

Mr. Edwards' Unraveled Life

Chapter 811

Bonian had picked out a champagne-colored strapless dress for Jayde. It fit perfectly, but she felt out of place and kept checking herself in the mirror.

"You look beautiful, Miss Leung," the servant said kindly.

Jayde managed a small, unsure smile.

"She's right," Bonian added as he stepped out, dressed in a matching suit.

Jayde froze, suddenly feeling awkward. The servant slipped away, leaving them alone. Bonian held up a necklace.

"A dress like this needs the right jewelry. Try this," he said.

"No, I don't need—" Jayde began, but he gently insisted.

He fastened it around her neck, his eyes lighting up. "Just like I imagined."

His stare made her heart race. She looked away, her cheeks warm.

"Let's go," he said, offering his hand.

The ride to the venue was smooth. Security had cleared the area for the guests. When people saw Jayde at Bonian's side, heads turned. Many were shocked—Bonian had brought a woman?

A businessman grinned. "Haven't seen her before. She's stunning. Been hiding her from us, Mr. Lepage?"

"I'm still chasing her," Bonian said smoothly.

Jayde's jaw dropped. She was as surprised as everyone else. He'd never said that to her before.

She wanted to disappear from all the attention, but Bonian held her hand, calm and unbothered. That was just who he was—relentless when he wanted something.

Once they were alone, Jayde glared at him. "Why didn't you tell me you'd say that?"

“I’m sorry,” he said, sincere. “But it’s the truth.”

“Why me?” she asked quietly. “There are better women out there. And Emmie—”

“Don’t,” Bonian interrupted, his voice low. “Not tonight. I brought you here to relax.”

Jayde stayed quiet. His serious gaze shut her down.

The auction began, showcasing heirlooms from wealthy families—gemstones, rare antiques. Jayde wasn’t interested. Family always meant more than money to her.

Then the final item came out: a ring once worn by a queen. Jayde froze. It was exactly Emmie’s style.

“Do you want it?” Bonian asked, his voice warm in her ear.

He lifted the bidding paddle, but Jayde beat him to it. “Two million,” she said clearly.

The starting price was only one million. Her bold move stunned the room. People gasped. Suddenly, she wasn’t just a pretty face on Bonian’s arm—she had presence.

Bonian looked at her, surprised—but impressed. She’d caught him off guard.

She won the ring. It was more than she planned to spend. Bonian handed her the velvet box.

“You really wanted this,” he said.

“It’s for charity, right? Worth it,” she said, avoiding the real reason. Her eyes lingered on the box, thoughts hidden.

Bonian gently smoothed the frown between her brows. “I like it better when you smile.”

His words were soft but serious. Jayde stood still, startled.

Then—she saw her.

“Emmie!” she gasped, spotting someone in the crowd.

Bonian grabbed her shoulder before she could bolt. He looked too—but only saw a glimpse of someone in a black skirt. Thin. Familiar. His mind jumped to the photo he’d seen.

Before either of them could react further, a strange, sharp smell hit them—kerosene.

Jayde froze. “What is that?”

Bonian’s face hardened. “Kerosene!”

He pulled her toward the back exit—and then came the explosion.

Flames roared across the villa winery. Screams rang out. Chaos.

Jayde's heart raced. They had been in the garden, close to the exit. If Bonian hadn't reacted fast—if she hadn't been distracted—they could've been trapped.

It would've been deadly.

"Call for help!" Jayde shouted, grabbing her phone along with others.

Firefighters arrived quickly and began putting out the fire. The aftermath was devastating—many injured, some dead. The place turned into a crime scene.

Survivors gave statements. But Bonian, seeing how shaken Jayde was, handed things over to his assistant and took her home.

In the car, wrapped in his coat, Jayde sat shivering. "It was just supposed to be a party. How did it end like this?"

"It was probably an accident," Bonian said, not knowing what else to say. "Try not to think about it too much."

Chapter 812

"Did you say you saw Emmie?" Bonian's voice was tight.

Jayde clutched his arm, panic rising. "I have to go back. The fire's huge—what if she's trapped?"

The thought of Emmie burning alive crushed her. If Emmie had survived before, only to die now because Jayde didn't act... she couldn't live with that.

"Jayde, you can't," Bonian said, blocking her. "The police already sealed it off."

"But what if it really *was* her—"

"You're not even sure. Why risk your life over a maybe? What about Lele? What if something happens to you?" Bonian's voice softened, but he didn't let go.

He didn't say the rest: *What would I do if I lost you?*

Jayde stared at him, tears spilling down her cheeks. Bonian pulled her into his arms, warm and steady. "I'll have my assistant look into it. Let's go home."

That word—*home*—tugged at something inside her. Her resistance eased. "Okay," she whispered.

