

Wrong Table 601

Chapter 601

When Emmanuel exited the room, the Lenoirs' butler was already waiting for him outside. Meanwhile, Quintus threw himself at him and grabbed his shoulders, asking, "How is Claudette? Has she woken up?"

After glancing at his surroundings, Emmanuel shook his head at him. "Not yet.

Why don't you head inside and see her?" Since he had discovered that

Magnus wanted Claudette dead, he could not let his guard down. With

Quintus around, at least Magnus would not dare to act rashly.

At that moment, the butler asked Emmanuel, "Dr. Lowe, Madam asks that you immediately report the situation to her after coming out of the room."

With a nod, Emmanuel left with the butler. They passed through several

corridors before arriving at an equipment room. Inside the room, Laura was

making a video call with another noblewoman through a large screen,

giggling as they spoke. Their conversation consisted of typical flattery used in

upper society.

When Emmanuel entered the room, he glanced at the large screen and saw

that the noblewoman was not the type of woman that wore all sorts of

expensive jewelry like she was showing off her wealth to everyone. Instead,

she was exuding a noble temperament from within.

Noble and elegant! Those were the only words he could think of to describe

the noblewoman.

Meanwhile, Magnus was sitting quietly behind Laura like an obedient child. In

addition, he had a graceful smile while listening to the two women

conversing! If Emmanuel had not fought with him earlier, he would have

thought he was a nerdy genius!

Kolton used to tell him that the real devil lay hidden under a harmless

facade, and now, Emmanuel had finally comprehended what it meant!

“Hey, it’s Dr. Lowe. How’s Claudette?” Without turning off the video call, Laura

immediately rose to her feet and approached Emmanuel, swaying her curvy

figure.

“Not good!” He was frank. “She might never wake up.”

“What?!” Her figure shivered as tears poured out of her eyes like a waterfall.

She began hitting Emmanuel’s chest the next moment to vent her emotions.

“You liar! You lied to me! You promised that you would save my daughter! If

Claudette dies, I will make sure you die with her...”

Emmanuel frowned in pain. Though Laura seemed like a weak vixen, she was

pretty strong. Also, she treated him like an enemy while hitting and grabbing

him like a shrew! However, he had no time to stop her because he had

accidentally met Magnus’ gaze.

Magnus adjusted his glasses while sadness filled with eyes. Who knew if they

were real or fake?

“How could that be? Magnus, go and check on Claudette. You have to make

sure she lives! She’s the best candidate I have in mind to be my

daughter-in-law!”

The noblewoman on-screen looked anxious.

“Yes, Mom,” he replied quickly like an obedient child. Right before he exited the room, he sneaked a peek at Laura and Emmanuel from the corner of his eyes.

Once he was gone, Emmanuel began to think about how he would tell Laura the truth. After all, Quintus was all brawn and had no brain, so it was unrealistic to count on him to protect Claudette.

“You liar! I’m going to kill you!” Suddenly, Laura began thrashing around vigorously and pulling at Emmanuel’s clothes.

The new shirt he had specially put on for tonight was ripped into pieces, and there were even scratches and blood on his chest and neck! Depressed, he thought, This woman is so powerful! Is she beating me up like how she would to a mistress?

Just as he was thinking of stopping her, she suddenly threw herself at him

and stood on her tiptoes, parting her red lips to whisper in his ear, “Dr.

Handsome, do you have a secret to tell the little old me?”

-Emmanuel felt electrocuted. When he looked at the computer equipment, he

saw they were out of the picture. It was then that he realized what Laura was

doing; she was trying to avoid the noblewoman inside the screen.

He knew the woman before him was more complex than she seemed! Could

she have seen through Magnus’ thoughts too?

“Mrs. Lenoir, someone doesn’t wish for Claudette to live!” He made it short and

simple.

Her expression showed slight shock, but she whispered in his ear, “It’s not that

he doesn’t want Claudette to live. He refuses to see her become someone

else’s wife... It’s such a pity. He knows he can’t change reality, so he destroys

everything to save his pride...

When Emmanuel heard that, he fell into a deep thought.

Chapter 602

Under the sexy facade, Laura indeed had a bright mind. Women... None was easy to reckon with!

“Dr. Handsome, wait until I inform the others before visiting here again.

Quintus and I won't let Claudette die...” Once she finished, she suddenly went berserk and began tugging at Emmanuel's shirt again, continuing the previous scene.

My gosh! This woman is such a good actress. It's a pity she's not in the entertainment industry because she might win the Academy Awards for best actress-such a waste of talent.

