

## **The Kiss 951**

### *Chapter 951*

*When Patricia saw the photo of her greeting Tracy and Sheila on Ellinor's phone, she turned as pale as a sheet.*

*Xenia also noticed the photo and immediately sensed something bad was coming*

*Ellinor handed her phone to Balfour, who was standing close, and asked, "Mr. Howard, is the lady in the photo your sister?"*

*Balfour took a look at the photo, his brow furrowing. He then turned to a pale-faced Patricia and asked, "Why were you at the place in the photo this morning?"*

*Patricia was completely stunned. She was caught on camera? Even though she had been so careful.*

*"Crap! It must've been Sheila and her daughter's actions that attracted Ellinor's attention!" she nervously thought.*

*Patricia blinked her eyes, visibly a tad nervous and tried speaking, "I... I wasn't..."*

*Balfour scoffed, "You weren't? You were caught on camera and you're still denying it?"*

*Patricia insisted, "Photos can be deceptive! With today's technology, photos can be edited, and even videos can face-swap! You can't just jump to conclusions based on one photo!"*

*Xenia chimed in. "Yeah, Balfour, don't rush! I think Ms. Mendoza has ulterior motives. Why would she stir up trouble in our house with such a fake photo? Every time she shows up, our house turns into a madhouse. Balfour, you need to cool down, don't let her manipulate you!"*

*Balfour squinted at Xenia, "You think Ms Mendoza would cause a fuss for no reason? You think she'd waste her time on you guys without cause?"*

*Xenia was at a loss for words, "Uh..."*

*Ellinor glanced at Xenia and calmly said, "Xenia, if you suspect the authenticity of this photo, feel free to have it verified by any authority. If it's fake, I'll apologize to your daughter."*

*Xenia knew the photo was real, but they couldn't admit it. If Ellinor really took the photo for verification, they'd have no room for excuses. She glared at Ellinor and deliberately changed the subject, "Ms. Mendoza, since you've brought this photo, I bet you've bribed the relevant authorities. Even if we get it verified, we may not get the truth!"*

*Ellinor laughed. "Xenia, you've really thought this through! Even if I bribed the local authorities, you have the option to relocate. Verifying a photograph's authenticity is not rocket science. I believe with the Howard family's connections; this little thing can be managed!"*

*Xenia couldn't say another word.*

*Patricia clenched her hands, quickly calming herself down. She put on an innocent face and asked, "Ellinor, why would you bring this absurd photo to our house? What are you trying to say?"*

*Ellinor looked at Patricia with a composed look and said, "Ms. Howard, the two people standing opposite you in the photo, one is my former stepmother, Tracy, and the other is Sheila who is not related to me by blood. You three should have no connection, but why were you meeting in a secluded park early in the morning? What's in the black case you're holding? I'm quite curious."*

*Patricia's eyes flickered, but she was used to long-term pretense, so she appeared relatively calm, "The woman in the photo isn't me. I didn't leave the house at all this morning! If you don't believe me, you can ask my housemaid if she saw me leaving!"*

*Chapter 952*

*With someone like Patricia, who has no morals, nobody can make her admit her misdeeds unless she's been completely exposed.*

*Ellinor shook her head and gently tapped her forehead. The evidence was right in their faces, and they still had the audacity to argue. It was laughable.*

*Patricia saw Ellinor's frustrated reaction and thought Ellinor had no more moves to make. So, she pretended to be understanding and advised, "Ellinor, you should actually go and ask your stepmom and sister. Ask them who they met in the park this morning and what they got from that person, instead of asking me. The person in the photo really isn't me."*

*Ellinor laughed, "Ms. Howard, do you and your mum consider any photos or videos that could prove your wrongdoings as fake?"*

*Patricia feigned innocence, "We don't think they're fake, it's just that you, Ellinor, can't really prove the authenticity of what you're presenting. Because of Theo, you're inherently biased against me. You've always seen me as competition."*

*Competition?*

*Ellinor never saw her as a competitor.*

*She misunderstood the relationship between Ms. Howard and Theo before, but she decided to let go of him, never thinking of competing with*