Unseen, a van sat parked not far from the villa. Inside was a woman in a black dress, curly hair framing a cold, distant face—beautiful, but unreadable.

If Jayde had seen her, she would've frozen in shock.

It was Emmie—but not the Emmie she remembered.

“You let her go on purpose,” the man in the driver's seat sneered.

Emmie flinched. “I didn't!”

“Don't lie. I saw it. Didn't expect you to go soft on your sister after everything. Blood really is thicker, huh?”

“I didn't—” Her voice cracked.

The man scoffed, ignoring her. “Doesn't matter. You messed up. No antidote for you this month.”

“You can't!” Emmie's eyes filled with panic as she grabbed his arm. “You promised!”

“I said after you delivered. Did you?” His tone was cold.

Emmie glared at him, hatred blazing—but she held herself back. She couldn't fight him. Not yet.

He smirked at her in the mirror. “Smart. Just remember who owns you now. No more screwups.”

Her lashes trembled. “I know...”

The van slipped quietly into the night.

Emmie stared out the window, Jayde's face haunting her. Her heart ached.

I have to find a way to warn her...

—

The fire investigation dragged on, with no real answers. The only clue was a woman in a black dress. A cleaning lady who escaped said she'd smelled kerosene on her.

Jayde found the cleaner. “You're sure about the black dress?”

The woman nodded.

Jayde felt drained. Relief and pain crashed together. If Emmie was alive... why would she do this?

Bonian noticed something was off but didn't push her.

"Mom, are you mad at me?" Lele's voice pulled her back. She'd been distracted while playing with him.

She smiled weakly and ruffled his hair. "No, sweetheart. Why would you think that?"

"You don't smile like before," he said quietly.

Jayde sighed. "Grown-ups just have a lot on their minds."

Of course she couldn't shake it.

Lele nodded, half-understanding, and squeezed her hand. "I want you to be happy, Mom. I'll give you some of my happiness."

Jayde laughed, and her mood lifted a little. They played a while longer before Lele scampered off.

She didn't worry. He never went far.

Lele ran to Bonian. "Uncle Lepage, I did what you said, but Mom didn't tell me anything." He wrapped his arms around Bonian's neck, frowning.

Bonian tapped his nose. "You did great. You made her smile—that's more than enough."

Lele beamed.

But Jayde's mood never fully bounced back, and Bonian grew more anxious.

Then her phone buzzed. An anonymous message lit up the screen:

"I'm Emmie. Someone wants to hurt you. Be careful."

Jayde jumped up, the chair scraping loudly. A servant ran in, hands still wet. "Miss Leung, are you okay?"

Jayde stared at the screen, breathing hard. "It's nothing."

But inside, she was spinning. It *had* to be Emmie. Joy surged... then confusion. Why a warning like this?

She replied fast—asking why Emmie hadn't come back, what was going on.

No answer. Her calls went straight to voicemail. The number was already deactivated.

That night, Bonian was working late when a servant mentioned Jayde acting strangely. He rushed home, still in his suit, and found her shaken.

“What did you just say?” he asked, stunned.

“Emmie’s alive.” Jayde’s voice was steady. She showed him the message. “She warned us. Someone’s after me. That body—it wasn’t hers.”

Bonian read the text, his face darkening. “How does she know this?”

Unlike Jayde, he wasn’t quick to trust. Why would Emmie hide, only to send a cryptic warning?

Chapter 813

Jayde bristled. “You’re suspicious of my sister?”

Bonian rubbed his temples. “That’s not what I meant—”

She cut him off, eyes filled with hurt. “Bonian—Bryan—do you not remember everything she did for you? How can you doubt her now?”

“Jayde, I didn’t mean it like that—”

But her happiness was already unraveling into disappointment. She’d wanted his help, his support. Instead, his doubt felt like betrayal.

The warmth between them iced over. “I thought you’d understand. Guess I was wrong. Men really *can’t* be trusted.”

Bonian grabbed her shoulders, frustration bubbling. “You think I don’t care? Jayde, I love *you*, not Emmie. But something about this feels wrong. Why fake her death?”

“I don’t want to hear it!” she shouted, her breathing uneven.

Bonian’s irritation vanished. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. Did you take your meds today? I’ll get them—”

He called for the servant, but Jayde waved them off, voice cold. “No need. If you won’t help, I’ll find her myself. Sorry for bothering you.”

She stormed upstairs and packed her bags with resolve. She’d thought about leaving before, but Bonian always stopped her with reasons—her health, Lele. Not this time.

Bonian stood frozen, his chest tight. He didn’t stop her.

She left.

—

Later, Norah stopped by with her toddler. “Where’s Jayde? Wasn’t she staying here?”

“She just left,” Bonian said flatly.