His clothes were torn into pieces. Even when he left the room with difficulty, the woman still hung tightly on him. “Get out of here! You're a phony! A useless doctor!” she roared as the Lenoirs' bodyguards forcefully chased Emmanuel out of the villa.

Without a car, he could only walk away in his haggard state.

Meanwhile, Magnus was standing by a window on the top floor of the Lenoir residence and thinking about something while watching the figure under the lights. A while later, he turned around and entered Claudette's ward.

Quintus was anxious, muttering, "Why isn't she waking up? What went wrong? I thought she looked healthy before!"

"Quintus, I have a way for Claudette to wake up."

Hearing the voice, Quintus turned around and looked at Magnus with shocked eyes. They had known each other for many years. When they were younger, he had even secretly asked Magnus about homework. Therefore, he trusted him wholeheartedly.

The next moment, Magnus approached Claudette and gently grabbed her hand. Quintus watched tentatively, thinking that Magnus might have a medical way of waking up his sister. However, he did not expect the other would use so much force that he snapped her fingers!

"Hey! Hey! What are you doing?" Quintus was alarmed and wanted to stop

Magnus, but his yells did not stop the latter. Instead, Magnus had a fierce look

in his eyes as he broke her finger!

Crack!

The sound of bone breaking was crystal clear, and the sight of the finger

bending at ninety degrees was terrifying!

“You b*stard!” Quintus’ eyes were wide in shock, and he felt his blood boiling!

He did not care who that madman was anymore and wanted to punch him

to death! However, Blue Rose suddenly jumped out from the side and

wrapped her arms around his waist. Then, she bent over and threw him to

the ground!

“F*ck you! I’ll f*cking kill you all!” Quintus’ head bled from the impact but did

not seem seriously injured.

Ignoring the other’s screams, Magnus stared fixedly at Claudette’s face.

Crack!

Another finger was ruthlessly snapped.

“Ahh-Ahh! Don’t you dare hurt my sister! I’ll f*cking kill you! I will kill you!”

Quintus’ eyes were bloodshot, and his face was dark as coal. He wanted to skin Magnus alive. That b*stard kept saying he loved Claudette and wanted to be her knight in shining armor. Was this how a knight in shining armor should act? More like a princess-slaughtering devil!

The furious Quintus exposed all his weaknesses before Blue Rose, and she tripped him with a sweep of her leg.

Crack!

Magnus broke the third finger on Claudette’s hand. Although he had praised her beautiful fingers, saying that her index finger was like a magic wand that could play melodious tunes, now, he had destroyed them without blinking.

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However, Claudette remained quiet and did not even react after he had broken three of her fingers as if she was dead.

“Interesting...” He guessed Emmanuel had done something, so he released

her hand and left.

Chapter 603

Magnus exited Claudette’s ward and left the villa, knowing everyone in the

Lenoir family well. Even though Adolph and Laura would not publicly fall out

with him after what he had done, Quintus would certainly take his life if he

stayed at the Lenoir residence.

Seeing that it was not time to kill Quintus, he could only leave for the time

being.

“Mr. Magnus, the estimate you made an hour ago was very precise. Ms.

Winona had indeed called!” Once Magnus got inside the car, Blue Rose sat

beside him with an iPhone 14 Pro in her hand, speaking with admiration. She

had dedicated her life to Magnus. Unlike Quinn and Casper, who did it for

money, she did so because she was mesmerized by his charm.

On the other hand, Magnus did not answer the call but hung up. Afterward,

he scanned his finger to retrieve an encrypted website from the phone before sending it to Winona. Lastly, he placed the phone back between Blue Rose's soft chest before gently patting it. That was the specialized spot he kept his phone.

In the meantime, Winona still had bloodshot eyes. She could not sleep despite the quiet night. Her son had suffered such a huge humiliation, and she could not wait another moment. The Quillen family did not deserve another second of peace! She had to seek revenge for her son!

The Verkades had previously sent out several assassins but failed to wipe out the Quillens. Since then, she realized that the only people she could count on were the Zelinskys from Zovince. Therefore, she immediately called her nephew but did not expect him to hang up.

Just as she was about to explode in anger, she received a text. When she opened it and saw the website, her eyes immediately lit up! Swiftly, she

opened the link without hesitation and saw a member's login page. Then, she found the login details Magnus provided at the bottom of the text.

Once she successfully logged in, she saw an extremely horrifying scene.

Seeing such a terrifying scene in the middle of the night made her hair stand on its end! Bloodthirsty spiders were crawling across the bloody webpage; the animation seemed almost realistic.

