

Apocalypse 676

Chapter 676 The Schemer Duke

What the Winters didn't know, however, was that Kisha had already given Keith and the Aldens a heads-up beforehand. But hearing about it was one thing—seeing it unfold before their own eyes was an entirely different experience.

"Why don't you both sit down first and discuss your future plans as a couple?" Mrs. Winters suggested, gently urging Kisha and Duke into the room.

The room was modest, furnished with twin beds, a small sofa, and a coffee table where the old Patriarch sat, sipping tea. The old couple, along with Mr. and Mrs. Winters, were seated on the bed, exchanging glances as they observed the pair.

Duke, taking in the scene, first escorted Kisha to the sofa, ensuring she was comfortable as he poured her a cup of tea and offered her some snacks. Only after tending to her did he approach the old couple, giving them a gentle hug.

His movements were so natural and fluid that it caught everyone off guard—no one had ever expected to see this side of Duke.

But Duke didn't give them a chance to respond before speaking. "It's good to see you again, Grandpa, Grandma. It's been a while, and we brought plenty of gifts for you."

He spoke as if he had known Kisha's grandparents for years, effortlessly playing the role of a devoted grandson-in-law. His warm, considerate demeanor was a stark contrast to his usual self, and he even went as far as bringing them gifts.

The Patriarch, who had been quietly sipping his tea, nearly choked upon hearing his grandson's unexpectedly affectionate words.

It was hard to believe that the same man—who had always been cold and indifferent—was now so thoughtful and expressive toward someone else's grandparents.

Somehow, the old Patriarch couldn't help but feel wronged. "I never knew my beloved grandson would favor the new and forget the old. He's never treated me with such affection before—let alone been this gentle with me." He stared at Duke in disbelief, completely dumbfounded.

Even Duke's parents were caught off guard. His thoughtful gesture made their own visit seem lacking in comparison. Realizing they had come to meet the Aldens without bringing anything, a hint of embarrassment crept in—they hadn't even thought to bring a gift.

Bringing gifts when visiting in-laws was a matter of respect—especially when discussing marriage. Realizing they had overlooked this important gesture, they couldn't help but feel they hadn't done enough. Yet, Duke had effortlessly filled the gap, making up for their oversight.

It wasn't that they had simply forgotten—it was just that the world they once knew had crumbled, turning laws and customs into mere remnants of the past. Yet, despite the chaos, they still had the means and resources to uphold these traditions.

It was only in their flustered state that this small yet significant detail had slipped their minds. Seeing Duke step in so effortlessly, Mrs. Winters felt both grateful to her son and a little embarrassed as the family's little matriarch.

"No need for gifts. What truly matters is that you and our little girl have returned safe and sound," Grandma Aldens said with a warm smile, reaching out to gently clasp Duke's hand.

Her eyes shone with gratitude as she took in the young man before her. She had witnessed firsthand how Duke prioritized Kisha's well-being, tending to her with unwavering care before concerning himself with anything else.

He was thoughtful, respectful, and dependable—qualities she deeply valued. In that moment, a sense of peace settled over her, reassuring her that her precious granddaughter was in the right hands.

Grandpa Aldens opened his mouth to speak, but his expression had already soured. Just moments ago, he had been enjoying a pleasant conversation with the Winters and even the old Patriarch.

But the moment his eyes landed on Duke—that stinking brat—his mood took a sharp downturn.

He still couldn't get over the fact that this rascal had stolen his precious granddaughter so easily. It had barely been a month or so since they met, yet they were already calling each other husband and wife.

Everything had happened so fast, and to make matters worse, he and Grandma Aldens were the last to know about it.

The more he thought about it, the more reluctant he felt. Back in his day, even arranged marriages took longer to solidify than whatever whirlwind romance these two had.

The sheer speed of it all left him feeling bitter, sulking in quiet protest as he struggled to accept reality.

'I nurtured and protected my precious flower, only for some stinking brat to come along and steal her away! I even kept her in a greenhouse, giving her the best environment so she'd have plenty of choices—but no, this brat swooped in and took her just like that. Hmph! Just you wait. He probably planned this all along, taking my little girl away just to coax her into becoming his wife. What a schemer!'