Norah noticed the tension. “Another fight?”

He scowled. “Why are you here? If there’s nothing urgent, go.”

Norah rolled her eyes. “Relax. I came to help.”

But he didn’t soften.

She sighed and left. “Bad timing, kiddo. No Aunt Jayde today. Just one grumpy face.”

Kevin, catching the vibe, shrugged. “I’m heading out. Want a ride?”

Norah declined, wanting to walk with her daughter. At the mall, she ran into Jace.

“Jace!” Her smile lit up.

He smiled back, glancing at her little one. “Been a while.”

“Visiting Lele?” she asked. “Got your medical kit and everything.”

“Nah. Dropping off Jayde’s meds,” Jace said. “She’s been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.”

Norah’s smile faded. “Is she okay?”

“She’s stable now,” Jace said gently. “Losing Emmie... and everything else—it hit her hard.”

“That’s good to hear,” Norah said, relieved. They chatted a bit more.

“You holding up okay?” Jace asked.

“I’m good. You?”

“Busy, as always. But doing better,” he said.

“You’re always swamped. I’m just juggling a toddler and housework,” she said with a warm laugh.

Jace’s heart ached for a second, but he smiled. She seemed truly happy.

He watched her walk away, eyes lingering until she disappeared. Then he blinked away the sting in his chest and went back to being Dr. Jace.

—

Later, he stopped by Bonian's house to drop off Jayde's meds, but she was already gone. Bonian was civil—Jace had saved Lele's life, after all.

"Lele can be discharged," Jace said. "He's stable. He can travel, go to school."

"Already?" Bonian asked.

"Half a month ahead of schedule. He's doing great."

Bonian finally cracked a smile. One good thing, at least.

Jace turned to leave, but paused at the door. "One more thing. Jayde might still care about you. Up to you what you do with that."

He left.

—

The next day, Bonian picked a kindergarten for Lele—just an excuse to see Jayde.

When the doorbell rang, Jayde frowned. "Who is it?"

She opened the door—and blinked, surprised to see Bonian. For a second, she thought she was imagining it.

Fresh from discharge, Lele rushed over. "Uncle Lepage!"

Bonian looked at her. "Mind if I come in?"

Jayde hesitated. After everything, she didn't want to let him in... but not in front of Lele. Besides, Bonian *had* done a lot for them.

She opened the door.

Lele beamed and dragged Bonian to the couch, offering him a plate of unevenly sliced oranges. "Eat, Uncle Lepage!"

Chapter 814

Bonian eyed the haphazardly cut orange slices. Jayde moved to take them away. "Your Uncle Lepage doesn't want—"

“Thanks, Lele. I’ve been craving oranges,” Bonian interrupted, plucking a piece and popping it into his mouth.

Jayde froze. Bonian was meticulous—obsessive, even—about presentation. He *never* ate anything this carelessly prepared. Yet there he was, chewing without complaint, even complimenting Lele’s “knife skills.”

She was speechless. If her mother had seen butchewed fruit like that, she would’ve recoiled.

After shoos Lele off to his room to play, she turned to Bonian. “What’s going on with you?”

“You don’t have to shut me out,” he said.

“Then tell me how I *should* act around you,” she fired back.

Her sharp tone dimmed the warmth in his eyes. “Sorry. I didn’t mean to push.”

“Lele’s been discharged,” Bonian said after a beat. “He can start school now. Jace told me last night.”

Jayde’s eyes widened. “*School?* Already?”

Kids with heart conditions *could* attend, but the risks never fully disappeared. Even after surgery, Jayde’s instincts screamed caution.

Bonian slid a stack of papers toward her. “These are the best kindergartens in the area. Pick one, and we’ll get him enrolled.”

She scanned the options, noting his thorough research. His effort softened her resistance. “This one,” she said, tapping a page.

As lunchtime approached, Bonian pulled her aside to discuss the schools’ credentials—details already outlined in the documents. Jayde sensed he was stalling.

Finally, he stood. “You two eat. I should go. Just let me know when Lele’s ready for school—I’ll take him.”

Jayde nodded. No argument. He *was* Lele’s father, after all.

“Uncle Lepage, don’t leave!” Lele burst out, clinging to him. “Stay and eat with us!”

Bonian glanced at Jayde. “Can’t, buddy. Work calls.”

“*Why?*” Lele’s eyes welled up. “You *always* say that, but then it takes *forever* to see you again. You *and* Grandma.”

Jayde's chest tightened. She'd thought her love was enough for Lele, but he craved more—family bonds she couldn't erase.

Bonian met her gaze. "It's just lunch. Won't take long."

She caved instantly. "Stay."

