind them tremble in fear, who then stammered, "Chairman Lockwood, I apologize, it wasn't intentional. I was applying makeup to Ms. Nightshade when Miss Judy pushed me hard, causing the eyebrow pencil to scratch Ms. Nightshade's face

At this, a chilling and fierce storm brewed in Orion's deep eyes. His gaze turned sharp and menacing towards Judy, as if he could tear her apart with his look alone.

Seeing the situation, other board members of the Lockwood Group shuddered in fear. Michael, who had known Orion's temperament for years, slapped Judy across the face in a panic.

This wretched woman had finally caused trouble!

The force of his slap was many times stronger than Xanthea's, knocking Judy to the ground, her ears ringing as she nearly passed out.

"A madwoman coming out of nowhere accusing people, I don't even know her!" an infuriated Michael yelled, pointing at his secretary, "John, John, get her out of here!"

As Xanthea curiously touched her jaw following Orion's gesture, she was startled by the sudden outburst.

Just moments ago, Judy had joyfully thrown herself into Michael's arms. Although he was initially surprised, the panic in his eyes clearly showed he knew her, and he had been subtly pulling her hand behind him, as if hiding something shameful.

Now, with Judy embarrassing him in front of everyone, he instantly disowned her and struck her viciously. Was this really her husband?

Given how despicable her husband' turned out to be, where had Judy's confidence come from to speak so boldly in front of Xanthea?

Xanthea watched the scene unfold with irony, while others shifted their shocked gaze from that scene back to her.

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CHAPTER 67

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Chapter 67

Judy was famously pampered by her high-profile patron in the industry, receiving everything from solo albums and film roles to custom designer gowns. She could do no wrong in his eyes, and even when she threw her weight around with other stars, Michael would quietly smooth things over.

But today, he had shockingly abandoned and publicly confronted Judy—all because Xanthea had been accidentally scratched!

It was unbelievable!

Xanthea must have some unusual connection with Chairman Lockwood, because only a displeased look from him had prompted Michael to act so ruthlessly against Judy!

Vet, Xanthea seemed just a young girl. What could **her** relationship with Chairman Lockwood possibly **be**?

Rumors had it that Chairman Lockwood was a confirmed bachelor and the sole heir to the Lockwood Group. The theories of her being

girlfriend or sister didn't quite fit. Judging by today's incident, his reaction towards Xanthea seemed more like she was his cherished darling.

"What's going on? Why are there so many people gathered at the door? Has something big happened?"

Suddenly, a voice emerged from outside. Director Hawthorne made his way through the crowd to the makeup room door and, upon seeing Xanthea and Orion inside, hurried in apologetically.

"Chairman Lockwood, what brings you here? Such a small matter, and it has brought you personally!"

"Ms. Nightshade, I'm so sorry, truly! I had already terminated the contract with Judy due to her constant demands for changes. After much difficulty. Mr. Lopez managed to bring you in, but I didn't anticipate Judy would cause such a scene here. It was my oversight. I hope she hasn't disturbed you."

"It's alright.

"Let me apply some ointment for you."

As soon as Xanthea spoke, Orion pulled out a small, elegant bottle.

—

Wait, wasn't that the scar treatment cream she had given him?

He still had it? And carried it with him?

It seemed he had been diligently applying it morning and night, **just** as she'd advised.

“No need, it’s just a small scrape. I hardly feel it; it’ll heal in no time.” She smiled and shook her head. “Thanks for your concern, Lockwood, but I won’t keep you from your schedule. Director Hawthorne, when do we start shooting?”

“Uh.” Sean stammered, “Whenever **you’re** ready, Ms. Nightshade!”

“Great! Just give me a moment then, I haven’t finished my makeup.”

Xanthea reassured the trembling makeup artist with a comforting look and resumed her seat before the vanity mirror

Orion watched her reflection, his grip tightening on the bottle.

Was she still upset about that night?

Mr.

Seeing him still standing behind her in the mirror, her eyelashes fluttered, seemingly masking some deep, hidden emotion. Curious, **she** blinked.

Why hadn’t he left yet?

She thought he’d be eager to deal with the Judy and Michael situation, so she hadn’t said much to hold him back. But there he was, lingering. Did he have something to say?

Just as she was about to turn and ask, he walked away.

Xanthea thought, “Well, that’s just wishful thinking on my part.”

‘Chairman Lockwood, take care!’

Sean escorted Orion to the door, and the members of the Lockwood Group board dispersed. The staff in the makeup room finally breathed a sigh of relief and began whispering among themselves, looking at Xanthea with **envy**

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CHAPTER 68

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Chapter **68**

“Wow, there’s always a bigger fish, huh? Today was definitely an eye-opener!”

