

## Wife Mask 461

Chapter: 461

"When Jason marries the Thorn Rose leader, the family stands to gain enormously. Both you and Jason deserve special recognition for that."

Settling gracefully onto the sofa, Irene feigned modesty. "The credit should all go to Jason. I just gave birth to him -it's hardly an achievement."

"Nonsense, Irene. Raising such an exceptional son is no small feat. You've made a huge contribution to the family."

"Indeed! If every woman who joined the Evans family possessed your brilliance, our fortune and legacy would be nothing short of extraordinary."

For a brief moment, Irene basked in the glow of praise, while Elliana stood quietly in the corner, unnoticed and forgotten.

Chapter: 462

Carter dismissed Elliana's anger with a derisive smile, piling on more criticism. "Cole's already carried that gene disorder, and with that reckless woman at his side, he's sure to mess up even worse. Who knows what irreparable damage he'll inflict on the family? That's why we need to act now. Now, look at Jason. Bertram and Irene raised him right. He's smart, capable, and about to forge an even stronger alliance once he marries the Thorn Rose leader. Jason's track record speaks for itself. Isn't he the obvious choice to take over the Evans family?"

Irene's heart pounded with excitement. Carter was saying everything she'd ever wanted to hear. If Jason took the position as the family head today, it would finally be her turn to knock Elliana down and settle old scores.

Elliana didn't even spare Irene a glance. Her attention stayed locked on Carter, her glare unwavering.

Carter smirked, unfazed. "Let's be honest, Elliana. You've only done one thing since marrying into the Evans family, and that was giving out Venacure. That hardly counts for much. I'm sure you won't mind if Cole steps aside, right?"

Carter had assumed a confrontation would rattle Elliana, but she stayed calm and collected, refusing to give anything away.

Chapter: 463

In that moment, Clarence decided Elliana was nothing but trouble—a venom he desperately wanted out of his life.

A harsh cough abruptly racked Carter's chest, and a spatter of blood stained his lips. Before, no one in the family had dared challenge his authority-his rank as Ruben's brother had always kept him above reproach. Even back when Irene took charge as the acting matriarch, she'd bend over backward to please him, no matter how harsh he got. And Ruben had always let him get away with more than anyone else. Yet now, Elliana had turned everything upside down-publicly flogging Derek before his very eyes and cornering him with a vow he could never make. The sting of such disgrace was more than he could bear.

After coughing blood, Carter's body nearly gave out, so frail that he needed Clarence's support just to stay upright. Voice trembling with rage, he jabbed a finger at Elliana. "Clarence, don't just stand there. Make her pay—break her legs and dump her in the sea!"

Sanity abandoned Carter. He no longer cared about consequences.

Clarence matched his grandfather's fury. Without a moment's hesitation, he shouted at the top of his lungs, "Guards!"

Chapter: 464

With a trembling finger, Carter jabbed the air toward Elliana. "Stay out of this if you want, Bertram, but don't think I'll let this insolent woman get away with it. I'll deal with her myself!"

Carter's sharp glance at Clarence sent the next move into play.

Without hesitation, Clarence instructed his men, "Do what my father says. Make sure she never forgets this lesson!"

A wave of guards dressed in black closed in on Elliana, their intentions clear.

Elliana squared her shoulders, ready to stand her ground. If it meant protecting Cole, she was more than willing to fight. On her left and right, Paulina and Myles braced for a showdown, determination in their eyes.

Chapter: 465

Resolute, Cole stared him down. "Because you're an elder, I'LL spare you any physical punishment. But from this moment forward, you're banned from the family council. You will have no say in any matters concerning the whole family from now on. Try anything else, and you'll be cast out for good."

A lifetime spent chasing power came crashing down. For Carter, losing his influence was nothing short of devastation. No sooner had Cole finished than he erupted. "How could you, Cole? I'm your grandfather's brother! How can you treat me this way?"

Without a hint of sympathy, Cole turned his icy glare on Clarence.

"C-Cole?" Clarence's voice barely held together as he looked to Cole for mercy.

Unmoved, Cole delivered his verdict. "Break Clarence's legs. Remove him from every position he holds in the Evans Group. He's finished here. He'll never set foot in our business again."

Chapter: 466

Paulina, never one to tolerate time-wasters, stepped up with her people. "Enough. Get out, all of you. Don't let Mr. Evans see your faces again!"

Beaten and hopeless, the bodyguards shuffled from the room with nothing but regret for company.

A strange stillness settled over the room as the last of them disappeared, though the tension hung in the air like a storm cloud. No one missed the warning Cole's actions had sent. The fear in the room was evident. His message rang out clear as day—he would go to any lengths to protect Elliana. With Cole as her unwavering protector, nobody in their right mind would dare cross her again.