Bonian settled in beside Lele, waiting for the meal. Jayde shook her head as she cooked, feeling played. Lele's sniffles stopped abruptly, and he shot her a sly glance. "Uncle Lepage, did I do good?"

Bonian smirked. "Perfect."

Their matching grins confirmed it—they'd teamed up against her.

After lunch, Lele dragged Bonian into more playtime. Jayde tried to intervene, but Bonian waved her off. "Meeting's canceled. I'm free."

He stayed until evening. By the time he left, Jayde was dazed, realizing she'd let him linger the entire day. As he stepped out, he pressed a velvet box into her hand. "For you."

She frowned. "What is this?"

"Open it."

Inside was a ring—dazzling silver, catching the light. Her breath hitched. Was this all a setup? She searched his eyes. "I can't accept this—"

"It's not a proposal," he clarified. "You liked the auction ring, so I found something similar."

Jayde wasn't fooled. The auction piece had been a rare collector's item, worth millions. This one? Priceless. Impossible to obtain with money alone.

"It's too much," she insisted, pushing it back.

"It's a gift," Bonian said, stepping away. "Keep it or throw it away. Your choice." He left before she could argue.

Jayde stared at the ring, unable to toss it. So she kept it.

After finalizing Lele's kindergarten, she called to enroll him and took him shopping for supplies. Downstairs, Lele suddenly perked up. "Uncle Lepage!" He sprinted straight into Bonian's arms.

Bonian caught him effortlessly. Jayde eyed the low-profile car nearby—not his usual ride. "Why are you here?"

Bonian didn't miss a beat. "Perfect timing. Since I handled Lele's school, tagging along isn't too much to ask, right?"

Jayde sighed, glancing at Lele, who suddenly found the ground fascinating. "Lele, why won't you look at me?"

"My neck hurts," he mumbled.

"Whatever," she muttered, watching Lele's beaming face. "As long as he's happy."

At the mall's stationery store, Lele darted between aisles. "Slow down!" Jayde called. "Don't run into—"

Lele tripped—and hit the floor.

Chapter 815

Jayde's heart lurched. She rushed over. "Are you okay? Does it hurt? Let Mommy see."

"I'm fine," Lele said sheepishly. "But I bumped into that lady..."

Jayde looked up to apologize, but the woman—face half-hidden behind a mask—was already walking away. "Was I *that* scary?" she muttered.

"She didn't seem friendly," Bonian remarked, frowning. "Forget her."

Since Lele was unharmed, they brushed it off and focused on picking out his school supplies. Unbeknownst to them, the woman peeled off her mask in a quiet corner and snapped a photo of the three of them—happy, oblivious.

Jayde bought Lele a pencil case, backpack, and a set of pencils until their bags were full. They grabbed ice cream, and Lele, exhausted from the excitement, dozed off in the car.

Jayde's arms ached from holding him. Bonian noticed her flexing her wrists. "Let me take him. It's a long drive."

She passed Lele over, and he immediately curled into Bonian's arms, shifting until he was sound asleep. Jayde's gaze softened.

Her own eyelids grew heavy, and she drifted off, her head eventually resting against Bonian's shoulder. He adjusted slightly, letting her stay there.

When she woke, they were parked outside her building. "We're here?" she mumbled.

Bonian stirred, his voice rough with sleep. "Yeah." He still held Lele.

The quiet moment felt too intimate, too *domestic*—like they were a real family. Flustered, Jayde took Lele back. “Thanks. I’ll get him upstairs.”

“You’ll hurt yourself,” Bonian said, reclaiming Lele effortlessly.

In the elevator, an elderly neighbor smiled. “Jayde, is this Lele’s father?”

Jayde opened her mouth to deny it, but Bonian answered first. “I am.”

The neighbor nodded approvingly. Jayde let it go—what was the point of correcting her? It was the truth.

Bonian tucked Lele into bed, smoothing the blanket over him. “Thanks for today,” Jayde said. “You should go. It’s late.”

“How are you planning to find Emmie?” Bonian asked suddenly.

Jayde blinked. “*What?*”

“If she’s right, this could be a setup targeting us,” he said calmly. “Or maybe she’s just warning you. Either way—how do you plan to bring her back?”

“I haven’t figured it out yet,” Jayde admitted. “I’ll start with a job.”

“Doing what?”

“Still looking.”

“Then work for me,” Bonian offered.

Jayde hesitated, but he cut off her refusal. “No other firm will pay what I can. You’d end up in some HR role, barely scraping by. I’ll double their highest offer.”

She fell silent. The offer *was* tempting—who wouldn’t want that salary? But working for him meant crossing a line, stepping back into his world.

“Let me think about it,” she said finally.

“Three days,” Bonian said. “Lele starts school soon. You’ll have time.”