When she looked carefully, she saw that it was the Redback Assassins

figures

guaranteed commission for every task. Since Magnus had provided her with a VIP account, she could see up to the third-ranking assassin's details.

Winona seemed possessed as she greedily took in all the information on the webpage. There are 33 completed tasks, 33 completed tasks, 0 failures, 100% success rate? While silently reciting the information, she noticed this assassin was not the one with the most tasks done and was even at the bottom of the leaderboard. However, this assassin had a 100% success rate.

She took another look at the commission for each task and saw it was 12 million! That was almost worth one of the Verkade family's subsidiary companies. Though, this was reality, not fiction. Even when Adolph tried to save his daughter, he only offered a 7.5 million reward. Now, she had to pay the assassin an entire subsidiary company to kill someone. If it were up to William or Gautier, they might not be willing to pay that much!

It was a pity that Winona was a woman. Her son had suffered such humiliation, and she would send the culprits to hell, even if it meant selling everything she owned!

In the meantime, Emmanuel returned home after leaving the Lenoir residence. After everyone set off the firecrackers at midnight, he hurriedly went to bed because he had a full schedule during the upcoming New Year festivities. However, he barely got five hours of sleep when he heard someone gently knocking at his door.

“Manny, get up! Manny, wake up...” It was Alessandra’s voice, sounding
anxious.

With reddened eyes, he opened the door, looking sleepy. “Mom, what’s going
on?”

“Manny, quick, wash up and make yourself presentable. We’re going to spend
the New Year at the village!”

Chapter 604

“We’re returning to the village?” Emmanuel was dumbstruck because they
had never discussed this.

“I almost forgot about it. Remember the ancient rule back in our family’s
hometown? Once a man in the family marries someone, he must bring his
wife home for the first New Year after marriage and pay respects to our
ancestors! If your Uncle Benny hadn’t reminded me, I would’ve forgotten all
about it!”

Once Alessandra mentioned it, Emmanuel recalled it as well. We do have

such an ancient rule! However, their family had moved to Yeringham's city center over ten years, and he even thought he would never find a wife.

Therefore, he did not care about that ancient rule.

"Mom, do we have to go back?" Roselynn came out in her pajamas and messy hair.

"Of course. You have to return and pay respects to the ancestors. After all, you're married too!" Alessandra requested.

"Mom, I agree to pay respects to the ancestors, but there's no need to announce my marriage to everyone in the village, right?" Once Roselynn said that, she muttered, "I'm going to get divorced anyway..."

"What are you saying? If you dare get a divorce, I'll skin you alive!" It was rare for Alessandra to get angry, but when Roselynn mentioned getting a divorce, Alessandra instantly turned solemn. As parents, who would not want to see their children have a happy family?

Roselynn did not understand her mother's feelings and even argued, "Mom,

Jaxton and I are over! I've seen through that man, so what's the use of forcing me to be with him? Our relationship has ended. Do you understand?"

Alessandra anxiously retorted, "Oh, Roselynn! You're over thirty and finally married someone, yet you want to get divorced? That would only make it harder for you to marry someone else. You won't be able to find anyone better than Jaxton, and you'll regret your decision!"

The mother and daughter pair had different values. The young daughter was confident that she was still in a good situation, but the old lady was less assured and had more of a first-hand view of the situation.

Afraid they might start arguing and ruining the peaceful atmosphere,

Emmanuel quickly advised them, "Mom, Roselynn, since we're returning to our hometown, we should leave soon. Let's leave this topic until we return!"

It was then that the mother and daughter paused their argument.

Alessandra was more worried about something else. "Manny, will Mackenzie

agree to return with us? Our village is quite underdeveloped, and I'm afraid she might not be used to staying there."

Emmanuel responded with a bitter smile because it was a difficult question to answer. Last night, he suddenly left the Quillen residence, so Mackenzie must have been mad. Though he had texted her afterward, she did not reply to any of them, so he wondered if she followed her routine and slept before 11.00PM on New Year's Eve. Could that be why she did not reply to his texts?

"Mom, can I choose not to return?" He did not answer but asked another question.

While shaking her hand resolutely, Alessandra rejected him, "We have to return to our roots. That is the rule our ancestors have set, so how can we, as their descendants, not follow them?"

"Then, there's no other way. Let's head back first. I'll try to get Mackenzie to come over tomorrow."

At that point, Emmanuel could only play it by ear. He dared not tell his mother

the truth lest it would worry her. In addition, although Mackenzie seemed arrogant and hard to communicate with, he foolishly believed she would agree to come.