Grandpa Aldens grumbled inwardly, his frustration bubbling up. He wanted to say it out loud, but he held himself back.

He couldn't risk embarrassing the Winters, especially when they had come with good intentions, showing their willingness to follow his lead and make amends in every possible way.

But he couldn't completely hide his dissatisfaction, and even Duke noticed it. Smiling, Duke reached into his Space Ring and pulled out a fine bottle of wine and a selection of high-quality tobacco, presenting them to Grandpa Aldens.

"Grandpa, my wife told me you have a taste for good wine and tobacco. Fortunately, we happened to have a few foreign brands on hand. Why don't you give them a try?"

Duke handed over the gift boxes, subtly watching as the old man's sulking expression shifted. The moment Grandpa Aldens laid eyes on the gifts, his frown disappeared, replaced by a wide grin.

His previous resentment toward Duke evaporated as he eagerly examined the offerings. Nodding and laughing like a delighted child who had just received a long-awaited present, Grandpa Aldens was in high spirits—until, suddenly, a firm slap landed on his back.

"Be grateful that this is a gift from your grandson-in-law," Grandma Aldens scolded, her usual gentle demeanor vanishing in an instant. "But don't you dare drink that wine like it's water or light those cigars as if they're nothing! If you do, you'll see exactly how I deal with you."

Her sharp tone made Grandpa Aldens flinch. Though she was usually kind and patient, she couldn't stand by and watch him indulge recklessly.

She knew all too well that once he started, he wouldn't stop until he had emptied an entire bottle or finished a whole box of cigars—habits that were anything but good for his health.

Seeing this, Duke's smile didn't falter—in fact, his eyes crinkled with amusement. He knew that his grandfather-in-law held some prejudice against him, so he had deliberately chosen to bribe him with gifts, hoping to soften his stance.

At the same time, with Grandma Aldens keeping a firm grip on the old man, Duke was confident she would handle him for him, sparing Duke from any further effort.

His smiling eyes curved like a sly fox, and in that moment, the Winters couple and the old Patriarch finally realized—Duke had just successfully schemed against Grandpa Aldens in front of everyone. A strange sense of pity welled up for the old man, who had unknowingly walked right into Duke's trap.

Kisha, catching on to Duke's mischief, shot him a glare. In response, Duke pursed his lips and shrugged innocently, feigning helplessness, as if he were the victim instead of the mastermind.

Kisha shook her head in exasperation. She had told Duke all about her family—their likes, dislikes, and little quirks—because he had insisted on getting closer to them.

He had claimed he wanted to curry favor with them, and during their vacation in her territory space, they had spent time discussing it in detail.

Knowing Duke, she hadn't been surprised when he carefully prepared thoughtful gifts for her grandparents and little brother.

But to think that this mischievous man had been scheming all along? Kisha felt an overwhelming urge to smack him on the back—just like her grandmother had done to her grandfather moments ago.

Duke had long anticipated that Grandpa Aldens would be dissatisfied with him.

After all, he and Kisha had met as strangers while escaping for their lives from the heart of City A, and within just a few weeks, they had become husband and wife. To the old couple, it must have felt as if Duke had stolen Kisha away without so much as a word or warning.

Knowing this, Duke fully expected Grandpa Aldens to give him a hard time once they returned.

To counter this, he had already prepared his strategy—bribing the old man with gifts while letting Kisha's Grandma handle him to smooth things over. And just as planned, Grandpa Aldens had fallen right into his trap, none the wiser.

That is, unless Kisha or his parents decided to spill the truth.

Seeing Kisha glare at him without saying a word, Duke knew she wouldn't expose his scheme. Not only would it anger Grandpa Aldens, but it would also dampen the old man's happiness after receiving the gifts.

Meanwhile, after the slap on his back, Grandpa Aldens only pouted briefly before returning to his cheerful self.

His eyes kept darting toward the gifts on the floor, his fingers already itching to open the boxes. After all, it had been a while since he'd had a sip of fine wine or the pleasure of lighting a good cigar.