Jayde sent out résumés, but the responses were dismal—lowball offers or outright rejections, many citing her as a single mom who’d be “distracted.” Bonian’s offer loomed larger by the hour.

She called Norah. “I need advice. A friend—”

Norah laughed. “Sure, a *‘friend.’* What’s up?”

"It's *not* me," Jayde insisted, then laid out the dilemma.

Norah didn't hesitate. "Take it. It's the best option. The door's open—walk through it."

"Besides," she added, "he's just your boss."

Jayde hung up, still torn. She'd wait until Lele started school to decide.

Then, a scandal exploded online:

"BILLIONAIRE'S DIRTY SECRETS! LEPAGE CEO'S SHOCKING PAST—SISTERS SHARED?"

The post rocketed to the top, tagged #Explosive. Jayde, who rarely checked social media, saw it late. The comments were a bloodbath—her and Emmie's lives dissected in brutal detail.

Her phone rang—Bonian. "Are you okay?" she asked, voice tight.

"I'm fine," he said curtly. "Focus on Lele. I'll be away for a while."

Jayde knew him. "Fine" meant anything *but*. "Are you sure? I can help clear this up. This could destroy Lepage Group."

"Don't worry about it," he said. "Just take care of yourself."

He hung up, leaving her uneasy. Glancing at Lele, still napping, she trusted the nanny due to arrive soon—then grabbed her keys and hailed a cab to Lepage Group's hospital.

Chapter 816

Jayde walked into the sleek lobby of the Lepage Group, expecting chaos after the recent scandal. But everything looked normal. She approached the front desk. "I'm here to see Bonian," she said.

The receptionist raised an eyebrow. "Mr. Lepage—the top lawyer in Belourvinelle? Shouldn't you be at his law firm instead?"

"He's not here?" Jayde asked, confused. They had just spoken on the phone. "Do you know when he'll be back?"

"No clue," the receptionist said with a shrug. "Try calling him."

Jayde sighed and turned to leave when the receptionist suddenly stopped her. "Wait—are you Miss Leung?"

"Yeah. Why?"

“He said if you came by, you could wait in his office.”

“So he’ll be back soon?” Jayde asked, deciding to stay. She wanted to see how he was doing—and maybe help if she could.

Two hours later, she’d fallen asleep on the office couch. Her hair was a mess, and tired lines marked her face. Bonian returned from a draining partner meeting, but the sight of her sleeping there softened the tension in his face. He moved quietly, not wanting to wake her.

Jayde stirred, swatting gently at the touch on her cheek. “Lele, quit it,” she mumbled.

A low chuckle pulled her awake. She blinked and saw Bonian crouched near her, his sharp features unusually gentle. “You were totally knocked out,” he said, leaning back. “There’s a lounge if you want to sleep more.”

Jayde sat up quickly, flustered. “No, I’m good,” she said, trying to smooth her hair.

“You haven’t been sleeping much, huh?” she asked, noticing the dark circles under his eyes.

“Just work,” he said, brushing it off. “We’ve got a tough land deal—some guy wouldn’t sell, and things escalated. An old man had a heart attack during a confrontation. He’s okay now, but the media’s all over it.”

He didn’t mention the nonstop meetings, legal red tape, or the damage to the Lepage family’s name. He didn’t want to burden her.

Jayde hesitated. “About that job offer...”

“You’re saying yes?” he asked, eyes locking on hers.

She nodded, looking away. “It’s a good opportunity. No reason not to take it.” Seeing how exhausted he was made her want to help.

That evening, Bonian suggested dinner. “To celebrate your first day. I know a place you’ll like. We can pick up Lele too.”

Jayde smiled at the mention of Lele. She always felt bad that he’d missed out on so much. If this made him happy, she was in.

They picked up Lele, who was beyond excited. “Mom, are we having barbecue?”

Jayde was about to say no, but his hopeful look made her pause. “Sure, kiddo.”

She turned to Bonian. “Sorry, guess we’re skipping your fancy restaurant.”

Bonian had already told the driver, “Find a good barbecue spot.” Then he looked at her. “What?”

“Nothing,” Jayde said, her heart fluttering.

The place they found was clean, quiet, and had private booths—perfect for Lele. Jayde finally relaxed. Lele dug into his food, smearing oil across his face. She leaned over, wiping him gently. “You’re such a mess.”

“Mom, wipe again!” he giggled, handing Bonian a greasy roasted eggplant.

Jayde reached out to stop him—Bonian was picky about food. But to her surprise, Bonian took it.

“For me, Lele?” he asked.

Lele nodded eagerly. Bonian calmly picked it up with his chopsticks and ate it. Jayde blinked in shock.

“He usually hates this stuff,” she told Lele. “Don’t force him.”

“No problem,” Bonian said smoothly. “If Lele gives it to me, I’ll eat it.”

