

Chapter 33 His Vows

As more people began sharing videos across social media platforms, a heated debate started brewing beneath the surface.

A user named Seville stepped into the conversation with his own take on the night. "I witnessed it firsthand, and honestly, the standout performance had to be 'Yesterday.' Both the song selection and the singer's polished delivery were absolutely flawless—without question, it became the evening's crowning moment. But now, scrolling through these live stream highlights, it appears surprisingly mediocre. Something feels off."

Another user, Fray, jumped into the conversation with enthusiasm. "I stood right there in that crowd too. When I walked out, I craved nothing more than to experience those magical moments again, but what they uploaded online bore no resemblance to what my eyes actually witnessed. Did the live stream malfunction somehow?"

Seville's curiosity peaked as he responded, "I have no clue. Did anyone else catch this strange discrepancy?"

This simple question ignited a wildfire of discussion in the comment threads that followed.

"You two must be absolutely devoted fans of Serena. I believe the most stunning performance belonged to 'Glimmer of Love!'"

"Absolutely right. 'Yesterday' delivered solid entertainment, but it cannot compare to the raw power of 'Glimmer of Love.' Besides, Vivian isn't even a trained professional vocalist, so her performance carries even deeper significance!"

"Exactly my thoughts. Vivian possesses the mind of a true artistic genius!"

"Listen, Seville, I also appreciate the musical style of 'Yesterday,' but there's really no reason to insist it surpassed everything else. Both songs offered their own unique brilliance. Why must 'Yesterday' necessarily eclipse 'Glimmer of Love'?"

Seville felt compelled to clarify his position once more. "I'm not pushing any agenda here—I'm simply making an observation. I genuinely enjoyed both 'Glimmer of Love' and 'Yesterday,' but truthfully, experiencing it live,

'Yesterday' delivered far more emotional impact, especially during that breathtaking final violin solo. It was absolutely mesmerizing, and the highlight reel failed to capture even a fraction of that performance!"

"All right, Seville, we understand your position—you're clearly a devoted Serena fan. Stop attempting to manipulate the narrative. Do you honestly believe the entire Internet can't see through this obvious bias? Are you the only person who possesses the real truth?"

At first, Seville had simply posed an honest question, but being confronted so aggressively made him plant his feet firmly and fight back.

He crafted an extensive post, meticulously analyzing every detail—stage design, lighting techniques, sound engineering quality, and numerous other technical aspects—and fired it back into the thread.

After hitting submit, he kept refreshing obsessively, waiting for responses, but nobody seemed to engage with his detailed analysis.

Looking back at the thread, he discovered his comments had vanished completely.

Scrolling frantically through the entire discussion, he realized all his previous contributions had disappeared too.

Content moderation? But he hadn't written anything remotely offensive or inappropriate. He was simply asking legitimate questions! What possible justification could there be for such action?

Seville then navigated to his private messages and reached out to Fray, the other attendee who had shared his concerns about the livestream quality.

He typed carefully. "Hello, I was present at the live show for 'Heavenly Melody.' All my comments have mysteriously disappeared. Did the same thing happen to your posts?"

But the moment he clicked send, a notification flashed across his screen, informing him that he had violated the platform's community guidelines and was now suspended for seven full days.

Visiting Fray's user profile with growing dread, he saw that Fray had also been handed a seven-day suspension.

Previously, Seville had experienced only mild irritation at the situation, but now white-hot rage coursed through his veins.

This represented nothing short of pure intimidation. Wasn't this simply a

calculated effort to silence opposing voices?

The widespread silence suddenly made perfect sense—everyone had been effectively muzzled through intimidation.

However, Seville possessed the tenacity of someone who refused to surrender without resistance. He swiftly accessed a secondary account, mobilized his network of contacts, and launched a targeted campaign with the hashtag—#YesterdayLiveSound—determined to amplify the suppressed voices.

As the digital movement began gathering momentum across social platforms, Millie found herself staring at a message that had materialized on her phone screen from Brandon. "My grandfather's condition has deteriorated significantly. He's requesting to see you."

Millie's fingers tightened around her phone until her knuckles turned white, and Derek's increasingly frail silhouette materialized in her mind's eye.

She recalled with painful clarity that Brandon's original motivation for marrying her had been to lift Derek's spirits during his declining years.

That pivotal day remained etched in her memory—the two of them positioned beside his hospital bed while machines hummed softly in the background. Brandon had clasped her hand with gentle determination and announced, "Grandpa, I've brought Millie to visit you. We're planning to get married soon."