*Patricia*

*Later, the misunderstanding between her and Theo was cleared up, and she realized that Theo didn't see Patricia as important. So, she wouldn't consider Patricia a competitor.*

*Patricia sure knew how to score points for herself.*

*Ellinor lazily rubbed her forehead, "Ms. Howard, you're overthinking it. I don't have the spare time to worry about you."*

*Patricia lightly smiled,*

*"Ellinor, we're both girls. I can understand how you're feeling right now. It's okay to admit it."*

*Ellinor lightly laughed, "Alright, say whatever you want. Now let's get back to the point. Ms. Howard, since you and your mom don't believe in the authenticity of this photo I brought, let's check out the footage from the streets. We all know that city traffic surveillance can't be faked."*

*She continued, "Ms. Howard, you were recorded by the surveillance cameras driving your family's spare car to the park this morning. You even got a ticket for running a red light, right?"*

*Ellinor said, taking her phone back from Balfour's hand, opening a traffic management app, and pulling out the relevant surveillance records.*

*Patricia's face had turned pale by that time, but she still clung to a glimmer of optimism, not believing that Ellinor could obtain these internal police surveillance.*

*Nevertheless, Ellinor not only had the surveillance footage, but she also played it on the living room television for everyone to see.*

*The surveillance footage was very clear, with the date and exact time displayed in the top right corner.*

*At five in the morning. Patricia was driving an ordinary small car on the road to the outskirts..*

*(Patricia became very flustered after seeing the footage on TV.*

*Dean and Alyssa looked at their granddaughter, who was full of falsehoods, with eyes filled with dismay and bewilderment.*

#### *Chapter 953*

*'They were dismayed by her lies and could not comprehend why she had to lie in the first place.*

*After watching the footage on TV, Balfour glared at Patricia, asking coldly. "You said you've never been to that park. Then why did the footage catch your car heading there? Can you make sense of all this?"*

*Facing her brother, Patricia clearly didn't have a leg to stand on,*

*"I... I didn't sleep well last night, and I was feeling down this morning, so I thought. I'd go for a drive. The outskirts are quieter. I just happened to drive that way. That doesn't prove I've been to that park, does it?"*

*Ellinor sneered, "Ms. Howard, you just confidently said you didn't go out this morning. Now you're admitting you went for a drive? Which of your words are true and which are lies? Don't you find your story full of holes?"*

*'Patricia was in a flap. "..."*

*Balfour massaged his forehead, totally fed up with his sister's pack of lies.*

*Ellinor continued, "If you just wanted to clear your head this morning, why sneak out behind everyone's back, and deliberately drive a car nobody in your family recognizes? You didn't want anyone to know your whereabouts or who you were meeting! So, what's a straight shooter like you, Ms. Howard, doing sneaking around like that, hmm?\**

*'Patricia's eyes darted around, totally at a loss for a comeback.*

*Xenia said, "Ms. Mendoza, cut it out! You're stirring the pot first thing in the morning with these made-up stories. What's in it for you?"*

*Ellinor scoffed at Xenia and said, "Mrs. Howard, I'm not interested in stirring up your family. But I must say, your daughter is the spitting image of*

*1. ou. You two would do anything to get what you want. Birds of a feather!"*

*(enia turned red with anger, "What did you just say? Dean, Alyssa, and Balfour, you saw that, right? She insulted us! She showed her true colors!"*

*Jean and Alyssa exchanged glances, thinking Ellinor was a bit over the top today.*

*But Balfour felt bad for Ellinor, understanding why she despised Xenia so much.*

*Ellinor ignored Xenia's reaction and continued, "Yesterday, my stepmother, Tracy brought her husband Arnold Mendoza and daughter Sheila to our house and dragged along a mother-daughter duo who slandered me online. They claimed they were seeking justice from me and the Blanchet family. They accused me of having a scandalous personal life in high school and said I took that girl's place at Creston University, and so on. None of what they said was true. When they didn't get what they wanted at my house, they started slandering me online!"*

