

Her Revenge 41

Chapter 41

In her previous life, when Lea had escaped from prison and hid in the sewer, it was Shannon who braved the cold night to bring her a quilt, a sandwich, and some water.

Lea still vividly remembers what Shannon told her then. As she spoke, Shannon's eyes sparkled with hope.

"Lea, you're using your artificial brain technology to appeal your case. With your R&D achievements and your talents in the tech industry, there's a chance the death penalty could be changed. There's still a glimmer of hope—don't give up.

"As long as you keep pushing the boundaries with AI your life will shine. There's still so much you can do"

"You're still breathing, so there's still a chance to turn things around, right?"

"Never give up, not ever...."

That pep talk was what kept Lea going in prison. It paid off—her skills got noticed by Milton, giving her a chance at a new life. It was only later that Lea realized Shannon's encouragement to "never give up was also a message to herself,

Tragically, the day after Shannon received her SAT scores, her body was found in the river.

Previously, Donna had died from complications of alcoholism and a heart attack, leading the police to conclude that Shannon's death was a suicide related to Donna's death.

Shannon had excelled in her exams and secured a place at Conrad University. But she knew Helen well enough to know that Helen wouldn't easily let go of someone who knew too much and was too smart. So, Helen ended up at the same university, still in Lea's life.

"Can't I drop by to see you?" Lea said coldly

Helen's target had always been Lea. Shannon, shocked and in pain, blurted out, "Lea. I begged you to leave. If you had, Lily would still be alive, and none of this mess would have happened. I wouldn't be stuck in this hell!"

As tears streamed down her face. Amid her current nightmare, Lily's death weighed

"Lily is dead, and she was so young... Shannon choked up, tears heaviest on her soul.

"Shannon, you think I can just walk away from all this crap?" Lea responded.

After all, assassinations, car crashes, and blatant murder attempts—Lea had seen it all. And there were things even Shannon didn't know about.

Shannon looked at Lea puzzled and clearly too young to understand the full extent of Helen and Matilda's ruthlessness. She naively thought that if Lea had just stayed away, nobody would have died

Lea knew better than to expect such deep insights from an eighteen-year-old. "Did you push Lily downstairs?" she asked, changing the subject.

"Hell no!" Shannon replied, her body jolting as she vehemently denied it

At that time. Helen had summoned them to the rooftop. As soon as they exited the stairwell, they saw Lily standing there.

Helen ordered, "Push her off!"

Shannon was horrified and in total dis

array: "Helen, this is murder! You can't fucking do this?" she protested.

Shannon didn't help Helen; instead, she tried to stop her. Enraged but not wanting to miss her chance, Helen shoved Shannon aside, ran forward, and pushed Lily off.

"And how is this your problem?" Lea's soft inquiry caught Shannon off guard, her eyes widening, pupils dilating with shock. But then, just as quickly, the sparkle in Shannon's eyes dimmed

"Your mom?" Lea saw right through Shannon's thoughts.

Shannon bit her lip and looked down, wrestling with her feelings of wanting to detach from Donna but unable to detach completely when it really

mattered

Lea said, "You know, Matilda tortured me for nineteen years. I only found out later she wasn't my real mom. That's how she could do such inhuman things to me. All men, good or bad, rarely illtreat their own children. Someone as ruthless as Matilda is still fiercely protective of her own child."

She paused, then added. "And your mom? She's like the only mom I've ever met who lacks any maternal instinct. Just a cold, selfish monster"

Lea was a mother herself before, knew what maternal instincts should look like. She had accidentally overheard Donna's conversations at Fraley Hospital, where she was willing to sell out Shannon to Helen just for better medicine. And now, her suggesting Shannon take the fall for Helen

pissed Lea off

were dead-on accurate.

Lea's harsh words hit Shannon hard, stinging and difficult to hear, but she couldn't refute them. Because they were

Seeing Shannon's silent, pained reaction, Lea knew her words had struck a nerve, shedding light on the twisted nature of Shannon's relationship

with Donna

"Hey, Shannon, ever thought about getting a DNA test! Just to check if you're really your mom's kid? Lea suggested.

As she spoke, Lea flicked something towards Shannon, who caught it instinctively.

With that, Lea tossed a strangely shaped bracelet Shannon's way, and she caught it quickly. It was more than just a bracelet—Shannon recognized it immediately, her eyes lighting up with recognition.

Being a hacker herself, Shannon didn't waste any time. She transformed

d the bracelet into a phone and powered it up, bringing up a display—it showed the school's rooftop

Shannon's heart raced as she glanced up at Lea, her breath catching in her throat. Without a word, she pressed play.

video on the

The video was brief, just 8 seconds, but it was enough. It clearly showed the face of the person who had pushed Lily downstairs—none other than

Helen

After school, as soon as Lea had left the classroom, she had hacked into the school's monitoring system. Anticipating Helen's maneuvers, she had Shannon disable the cameras first. But Lea, the brains behind advanced AI, had superior hacking skills.

Lea had ensured the surveillance was running so their ascent to the rooftop was recorded. But knowing the rooftop had blind spots, Lea had set up external cameras to catch this crucial footage. It was precisely at this moment when Lily nearly fell from the building, nearly hitting her

This footage was undeniable—it could prove Shannon's innocence and set her free.

Shannon trembled all over as she watched the video: "Lea! Why why'd you do this?" she asked, visibly shaken.

"Helen's been after my b

lood, and I want h

her

to face the consequences," Lea said firmly.

But her motives weren't just about revenge. She also wanted to repay Shannon for a past life's debt, giving her a chance to live freely on her own.

Teribs

Shannon could only stare in stunned silence as Lea gave her a meaningful look and walked away.

Not long after, police officers showed up to interrogate Shannon and she asked for a lawyer. By the afternoon, her attorney had arrived.

The lawyer, a no-nonsense man in his forties dressed in a sharp suit, immediately took charge. “Miss Yancey. I’m your defense attorney. I’ll handle everything from here. Don’t worry about the fees—the Berry family has taken care of it,” He informed her.

Shannon’s expression shifted as she quickly regained her composure. This was all within her expectations.

“I need to visit my mom in the hospital,” she stated, momentarily catching the lawyer off guard before he nodded in agreement.

Chapter 42

In the evening, Shannon was covertly driven to Fraley Hospital to visit Donna.

The attending doctor, Peter briefed her, saying. “Your mom checked out with a fresh surgery wound, completely exhausted. The wound got worse, causing complications. She passed out before she even made it back here”

Shannon saw Donna hooked up to oxygen and IV’s, her face pale and gaunt, breathing erratically. The sight made her own breathing hitch.

“We’ve given her the best meds we have, some are even pricey imports Peter continued. “Up to now, your mom has racked up about 28 thousand dollars in medical balls. With the current treatment, it’s costing about eight hundred to a thousand dollars a day. But the real issue is, her years of heavy drinking have wrecked her organs. Without a new kidney, she’s not gonna make it.”

He then added, “Miss Berry spoke with our director, Mr. Donovan, and he’s prioritized your mom for a transplant. We’ve even found a potential donor

Helen was the Fraley family’s golden girl, rumored to be the future heiress, and Shannon knew it wasn’t just gossip.

Peter then stated, “But the kidney comes at a cost—over 20 thousand dollars, which is way out of your league. If you don’t pay up, we can’t proceed. with the transplant, Unless, of course. Miss Berry decides to cover it for you?

When Shannon heard this, it hit her like a ton of bricks, making it hard to breathe.

Now, she faced two brutal choices: Plead guilty for Helen face life in prison, and endure a bleak, sinless existence. Or let Donna die

Staring at Donna struggling for every breath, Shannon knew she couldn’t just let her die.

She took a deep breath to steady herself and then said to Peter. “Can I have some time alone with my mom?”

Peter nodded, giving her space, and stepped out, closing the door behind him.

Sitting by the bed, Shannon couldn't shake Lea's words from her mind.

monster”

“All men, good or bad, rarely illtreat their own children. Someone as ruthless as Matilda is

is still fiercely protective of her own child.”

“And your mom? She's like the only mom I've ever met who lacks any maternal instinct. Just a cold, selfish r

“Hey, Shannon, ever thought about getting a DNA test? Just to check if you're really your mom's kid?”