Once the family of three was done washing up and had breakfast to celebrate the New Year, they got ready to return to their hometown.

The Lowe family's hometown was Hero's Village, a large town with a mixed population. Even under normal circumstances, it would still take them three hours to arrive at the village from Yeringham. Since the family of three was in a hurry to return for the New Year, they could not afford to wait for Emmanuel to retrieve the Maserati from the Yociam Residence, Therefore, they could only call for a cab online.

However, they did not expect the roads to change drastically over the years.

The cab they hired came to a small passageway, and the driver refused to continue, no matter how much Emmanuel was willing to tip him. Then, the

driver even left them on the side of the road!

The trio was speechless at the turn of events because being stuck in the middle of nowhere on the first day of the New Year was nowhere near a pleasant experience!

Chapter 605

Alessandra was on the verge of making a phone call to find out where Benny and his family had gone, hoping to hitch a ride back to the countryside with them. They had agreed to travel back to the village together on the first day of the New Year, intending to honor their ancestors and reconnect with their fellow villagers.

Just at that moment, a mountain bike suddenly emerged from behind them.

Despite having undergone renovation, it was evident that the mountain bike was possibly over a decade-old model with an assortment of flashy accessories. It skidded to a sudden stop and created a dust cloud right before the Lowe family.

Roselynn's brows furrowed in anger. What's wrong with this driver? Is he trying to flaunt his driving skills? Or does he want to pick a fight?

In the following moment, a round head emerged from the window of the mountain bike and called out to Alessandra, "Well, well, if it isn't Ms. Cadigan?"

The rider turned out to be a chubby man, whose gaze shifted to Roselynn.

She was dressed grey stockings that highlighted her well-defined and shapely legs, a stretchy skirt underneath, and a fur coat, exuding a commanding presence at first sight.

The chubby guy's mouth hung slightly open as if he was on the verge of drooling, but he suddenly froze-and-exclaimed excitedly, "Wow, it's you! Roselynn!"

"Hey, you're that chubby little guy!" She also recognized the round-headed individual. Isn't he Emmanuelis junior back in the day? What's his name again? She could not recall it for a moment! Oh well, let's just call him

Chubby.

Emmanuel, on the other hand, had a good memory. He walked forward to greet him. “Shane, is that you? It’s been so many years. I didn’t expect you to have grown so much!”

“Haha, what do you mean? Does being handsome mean you won’t grow up?”

Manny, you’re still a four! You haven’t changed much!” Shane swung open the car door and leaped out, trying to showcase his agility with exaggerated moves and striking a pose upon landing. Regrettably, he resembled a large watermelon with a height of slightly over 5 feet, a round physique, and clad in green attire.

“What does ‘four’ mean?” Alessandra could not help but ask when she noticed her children ignoring this adorable guy.

“Haha, when you divide two from four, you still get two, and when you subtract two, it’s still two. What I mean is that Emmanuel is just as I remembered... Ms. Cadigan, aren’t I talented?” Shane smiled and raised his

eyebrow as if anticipating praise for his talent.

Emmanuel and Roselynn were rendered speechless, while Alessandra also

chuckled awkwardly. “Shane, you’re still as adorable as ever!”

“Ms. Cadigan, while what you said is true, it’s not entirely accurate. You

shouldn’t overlook my handsomeness just because I’m adorable!” He

adjusted his brand-new attire, tapping his shiny shoes. However, despite the

newness of his clothes, they gave him the appearance of a child playing

dress-up in adult attire.

Unable to bear it any longer, Roselynn exclaimed angrily, “Some things never

change. Shane, stop trying to show off. You’ve kicked up dust all over us. I

won’t hold it against you, but you must take us to the village now!”

“Alright!” Surprisingly, he complied with her request. Emmanuel was not

surprised either, as he knew Shane very well.

He was an orphan Santiago adopted years ago. Emmanuel was considered

his senior as he learned martial arts from Santiago during his youth. Since

their early days, Shane had recognized Roselynn as his sister and used to follow her around constantly.

Chapter 606

Since childhood, Shane had never been a well-behaved person. He would always make funny faces and engage in mischievous behavior to grab everyone's attention. However, what was unexpected was that he had become shameless after all these years.

"Manny, why did your family suddenly decide to come back for the New Year this year? It's been years since your last visit, isn't it?" he asked while driving.

Before Emmanuel could respond, he answered his question, "Did you get married?"

Glancing at the rearview mirror, he confirmed that only Emmanuel and his family had returned and shook his head. "No way! With your awkward speech and unimpressive appearance, how could you possibly manage to find a wife?"