*Ellinor continued, "However, as two ordinary country folks, they couldn't have stirred up such a controversy online in such a short time. After controlling public opinion domestically, they fled to foreign forums to sow chaos, attracting a lot of attention! They can harm my reputation all they want because my conscience is clear, but they caused the Blanchet Corporation's stock to plummet, affecting the Blanchet family's reputation! This is something I cannot tolerate!"*

*She carried on,*

*"This morning, Ms. Howard ran off to a remote park for no reason, met with the people who brought that mother-daughter duo to our house yesterday, and gave them a suitcase with who knows what inside. Isn't that too big of a coincidence?"*

Chapter 954

As she said that, Ellinor picked up her glass of water, took a gentle sip, and then looked at the visibly tense Patricia with a slight smile.

She began to theorize, "Let me guess, that black suitcase is stuffed with cash, right? Why would Ms. Howard give my stepmother such a huge amount of money? You're not trying to play the good Samaritan and help me fulfill my filial duties, are you?

I believe there is only one plausible explanation: Ms. Howard intends to bribe my stepmother, who has never liked me, to frame me and try to have me expelled from the Blanchet family. But their plan didn't work. Then, Ms. Howard had my stepmother guide that mother-daughter duo to stir up trouble online. Those country bumpkins clearly don't know much about the internet. Obviously, someone is pulling their strings. My stepmother is a pro at creating buzz online. That's how she made her daughter, Sheila, a star. No one is better at stirring the pot than

her!”

Ellinor kept pressing. “But Tracy’s guidance alone is not enough. To maintain sufficient attention online, it needs money to drive it. The Mendoza family is broke now, with no connections. They could only make a small ripple online, nothing more. Especially with the Blanchet Corporation putting pressure on the media, they couldn’t create any real waves. Yet, that mother-daughter duo is still causing trouble on the foreign web. Clearly, they have other people and financial support behind them.

So, who would dare to insult the Blanchet family and support a mother-daughter duo that falsely accuses me online? Well, only the Howard family would have the courage to oppose the Blanchet family, right?”

Ellinor’s words made Dean and Alyssa feel a bit wronged. They frowned.

They might not get along with the Blanchet family, but they wouldn’t do things that harm others without benefiting themselves.

Balfour understood that Ellinor was not accusing the whole Howard family but hinting at two specific people. He asked, “Ellinor, are you saying...”

Ellinor took another slow sip of water, “What I’m saying is, the puppet master behind the online slander against me is Ms. Howard! She is the one manipulating everything behind the scenes, driving the whole incident.”

Dean and Alyssa looked at their granddaughter in disbelief.

Balfour was no longer surprised. Patricia’s actions all that time made him realize he had misjudged her. He had actually treated such a person of poor character as a treasure.

Patricia didn’t give up. She put on an innocent look, glaring at Ellinor, “Ellinor, on what grounds are you accusing me? Do you have evidence? I don’t even know the mother-daughter duo who slandered you online, I’ve never even met them. You can’t just frame me to clear your own name!”

Ellinor scoffed, “You definitely don’t know that mother-daughter duo. You always act cautiously, afraid of exposing yourself, so you didn’t contact them directly. Instead, you gave money to my stepmother to deal with them! And you just manipulated the Howard family’s overseas influence and connections behind the scenes, pushing those false slanders to the peak of public opinion!”

Chapter 955

Patricia was shaking her head in tears, “No! I didn’t... It’s not... Ellinor, you’ve got the wrong idea! I just went for a walk this morning. I didn’t expect you to seize this opportunity to frame me!”

Ellinor had anticipated such a reaction, “Who’s framing who here really? Ms. Howard, in your desperation to bring me down, you’ve even disregarded the feelings of your beloved Mr. Blanchet. You’d stoop to anything, won’t you?”

Patricia had to think it over. At the moment, she was at a loss for words, so all she could do was continue playing innocent.

She immediately put on a devastated face and said, "Enough! Stop it! I didn't do any of the things you accused me of. Ellinor, I've given up on Theo. I swear I won't fight over him with you anymore! Please, have mercy on me! Stop targeting me! If you hate me so much, would it make you feel better if I hit myself? Will that satisfy you?"