Prompted by Lea's suggestion, Shannon impulsively collected a hair strand from both herself and her mom.

On the drive back, Shannon seized the moment to text Lea. Can you help me? I need to do a DNA test.]

Ever since Shannon was little, Donna had been erratic, abandoning her and even hitting her when drunk. Shannon had always questioned if they were truly related. Now, being coerced to cover for Helen's crime really turned her world upside down, amplifying her doubts fueled by Lea's remarks. She was determined to get that test.

She believed Lea would help. Otherwise, why would she visit me at the police station? she thought.

Lea had just reached the Berry Mansion when she received Shannon's text, smirking slightly at its content. “Shannon is not stupid, that's for sure. Anyone smart enough to get into Vaporleon High School isn't ordinary” she thought.

Shannon and Lea shared similar burdens—both had mothers who were nothing short of monstrous, causing pain and suffering.

But oddly, Lea considered herself luckier. Matilda, despite exploiting and abusing her, hadn't directly endangered her life, and allowed her to access advanced scientific knowledge.

Donna, however, was like a vampire, draining Shannon of life, ready to sacrifice her at a moment's notice.

Lea quickly replied, [Sure thing. I get someone to swing by the station to find you.

After that, she hit up Lorrard, telling him to check on Shannon at the station, keeping it low-key.

Then, she walked into the living room. Immediately, she noticed Melissa packing up three cats into a cage. “What's going on, Melissa?” she asked.

“The tiniest cat hasn't touched its food all day. I'm gonna take it to the vet for a check-up. The other two aren't looking too hot either, so I'll bring them along. Sorry, Miss, I screwed up taking care of them,” Melissa said, clearly upset.

Melissa was somewhat aware of why Lea suddenly moved into the old house. She'd picked up and pieces about it

To Melissa, Lea was just a young kid, feeling lonely and sad. She only had a couple of kittens for company, but Melissa didn't even do a good job taking care of them, hence the self-blame.

A shadow passed over Lea's face. She hadn't expected her cat to get sick so soon.

to grab the cage.

Lea decided to take charge. "You've got enough going on. I'll take care of this," she said, dropping her backpack and heading over to

"Miss Berry... Melissa started, but Lea cut her off with a kind smile. "It's all good," she said, before heading out with the cats.

Watching Lea go. Melissa's heart sank. Such a sweet girl—why couldn't Mrs. Herry just cut her some slack?"

Instead of heading to the vet, Lea went to Andrews Hospital.

The hospital had merged with Riverview SmartMed, but the main building was still being renovated and wasn't open yet, so it was still running independently as usual.

By lowering the barriers for patient admission and taking in those rejected by other hospitals, the hospital quickly built a strong reputation, attracting more patients in just a few days.

Charles and Lorrard had completed the marketing procedures for several new drugs and got approval for their launch.

But Lea had instructed that, despite Fraley Medical developing similar drugs with issues that prevented their approval, they would use them discreetly in the hospital to avoid sparking malicious competition, as they were not ready for such a battle,

Thus, these new drugs were administered exclusively to their patients, significantly enhancing the quality of medical care and boosting the hospital's revenues, turning around its financial work

Lea took a taxi to the hospital. Just as she got out, Lorrard pulled up in his car.

He'd been to the police station to meet Shannon and brought back her stuff.

"Miss Berry, what's up with the cats?" he asked.

"I think they've been poisoned. I'm here to get a blood test done," she replied.

"Alright, I'll get on it. He nodded, and they went into the hospital together.

After the reshuffle, Alfred took care of her

Thuring, with Lea's approval.

He also handled investments, while Lea managed the hospital

Chris, as the CEO, represented Lea in all affairs.

Charles was in charge of the research lab, and Lorrاند, being the hospital director, oversaw the entire operations

Their assertive and aggressive approach pushed the hospital's development faster than anticipated.

Lea's concern for the cats was prioritized immediately. Lorrاند had the staff start the tests without delay. Meanwhile, the paternity test Shannon needed was also set up.

With nothing else pressing, Lea decided to take a stroll around the hospital, with Lorrاند as her guide.

Chapter 43

The equipment here is old and can't keep up anymore, Lorrاند said. "Tvr talked with Mr. W

Wessen about raising money to buy new stuff –

"No worries, Lea replied. "Just make a list, and I'll figure out the funding," She was after rapid growth Counting on the hospital's profits was too slow, so she'd have to find another way.

"Also, Ms. Foster is on it, buying machines mostly from abroad. Once we finish the renovations at the headquarters, everything should be in place" she added.

Lorrاند looked pleasantly surprised as they walked il through the corridor into the inpatient department

"We've been slammed with seriously ill patients recently, and the inpatient department is bursting at the seams. We're working on a fox," he noted: Standing in the glass corridor, Lea looked at the old, low buildings behind them. "Once the headquarters renovation is done, we'll move the patients there. Then, we'll tear down these old buildings and build towers over 20 stories high," Lea explained,

Lorrاند looked at Lea, unerly astonished. Despite her youthful look and being a high school senior, shar commanded the space like a seasoned leader.

"Don't fuss over the money. I'll hook you up with some parents later that you can sell off. And if there are any high-ticket surgeries, help me out with those she continued.

status, the pressure was on, and she didn't want him

What Alfred had set up was merely a start, for from what she envisioned. Gaven Alfred's stop worrying over her anymore.

Lorrard was left speechless, but he couldn't help but nod, feeling a surge of excitement.

The drugs Lea introduced promised big dreams, yet now, she painted a picture even they hadn't dare to imagine.

Chatting along, they reached the end of the corridor where a door was ajar, and a small figure stumbled out, bumping into Lea and collapsing.

Quick as a flash, Lea swooped down to help the child.

The little one looked up and blurted out. "Mom?"

Lea froze, feeling like she'd been hit with a ton of bricks by that "mom."

"Anna!" A nurse, pushing sixty, hurried over, shocked to see them. "Mr. Phoenix, your wife looks so young!"

Lorrard rushed over to scoop up the little girl, who happened to be his daughter, and he quickly clarified, "She's not my wife,"

as the hospital boss was still on the down-low, so Lorrard kept quiet.

Lea's secret as

"Sorry about that. Anna called you 'Mommy, so I just figured. Plus, you're practically a kid yourself, the nurse apologized.

Casasas

She'd been working at the hospital forever and came out of retirement to help Lorrard with his daughter, knowing how busy he was as a surgeon.

Seeing Lea so composed and stern, Lorrard felt his heart skip a beat and suggested the nurse take a break.

"Miss Berry, I apologize. Anna is still working on her memory and recognizing faces," he explained.

Anna, with those big, round eyes, was beaming at Lea.

Even though they hadn't seen each other in less than half a month, the kid still remembered Lea and called her "Mom" like before.

Lea kept her cool, shrugged it off, and shook her head.

sking to be picked up.

Next thing she knew, Anna was rushing into her arms, asking to

Lea was taken aback, but Anna was already in her arms, so she went with it.

And once she had her, Anna snuggled in close, peppering her face with kisses.

Lea looked closely at the little girl and saw that the new medication was working wonders, Anna look and her skin looked better. She was a bit chubby now, really cute, cooked much healthier, load gained some weight.

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realark red and

a bat beary,

Tuilt if awe

“She’s already learning to walk,” Lorrاند said. “She’s talking a lot and picking things up quickly and gratitude

If it weren’t for Lea, Antuu wouldn’t be doing.

Lea nodded but felt uneasy because her own child hadn’t had this chance.

She quickly pushed those thoughts away, not wanting to think about it.

“Where’s Anna’s mom Lea asked. The fact that Anna called Lea “mom” twice made it clear she missed her real mom. It was a cruel separation to think about.

“My wife passed away when Anna was three months old, Lorrاند said sadly. “Anna didn’t get to see her one last time.”

Lea frowned. Did she die at Fraley Hospital?”

He nodded

“Do y

o you know why?” Lea asked.

Lorrاند sighed deeply. “My being locked up really fucked her up. She was already in poor health, staying at the hospital during her pregnancy. She bled out during childbirth complications followed”

Tears welled up in his eyes, and his face showed both suspicion and resentment.