Despite Derek's weakening physical state, he had summoned enough strength to point a trembling finger at Brandon and declare, "If your feelings aren't genuine, don't squander her precious years. I refuse to accept sacrifices made solely for my momentary happiness!"

The Watson family's meteoric ascent had originated when Derek first ventured into the business world decades earlier. He had become the unwavering foundation upon which the entire Watson Empire was constructed.

When Derek spoke, every family member and business associate listened with reverent attention.

How could anyone witness such selfless concern without feeling deeply moved?

That sacred day, Brandon had made a solemn vow at Derek's bedside, swearing that his love was authentic and promising to cherish Millie throughout their shared lifetime. But circumstances had shifted dramatically since then.

At last, Millie squeezed her eyes shut and let the weight of reality settle over her shoulders.

Time had proven itself a relentless force of transformation.

Brandon had already initiated divorce proceedings, and they had made their obligatory appearance at the courthouse together just days before.

Concealing the news from Derek represented the maximum extent of protection she could provide.

There existed no additional actions she could take, nor any she possessed the emotional strength to attempt.

With that sobering realization settling over her, Millie closed the chat application with finality.

Across the sprawling city, Brandon remained frozen in the plush leather seat of his midnight-black Bentley, his eyes fixed on the message he had transmitted with mounting desperation.

Three excruciating minutes had elapsed since sending it.

Millie's response remained conspicuously absent from his screen.

Brandon scrolled upward through their conversation history and experienced a jarring realization—the last time she had initiated contact was before their courthouse appointment.

He directed his attention toward the rain cascading down the window glass in intricate patterns.

When had their paths last crossed in the physical realm?

It seemed like approximately three days ago during that tense encounter at the hospital.

Her forehead had been swathed in stark white medical bandages. During the entire agonizing time, she had only spoken three brief things to him.

"What are you doing?!"

"What happened?"

And as he prepared to leave with Vivian, she had called out with unexpected urgency—"Brandon."

Those initial two utterances hadn't even been directed specifically

toward him.

For inexplicable reasons, he discovered himself yearning for her presence with unexpected intensity.

The image of her tumbling down those unforgiving stairs replayed in his mind, and he found himself genuinely concerned about her current condition and recovery.

His brow creased with concern as troubling thoughts invaded his mind.

Brandon couldn't comprehend what mysterious force was affecting his usual emotional equilibrium.

Millie had haunted his thoughts with persistent tenacity throughout every waking moment of the day.

A vivid recollection suddenly blazed across his consciousness—the enigmatic masked woman from earlier that evening.

Perhaps she had triggered this emotional upheaval within him.

Something indefinable about her had evoked memories of the Millie he once cherished—vibrant, passionate, always expressing herself through laughter or tears.

At that precise moment, a series of rhythmic knocks resonated against the car window.

Brandon lifted his gaze and discovered Vivian standing outside in the rain, her silhouette blurred by the water streaming down the glass.

"Hey there, Brandon!" Vivian wrenched open the car door and slipped gracefully into the seat positioned beside him.

Instinctively, Brandon concealed his phone from her penetrating gaze, sliding it away with practiced stealth.

Vivian's eyes tracked the movement briefly, though she appeared to dismiss it as inconsequential, but as she pivoted to close the door behind her, a flicker of resentment darkened her expression.

When she faced him again, her features had transformed into a mask of radiant warmth.

She inquired with gentle concern, "Did I inconvenience you by requesting this ride? Have you been waiting here for long?"

"Not particularly lengthy," Brandon responded with measured neutrality. 1

"That brings me considerable relief," Vivian replied, her smile never wavering.

The driver engaged the engine, propelling them through the rain-soaked streets of the city.

Vivian began recounting entertaining anecdotes from the recording session, but Brandon's attention drifted like smoke, barely registering her animated storytelling.

His consciousness remained fixated on the masked woman's provocative words, which echoed relentlessly. "You really ought to ask Vivian about what she said to me."

"Brandon? Brandon?" Vivian's voice cut through his mental fog.

Brandon jolted back to the present moment, his focus returning to the car's interior.

He turned toward Vivian, his expression clearly indicating that she should continue with her narrative.

"What thoughts were consuming your attention?" Vivian asked, her tone laced with curious concern. "You've appeared completely absorbed in your own world for quite some time now."

Brandon studied Vivian's delicate features—porcelain pale, fragile, and almost heartbreakingly vulnerable. 2

Finally, he posed the question that had been searing through his mind. "What precisely did you say to Serena during the recording?"