As she spoke, she started hitting her own face over and over.

Such irrational behavior was truly exasperating. Ellinor didn't find Patricia's teary-eyed dramatics sympathetic.

But in the Howard family, Patricia was still the princess. Her crying would always tug at Alyssa and Dean's heartstrings.

It was clear that even if Patricia had made a mistake, her family was ready to forgive her.

Balfour was looking at Patricia, feeling torn.

Honestly, he despised those who were full of lies and deceit, yet he watched Patricia grow up exactly. Even though he no longer liked her, he had a soft spot for her. Seeing her hit herself until her face turned red, he wanted to stop her. However, as he recalled what she had done to Ellinor, he kept silent.

Xenia, feeling heartbroken for her daughter, rushed to stop her, "Patri, what are you doing? She's an outsider! If she doesn't like you, that's her problem, but we still love you! Stop hitting yourself! It's breaking my heart!"

Patricia pushed away Xenia's intervention, crying even harder and hitting herself even stronger, "Mom, let me be! Ellinor doesn't like me. If I don't make her feel better, she'll keep messing with me and slandering me. I don't want you guys to be disappointed in me because of Ellinor's lies. Only this way can I satisfy Ellinor."

Xenia also broke down in tears, "Patri..."

Moved by her daughter's actions, Xenia started hitting herself too, "Ms. Mendoza, you're probably angry because I spoke ill of you earlier, right? If you have any resentment towards me, take it out on me, not my daughter! You've already taken away the man she loves most, isn't that enough? I beg you, leave my daughter alone."

The living room was thrown into chaos with the sounds of Xenia and Patricia hitting themselves.

The Howard family's long-time servants, who had been with them for over a decade or even two, had never seen such a scene. They all thought Ms. Mendoza was incredibly powerful, managing to reduce them to such a state in front of Alyssa and Dean.

"Enough! Stop humiliating yourselves!" Balfour finally shouted in extreme annoyance.

Only then did Xenia and Patricia stop, looking at Balfour fearfully.

Patricia's face was swollen, and her eyes were red. Looking at her brother, her voice was hoarse and full of anguish, "Balfour..

Balfour rubbed his brows as his gloomy eyes filled with annoyance. "So you can't refute Ellinor's accusations, and you start throwing a tantrum? You think that will prove your innocence?"

Throwing a tantrum?

Her own brother used such a term to describe her.

She was pushed into it by Ellinor. She had to resort to this to win her family's sympathy and trust. However, while her grandparents did pity her, Balfour was no longer as indulgent as before, even going so far as to accuse her.

Tears rolled down Patricia's cheeks. "Balfour, I didn't want to... Ellinor pushed me to the edge! You saw it too; she blamed everything on me and said I was the puppet master. I... I feel so wronged."

Balfour looked at her seriously. "Her accusations against you aren't baseless."

Patricia looked hurt. "Why don't you believe me, but believe Ellinor with just a few words?"

Balfour said solemnly, "The surveillance footage Ellinor provided proves you lied. You did sneak out to the countryside alone in the morning. Not only her, but even I find it hard not to suspect you after seeing this."

Patricia looked guilty as she tearfully defended herself, "I just wanted to take a solitary drive to clear my head; is that wrong? I don't even know Ellinor's stepmother. The photo is doctored, and the person in it isn't me!"

Balfour squinted at his stubborn sister, feeling exasperated. He couldn't hit her, nor could he drive her away.

At this point, Ellinor glanced at her watch and said casually, "Mr. Howard, my stepmother, Tracy, and her daughter, Sheila, should be at your doorstep by now. Could you send someone to let them in?"

Balfour paused for a moment, guessing her intention. He nodded and signaled a servant to the door.

After hearing this, Patricia's already pale face turned even paler. Ellinor actually brought her stepmother here? Has Tracy betrayed her?

She looked at Xenia in a daze. Xenia also looked terrible as she began to realize that they were seemingly out of options.