This was the hospital’s official story, but he had his doubts,

“Get a good private detective to check it out Lea suggested. “And look into your daughter’s kidney situation too. If money’s tight, talk to Ms. Foster. I’ll handle the rest.

Back when Lea was in Iverton, she stumbled upon reports online about organ trafficking at Fraley Medical. There had been instances where patients inexplicably lost organs – not just once or twice, but three or four times

It seemed too coincidental. Right after Matilda had told Nixon to make sure Shannon behaved, Donna was diagnosed with kidney cancer and ended up losing a kidney.

There's definitely more to
more to this, she thought.

Lorrand was visibly shaken but then nodded, his resolve firming. He had wanted to do this for a long time but lacked the strength and support before. Now, fueled by Lea's backing, he was more than ready to art

"Thanks, Miss Berry... His voice choked up a bit, knowing he'd spend the rest of his life repaying her for such kindness

Meanwhile, Alfred now lingereid by the elevator, watching them from afar,

Lea was holding the child close, sharing smiles with her as the warm sunset streamed through the window, casting a gentle glow.

When the child—called her mom," he couldn't bring himself to move forward, his gaze weighed down with fatigue.

Sensing something, Lea turned to him.

She handed Anna to Lorrand and dashed over to him, excitement evident as she exclaimed, "What brings you here?"

He smiled and casually remarked, "Got some hospital stuff to take care of

He'd spotted her machinery order last night and knew she was on the move. Seeing her today caught him off guard.

"Come with me," he said, leading the way.

Chapter 44

Alfred escorted Lea to the conference room in the medical research building, where Charles and a few colleagues immediately greeted her upon arrival.

"Miss Berry!" Charles exclaimed, his eyes gleaming with admiration

1. h. Could you give us some

"Mr. Andrews has arranged to purchase this cutting-edge medical equipment for us, setting us on a new path of research. direction on where to focus?" he asked eagerly.

Lea, taking the equipment list from him, looked surprised as she glanced at Alfred. Everything she had envisioned was on the list, including a few extras she hadn't anticipated but would need later.

However, these items were not only expensive but also hard to come by, even with money.

"Alfred explained quickly. "Luckily, I've got connections with leading global manufacturers of medical devices, so I went ahead and ordered some."

“Awesome!” Lea rarely showed her emotions in front of others, but she couldn’t hide her genuine happiness now. “With these, we can elevate the medical standards of our hospital to a new level”

“Yeah,” Alfred agreed, nodding.

Seeing her smile, he felt good, thinking that the billions spent were worth it

“As for the research...” Lea paused for a second, then came up with an idea. “I’ve got a few ideas brewing. Where can I find a computer around here?”

Charles’s face lit up and he exclaimed, “Right this way?” He led her to his laboratory.

Charles had his own private labs fitted with several computers, two of which were busy crunching numbers. Funded by the Andrews Group, the equipment was state-of-the-art and secured with biometric locks to ensure confidentiality.

After starting up one of the computers, Charles pulled up a chair for her. “Miss Berry, please make yourself at home

Lea sat in front of the computer, adjusted the keyboard, and quickly got to work.

She had set up her own server to store data, loaded with stuff she’d been working on late into the night back at her old place.

Back home, everyone thought she was just pulling all-nighters for the SAT exam, with her grandpa and the housekeeper, Jeffrey, always telling her to take it easy.

She pulled up two files she had been working on and downloaded them to the computer. With a few adjustments, she maxed out the hospital’s internet speed for super quick downloads.

One file detailed an updated formula for an immune-boosting drug the other was a design for a blood-testing device powered by artificial Intelligence. These were innovations she had developed at 22 in her previous life, now safely stored in her mind and ready to be utilized whenever necessary

However, Lea knew she had to be subtle about how she introduced these innovations to Charles and the others to avoid raising suspicions.

She was busy downloading stuff and tapping away on the keyboard, her fingers moving like lightning.

Alfred was outside, but he couldn’t resist the sound of that keyboard. He peeked in and saw this girl in her school uniform, her delicate fingers dancing over the keyboard like there was no tomorrow. That rhythm had his hair standing on end.

The blue glow from the computer screen highlighted her beautiful facial features, making it look more ethereal, while her eyes sparkled like stars. It was as if she was born to be in the lab.

Before long, Lea was totally lost in her work.

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Alfred pulled up a chair and settled in, silently enjoying the sight.

Charles eyed Alfred, then shifted his gaze to Lea, piecing together their connection.

Alfred, usually staying out of Andrews Group affairs, had surprisingly brought her to the hospital this time. He didn't stop there; he bought and revamped the whole hospital, handing it over to her. Now, he was even dropping big money on new equipment

There has to be more to it—what else could explain all this fuss? He is definitely into her, Charles thought.

And with Lea around, Alfred seemed less like a corporate robot and more human. But Lea, a talent like her wasn't just anyone's catch. Around him..... her icy demeanor melted away, showing a softer, more accommodating side.

The two of them were oddly well-matched.

"I gotta jet, got some other stuff to wrap up, Charles announced, breaking the moment.

Even though he was curious about what Lea was working on her typing was lightning-fast, and the codes on her screen was like gibberish to him right now.

He didn't want to be a third wheel here, so he found an excuse to leave.

Once Charles left, Alfred scooted his chair right next to Lea, close enough to catch the scent of her hair.

Lea was lost in her work, oblivious to time, until Lorrاند came up to her. "Miss Berry, the blood test results for the cats are in"

She paused, shifting her focus to him.

"We found a chemical that accelerates cerebral thrombosis, he explained, handing over the report.

Lea's hands shook as she read through the findings. This chemical, once in the bloodstream, would accumulate in the brain and cause thrombosis within months, showing no other symptoms

For someone like Christian, it was practically a death sentence. Given his age and condition, a higher dosage would quickly lead to cerebral thrombosis, potentially fast or slow. Should his brain function deteriorate, he'd be bedridden and helpless.

At that point, the entire Berry family, including Christian, would be at the mercy of Matilda's schemes.

"So, this drug doesn't really affect cats much. It might cause some reactions because they're still kittens. If you hadn't brought it in for testing, the per hospital wouldn't have caught it," Lorrاند explained.

“Gotcha.” Lea hadn’t expected she could uncover this issue through this process.

“Can we whip up an antidote?” she asked.

Once they knew the chemicals and understood their structures, making the counteract wasn’t 100 tricky in the medical world

“It’s doable. If we need it ASAP, I’ll have Mr. Wessen start on it, he suggested.

She nodded in agreement.

“Those cats...” he said.

“I’m not taking them back. Can you find them a home?” Lea was done with pets; she didn’t have the energy anymore, especially after achieving her goal with them.

“Sure thing. And about the DNA tests, the results will take a bit longer. I’ll send them over as soon as they’re ready. Lorrاند replied.

Like Charles, Lorrاند picked up on the unique dynamic between Alfred and Lea, deciding to give them some space. He quietly excused himself.

over at Charles computer

Lea glanced over

computer, then decided to power down her server af

after a moment’s thought

Just as she did. Charles strolled into the office.

“I’ve transferred the two projects I’m working on to your computer. Any new developments will be directly presented to you.” She updated him.

“Got it, thanks. I’m heading out now, Charles said.

It was about time for Christian to wrap

ap up his day, and with all eyes from Matilda’s camp and the mansion on her, Lea needed to head back early

Lorrاند had thought about walking her out, but hesitated because Alfred was there.

Lea and Alfred left the experimental building together as dusk fell, bathing the park in a soft glow from the streetlights.

“What’s up with the cats” Alfred asked, sounding concerned.

“They ate some bad food, but it’s okay. I can handle it” Lea assured him.

Alfred had already done so much for her at the hospital, and with his busy life, she didn’t want him more stressed because

of her.

i know y

you’re worried and don’t want me to deal with the Berry family alone, but your presence will only make Matilda and the others more cautious,” Lea said, fixing his shirt collar. “Don’t worry, I can handle it.”

’T

“Lea, Alfred said, stepping closer, their breaths mingling. “Don’t let anything happen to you.