Emmanuel was left speechless while Roselynn burst into a chuckle. She found that Shane's lack of tact was nothing out of the ordinary. She also used to think that Emmanuel's awkward speech would not be able to attract a wife, but then Mackenzie came into his life unexpectedly. If Shane found out about it, would he not be infuriated?

"Hehe, he did get married. He came back to pay respects to our ancestors,"

Alessandra finally replied to Shane's question.

However, he was taken aback and looked incredulous, exclaiming, "This is so unfair! Aside from being slightly taller, better-looking, and having slightly better martial arts skills than me, what does Manny have that surpasses me? I don't even have a girlfriend yet... I mean, too many girls like me, and I can't decide which one to choose. So, for now, I'll stay single. How did Manny get married before me, though?"

Emmanuel simply smiled and stayed silent. Roselynn listened to the banter of

this amusing guy throughout the journey, treating it as a live comedy show

on the first day of the New Year. Alessandra, on the other hand, felt delighted.

This compassionate woman had previously worried about Shane's future, but

it seemed that he could take care of himself quite well.

Thanks to his help, they finally arrived at Hero's Village a little after 8.00AM.

The road conditions outside had changed a lot, but the village remained

unchanged from ten years ago.

The town had a simple and rustic charm. Half of the house's were

constructed with sturdy stone bricks, while the other half were built with

traditional mud bricks. The streets were surprisingly clean and

well-maintained, a stark contrast to the villages in Eastern Star Mountain.

Due to Hero's Village's strong emphasis on patriotism and defending its

homeland, it witnessed numerous residents serving in the military-and

bravely venturing into battle over the past century. As a tribute to their valor,

the village was adorned with stone statues, some of which had been cast in

bronze.

The majority of the villagers were humble and down-to-earth, still donning

buttoned cotton-padded jackets. Some farmers even wore headscarves;

many had tanned skin from toiling in the fields under the sun.

As car ownership was scarce in the village, Shane's arrival in a vehicle

attracted attention. As the car came to a stop and Emmanuel's family

stepped out, someone immediately exclaimed, "Holy sh*t, Emmanuel, you've

finally returned to the village for the New Year!"

Emmanuel looked at the person and was also slightly surprised. "Frederick, is

that you?"

The two had grown up together in the same village, so their relationship was

close. He had assumed that Frederick's family, like theirs, had settled in the

city and would not return to the village for the New Year, especially

considering that he was still single!-

“Haha, I only came back to the village this year for a blind date. They say village women are simple and down-to-earth. I’m also tired of searching for gold diggers outside! It’s exhausting...” Frederick said as he patted Emmanuel’s shoulder.

Before Emmanuel could say anything, Shane immediately teased, “Frederick, from how you’re talking, it sounds like you’re tired of those city girls and want to return to the village to find an honest person! But don’t assume that village women have lower standards. There might be a slight gap between your style and their ideal standards.”

Pfft. Roselynn was once again amused by Shane.

Frederick’s complexion instantly turned green, and he pointed his finger at Shane, cursing angrily, “If it weren’t for the fact that I’m not as fat as you and afraid I couldn’t take you down, I would’ve already thrown a punch at you!”

Amidst the boasting and banter, a growing crowd of villagers gathered around.

“Oh, are they the Lowe family?”

“That woman looks like Alessandra!”

“Are the tall man and woman her children? Or did her son bring his wife back?”

Some curious onlookers and gossipmongers started to gather around as if there were newcomers in the village, eagerly engaging in discussions about the situation.

Chapter 607

Alessandra warmly greeted each villager and introduced Emmanuel and Roselynn to them. It had been many years since they moved away from the village with their father, and she was concerned that her children might not remember them.

Indeed, Roselynn did not recall the villagers, and her lack of enthusiasm was evident. However, Emmanuel’s memory was surprisingly sharp. Without any prompting from Alessandra, he greeted the elders by name.

“Oh my, Manny, your memory is still so impressive!” At that moment,

Frederick’s grandmother emerged and warmly invited Emmanuel’s family to visit her house.

Alessandra politely declined the invitation as she needed to return to the old house to tidy up. Roselynn, too, did not want to get caught up in gossip with the nosy villagers, feeling they would bombard her with intrusive questions.

-She decided it was best to steer clear of the villagers and accompany

Alessandra back to the old house.

On the other hand, Emmanuel was dragged into Frederick’s house, which was bustling with relatives and neighbors. “Frederick, when are you planning to get married?”