Before Tracy and Sheila walked in, Ellinor suddenly stood up and said, "As everyone knows, I don't get along with my stepmother, so I invited her and Sheila here as Ms. Howard. Now, aside from Ms. Howard, it would be best if everyone else could step back with me. This way, once my stepmother arrives, we can find out whether Ms. Howard and my stepmother know each other. What do you all think?"

Balfour and Ellinor stood up together, "Someone, please help my grandparents to the inner room for a rest."

Dean and Alyssa exchanged glances. They were surprised that the usually aloof Balfour would cooperate with Ellinor's proposal. This was utterly out of character for Balfour.

However, Ellinor's request was indeed reasonable. If this could clear Patricia of suspicion and prove that Patricia didn't know Ellinor's stepmother at all, they were willing to cooperate.

With this in mind, the two elders got up and went to a nearby room to rest.

Ellinor glanced at Patricia, who was still sitting there looking pale, then turned to Xenia. "Let's go, Mrs. Howard. Grandpa Dean and Grandma Alyssa have already cooperated and left. If you don't cooperate, it wouldn't be very appropriate."

Xenia had wanted to stay here with her daughter, but under Ellinor's urging, she had no choice but to leave.

## Chapter 957

Before she left, Xenia gave Patricia's hand a gentle squeeze, trying to calm her frazzled daughter down and reminding her to think on her feet. Patricia looked up at her mother. Her mind was in a total whirlwind, and she was unable to calm down.

After seeing the state her daughter was in, Xenia felt helpless and went to find Dean and Alyssa.

Ellinor followed Xenia. Balfour glanced at Patricia, not holding much hope, and followed Ellinor into the inner room.

Once they were inside, they didn't close the door completely, leaving a crack open to hear what was happening outside.

Before long, Tracy and Sheila were ushered in by the Howard family's servant and took a seat in the spacious, luxurious living room.

Tracy and Sheila seemed a bit baffled, unsure why Patricia had called them over.

When they saw Patricia sitting on the living room couch, Tracy gave a rather ingratiating smile, "Ms. Howard, did you need us for something? Didn't we just see each other? You called us over again; do you have any new orders?"

Sheila also chimed in with a laugh, "Ms. Howard, if you have any orders, just let us know! Are you feeling like there's not enough negative news about Ellinor online? If you think it's not enough, we can make up more! After all, we don't like that bitch either."

Patricia looked pale and furrowed her brows at Tracy, "Who are you? I don't know you..."

Tracy and Sheila both froze, exchanged surprised glances, then looked back at Patricia.

Tracy regained her composure and asked, "You... you're not Ms. Howard?"

Sheila also seemed very confused, "Ms. Howard, we just met in the park this morning. You even set the location."

Patricia blinked repeatedly at Tracy and her daughter, hinting for them not to reveal the truth, "I've never met you, and I don't know you. You've got the wrong person!"

Tracy and Sheila didn't understand what was going on, so they failed to grasp the hint in Patricia's eyes.



Sheila whispered, "Mom, does Ms. Howard have a twin sister? Was the person who met us this morning her sister?"

Tracy frowned, puzzled, "I've never heard of Ms. Howard having a twin sister."

At this point, the people hiding in the inner room understood the truth.

Dean and Alyssa were helped out by the servants, looking at their beloved granddaughter, Patricia.

Dean exclaimed angrily, "Well, well, Patri! So, all those things on the internet... you had them fabricated!"

Alyssa was also upset, "You should be honest! How could you deceive us? Who taught you to do this?"

## Chapter 958

Tracy and Sheila totally freaked out when they saw someone show up. They gawked at the two elders from the Howard family.

Patricia didn't jump out of her skin, but she was all jittery and uneasy. Her eyes were anxiously darting between Dean and Alyssa. She was still babbling on about her innocence, "Grandpa, Grandma, I don't know these people... I don't know why they're talking trash... They're Ellinor's puppets: they probably got their pockets lined by her to frame me."

Ellinor also came out of the room, letting out a chuckle, "Ms. Howard, you're still trying to talk your way out of this with all the evidence staring you in the face?"

Patricia shot daggers at Ellinor, but with all the resentment inside her, she didn't know what to say in return.