Stay safe.”

She finished straightening his collar, gazed up into his eyes, and offered a tender smile. “I can’t stand the thought of being away from you.

With him by her side, the world seemed less daunting.

Alfred grinned. Til have someone go with you to make sure you’re safe”

“Okay” She smiled back

He took out his phone and made a call. Shortly after, a young man in his twenties appeared, looking just as professional as Eddie and Craig.

“Jason, I want you to follow her and keep her safe, Alfred said.

Jason looked at the girl in front of him, surprised. She was stunning, but that was expected among the wealthy.

Jason, along with Craig and Eddie, had been Alfred’s bodyguards since childhood, with the sole mission of protecting him.

Now Alfred was asking him to protect someone else, treating her safety as paramount,

Jason found it hard to understand and wasn’t thrilled about it.

Alfred noticed his hesitation, arched an eyebrow significantly, and called out sharply. “Jason”

“Yes, sir!” Jason replied.

“Do you wanna quit?” Alfred challenged.

No,

sir!” Jason snapped back immediately. In their line of work, quitting wasn’t in the cards—only death.

Jason turned to Lea, adopting a

ta professional tone. “Ms. Lea, just give the word, and I’m at your service”

Lea chuckled softly, acknowledging his pledge. Turning to Alfred, she remarked, "I'll keep him close, but I can't bring him home just yet. Grandpa would be upset if he knew I brought one of your men home

She also needed to keep this arrangement hidden from Matilda and the others.

"Just handle it your way." Alfred consented.

"Alright," she responded, her sweet smile reflecting pure innocence. Only in front of him would she smile like that,

"I'm off now," she said, her eyes lingering on his.

Then, he nodded as she left.

mily driver, everyone just assumed she took a taxi as usual.

Jason drove her home, and since she rarely used the family

By the time Lex arrived home, it was already dark. She was surprised to find Christian home and having dinner.

She expected him to be working late, but it seemed Matilda's request for Nixon to raise money for the stock market had been effective.

After washing up, she joined Christian for dinner.

"Where are the caus?" he asked, noticing their absence and learning from the servants that she took them to

o the pet hospital.

"I sent them away, Lea replied coldly.

Christian frowned, not too pleased. "You just gave them away? Why'd you bother getting them in the first place?"

Though he was a tough, no-nonsense person who didn't care for pets, he always envisioned Lea as compassionate and loving.

"I'm swamped with school, Grandpa. I don't have the time to care for them properly.

y, and a's only going to get busier if I go away to college. They re better off with someone who can dedicate the time," Lea explained logically.

Christian wanted to object, but he knew she had a point, although it still didn't sit right with him.

Lea set some bread in front of him and urged him to eat, while she started on her own portion.

ith Alfred be

She was starving; originally planning to grab a meal with Alfred before heading back, but got caught up in Charles lab and forgot all about it.

d to make conversation.

“How’s the company doing now?” Lea tried

“It’s stabilized and even showing signs of bouncing back, Christian replied, feeling a bit better as he spoke. His mood lightened, and his appetite returned.

Noticing his improved mood, Lea smiled warmly and said. “Congratulations, Grandpa.”

Laughing lightly, Christian responded, “Oh, don’t be silly, dear. You’re part of the Berry family too, and this success benefits you just as much as anyone else!

She smiled back, though inside she knew the true beneficiary of the Berry Group was Matilda, not even including him.

Pulling out her phone, Lea immediately saw a headline about the Berry Group’s stock rebounding. Another headline caught her eye about Helen’s murder case. “Hidden Truths Behind Helen Berry’s Alleged Murder.”

Intrigued, she clicked to read more. One comment speculated, [Helen Berry, a prodigy from Vaporleon City’s wealthiest family and a billionaire by sixteen had no reason to commit murder and destroy her life.

Another read. [If Helen had really murdered someone, the Berry Group wouldn’t just sit back. Their silence suggests they’re waiting for the right moment to clarify the situation.]

Further comments argued, [If Helen was really the culprit, the Berry family would be in damage control mode. The fact that they’re not scrambling says a lot.]

[Exactly! The cops would’ve spilled the beans ages ago if she was the real killer. Something’s fishy here, folks.]

[Yep, smells like there’s more to this story

y than meets the eye. Bet there’s some hidden truth lurking in the shadows.

Then, another post popped up, asking, [Berry Group stocks are climbing. Should I offload my shares now! What if there’s more to Helen Berry’s case! Could be a big loss if I sell now]

Responses flooded in

[I’m all in on Berry Group’s AI tech. It’s ahead of the curve—that’s why I bought big. If it turns out Helen was set up. I’d kick myself for selling

[Hold onto those stocks! Helen isn’t the villain they make her out to be. She’s been a straight—A student forever a total whiz kid.]

[Exactly! The stock bounce is legit.]

Then came the third post, declaring. This smells like a stock market scheme to tank Berry Group and smear Helen

The comments continued, heavily influencing public sentiment.

Some netizens even claimed it was all a setup, and Helen was framed, urging others to buy Berry Group stocks while they were low

No wonder the stocks were bouncing back so quickly. It turned out, Matilda had been hard at work not just on the financial front but had unleashed a full-blown PR blitz online.

She wasn't just steadying shareholder nerves, she was also enticing new investors into the fray and cleaning up Helen's public image impressively. It was called "three birds, one stone"

Lea recognized the maneuverings as classic Manida—media manipulation masterclass. Using the financial clout of Berry Group and Fraley Medical, Matilda had secured control over major media outlets in Vaporleon City years ago, reaping substantial profits from orchestrated news coverage.

Lea thought of bringing up the cat poisoning to Christian, but he looked too caught up to listen.

Hed probably misunderstand, thinking she was just accusing Matilda, not caring about the family's survival

She'd have to wait for the right moment to mention it With Lorrard working on an antidote, she could protect him anyway.

"Done eating. Grandpa. I'll go hit the books," she said, heading upstairs.

So Matilda thought she could easily

y stabilize the stock price! Not so fast.

If Lea couldn't beat them this time, she'd make sure they'd pay up big time and pour more money into Berry Group. It was about to be hers for the Laking.

Chapter 46

"Hey, why so lule on your plate?" Christian glanced at Lea's half-eaten meal.

Lea, still growing needed her fuel, after all

But seeing her putting in so much effort made Christian feel warm inside. "Hey, Melissa, make some more snacks for her, will yar

"Okay, sir" Melissa nodded.

Lea walked into her room and locked the door. She headed straight for her desk, turned on the computer, and started typing around for a bunch of IP addresses. Then, she hopped on some foreign websites and posted Helen's video.

Just a few days ago, when Shawn and Chandler confessed about Helen, Lea had tried uploading the videos using several accounts, only to have them swiftly taken down.

It was frustrating – all her efforts seemed to be in vain. But this time, she had a plan. Lea had written a program to counteract any attempts to delete the videos. If they wanted them gone, they'd have to really sweat for it

Simultaneously, she sent a data packet to several email addresses through foreign websites

The data contained evidence collected since Shawn and Chandler's confession. And those two were right at the top of her list. She wanted them

gone.

With one last click, Lea's hand left the keyboard, and a cold grin spread across her face. 'Matilda, wait and see!

Over at the Berry Group HQ, in the Vice President's Office, Matilda had been kicked out before, but stock problems brought her back in. She'd been grinding since morning, and now it was almost dusk.

Luckily, the stock prices had leveled out and were even bouncing back, better than she'd hoped.

Luckily, the stock prices had settled and were even on the upswing, better than she'd hoped. In the afternoon, Christian was all smiles and his attitude toward her did a complete 180, so she smoothed things over with him.

Inside and out, everything finally settled down.

Matilda knew Nixon was a real lifesaver. He always came through when it really counted, unlike Ewan

Thinking about Ewan just pissed her off. She'd asked him for 200 million bucks, but hadn't seen a dime

"What's up with that lover?" she snapped

5

Max, who was working nearby, jumped before finally got the question. "Um... Mr. Berry, he's been stuck in the suburbs since last night..."

Since they found out about his affair with Janice, they'd been keeping tabs on him.

Her face soured.