“Yeah, you’re already 29, aren’t you? When I was your age, I already had two kids!”

“Do you have a partner or not?”

Watching a group of elders urging him to get married, Emmanuel could not help but feel a sense of sympathy for his best friend, as he had experienced the same pressure in the past. It was precisely why he had been hesitant to return to the village for the New Year. The constant pressure and inquiries from relatives and elders were too overwhelming.

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Unexpectedly, Frederick raised his hand, gesturing for everyone to quiet down. He then pulled out a laptop and a projector from his bag. He switched on the device, revealing a prepared PowerPoint presentation.

“A report on why I haven’t gotten married yet?” Shane read the title of the PowerPoint presentation in a stunned manner and exclaimed, “This is a bit too much! You formalized it just to deal with the pressure of getting married!”

Emmanuel was also taken aback as he had not expected his best friend to pull out such a trump card!

“Dear relatives and elders, have you all finished listening to my report? In

summary, the skyrocketing housing prices, inadequate salaries, and unreasonable dowry expectations in the city are the reasons why I haven't gotten married, and the situation is likely to persist. It's unlikely I'll be able to afford a city girl before I turn 36. So, please, let's not discuss this topic any further!"

Frederick's clever maneuver left their relatives and friends at a loss, as if they had been struck by a moment of enlightenment but were still struggling to fully comprehend it.

Emmanuel was speechless. Frederick gave a presentation to rural relatives with a projector and PowerPoint. Does he think these folks are corporate bosses or hospital supervisors? Nevertheless, I must admit the effect seems to be quite impressive...

"Haha, Frederick, all this mystery just to say you can't find a partner and can't afford to get married! Just be straightforward. We won't laugh at you. By

doing all this, I must say I feel a sense of contempt on behalf of everyone!" A

mocking laughter echoed through the room. As everyone turned their gaze

toward the source, they found a man of similar age to Frederick,

accompanied by a woman.

"Oh, it's Howard! Is that his wife?"

"Tsk tsk. He's dressed in a suit. Looks like he's been doing well these years!"

"The boy from the Banner family has made something of himself!"

The elders in the house began to discuss, and Howard Banner, dressed in a

suit, held his head high with pride, thoroughly enjoying the attention. Isn't this

the most enjoyable moment of returning to your hometown for the New

Year? Now, who's the successful one here?

Chapter 608

"Everyone, allow me to introduce my fiancée, Quetta Booker! She works for a

major company in Yeringham and earns a monthly salary of over tens of

thousands!" Howard introduced proudly.

With that, the surrounding elders were even more impressed, raising their

thumbs and showering him with praise for his achievements!

Frederick, on the other hand, wore a displeased expression. Howard had been Emmanuel and his childhood playmate, but he was always fiercely competitive. He would demand to win in games and cry if he did not, and boast when he emerged victorious. Much to Frederick's surprise, he had to put on a show and boast about his success, even in the matter of finding a partner.

"Frederick, if I'm being honest, Howard's woman may be average, but he still outshines you and Manny in terms of making his presence known!" Shane seized the opportunity to take another jab upon seeing Frederick's gloomy expression.

Frederick's mouth twitched. This is my turf! Do they think I have no pride? And how dare Howard flaunt his success in front of my best friend with a wife of such caliber! Just wait until I unveil my friend's wife. I'll reduce you to dust in

an instant!

Just as he was about to speak up, another couple entered the room. The woman exuded an air of dignity and elegance, captivating the men in the room with her strong feminine charm. Even Emmanuel could not help but be taken aback, his eyes fixed on her with a sense of surprise.

“Frederick, Emmanuel, you finally returned for the New Year this year! Have you been doing well out there? Have you both married and settled down?”

the woman spoke gently, emanating a noble and refined aura.

“Queenie, is that you? How...” Emmanuel’s voice trailed off. As the saying goes,

‘Women change greatly in eighteen years.’ It seems that this ancient saying—

holds. The once chubby little girl has now blossomed into a beautiful woman.

His expression was one of surprise, not because he had any personal feelings

toward Queenie Banner but because her transformation was truly

remarkable. However, in the eyes of others, it appeared as if he was

captivated by her beauty, unaware that he was comparing her to Mackenzie

and finding her somewhat lackluster.

“Haha, Emmanuel! Isn’t my sister much more gorgeous now? But let me advise you, don’t have any delusions. Although she played the role of your bride in our childhood games, you’re no longer worthy of her!” Howard burst into laughter, making no effort to conceal his disdain for Emmanuel.