Lele lit up, and Jayde’s chest tightened—touched, but also uneasy.

On the way home, Lele fell asleep in the back seat. Jayde lowered her voice. “You don’t have to spoil him. It’s not good for kids.”

“I’m just trying to make up for lost time,” Bonian said, meeting her eyes.

Her heart skipped again. She turned away, checking a text on her phone—and her face went pale.

“Turn! Now!” she shouted.

The driver swerved instantly.

Chapter 817

The tires screeched as the car skidded to a stop. Just seconds later, a truck tore through the intersection, flipped, and smashed into other cars. The driver was frozen—Jayde’s warning had saved them.

“What just happened?” Bonian asked, frowning.

Jayde showed him her phone. “A text. It said, ‘Out-of-control car ahead.’ It came from Emmie’s number.”

His eyes narrowed. “Emmie? She sent that?”

“I think so. She didn’t answer my calls before. Now this—out of nowhere.”

Bonian held her hand. “If she’s warning you, it means she’s looking out for you. Try not to stress.”

Jayde nodded, grateful, but her fear grew. Someone was clearly targeting them.

“We’re not safe here,” Bonian said. “You and Lele should move in with me. I’ll keep you safe.”

“I need to think about it,” Jayde said. “And I have to pack.”

He didn’t push, but she still felt like the choice was being made for her.

The next morning, she helped Lele get ready for his first day of kindergarten. Her nerves were all over the place.

“If you feel sick, tell Teacher Gong right away, okay?”

“Who’s Teacher Gong?” Lele asked.

“Your homeroom teacher,” she said, zipping up his coat. “Be polite with the other kids.”

At the school, a warm-looking teacher with a scarf greeted them. She crouched to Lele’s level. “You must be Lele. Such a cute boy!”

Lele blushed and hid behind Jayde.

“He’s shy,” Jayde said with a small smile.

“That’s totally normal,” the teacher replied. “Want to come in and take a look around, Ms. Leung?”

“I’ve got to get to work,” Jayde said. “But I’ll stop by later.” She left, heart full of pride—and anxiety.

At the Lepage Group office, things were bustling. Bonian’s assistant—recently back from leave—walked Jayde through her duties as the new secretary. Everyone still referred to Bonian as “Mr. Lepage,” even though he was technically a lawyer.

“This is the conference room,” the assistant said. “Big meeting at ten. You’ll take notes.”

A female staffer approached, holding two coffees and breakfast. “New hire?” she asked, eyeing Jayde with interest. Word had already spread that Bonian pulled his assistant back just to train her.

“Hi,” Jayde said with a polite smile.

The woman blinked, then offered, “Want some? I brought extra breakfast.”

Jayde accepted, touched. It was clearly an excuse to be friendly, and the kindness helped settle her nerves.

With the assistant's help, she quickly learned the office layout and her basic tasks. When ten o'clock rolled around, he asked, "Want to skip the meeting for today? No pressure."

"I'll go," Jayde said, eager to prove herself.

He nodded, impressed.

In the meeting room, Bonian's eyes briefly landed on her—just a flicker, but it lingered—before he turned back to the presentation.

Chapter 818

Jayde scribbled notes, completely absorbed in her work, unaware of Bonian's lingering gaze. A team leader finished his presentation. "Mr. Lepage, your thoughts?"

Silence.

"Mr. Lepage?" the leader tried again.

Bonian snapped to attention. "Not good. Redo it." His sharp tone masked his distraction as he scanned the projection screen.

The leader visibly deflated under Bonian's abrupt dismissal. Jayde caught the exchange, eyebrows knitting in confusion.

Mid-meeting, an assistant rushed in with an urgent call. "Mr. Lepage, we need you immediately."

Bonian dismissed the team to revise their proposal while directing PR to manage the growing media storm. Jayde followed him out. "What's happening? Everyone looks like they've seen a ghost."

The assistant shot Bonian a loaded glance. "It's the old city project..."

Jayde's stomach dropped. The Lepage family's urban renewal initiative—a government-backed redevelopment of dilapidated housing—had become a public relations nightmare thanks to stubborn holdouts.

Bonian turned to his assistant. "Handle it. Standard protocol. Bring extra security and keep reporters out."

The media had been circling like vultures since the scandal broke.

"I'm coming too," Jayde announced.

The assistant's eyes widened in surprise. Bonian shut it down immediately. "Absolutely not. It's too dangerous."

"It's literally my job," Jayde countered.

"Your job is to follow my orders," Bonian fired back, his commanding tone laced with uncharacteristic concern.

Jayde felt the protective edge in his voice but stood her ground. "I'll be careful. If the team's going, it's my responsibility too."