Helen was still locked up at the police station, and Berry Group's stock was about to hit rock bottom. And here was Christian, the CEO and dad of the kid, just ignoring it all to chat with his side chick.

is toast, so he is throwing in the towel I am still kicking Matilda seethed internally

Does he think Helen intoani,

"Round up some people, get a car ready, we're heading to the suburbs!"
Matilda commanded.

At the suburban villas, Janice was rocking a light pink silk nightie, clutching her waist with one hand and Ewan's arm with the other, leading him

QUL

"It's getting dark, why don't you just stay?" she suggested.

ing ruildes. But now, with her daughter likely facing a

Before, Janice used to fear Matilda- a woman with hefty connections and a reputation for being Life sentence for murder. Maulda's power seemed diminished

For the Berry family, without another hear, the unborn child Janice was carrying represented their only hope.

Maulda is finished, Janice thought, relishing the idea of taking her place and watching her beg

It was a liberating thought. If it weren't for Matilila, Janice thought she wouldn't have to hide her pregnancy in this deserted suburb, afraid to be

"I've been here with you all day and night, but I've got things to sort out back home. Ewan said.

If the Berry family went belly-up, he'd be out of cash too, which was a big deal for him

"Matilda's been causing trouble. I'm worried you'll be stressed when you get back home," Janice said, trying to calm Ewan down

"Matilda's got that fancy family background. But who knows what kind of upbringing Helen's had in the Fraley family to end up this way," Janice added, feeling pretty high and mighty compared to Matilda

"Don't sweat it too much. Just focus on looking after the baby," Ewan replied.

He had a burning resentment towards Matilda, but Helen was still his daughter. Hearing this didn't sit right with him.

"Take it easy. We've got a little guy on the way. He's a boy. Take good care of him, and he'll carry on the Berry family name" Janice reassured him, her hand resting gently on his chest.

"Christian's probably furing. He's not getting any younger, you know. You should talk to him, let him know about our son. It'll make him happy." she suggested, confident that once Christian knew about their grandson, she'd be welcomed into the Berry family, kicking Matilda out

"Alright, when you head back, find Christian and let him know, okay?" she finished, reaching for the door handle.

“Argh!” As soon as the door swung open, Janice let out a surprised scream and stumbled backward. Ewan quickly rushed to her aid, helping her regain her balance.

Standing in the doorway was Matilda.

She was decked out in a sleek black dress, her hair perfectly coiffed, ruby earrings glinting, lips painted dark, and her eyes blazing with anger like sharp knives

Behind her loomed five bodyguards, along with a driver and a handful of stern-looking secretaries, all dressed in black and radiating an air of intimidation.

Even Ewan was taken aback by the sight

“Get that tramp out” Matilda gritted her teeth, her voice full of rage

Two of the bodyguards moved in fast, one on each side of Janice, grabbing her and starting to usher her out.

“What are you doing? Let me go!” she yelled

“What the hell do you think y

ou’re doing?! Lai !

es her go, damn it! She’s pregnant Ewan protested, his face flushing with anxiety.

But before he could even take a step forward, two other bodyguards stepped in, blocking his path, clearly wouldn’t hesitate to intervene if he tried anything.

Following Matilda’s orders like robots, they brought Janice right up to her.

“Matilda, you can’t just bust into someone’s house like this! I’ll sue…….”

Janice started, her voice shaky with fear and anger.

Before she could finish, Matilda smacked Janice hard across the face, Janice’s head tilted to the side, her cheek swelling with red finger marks, blood trickling from the corner of her mouth

Janice hesitated for a second, then straightened up, her voice firm despite the pain. “Hitting so someone is illegal”

Matilda slapped Janice again, just as hard, making her own palm go red, she didn’t even play by the rules. ‘So just because being a homewrecker isn’t illegal, she thinks she’s entitled? she thought in disdain.

Not satisfied just being the other woman, Janice now wanted Ewan to persuade Christian to welcome her and her unborn child into the Berry family, effectively replacing Matikla and Helen.

And she dares to question our family values? Th

The nerve of Janice, a mere mistress, thinking she and her child could usurp me and my daughter’s place? Matilda thogubt.

Remembering how terrified Helen had been the last time she learned about Janice and the baby, Matilda boiled with rage.

“Beat her until she lost the baby!” Matilda snapped.

Janice’s face went pale at her words, and she panicked.

“No, please don’t she begged desperately

But before she could say another word, the bodyguard grabbed her and slammed her to the ground, her stomach taking the hit. Pain shot through her throat as she cried out

Chapter 47

“Please, let me go, let go of my child?” Janice pleaded, her hands instinctively protecting her stomach, though it was too big to hold

But the bodyguards stepped on her stomach, and the pain surged,

Her kid was hurting too, squirming like crazy inside her. She could feel his little hands waving, his feet kicking, his head tucked in.

She was scared, heartbroken, and full of regret

“Matilda, I messed up! I’m begging you, please let me and my child go
Janice admitted her mistake, pleading from the bottom of her heart.

“My kid’s fully grown, he’s in agony! He’s innocent, it’s all on me. Whatever you want me to do, just let him go Please, I’m begging you.”

Matilda just stood there, her grim expression underscored by a smirk of sheer satisfaction as she watched Janice squirm under her control.

Let her go! And the baby too! If the tables are turned and it is me begging, would she have shown any mercy? Highly unlikely, she thought bitterly.

Janice looked a mess, all pathetic and small. But would anyone even bother to look her way, considering her mistress status! Matilda was just plain disgusted

Janice knew begging Matilda was pointless, so she turned to Ewan. “Ewan, please, save me. Save your son...”

“Matilda!” Ewan pleaded, tears streaming down his bloodshot eyes. “Please, make it stop. The baby is innocent, it’s all on me. Let the child go.

“Ewan” Matilda snapped, cutting him off. “You know what? Today, just to steady Berry Group’s stock, Fraley family dropped over 1.4 billion dollars”

That was not even counting all the behind-the-scenes stuff

The funds came from Nixon’s wheeling and dealing with the big bankers, and the interest rates on them are through the roof, costing another

“I’ve got most of Berry Group’s stocks in my pocket right now,” Matilda continued. “And you know about Christian.”

“If you dare speak another word. I make sure you regret it. I’ll break you so thoroughly you’ll wish you had nothing,” she threatened menacingly

Ewan’s jaw tightened, a mix of fear and resignation in his eyes. Christian had made it explicitly clear from the day he married Matilda no affairs, no illegitimate children. He had made countless promises, all broken, leading to numerous hidden affairs and secret abortions.

Ewan had once naively tried to challenge this arrangement by exposing his affairs to Christian, only for the outcomes to be devastatingly swept under the rug, the women and the pregnancies crushed from their lives.

So Christian’s loyalty was to Matilda, not to him. Ewan knew even if Matilda were to cripple him, Christian wouldn’t so much as blink.

Faced with the unyielding figure of Matilda and her almost robotic bodyguards, Ewan finally bowed his head in defeat. Wash out her wealth, he wouldn’t stand a chance outside the walls of his gilded cage..

Janice was in agony, her whole body hurting, but she was still clear-headed.

No way! It is all bullshit. How could Matilda kick out the only male heir in the Berry Family with nothing? she thought bitterly,

Another brutal hit to her stomach sent a surge of pain through her, as blood mixed with amniotic fluid poured out. Janice’s heart dropped as she desperately looked to Ewan, their child’s only chance for salvation.

“Ewan, please, stop them... the baby. Janice gasped, her voice fading fast.

“He’s your son! You were just playing with him last night, he responded to you, felt your touch,” she pleaded, each word a struggle as she fought through the pain. “You’ve talked to him, he knows you. He knows you’re his father. He’s been alive, feeling everything for over six months now. He’s in agony, crying out for you, his father. You know this, you must know..”

Before she realized, Janice’s voice had faded, her breathing shallow

Ewan looked at her, covered in blood, with a pool of fluids beneath her. Her once-big belly now shrunk

The bodyguards kept at it, hitting Janice’s belly and waist, landing blows on both her and the kid inside her.