Queenie also assessed Emmanuel with a tinge of disappointment in her gaze. As a childhood playmate, she held a favorable impression of him.

However, she observed that he seemed to be struggling in life. On the first day of the New Year, he returned to the village looking plain and covered in dust.

“Howard, it’s not fun when you put it that way. Do you think you’re doing so much better? Do you have any idea how incredible Emmanuel’s wife is? He’s even more deserving of your sister!” Frederick could not bear to watch any longer and stood up for Emmanuel.

Unfortunately, Emmanuel was not one to seek the limelight. Moreover, he believed finding a spouse was about mutual affection, and boasting was unnecessary. Therefore, he quickly tugged on Frederick's sleeve. However, his action was misunderstood, and people began to think that Frederick was making up stories about him.

Howard once again observed Emmanuel from head to toe, wearing a sarcastic smile. "So, Emmanuel, you're married, huh? Oh. You brought your wife back to honor our ancestors this year, right? Where is she, then? Why didn't you bring her along to introduce her to us?"

Emmanuel calmly replied, "She didn't come with me."

Howard immediately burst into laughter. "So, she didn't come, or maybe she doesn't even exist? I've heard of people inventing imaginary friends, but

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inventing an imaginary wife takes it to a whole new level!"

The surrounding elders began to discuss among themselves. While it was

generally challenging for village men to find wives, they had never witnessed

someone boldly claiming to have one when they did not.

“Howard, enough with the nonsense!” Queenie quickly intervened to halt her

brother’s remarks.

Shane and Frederick assumed that Queenie was trying to spare Emmanuel

from embarrassment because she still had lingering feelings for him.

However, Emmanuel felt differently. As the saying goes, ‘Women change

greatly in eighteen years.’ The current Queenie doesn’t evoke the same

innocent and carefree feelings back in childhood. Instead, she appears

profound, akin to a tranquil lake.

Chapter 609

“Oh, Queenie, is this young man your boyfriend?”

“Right! Did you bring him home for the New Year?”

“He looks quite energetic.”

A group of curious villagers immediately surrounded Queenie and her

boyfriend, eager to learn more about the newcomer. Emmanuel also assessed the man standing beside her. To be honest, he has an average appearance, but his attire and demeanor are quite stylish.

Shane quickly whispered to Frederick, "This guy is obviously a show-off. If he wasn't afraid of breaking the rules, I think he would even want to flaunt the price tags on his clothes to everyone."

Frederick nodded. "Shane, although I did want to stab you earlier, I'm on your side now. As someone experienced in judging people, I can tell that this guy is probably nouveau riche. It's as if he's constantly afraid that others won't recognize his wealth! Such a show-off!"

Shane suddenly looked proud. "Exactly, this kind of person lacks depth, unlike us!"

Frederick nodded in agreement once again. "That's right, even though we may not have money, we have substance. We're not on the same level as

him, and he can't hang out with us either."

"You're right! I don't like hanging out with someone like him!"

Unbeknownst to them, everyone's attention was not focused on their conversation. Emmanuel could not help but shake his head and chuckle at their words. These two manage to find ways to feel superior, even without money.

"Everyone, let me introduce my fiancé, Zaniel Kennedy!" Queenie held the man next to her and smiled as she introduced him to everyone. "He's the Regional General Manager of East Gate Group."

"Wow, what a young and successful man! He became a general manager at such a young age?"

"I've heard of East Gate. It's a big corporation!"

"We can't find such a decent man in our village."

The group of elderly folks praised Zaniel with admiration.

"Not at all, I've achieved a little through hard work, but it's nothing to be proud

of!” In a humble’ manner, Zaniel repeatedly downplayed his achievements

and graciously accepted the compliments while secretly enjoying the

atmosphere. He then pulled out a stack of cash envelopes from his pocket

and handed them to everyone, regardless of age or gender.

“Oh my, he’s certainly not lacking in wealth!” Everyone gave him thumbs-up,

and their praises became even more justified.

Finally, the stack of cash envelopes made its way to Emmanuel and his two

friends.

“Tsk, what’s so impressive about being rich? Do you think I don’t have any? I

don’t like befriending people like you.” Although disdainful, Shane was quick to

react. He swiftly pocketed a cash envelope for himself and then handed two

to Emmanuel and Frederick.

Frederick initially considered accepting the money but declined the offer

when Emmanuel refused.

Shane was taken aback and whispered, "If both of you decline, won't it make me look spineless?" Without waiting for their response, he swiftly pocketed the two cash envelopes. "Since that's the case, I'll hold onto them for you. Just let me know when you've made up your mind."