Bonian's jaw clenched. The assistant held his breath, anticipating an explosion, but instead saw Bonian relent. "Fine. But you stay safe," he ordered, glaring pointedly at the assistant.

Both Jayde and the assistant blinked in shock—Bonian never backed down. "You're a miracle worker," the assistant whispered. "No one makes him change his mind."

Jayde waved him off, cheeks warming.

At the demolition site, angry shouts greeted them. "You made my mother sick! We want compensation!" A ringleader led a mob armed with makeshift weapons, surrounding the outnumbered Lepage representatives.

The company spokesman wiped his brow, voice shaking. "We're offering fair market value plus relocation—"

"Your blood money isn't enough!" someone shouted from the crowd.

Jayde turned to the assistant. "Where's our backup? We need to defuse this now."

"Still ten minutes out," he said nervously. "We can't intervene—they'll tear us apart."

His real concern wasn't for himself—if anything happened to Jayde, Bonian would have his head.

Jayde watched in horror as the mob escalated, threatening to tie up the spokesman. "That's felony kidnapping!" she snapped, stepping forward. "Back off or I'm calling the police!"

She held up her phone, keeping enough distance for a quick retreat. A burly man sneered. "Who the hell are you, bitch? Get lost before you get hurt!"

He brandished a metal pipe. Jayde stood her ground. "You're really committing kidnapping in broad daylight? Not afraid of prison?"

"Afraid?" he roared. "These rich bastards gave my mother a heart attack! Who pays for that?"

"That doesn't justify—"

He cut her off with a leer. “Pretty little thing defending them? You sleeping with the boss or something?”

Jayde swallowed her revulsion. “Let. Him. Go.”

The man’s face darkened as he lunged. “Don’t tell me what to do!”

Chapter 819

The man’s calloused hand clamped around Jayde’s wrist like a vice. White-hot pain shot up her arm. “Let go!” she gasped.

She raised her phone to dial emergency services, but he knocked it from her grip, shattering it on the pavement. “Call someone now, princess,” he taunted.

Jayde cursed her own recklessness—she’d underestimated their desperation. The assistant shouted, “Jayde, hang on!”

“Stay back!” she ordered. Surrounded by hostile faces, she refused to drag him down too.

The man squinted at the assistant. “You’re with Lepage Group? Bonian sent a pretty girl to do his dirty work? Doesn’t care if you get hurt?”

His cronies laughed cruelly. Jayde kept her voice steady despite her pounding heart. “You know Bonian personally?”

Her wrist screamed in protest, but she pressed on—his words hinted this wasn’t just random anger. Someone had targeted the Lepages specifically.

The man’s grip tightened viciously. “Trying to trick me, bitch?”

Jayde didn’t blink. With her free hand, she grabbed the pepper spray from her bag and unleashed it directly into his eyes. He howled, releasing her as if burned.

She sprinted for the car, the enraged mob giving chase. Just as she reached the vehicle, they surrounded it, smashing windows with shovels. Glass exploded inward as Jayde ducked a wild swing that grazed her headrest.

“They’ve lost their minds!” the assistant yelled, frantically trying to start the engine.

The mob pounded on the car like a drum, metal denting under their assault. Jayde’s breath came in short gasps—these people had abandoned all fear of consequences.

Then salvation—sirens wailed as police swarmed the scene. The crowd scattered like cockroaches. Jayde stumbled from the battered car straight into Bonian’s waiting arms, his familiar cedar scent anchoring her. “Are you hurt?” His voice was tight with barely leashed fury.

“What are you doing here?” she asked dazedly. The assistant had said he was tied up in meetings.

“You were here,” Bonian said simply, his dark eyes blazing. “Did you really think I wouldn’t come?”

Jayde’s throat tightened. She’d seen the exhaustion lining his face yesterday, hadn’t wanted to add to his burdens. Yet here he stood. “I didn’t think you’d make it,” she admitted, voice cracking.

He crushed her against his chest, his own body trembling. “I’m sorry I wasn’t faster.”

For once, Jayde didn’t resist, letting his solid presence absorb her fear. As police rounded up the rioters, Jayde spotted a woman with a professional camera lurking nearby. “Paparazzi!” she shouted.

Bonian’s murderous glare sent the woman scrambling, but security intercepted her. He examined her camera, his expression turning thunderous. Jayde peered over his shoulder—the memory card contained photos of them together, including their recent mall outing with Lele.

Her hands shook. “You’re the one who bumped into Lele,” she realized.

The photographer denied it, but her panicked eyes gave her away. Jayde pressed, “You’re behind those leaked photos online, aren’t you?”

The woman finally cracked. “Yes, okay? I took them...”

Jayde’s anger cooled slightly. “Take them down and issue a public correction.”