“Ewan, Ewan.” Janice’s voice broke with desperation. “The baby’s not moving. I can’t feel him anymore..... I just can’t”

Unable to hear the sight any longer, Ewan turned away, his hands covering his

g his face as tears streamed down unchecked. He adored that child, had dream for his future, but felt utterly powerless to protect him

Janice stared at his back, her eyes wide with pleading, unable to speak anymore.

This is the man I have entrusted my life with, the man I have believed in, and now he stood there, too frightened to save his own son—a coward, a selfish ghost, she thought bitterly

Janice was filled with regret, so profound and piercing. Then, she was at death's door, not fighting anymore.

The bodyguards stopped.

Matilda looked at Janice on the ground with disgust. Her desperate, regretful gaze gave Matilda some twisted satisfaction

This bitch thought she could screw around with my marriage and replace my daughter in the Berry clan by popping out a kid? This is what she gets Matilda cursed internally.

She glanced at Ewan again, still unable to face her. She sneered, then ordered the bodyguards. "Son it out properly. No mess left behind."

"Sure. Ma'am" The bodyguards nodded.

Matilda turned and strutted towards her red Bentley, clearly self-satisfied, swaying with every step.

Max opened the car door for Matilda, and she hopped in. The driver revved the engine and they took off.

Meanwhile, the bodyguards left behind called for an ambulance, Janice had to be saved; if she died, it would be blamed on Matilda, and that was a no-go. As for the child, covering up the miscarriage was surprisingly simple for them.

Others were busy erasing the nearby surveillance footage. If any of it leaked online, it would be a disaster for Matilda's image, and that simply couldn't happen.

Back at the Berry Mansion, Lea's eyes widened in shock as she watched the surveillance footage on her laptop. Matilda had actually caused Janice to miscarry.

Having been through childbirth herself, Lea couldn't stomach this kind of cruelty. Her fingers grew icy as she watched.

She was tracking Matilda's car through the urban transport system and saw the whole scene unfold.

A notification popped up on her laptop, telling that someone was trying to delete the surveillance data from the villa area.

Without missing a beat, she captured a screenshot of her recording and uploaded the video online, titling it. "Wife Beats Mistress Causing Miscarriage at Seven Months"

The headline was shocking and the images horrible, quickly capturing the public's attention. Within moments, it had racked up tens of thousands of clicks and thousands of shares. The heat around it was rising fast.

Matilda and Ewan's marriage had been rocky for a while, and after this bombshell, any hope for peace was gone.

From the get-go, Matilda only had eyes for Nixon, not giving a shit about Ewan. So, their marriage was teetering on the brink of collapse,

Lea knew she had to find a way to show Ewan the truth about Helen's background and Matilda's intentions.

She thought Ewan might have been a pushover, but this was too much even for him.

Her phone buzzed. It was the DNA test results from Lorrاند. As Lea read through them, a deep frown formed.

Just as s

as she suspected, Shannon and Donna weren't actually related.

Lea could not help lamenting that her and Shannon's lives were eerily similar. While Lea had faced her challenges, they were nothing compared to Shannon's hardships. Back in her previous life, Lea once thought she had it made after getting into Conrad University. Absolutely, she was wrong.

So who are Shannon's biological parents, and how the hell have she ended up with a trashy person like Donna? Thinking about her own parents sparked a surge of anger in Lea

She shook off these thoughts and sent the information to Shannon. She was curious to see how Matilda would react if Shannon refused to cover for Helen

After forwarding the message, she locked her phone and dove back into her work.

With the hospital's grand opening looming, Riverview SmartMed was ready to make its mark. Lea was determined to ensure the hospital's rapid rise and expansion.

There

was still so much to do.

Chapter 48

Night had fallen, and Matilda was enjoying a n

rare moment of peace in the back of her red Bentley, cruising down the highway towards downtown.

"Mrs. Berry, we've got trouble! Max said, thrusting a tablet into her hands, his voice tinged with panic.

Her eyes flew open, radiating intensity. Ever since Christian's birthday party last week, it had been one disaster after another, some threatening their very lives. So the mere mention of "Trouble" had her on edge.

"It's about Miss Helen... Max's voice faltered.

Matilda grabbed the tablet and was immediately hit with a trending headline screaming, "Scandal Between Helen Berry and the Directors.

Right beneath the trend about “Berry Group’s Stock Surge, another headline caught her eye. “Murder Rumors Involving Helen”

Her hand trembled as she tapped on the link, and that video played.

Her heart skipped a beat seeing Helen on the screen. Matilda sucked in a breath and dialed a number quickly.

“Nixon, Helen’s video weren’t you supposed to have scrubbed all this shit from the net? Why the hell is it trending again?” she demanded.

Just when she thought this mess was cleaned up, with money and effort poured into silencing it, it resurfaced, casting Helen into the unforgiving spotlight once more.

The consequences were unimaginable.

Trending What the hell are you talking about? Nixon sounded clueless on the other end. He was swamped with hospital duties and out of the loop.

“Nixon, if Helen gets hurt, you’re fucked. Remember that” Matilda snapped, her voice ice-cold.

She had invested everything to protect Helen, giving Nixon whatever he needed to deal with the mess. He had promised her he would handle it But he didn’t make it

“Look, Matilda, I care about Helen as much as you do. I’m on it. I swear” Nixon reassured her quickly.

“Pull that headline now and clean up this mess tonight?” she demanded, her tone booking no argument, and then she hung up, cutting the call short.

In his office at Fraley Hospital, Nixon swiped through his tablet, reviewing the trending topics. His expression darkened as he made another call.

“Why the hell is that video still up? Are you guys trying to get fired His voice was icy, slicing through the media company on the other end.

The director stammered. “Mr. Donovan, we’ve had our hackers on it, but the video’s encryption is tough-top-notch security. We haven’t cracked in yet. But we have found that the source is an overseas site. They’re damn good. We’re on in, but it’s a tough nut to crack.”

Nixon was taken aback. Fraley Medical was a leader in tech, employing the best hackers in Vaporleon City. Yet, the opposition seemed even more formidable. There was now a blatant smear campaign targeting Helen and Matilda.

ad this.

He couldn’t figure out who was behind

“Handle this now, immediately!” Nixon barked into the phone, then quickly briefed Matilda on the situation.

“Could it be Lea?” Matilda’s face tensed, her voice shaky. –

“That kid?” Nixon’s tone dripped with disdain.

Lea was a prodigy who had developed a sophisticated AI, but it was built on Berry Group’s tech and supported by their veteran researchers. They’d even enlisted a world–class international AI team to adapt it for medical applications. In Nixon’s view, Lea was still just a talented kid, overly reliant on others, hardly someone who could fend for herself. But Matilda’s concern made him take note.

“Isn’t she supposed to be under your watch?” he prodded.

Matilda paused, weighing her thoughts carefully, then exhaled slowly. “I’ll tighten surveillance on Lea. You need to clean up this online mess immediately. Find out who’s behind this video. I want them gone—vanished!”

Seeing an opportunity, Matilda ended the call swiftly, switched devices, and dialed another number, her eyes flashing with resolve.

“What’s Lea u

up to now!

“Doing homeworks, studying for the SAT exam™

As they spoke, a photo was sent—Lea at her desk, papers and books strewn about. The test paper was in clear view.

Matilda smirked. “Still dreaming of Conrad University, huh?” She mused, then returned the phone to her ear. “Keep a

a close watch on her Alert me immediately if anything seems of

“Yes, Mrs. Berry,” the man replied.

In Lea’s room on the second floor of the Berry Mansion, a window popped up on her computer—a screenshot from a hidden camera outside her window. Matilda had placed a few before, but Lea’s servants kept finding and removing them. Only this one remained, slyly hidden behind a curtain, capturing just a corner of her desk.

Matilda thought she was cunning, but she underestimated Lea, who had her own secrets and skills, unbeknownst to anyone else.

Just as Matilda ended the call her phone rang again. It was Shawn, and she answered with a frown.

“Ms. Fraley, I need 100 million immediately. I have to leave the country!”
Shawn shouted.

Matilda’s jaw dropped “100 million dollars?”

“It’s not a lot, Ms. Fraley. Im not asking for the moon. Just what’s needed for your daughter’s sake. Can you expedite the transfer?” Shawn’s urgency bled through the phone. “Ill also take Mr. Jensen with me, no loose ends.”