Xenia stepped up to bat for her daughter, "Ms. Mendoza, what's wrong with what my daughter said? These two are your stepmom and stepsister, of course they'd help you!"

Ellinor cast a glance at Xenia and then at Tracy and Sheila, who were standing in the living room, as if she heard something ridiculous, "Mrs. Howard, do they look like they'd help me? Did you not hear the nasty names they were calling me just now?"

Xenia knew very well what Tracy and Sheila were really thinking; she was just trying to get her daughter off the hook, "You must've planned this with them in advance! They're your accomplices; this must've been a well-thought-out plot to frame my daughter!"

Ellinor didn't argue with Xenia anymore; she turned to the two elders of the Howard family, "Grandpa Dean, Grandma Alyssa, and Mr. Howard, you heard everything my stepmother and stepsister said to Ms. Howard. I'm sure you know who to believe."

Tracy and Sheila had a pretty good idea of what was going on after Ellinor showed up; they also knew they messed up.

They were super nervous and tried to make up some excuses for Patricia, thinking they might still be able to turn the tables.

Tracy hastily said, "Uh... Sorry about that! We mistook her for someone else! We don't know Ms. Howard; it was Ellinor who brought us here!"

Sheila also nodded vigorously, following her mother's lead, "Yeah, yeah, yeah! Ellinor asked us to come here; she even told us to frame Ms.

Howard!"

Patricia, Xenia, Dean, Alyssa, and Balfour were all left speechless and dumbfounded by the mother-daughter duo's stupidity.

Tracy and Sheila didn't just not help Patricia; they dug a deeper hole for her!

If they hadn't flipped their stance under pressure, Xenia's accusations against Ellinor could still stand, but now they were totally off the rails.

The atmosphere in the Howard family's living room was as heavy as lead.

Dean and Alyssa looked at Xenia and Patricia's stubborn denial, sensing big trouble.

After a while, Alyssa slowly walked up to Ellinor, very apologetically took her hand, and said, "Ellinor, I'm truly sorry. We didn't teach our granddaughter well, causing you to suffer."

Ellinor shook her head, saying "No, it's not your fault; you don't need to apologize to me."

Chapter 959

Dean hobbled over with his cane. "Ellinor, don't worry, I'll sort this out. They'll pay for what they've done to you."

Ellinor gave a small smile. "Thanks, Grandpa Dean, for believing in me."

Tracy and Sheila, on the other hand, were scared stiff when they heard Dean was going to handle the situation and thought they were going to be punished. They wanted to bolt.

Tracy forced a smile, saying, "Uh... Sorry, something's come up at home, so we've gotta bounce,"

Sheila nervously clung to her mother's arm. "We're out."

Tracy and Sheila booked it out of there, and the Howard family's servants didn't stop them since they hadn't been told to.

Dean and his wife never really gave two hoots about Tracy and her daughter. They were more concerned about Xenia and Patricia, who had embarrassed them.

They sat down with stern faces. Dean frowned at Xenia and Patricia, grunting. "What've you got to say for yourselves?"

Patricia was obviously scared witless and couldn't find her voice.

But Xenia wasn't ready to throw in the towel just yet. She gritted her teeth in anger. If Ellinor was going to oust her and her daughter from the Howard family, then she wouldn't let Ellinor off scot-free.

“Dad, even if Patricia did find Ms. Mendoza’s stepmother and had her spill the beans online about Ms. Mendoza’s scandals, how can we prove they’re all lies? Maybe Patricia just wanted to show everyone the real Ms. Mendoza.”

Patricia, hearing her mother, quickly collected herself and chimed in, “Grandpa, Grandma, okay, I admit I found Ellinor’s stepmother. I had her share the mother and daughter’s story.

I heard that Ellinor seriously screwed them over, and I couldn’t stand them not getting any compensation.

I didn’t admit it before because I was afraid you’d give me a hard time for meddling.”

Patricia, quite the drama queen, started crying and shaking as she spoke.

Xenia, feigning sympathy for her daughter, comforted her and shot Ellinor a hateful look, “Ms. Mendoza keeps insisting that those rumors are false, but why hasn’t she cleared her name? Why hasn’t she proved that she didn’t do those things?”