They had Judy pegged as a spoiled princess with a silver spoon, but they were wrong Xanthea was the true queen, all elegance and grace under the radar!

Not only was she handpicked by Director Hawthorne himself, but she even turned down Chairman Lockwood's favor without batting an

eye!

Outside the Elevation Building, after Michael dealt with Judy, he regretfully chased after Orion trying to explain, but he was stopped by the bodyguards before he could get near the car.

As the car sped down Central Avenue, Jacob flipped open his tablet. "Mr. Lockwood, the singer Judy has been Michael's mistress for over two years now. It's been kept under wraps, both internally and externally."

"Send the video to his wife

"Right away."

Jacob compiled the video data and hit the enter key. "That Judy?"

"Disfigure her."

The two words coldly uttered made Cedric, driving in front, shudder. What on earth had transpired in such a short meeting?

Orien was known for his ruthless decisiveness, but he'd always taken care of the veterans who contributed to the Lockwood Group. To go this far against Michael, he must have crossed a serious line.

In the music video about the Queen of Pop, as Oliver mentioned, there weren't many shots of her, but each frame was **strikingly** beautiful.

Sean had thought his first collaboration with Xanthea might be challenging, given her lack of acting background and experience in film. To his surprise, she was a natural. She grasped the script profoundly and quickly understood everything he said. Her camera presence was unbelievably flawless.

Her perfect, radiant face showed no flaws at any angle, and her sparkling, luminous eyes seemed to capture the **soul** of anyone who looked into them on the big screen.

In less

than an hour, the shooting wrapped up smoothly, and Sean happily shook her hand. "Miss Nightshade, I was right to choose you. Working with you today was a pleasure, and I hope we can do it again

“Thank you for your guidance, Director Hawthome.”

After exchanging pleasantries with him, Xanthea headed back to the dressing room to grab her bag and leave, only to be stopped by Isabella.

“Xanthea! You did great in that shoot. Even the picky Director Hawthome couldn’t stop praising you. **Looks** like you’ll be a highlight once

it airs”

Xanthea paused but didn’t turn around. “Scared, are you?”

“Scared of you? Please!”

Isabella approached her, arms crossed. “I’m the **lead** actress, and no matter how brilliant you are, you’re just a supporting role!”

“Oh.”

Xanthea glanced at her posture, tempted to remind her that crossing arms while speaking often showed a lack of confidence and insecurity.

And yet, every time they spoke, Isabella crossed her arms.

“Hey, lead actress, would you mind stepping aside? Stop orbiting around me.”

There wasn’t a hint of jealousy in her eyes, only a disdain that stung Isabella deeply,

Why was it always like this?

From middle school to university, from being a child star to a top celebrity in the entertainment industry, Xanthea had never seen Isabella as a threat, easily overshadowing her at every turn.

Xanthea just casually won a championship on The Masked Singer, helping out and effortlessly obtaining resources that others **would** kill for getting into a fight without any repercussions but instead receiving comfort.

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CHAPTER 69

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Chapter 69

It seemed like everything in this world was either something Xanthea desired or didn't bother about, with no middle ground. And it seemed everyone favored and adored her unconditionally, no matter her actions.

But Isabella, no matter how hard she tried, no matter how high she climbed, no matter how strong she pretended to be, always felt like a mere shadow in her presence.

Isabella questioned fiercely, "What exactly is your relationship with Chairman Lockwood?"

Xanthea raised an eyebrow, a smirk playing on her lips. "It's something you'll never be able to replicate."

"You!"

Isabella clenched her teeth, furious. Xanthea always knew exactly how to strike at her weakest points.

"Bye, copycat"

Xanthea brushed past her, leaving Isabella watching her retreat, her fury nearly palpable. "What are you so proud of, Xanthea? Even if you have everything, you'll always **be a loser in love!**"

"When you were head over heels for Matthew, he was busy flirting with your dear step-sister, sparks flying everywhere!"

"Isn't it ironic? Life gave you **beauty**, brains, talent, and a wealthy family background. And yet, what good did it do? **You** still blindly fell for a man who mooches off women, losing to your stepsister who's nothing compared to you. Talk about karma!"

"One day, you'll end up with nothing, abandoned by the ones you love!"

Her tirade echoed like thunder, halting Xanthea in her tracks. She slowly turned around, disbelief etched across her face.

How could Isabella know about Matthew and Miranda's affair? How could she predict her tragic fate from a past life?