Matilda was seething. Aside from her family’s enormous wealth, had married into billions.

However, to stabilize Berry Group’s stock, she had liquidated her assets—mansions, jewelry, cars—all sold. Now she was billions in debt, with interest piling up by the millions daily. She couldn’t believe he was asking for 100 million

“What the hell is going on? Why the sudden need to flee?” she asked.

“Helen’s video’s surfaced again, it’s all over the news, and now we’re getting sued!” Shawn shouted.

“Sued Matila questioned.

“Yeah, it’s a big deal. If I get caught, I can’t guarantee Helen’s secrets stay buried. You need to send that money, fast he urged.

Matilda was overwhelmed. If Shawn spilled the beans about Christian’s birthday party, both her and Helen’s reputations would be ruined.

She had already spent a fortune making those two take the fall for her daughter, arranging for them to lay low abroad, hoping people would forget. However, they were deeply embedded in the entertainment industry, controlling companies, investing in films and TV shows, and signing dual contracts with artists. Breaking away from these ties would be complicated.

Her media company, alongside Nixon, was already in the works to acquire all that. She had previously ensured they were well-compensated. ‘Now they want another 100 million? Even if I have it, I wouldn’t send it she thought.

“I gotta hit the airport now. When am I getting that money? Just book me a flight, alright? Doesn’t the Berry family have a private jet or something?” Shawn exclaimed

Matilda was seething with rage as Shawn’s demands escalated. “Yeah, the Berrys have a jet, but it’s not like it’s ready to jet off just because you snapped your fucking fingers. He is really overstepping now, she thought

“You figure out your own escape plan, I’ll handle the finances...” Matilda stated.

“Matilda, if I knew what to do, I wouldn’t be on the phone with you,” he interrupted impatiently. “Just send the money and get me on any flight—private or commercial I don’t care, just make it happen now.”

Matilda was about to lose her cool when she heard a loud crash through the phone, followed by a commotion

“What the hell is going on there a servant shouted in the background.

“We are making a lawful arrest. Do not interfere,” a stern voice responded.

Then, the call abruptly ended.

“Hello Hello?” Matilda called out a few times, but it was to no avail

A sinking feeling took over as she realized Shawn had been arrested. If he spilled everything, Helen’s secrets would be out in the open.

No, I can’t allow that to happen, Matilda vowed internally.

That evening, the entertainment industry in Vaporleon City was stunned by a headline. “Shawn Bowen, a major entertainment mogul, arrested on serious charges.” The news exploded across all media platforms.

A series of shocking revelations followed.

“Multiple actresses accuse Shawn of exploitation”

“Shawn allegedly abuses a famous actress who k

kills herself five years ago.

“Shawn’s group is accused of manipulating their artists”

“Chandler is identified as a member of Shawn’s circle.”

“Shawn and Chandler are implicated in a scandal with heiress Helen Berry

The internet was flooded with photos and videos: the police dragging Shawn from his home, his arrest making waves far beyond the entertainment

circles.

Chapter 49

The news spread like wildfire, with local celebrities speaking out against Shawn and his group. It was all over the internet, with people rallying to clean up the entertainment industry from scum like him.

Most people were optimistic, betting that Shawn was done for this time. After all, he wasn’t just tangling with low-tier celebs anymore he was up against the Berry family, the top dogs of Vaporleon City. They weren’t about to let this slide.

Everyone assumed those arrested had crossed the Berry family, which only added to the storm

Matilda was livid as she watched the trending unfold online. These idiots dragging Helen into their mess Find out who is behind this and shut them down

Max knew the whole story and seemed battled. “But, Mrs. Berry, not just a few celebs, everyone online is echoing the same sentiments,” he said.

He understood even if Matilda had clout in Vaporlean City, she couldn’t sway Iverton, much less the entire country or

untry or international opinion. So, Strong—arming the media was futile

With reposts from many well-known celebrities and discussions among netizens, the topic shot up the trending rankings once again.

Matilda immediately called her media team, her voice tight with frustration. “Get Helen off those trending lists now!”

Mrs.

Berry, we’ve tried repeatedly” her team responded. “Every time we pull it down, it shoots right back up. We control the local media, but we can’t manage the narrative beyond that.”

Matilda suspected someone was using he

Matilda suspected someone was using Helen to target Shawn and his crew. Now, Helen’s ruined reputation was public knowledge, and there was nothing Matilda could do about it.

“Keep trying! What am I paying you for? You’re all useless!” she snapped, slamming down

the p

phone in a rage.

On the other end, media executives, gathered in their office, were seething. They were paid well but no amount of money could give them control over a erisay that their client had sparked, yet she blamed them entirely.

Resentment was brewing among them.

Inside the car, Matilda had never felt so dealeated

to manipulate these things for

The topic had exploded in popularity because someone had intentionally pushed it, and those in showbiz knew how to man better than she ever could

Shawn was in big trouble.

Shawn was toast. The situation with Helen seemed manageable—at least Matilda could make the allegation that he had assaulted Helen. And thes there was no way that people would believe Shawn now, branded as a rapist

But the price would be a heavy one. The entire work was aware of Helen’s tarnished reputation.

Matilda was livid. ‘Lea. It is all because of you. I’m gonna make you pay!

The scandal surrounding Shawn was intensifying. Is it directed at me! She pondered for a moment and concluded it wasn't. She thought if it were really aimed at her, there was no need to stir up the entire entertainment industry.

She wondered again. 'Right now, the only fool brazen enough to challenge me is Lea. But she lacks the clout for such a stunt

Matilda wasted no time; she immediately called Nixon, instructing him to pull the plug on their deal with Shawn's company.

Nixon was already on top of it, but the stakes were high—they had already shelled out hundreds of millions in cash, along with numerous film and TV rights and artist contracts, to their newly established media company, all to make Shawn take the fall

Shawn owned 31% of s

Star Entertainment and had been manipulating the shares for days. Nixon hurried to make calls to the key players.

"Mr. Donovan, the shares have been transferred to the subsidiary, someone reported.

That news hit Nixon like a ton of bricks. The shares were now not only worthless but could potentially drown him in massive debt.

He had maxed out his loans with the bank earlier that day; any more financial bleed and bankruptcy was a stone's throw away. With Fraley Medical and Matilda also in the mix, it was a tangled mess. If one thing went wrong, they'd all be screwed.

"Send those goddamn shares back!" Nixon demanded.

"Mr. Donovan, reaching out to Shawn now might be pointless," came the bleak response.

"Get the lawyers. We're suing his ass for fraud Nixon shouted, determined to pin the blame on Shawn and Star Entertainment. It might not get their money back, but it would stop the financial bleerling

"Should we loop in Ms. Fraley?" the worker asked

"Forget it. Just get it done. he barked back.

Nixon knew Matilda could be irrationally emotional, especially about anything concerning Helen. She'd go to the ends of the earth for her daughter, damn the consequences, But this time, they couldn't afford to lose. They were in full damage control mode. Nixon was determined to make decisions first and explain later.

"Got it came the response.

Meanwhile, at the old house, Lea watched from her laptop as Shawn was arrested from multiple angles.

A few other windows on her screen showed live feeds of Chandler at the Purple Gold Club, supposedly interviewing lead actresses for a new TV show. But the moment news of Shawn's arrest broke, Chandler freaked out and made a run for it.

Just as he bolted outside, sirens blared. Shawn was caught, and Chandler had no chance to escape. Panic-stricken, he dashed across the street.

Out of the blue, a truck came barreling down the road. In an instant, Chandler was hit, thrown into the middle of the road, and then brutally run over by the truck that couldn't stop in time.

Lea squinted at the screen, watching as he was taken away in an ambulance.

She then rapidly tapped on her keyboard, closing all the surveillance windows. Not getting away this time, she muttered

She refreshed her browser to check the trending topics again. The uproar was far bigger than she had anticipated, and the depths of their dirty dealings in showbiz shocked even her

Helen's trending scandal was a goldmine for her opportunistic schemes.