Suddenly, all eyes were on Ellinor again.

Ellinor raised an eyebrow, “Mrs. Howard, the Internet has been buzzing with this scandal. Do you really think anyone would believe me if I tried to clear my name now?”

Xenia snorted, “If you could provide solid evidence that you’re innocent, people would believe you! But if it’s just talk with no proof, why would anyone believe you, Ms. Mendoza? Or is it that you don’t have any evidence?”

Ellinor replied, “I indeed don’t have evidence.”

Xenia scoffed, “Well, if you have no proof, then you can’t blame people for believing that poor mother and daughter’s story!”

## Chapter 960

Xenia looked pretty chuffed with herself as she firmly asserted, “Without any proof, you can’t blame netizens for believing that poor mother and daughter! If you can’t prove their claims are false, then they must be true! Patricia was just trying to help them out by playing the anonymous hero; that’s why she went to your stepmother!”

Ellinor felt like giving Xenia a round of applause as she listened to her whitewash her conniving daughter as some low-key do-gooder.

Xenia was really something: she was quick on the uptake too.

“I don’t have proof, but I have this!” Ellinor casually tapped her temple with her index finger.

Her cryptic gesture left everyone a bit puzzled.

Xenia frowned, “Ms. Mendoza, what do you mean? Stop being so mysterious, will you?”

Ellinor, arms lazily folded, replied with poise, "Didn't that 'pitiful' mother and daughter insist that my frequent absences mean I couldn't possibly be a good student? Well, how about a live broadcast of a test against her daughter to see who can get into Creston University?"

Patricia, knowing the mother and daughter were a set-up by Tracy and not real, instinctively tugged at Xenia's hand, hoping she could find a way to stop this test.

Of course, Xenia understood her daughter's worries and, after a moment's thought, said, "That girl you screwed over didn't make it to college and had to work the fields with her family. She hasn't touched a book in years! While you took her place in college, receiving the best education in the country. Now you want to compete with her on grades; do you think it's fair?"

Ellinor calmly replied, "Don't worry, the test won't be on hard stuff, just the basics. A good student can't possibly forget all they've learned just because they did manual labor for a few years, right? If it's that easy to forget what you've learned, she would've had a hard time getting into Creston University on her own merit, wouldn't she?"

Realizing Xenia and Patricia were trying to prevent the test out of guilt, Ellinor didn't bother asking for their opinion and instead turned to the elderly Howards.

"Grandpa Dean, Grandma Alyssa, do you think it's fair for me to hold a public test?"

Dean and Alyssa exchanged glances, seeing no problem with the proposal.

Dean nodded, "Ellinor, I think it's fine."

Alyssa chimed in, "Ellinor, I agree."

With the seniors of the Howard family on board, Xenia really had no room to argue.

Having received their approval, Ellinor continued, "Then, could you, Grandpa Dean, find someone to set the questions? If I were to find the person, Mrs. Howard and Ms. Howard might accuse me of cheating, leading to endless disputes."

Dean seriously replied, "Alright, you can count on me."

"Thank you, Grandpa Dean." Ellinor gave a polite smile, then turned to Xenia and Patricia, calmly saying, "I'll give that girl three days to review. After that, I'll hold a press conference and live-stream our test. If she scores higher than me, I'll accept all the rumors online. But if she doesn't, it'll prove they've been spreading lies."

Xenia and Patricia glared at Ellinor, holding their tongues despite their objections.

As Ellinor prepared to leave, she suddenly remembered something, "Oh, by the way, I don't have the contact details of the mother or the daughter. Ms. Howard, could you pass along the message for me?"

With that, Ellinor shrugged and bid her polite goodbye, "Grandpa Dean, Grandma Alyssa, Mr. Howard, that's all for today. Remember to tune in for my live stream with that girl in three days. If there's nothing else, I'll be on my way."

She slowly headed towards the Howard family's front door.

Dean and Alyssa almost simultaneously called out, “Ellinor...”

Ellinor heard them but didn’t stop.