Seeing the absurdity on Xanthea's face, Isabella knew she didn't believe her. Well, it didn't matter. Sooner or later...

"How did you know about Matthew and Miranda behind my back?"

Before Isabella knew it, Xanthea had rushed up to her, her hands trembling as they gripped Isabella's collar.

Isabella **was** stunned.

Xanthea was so agitated. Did she believe it? How could she?

Wasn't Xanthea always blindly loyal to Matthew, dismissing any negativity as slander or jealousy? There had been similar accusations. before, why would she believe it this **time**?

And for someone who had always lived surrounded by love and beauty, how could she believe such a cruel statement?

"I've known all along."

Isabella jerked her hands free from Xanthea's grip.

"Back in high school, did you think everyone was as blinded by love as you? So naive th at they couldn't see what was blatantly obvious to everyone else."

So that was it.

Matthew and Miranda's first affair wasn't just in the backyard of their home, but earlier, way back in high school, so obvious that even classmates could see it, everyone except her, kept in the dark!

Xanthea's eyes narrowed, a hint of malice flickering through. "Those cheating dogs!"

When Xanthea cursed, Isabella's eyes widened in shock.

In her memory, Xanthea, the rich heiress, had only ever used sweet, cloying tones to call 'Matt, treating Miranda even better than her own sister. But now, to hear such words flow so easily from her!

Had Xanthea begun to see the truth as well?

It was astonishing indeed! Isabella had thought someone so deeply infatuated would never realize, or even if Xanthea did, she would find endless excuses for Matthew.

But Isabella had discovered a rather intriguing phenomenon.

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CHAPTER 70

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Chapter 70

Xanthea, typically so aloof and arrogant, now wore a look of defeat and hatred. Perhaps Matthew and Miranda were her Achilles heel. If that was the case...

"Not only did I know about it, but I saw them myself, Matthew and Miranda, getting intimate behind the old oak tree at school. I still have those photos in my Dropbox!"

"What?" Xanthea's eyes widened with pleasant surprise.

She couldn't believe it. Photos of Matthew and Miranda in such a compromising position, and in the sacred yet thrilling backdrop of the school woods. If those got out, it would create a bigger scandal than any hotel rendezvous!

She could never expect to find it so easily.

"Can I have a copy?"

Isabella couldn't help but inwardly laugh at how easily she'd taken the bait.

"Why should I give you?"

Xanthea knew full well it wouldn't be so easy, "Name your price. Money or connections? Just say it."

There she went again with her condescending attitude, which Isabella loathed the most, as if she was doing charity for a beggar.

Isabella was infuriated, "Xanthea, cut the sanctimonious **act**. I'm currently the most sought-after actress in the industry, with blockbuster roles and endorsements coming my way. Do I look like I need your charity?"

Xanthea had only asked out of reflex and was taken aback by Isabella's sensitivity.

"So, what do you want?"

"I want to beat you!" Isabella clenched her fist, her eyes burning with determination.

"I want you to start from scratch, and become more famous than me in six months! Beat me in fan count, critical acclaim, and market value, every aspect. If you do, I'll hand over the photos. If not, you'll admit defeat publicly, on a giant screen for the whole world to see that you, Xanthea, are no match for **me!**"

Xanthea was momentarily stunned by her fierce words, and then nonchalantly pulled out her phone. "No need for all that trouble. I just register an account and admit it right now."

“Xanthea, are you mocking me?” Isabella’s voice pierced the air, causing Xanthea physical discomfort. She massaged her ears, gazing at her in utter confusion.

Had she lost her marbles gradually through mimicking her day by day? It seemed in Isabella’s life, surpassing Xanthea was her biggest obsession; that was why she’d make such a ludicrous demand.

Although Xanthea wasn’t typically engrossed in showbiz, she knew from the constant media buzz that Isabella was on fire. Having started her career in TV and ads from a young age and graduated from a top theatre academy, she had built a significant reputation. To think she could surpass that in just six months was indeed a tall order.

“Well, do you accept?” Isabella pressed, “If not, I’m destroying those photos right now!”

“I-I accept!” Xanthea blurted out hastily.

Now that Matthew and Miranda were wary of her, capturing **such** photos again would be near impossible. Even if there was a one-in-a-thousand chance to get those pictures from Isabella, she couldn’t let it slide..

“Ha.”

Isabella sneered upon hearing her quick agreement. Xanthea really hadn’t taken her seriously, agreeing even to such an impossible task. “Just you wait” Isabella thought, “I will not lose in the field I excel at and take pride in. This time, I will beat you and crush you completely