Eyes wide, Irene cowered behind Bertram, praying that Cole wouldn't single her out next.

ALL the while, Elliana understood what this meant. Cole, despite his fragile condition, had forced himself to appear -all for her sake. A gentle warmth bloomed in her chest, wrapping her in a soft blend of thankfulness and quiet affection. Had he truly willed himself awake just to defend her? The thought left her heart fluttering.

Chapter: 467

"Bertram, is there something you need to say to me?" Irene asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Bertram's eyes bore into her. "Tell me honestly, do you really want Jason to take Cole's place?"

"I." A jolt of panic shot through Irene. Words caught in her throat. She had no idea how to answer. Bertram and Jason both held tightly to the family's traditions. Bertram himself had always accepted Jarrett's authority, while Jason respected Cole as the rightful leader. Neither had ever tried to challenge the family's established order. If Bertram ever learned what she'd done, his rage would be boundless, and divorce would almost certainly follow. Losing her marriage wasn't something she could risk.

Irene had loved Bertram since they were young, enduring countless humiliations just to become his wife. The thought of losing him now was unbearable. Besides, without her place at Bertram's side, her dreams of becoming the Evans family's most honored woman would crumble. Everything she'd worked for would vanish. Desperate, she lied. "Bertram, I swear, I would never think such a thing."

Bertram let out a cold, bitter laugh. "Irene, I've seen through you ages ago. The only reason I kept quiet was for our sons. But my patience has its limits. Don't test them."

Chapter: 468

Somewhere in her heart, Elliana knew the torment of Psycephrenia had left invisible wounds on Cole's spirit. Even the strongest men sometimes ran from the pain they couldn't defeat. Maybe that was the real reason he had lingered in a coma earlier—not because his body was weak, but because he dreaded facing his own mind.

A dull ache settled in her chest, heavy and relentless. ALL she wanted was to reach out, pull him into her arms, and promise that she would remain by his side to help him face the illness. She wanted to confess that she was Milena—the one who might actually hold the key to his healing, someone who had studied Psycephrenia and believed it could be beaten. He didn't have to endure the pain of pushing away the one he loved just to shield her from any danger he might inflict.

Still, she held her tongue and chose to walk away without another word. She wanted him to see for himself the kind of woman she truly was—not through pleas or arguments, but through the quiet strength of her departure. If he truly wanted her in his life, he would have to come find her and ask her to return. Otherwise, if a similar situation arose in the future, he'd still shut her out just as easily, without so much as an explanation. And she refused to accept a love that made her feel so disposable.

With a steady gaze, Elliana asked calmly, "Cole, let me ask you one more time. Is divorce really what you want?"

Cole's answer was simple and unwavering. "Yes."

## Chapter: 469

The sight struck Ruben right in the heart. Cole had always prided himself on his strength and rarely cried. For Cole to break down now, he knew this pain ran deeper than words. The only other time he'd seen Cole like this was when Sophie, Cole's mother, walked away. Now, it was Elliana's departure that left him shattered.

Ruben eased down onto the sofa beside Cole and spoke softly. "If letting Elliana go hurts this much, why are you insisting on the divorce?"

Cole kept his gaze fixed on the floor. "Grandpa, you already know why."

"Indeed, I do." Ruben nodded, his voice gentle. "You're scared that your illness will get worse and you'll end up hurting her, right? You'd rather push her away than let her discover the truth. I get it, Cole. But that doesn't make it any easier to watch you suffer like this."

Cole clenched his jaw, refusing to utter a single word. Memories tugged him backward. He was just three when Sophie had gone through a violent and uncontrollable episode. That night, she had turned into someone unrecognizable, trying to kill him and his father.

## Chapter: 470

"Cole," Ruben continued, his tone growing more insistent, "why not delay the divorce proceedings? If Milena possesses the power to heal you, you and Elliana could remain together after all."

Cole's mouth twisted into something resembling a smile, though bitterness poisoned every line of it. He shook his head with finality. "Even assuming Milena has devoted years to studying Psychephrenia—and that's an enormous assumption -there's no way to predict how long treatment might require. I refuse to keep Elliana chained to my side while I might inflict harm on her."

Cole bet the "Milena" Trinity had met was a fraud, and the real Milena remained as elusive as ever. He couldn't gamble with Elliana's safety based on false hope and desperate wishes. Another episode could strike without warning at any moment. If he caused Elliana irreparable harm, the guilt would devour what remained of his sanity. Pushing her away, despite the agony it caused, remained the only path that guaranteed her safety.

Ruben released a heavy sigh, recognizing the unshakeable resolve in Cole's voice, and allowed the topic to die a natural death.

At precisely three o'clock, Elliana stepped through the courthouse's entrance.