Now, the whole world was in on it. The internet has a long memory, and Helen wouldn't be able to escape this scandal anytime soon. It was like a bad rerun for Lea, she had moved to Iverson for a fresh start, only to have her past scandals unearthed and used against her once more.

A smug smirk played on her lips as she shut down her computer and started on her homework, feeling pretty good about how fast she was nailing

But her satisfaction was short-lived. A buzz from her phone showed a new message from Lorrard.

He informed her that the hospital had just received Chandler, a critically injured patient turned away by Fraley Hospital. His condition was dire, so he wouldn't make it through the night

Her eyes sharpened as she saw Lorrard even listed his injuries.

Lorrard was essentially probing if there was any hope for Chandler, but Lea knew the score. Even if she had the power to save him, she wouldn't bother. Why lift a finger for someone who have wronged me so deeply in a past life? she thought. To Lea, let him linger and suffer it was only a fraction of what he deserved.

She responded tersely. [The hospital is doing everything possible for him.]

Lorrard got the drift. She had no interest in saving a scumbag like Chandler, and frankly, neither did he. But duty called—the hospital had to at least appear to try, if only to prolong his agony a bit..

With a flick of her wrist, Lea flipped her phone face down on the table and dove back into her work.

Soon after, headlines blazed across the web. "Chandler Critically Injured in Car Accident While Being Arrested" The news was trending everywhere.

Chapter 50

In a dimly lit study at Lake Villa, Alfred was engrossed in the trending online topics, the light casting a dramatic shadow over half his face, intensifying his already brooding appearance.

The door creaked open, Eddie barged in, but Alfred didn't bother looking up: Alfred's voice was icy, laced with resolve. "Liquidate Star Entertainment. Cut ties with everyone connected to Shaven and Chandler"

Eddie's heart skipped a beat, his breath catching in his throat. Alfred's orders were always delivered with a chilling detachment

But what the hell have Shawn and Chandler done to get on his bad side like this! he wondered.

Eddie didn't catch the dark storm swirling in Alfred's eyes. It dawned on him then why Alfred had lingered here instead of returning to Iverton. He was here to clean up this mess

"Understood, Mr. Alfred. I'm on it," Eddie replied quickly, slipping out of the study.

In the lobby. Eddie bumped into Craig

Craig approached, waving a hand curiously. "What's going on? Some big corporate shake-up?"

Eddie was unusually pensive, a sight that

at bailed Craig, Eddie just shook his head, lost in thought.

Alfred's deep-seated animosity toward Shawn and Chandler baffled Eddie. They have no known ties, no apparent reasons for such a vendetta. What is fueling such hatred? he mused.

"Hey, don't mess with Mr. Alfred right now, he's seriously pissed off, Eddie warned before heading out

Craig decided to follow, chiming in, "I'll tag along with you."

Alfred was typically as unemotional as they come rarely showing any signs of agitation. They had been on his team for over a decade, and it was a known fact that when Alfred did lose his cool, someone was definitely going to catch hell

In the dimly lit police detention room, shadows swallowed everything except for the faint light spilling from the corridor, barely illuminating the interior.

Shannon sat on a wooden bed in the corner, clutching a clunky, square phone tightly. Her eyes were fixed on the screen for what felt like forever.

It was the DNA test results Lea had sent—there was no blood relationship between her and Donna.

Shannon's whole body shook uncontrollably. Her initial thought was that Lea was bullshitting her, probably trying to coax her into taking a stand against Fraley Hospital and Helen by feeding her lies.

But, deep down, Shannon felt a growing sense of truth about the results. It shed light on why Donna had been so cruel to her all these years. If Donna truly was her mother, she wouldn't have repeatedly abandoned her, hit her, screamed at her, and neglected her well-being.

Donna wouldn't have forced her to betray herself to get money from Helen, nor would she have coerced Shannon into taking the blame for a murder for Helen

Protecting one's young is an instinct ingrained in all animals, who would go to great lengths for their offspring. But Donna hadn't, probably because she wasn't Shannon's real mom

For more than ten years, Shannon had been caring for her "mom helping her kick the battle and even working for Helen for three years to pay for her treatment.

what was it all for she thought bitterly.

Shannon had always thought maybe Donna had suffered immensely or had been ditched and hurt by the father she often mentioned, which could explain why she acted the way she did. So she had saved away, caring for Donna and studying hard to get into Vaporleon High School, all to secure a better future for them both

Now, Shannon realized it was all built on lies, the truth cut deep

She once thought of Donna as her closest kin, a beloved mother figure. Now, she learned they weren't even related tore her apart. Tears streamed. down her face, unstoppable

Suddenly, footsteps echoed in the passage.

"Boss, we've been watching Shannon. She's ready for trial whenever," one reported.

"Okay, keep an eye on

tonight, came the reply.

They didn't buy Shannon's story. They had been informed by higher-ups that she was responsible for the crime, not Helen Though Helen had been questioned twice and never explicitly implicated herself, her statements subtly pointed to Shannon as the perpetrator.

Inside the room, Shannon heard the footsteps approaching. She quickly dismantled her phone, hiding the parts in her body, then swiftly wiped away her tears.

The switch flicked on, casting light on the skinny figure in the corner.

The staff approached, lifting her up. Her long hair obscured most of her face, revealing her tear-stained cheeks only when she was pulled upright.

They paid little attention to her distress, noticing only her desperate or frightened expressions. After all, she was just a teenager, barely eighteen.

Shannon was led into another interrogation room for yet another lengthy questioning session..

Since her arrest, she had barely slept, and was now on the brink of collapsing. Despite the relentless questioning by the police and lawyers, she refused to speak. Yet, many questions she hadn't answered were recorded as affirmative responses in the official report.

Meanwhile, at Berry Mansion, after finishing her work and realizing it was already 2 am. Lea felt hungry and thirsty and decided to head downstairs for a snack and some water

As she reached the staircase, she overheard Christian on the phone.

“Victor, investigate Shawn and Chandler. They’ve wronged my granddaughter, and I want them bankrupted. Christian couldn’t tolerate anyone taking advantage of the Berry family, especially in such a sordid affair.

Lea paused to listen for a moment. The family was facing financial ruin, a scenario far grimmer than she had imagined, yet she still retained some compassion—not wanting to bring disaster upon her own family.

Alfred had been a guiding light in her life, a beacon in her darkest times, helping her maintain her moral compass and kindness. It was comforting to know someone was willing to fight on her behalf.

Lea walked downstairs and found Christian had just finished his call. He looked surprised to see her and remarked, “You’re still awake

Just finished my homework, she replied.

He checked his watch and said, “You don’t need to stay up so late.”

Christian could get her into any top university, not just Conrad University.

“Grandpa, you haven’t slept either, have you?” she retorted.

Despite his age and the demands of running a large corporation, Christian often managed with only a few hours of sleep.

He wanted to say more but merely watched as she entered the kitchen, seemingly lost in thought about her.

Though young, Lea showed little interest in the typical indulgences of her peers. She wasn’t into parties, designer clothes, or lavish skincare and cosmetics, unlike Helen.

In contrast, Lea was diligent level-headed, self-reliant, and assertive—qualities that Christian deeply respected.

Before long, she dashed out with two plates of spaghetti, and they dug into their supper.

He took a bite and his eyes sparkled. “Did you whip this up yourself?”

“Yep,” she replied.

With the house quiet and all the servants tucked away for the night, Lea had no choice but to fend for herself in the kitchen.

Observing Lea across the table, Christian suddenly

only felt a pang of sadness. How had Matilda managed to raise her these years to become a wonderful cook?

Lea caught his gaze for a moment before quickly returning her attention to her food.

In her previous life, she had bent over backwards to win over Milion, enduring exhaustion and spending countless hours honing her culinary skills, hoping he'd come home to her dinners. He never did. Ironically, it was she who ended up a skilled chef.

should try to cut back on the late nights; take care of yourself, Christian said gently, a softness in his voice. "I can't pull these all-nighters

anymore"

Lea lifted her eyes to meet his.

"Matilda has been doing a stellar job running the company lately," he added.

Her hand tightened around her fork at the mention.

Matilda's fierce determination to hold onto the company's stocks wasn't just about business; she and Nixon were secretly plotting to swallow up the Berry Group.