“I can’t!” the photographer blurted. “I already sold them. Someone paid me to create that scandal.”

Jayde froze. This wasn’t random—someone had orchestrated it. “Who?”

Bonian cut in sharply. “Not here. Get in the car.”

Inside the vehicle, the photographer confessed everything. An anonymous client had paid her through an untraceable bank transfer. Bonian memorized the account details for investigation.

They forced the photographer to post a retraction. That evening, Lepage Group’s official account released a statement while Jayde published a personal explanation of their relationships. Gradually, the online firestorm died down, replaced by fresher gossip.

“It’s over,” Jayde exhaled, watching the hateful comments disappear like smoke. The relief was almost physical.

Chapter 820

Jayde left work early to pick up Lele from kindergarten. Bonian insisted on going too. "I'll drive. It's his first day—I want to see how he's doing."

Jayde didn't argue. He was Lele's father, after all.

They parked near the school, trying to stay low-key, but Bonian's luxury car still drew attention. A group of kids stared. "Whoa, that car is awesome," one of them said.

Lele's new friend, a talkative kid, pointed. "That thing costs a fortune. My dad could never afford that."

"That's my uncle's car," Lele said proudly.

"No way," the boy scoffed. "You're making that up."

Lele's face turned red. "I'm not! It's Uncle Lepage's!"

"Then prove it," the boy said. "Tell the guy in the car to come out."

"I can—" Lele started.

Jayde stepped in. "Lele, what's going on?"

He ran to her and tugged her sleeve. "He thinks I'm lying about Uncle Lepage's car."

Jayde sighed. It was Bonian's car, but explaining that to a kid felt a bit much. Still, the boy wouldn't let it go. "Auntie, you're Lele's mom, right? Tell him not to lie. That's what my mom says."

"Lele's telling the truth," Jayde said gently. "That car brought us here."

The boy frowned. "But sometimes adults lie too."

Before she could respond, Lele snapped, "My mom doesn't lie!" The two boys started bickering.

Jayde froze, unsure what to say, but then Teacher Gong rushed over. "Alright, boys, that's enough!"

At that moment, Bonian walked over and picked up Lele. "How was school, buddy?"

"Uncle Lepage..." Lele buried his face in Bonian's shoulder, upset and embarrassed.

The other boy fell silent, wide-eyed. When he saw Bonian step out of the car and heard Lele call him “Uncle Lepage,” he realized he’d been wrong. “Sorry, Lele,” he muttered. “I shouldn’t have said you were lying. Or your mom.”

“It’s okay,” Lele said. “But don’t talk about my mom. She’s the best.”

In the car, Jayde smiled. “You’re such a sweet kid, Lele. I’m proud of you.”

“Mom, stop,” he said, hiding his face in embarrassment.

“To celebrate, I’ll cook dinner tonight,” she said, grinning.

Lele’s eyes lit up. “Is Uncle Lepage coming?”

Bonian smirked and glanced at Jayde. “That’s up to your mom.”

Two pairs of eyes—one small and one intense—stared at her. They looked so alike, it was almost scary.

Jayde gave in. “Okay, fine. Let’s grab groceries. It’ll be fun.”

At the market, Lele’s charm won over the vendors. Everyone greeted Jayde warmly—she was clearly a regular. One vendor looked at Bonian curiously. “Jayde, your husband?”

Jayde hesitated, but Bonian smoothly answered, “Yeah, I’m her husband.” Then, seeing her glare, he added with a grin, “Well, one day.”

The vendor laughed, handing them free celery. “Young love, huh? Good for you, Jayde.”

Jayde rolled her eyes but couldn’t help smiling.

Back home, the sunset lit the kitchen as they unloaded the groceries. Jayde juggled the bags, trying to open the door, but Bonian stepped in and took them. “Got it. Open the door.”

She didn’t argue, but when she tried to take the bags inside, he was already in the kitchen, sleeves rolled up. “You’re cooking?” she asked, doubtful. His polished look screamed “doesn’t cook.”

“You don’t think I can?” Bonian teased. “Just watch.”

He waved her off. Lele was on the couch watching cartoons and called her over. She sat with him, catching the delicious smells drifting from the kitchen. Maybe Bonian wasn’t bluffing after all.

“I’m hungry,” Lele said, rubbing his belly.

Jayde handed him some biscuits. “Just a snack—you’ll ruin your appetite.”

Soon, Bonian served dinner. The dishes were colorful and smelled amazing—better than what Jayde usually made.

“Well?” he asked, drying his hands like he did this every day.

“Uncle Lepage, you’re awesome!” Lele said, speaking for both of them.

But just as they started eating, a new video hit the internet—exposing Bonian’s connection to the Lepage Group. The whistleblower’s identity hit him hard, like a gut punch.