What a cunning and shameless man Shane was!

However, Emmanuel firmly stated, "Shane, return my cash envelope to the sender! According to tradition, I shouldn't accept cash envelopes from anyone once I am married."

Shane was taken aback. "So, you do have a wife? Are you sure it's not a made-up story?"

Emmanuel nodded in response.

At the side, Howard could not help but interject, "Haha. So, you really got married? I can't wait to see what kind of celestial beauty your wife is when we pay respects to our ancestors today!" His tone was filled with sarcasm.

In his view, if Emmanuel had married an impressive wife, would he not dare

to bring her out openly? He was convinced that Emmanuel was unable to afford a substantial dowry, a car, or a house, so he must have settled for an overweight and unattractive woman. Perhaps she even had disabilities or intellectual deficiencies.

Emmanuel remained silent, paying no heed to Howard's remarks. He never married Mackenzie to seek validation from others or show off. She was his wife, and he did not require anyone's approval or validation.

However, Frederick could not tolerate it any longer and retorted fiercely,

"Howard, you preacher. Don't get too arrogant here! If you were to see

Emmanuel's wife, I guarantee you would question all your life choices. Who

knows, you might end up divorcing your fiancée within minutes!"

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Howard was stunned, and so was his wife.

Queenie trembled slightly. Is Emmanuel's wife truly that perfect?

"Hahaha... Well, then. I'll eagerly wait for Emmanuel's wife to make me

question my life choices! It's amusing to see how some people care so much

about their image that they silently suffer. It's quite laughable!" Howard

wanted to immediately have a falling-out as he felt frustrated that

Emmanuel falsely claimed to have a wife when he did not.

As such, they did not have a chance to defend their reputation, which was

something that did not sit well with Howard.

"Howard, be mindful of your words!" Queenie reprimanded him but did not

elaborate further. Instead, she turned to Emmanuel and said, "We'll take our

leave now. We'll meet again when we pay respects to our ancestors later in

the afternoon." With that, the two couples left Frederick's house one after the

other.

"This is so infuriating!" Frederick was enraged by the demeaning expressions

of the Banner siblings. He felt they were looking down on him and his friends.

It's one thing for them to look down on me, but I can't tolerate them looking

down on Emmanuel!

He earnestly wished to give them a resounding slap in the face on

Emmanuel's behalf.

Shane also told Emmanuel, "According to the statistics, there is a gender imbalance in Chanaea, with around 30 million men facing difficulties finding a wife. Additionally, millions of women choose not to get married. Not to mention the wealthy men and officials who keep mistresses... In short, there are over 100 million men in this predicament, so there's nothing to be ashamed of. You..."

As he spoke, the surrounding onlookers shifted their attention toward them.

However, before he could finish speaking, Emmanuel turned and walked away as he did not want to engage in further conversation. When did it become a necessity to prove one's marital status by flaunting their wife in public?

After departing from Frederick's house, he walked to his ancestral home,

which was a moderately-sized brick house. His grandfather had been honored for his military accomplishments on the battlefield, and as a result, the officials had specially constructed this house for his family in the village.

Although the house had been neglected for many years, it was not much dilapidated. When he returned, he found that Alessandra and Roselynn had already finished tidying up the house! Moreover, Naomi Lawson, from the neighboring house, had just left, indicating that she had a lengthy conversation with Alessandra.

“Manny, do you think Mackenzie will come today?” Alessandra was also anxious about the matter.

She had already informed others that Emmanuel and Mackenzie would be coming to the village to celebrate the New Year. If Mackenzie did not show up, she would not know how to handle the awkwardness in front of everyone.

“I’ll give her a call.” He did not want to keep speculating either and promptly

dialed Mackenzie's number.

"Hello!" Soon, Mackenzie's slightly cold voice came through on the other end.

Judging from her tone, it seems like she is still angry. Emmanuel's heart

skipped a beat, but he mustered the courage to ask, "Mackenzie, can you find

your way to Hero's Village?"

"What did you say? I can't hear you. The signal on your end isn't good-"

Beep. The call got disconnected.

He quickly checked the phone signal and realized Mackenzie was telling the

truth. Hero's Village was in a remote area with unstable signal coverage.

When he attempted to call again, the line was abruptly disconnected, and he

could not establish a connection anymore.

"Manny, how is it?" Alessandra was extremely anxious.

"Mom, don't worry. Mackenzie is smart. She'll surely find her way to our house!"

Emmanuel reassured her but could not help feeling a bit uneasy deep down.

Will she come?

