

## Chapter 15 Our Finances Are A Mess

A subtle shift passed through Elissa's gaze, just enough to show that she was thinking hard.

"Did Joshua do this on purpose?" she mused, her thoughts moving fast.

A slow, confident smile curved on her lips as she left her business card behind and strutted out of Joshua's office like she already had the upper hand.

Just a few minutes later, Joshua returned, this time with Arabella walking casually beside him.

"Arabella, don't you think this plan is a little too obvious? What if Elissa gets spooked and backs off?"

Arabella sank into the plush sofa like she owned the place, her voice flat and unbothered. "Relax, Joshua. They'll swallow it whole. Trust me, Elissa and her parents are nothing but fools."

"Fair enough," Joshua muttered, disgust twisting his mouth. "They've only been living large because we kept feeding them crumbs. If I'd known how low they'd stoop, I wouldn't have handed them a cent. We've just been too tied up with all these government projects to dig up the truth on them."

He paused, then looked at her curiously. "But seriously, don't you have other family around? Why didn't any of them stop your aunt from going rogue?"

Arabella's smirk was sharp and bitter. "Most of them are just bottom-feeders. When Dad was alive, they were lining up to kiss his boots like he was king. But the moment Meagan got her hands on some money, they ditched us like we were yesterday's trash. This time, I'm making sure every favor my dad ever gave them comes right back up, and they'll choke on it."

Meanwhile, Elissa rejoined her parents downstairs, and the three of them headed home.

"So?" Meagan asked excitedly, barely able to wait. "What happened? Did Mr. Willis agree to the dinner?"

Bennie leaned in, equally eager to hear the juicy details.

Elissa gave a sly little grin. "He didn't agree to dinner, if that's what you're asking."

Meagan's face dropped. "Then why do you look like you just won the lottery?"

"Because I managed to sneak a glance at one of his company's latest project files," Elissa said, pulling out her phone with a confident flourish. "Dad, we need to get our hands on this one."

She turned the screen toward Bennie, who squinted at the image. It looked like a typical business project on the surface, but the label caught his eye—it was ranked as Vanguard Group's number one.

Highly profitable. Big returns.

Bennie's interest was instantly piqued though he kept a cool expression. "Are you sure Mr. Willis didn't just leave that out on purpose? A little bait to mess with you?"

"I don't think so," Elissa said, tossing her hair back. "I could tell he was interested in me. If he wasn't, I would've been out of there in two minutes flat. And from what I've heard, Vanguard's run by a close-knit team. Maybe he can't just hand the project over, but he's clearly leaving hints for us to follow."

"That does make sense," Bennie nodded slowly. "Still, you don't think he's baiting us, do you? And even if he's trying to help... we're broke, Elissa. Our finances are a mess."

"Mom, Dad, you remember how much our relatives owe us, right? They've been clinging to us like parasites for years. Now, if we flash a golden investment in front of them, do you really think they'll resist?" Elissa said.

Bennie clapped his thigh with excitement. "Now that's my daughter

talking! If we can rope in their money just once, we're in the clear. And when this is all over, we'll show them the door."

Elissa grinned to herself, riding high on the thrill of her own brilliance, and glanced at her phone, hoping for a message from Joshua.

However, just then, a text from Joyce popped up.

"Elissa, Daisy's gone totally crazy!"

Seconds later, Joyce called and quickly told her everything. Elissa's smile vanished, and her face darkened. Daisy had truly gone off the rails.

"Mom, Dad, how have you even been watching Daisy at home?" Elissa snapped, clearly not pleased.

"Daisy? She's still locked up in that doghouse like always," Meagan replied offhandedly. Then, seeing a moment to bring it up, she quickly added, "By the way, Elissa—about Arabella..."

But before Meagan could finish, her phone buzzed again, and this time it was the Griridge Troupe director. She held up a hand to hush Meagan and took the call.

When the call ended, Elissa let out a breath. "The show's been moved up. Looks like I'll need to double down on rehearsals now."

"You've got this, Elissa," Meagan beamed, practically glowing with pride. "This is your chance to rise above the rest."

In her heart, she was soaring that her daughter's success would finally silence those smug old-money families who always sneered at them behind their backs.

As for Arabella, Meagan pushed her right out of her thoughts. She didn't see that girl as a real threat.

Elissa grabbed her things and headed off to the Griridge Theatre soon after.

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Later that evening Arabella sat quietly beside Daisy, keeping her usual watch. Every tiny improvement in Daisy's skin felt like a soothing balm on

her own heart.

She leaned in and played a video near Daisy's ear—one where Joyce was being humiliated in front of everyone.

Joyce's shrill cries and pitiful sobs stirred something in Daisy. Her brows twitched into a small frown, then slowly relaxed.

"Daisy," Arabella whispered softly while brushing her sister's cheek with care, "they're finally getting what they deserve, and I made sure it hurts even more than what they did to you. Just wait, and they'll start turning on each other soon. Doesn't that sound like fun?"



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