

After the Secret Wedding Rise of My Queen Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Spank Him

What's happening in there?

Samuel's imagination raced with the thought of cars careening down a high-speed track.

Inside the room, Isabel had Xander pinned against the door, her breath coming in short gasps as she struggled to maintain her composure.

It felt like a wildfire raging inside her.

"Hey, Mr. CEO, can I talk to you about something?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

Xander stood frozen, as if struck by a sudden tempest, his body as tense as a bowstring.

"You're asking for my help?"

Isabel took a shaky breath, trying to steady herself. "I can't take care of this myself right now."

She wouldn't have asked for such a favor unless the situation was dire.

"How about this—if you help me out now, I promise I'll sign the divorce papers whenever you want."

Her offer extinguished the fire in Xander.

Does she truly want the divorce that much?

For my convenience? He saw through her words—she was trying to free herself so she could return to that other man!

The memory of Isabel with Kaleb at the party flashed through his mind.

His thoughts grew darker with each recollection.

"Kiss me. I can't take it anymore," Isabel pleaded, leaning closer.

But before she could reach him, he pushed her away.

She stumbled backward, landing on the bed, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears as she looked at him in disbelief.

He rejected her? Was he really that repulsed? She was beautiful, with a figure that could stop traffic.

Was he really not interested in women?

As the thought crossed her mind, Xander stepped forward, and before she could react, he lifted her into his arms and carried her.

“Hey! This is Uncomfortable. Put me down!”

Isabel’s voice rose in exasperation as Xander carried her into the bathroom, ignoring her protests. Her frustration ignited, she swatted him on the backside.

The sound was sharp and unmistakable.

Xander froze, disbelief etched on his face.

Never in his life had he been spanked like that, and a flush of indignation colored his cheeks.

Fueled by embarrassment and anger, Xander marched to the bathtub and deposited Isabel into it without ceremony. He turned on the shower, drenching her in a torrent of cold water.

“Oh, that’s so much better....”

The chill washed over Isabel, bringing clarity and relief. As the water soaked through, she began to regain her composure, realizing she could perform the acupuncture on herself after all.

“Thanks,” Isabel said, glancing up at him. “I wasn’t thinking clearly—I forgot about the cold water. I feel a lot better now. You can leave.”

Xander stood there, his mouth set in a grim line, irritation simmering beneath the surface.

She had pinned him against the wall when it suited her and now dismissed him like he was expendable. Was he just a tool for her convenience?

“Why are you still here?” Isabel asked again, urging him to go.

Her clothes clung to her in wet folds, highlighting her silhouette. Despite the fabric’s thickness, it left little to the imagination.

Suppressing his irritation, Xander turned to leave the bathroom. As he opened the door, he found Samuel loitering just outside.

"Finished already? That was fast!" Samuel blurted out, glancing downward as if to confirm his suspicions.

Xander's expression darkened. "What are you implying?"

"No, no, it's not what you think," Samuel stammered, backtracking quickly. "You're a force to be reckoned with, unstoppable, and all that. I was just curious about what was happening in there," he said, shifting his gaze toward the room.

He couldn't see Isabel, but the open bathroom door caught his eye.

"She's in the bathroom?" Samuel ventured.

Before Samuel could speak again, Xander pulled the door shut decisively.

"Stay out," he instructed, letting the words hang in the air as he strode downstairs.

Samuel stood by the closed door, shaking his head and deciding against entering. He thought that witnessing too much would only corrupt his mind.

As he mulled over this, Leo burst in, urgency in every step.

"Boss, someone took those vagrants!" Leo exclaimed, his voice laden with concern.

Xander's gaze turned sharp, his mind whirring with the implications.

This was no mere coincidence; someone had orchestrated this to harm Isabel.

"Do you have any leads?"

"We're working on it, Leo replied.

"You have three days. I want answers.

"Yes, boss."

Meanwhile, at the Perkins' estate, Morris wasted no time when Tiffany arrived. "Did you handle everything?" he asked, his voice a mix of anxiety and expectation.

"I told them to leave Solaria tonight. We shouldn't face any issues, Tiffany reassured him

"It's not about probabilities. We need guarantees. If Xander discovers our involvement, we'll face severe repercussions," Morris warned.

Tiffany handed her father a glass of water. "Relax, Dad. We took every precaution. The area was off the grid -no cameras, no witnesses. By tonight, those vagrants will be long gone. The Bennetts may rule Solaria, but beyond it, they're just another player. It's a big world, and finding a handful of people is like searching for a needle in a haystack."

Morris sighed, his tension easing slightly.

"Still, let's not waste any time. Make sure they leave Solaria at once."

"Agreed. I'll arrange it immediately, Tiffany replied.

Two hours later, Xander received an update.

"Boss, we traced it to the Perkins. Leo shared every detail uncovered.

Xander's anger from his earlier encounter with Isabel hadn't faded. His expression turned even more severe.

"Let's pay the Perkins a visit," he declared, grabbing his coat with resolute purpose and heading out.

Samuel watched his brother's retreating figure, perplexed by his fury. Is it really over Isabel? Could she truly hold such significance for Xander?

The realization struck him suddenly. Although his brother had married Isabel out of necessity, she was still his wife in name. The Perkins' scheme against Isabel was a direct affront to his brother, a brazen act that symbolized betrayal and disgrace. Of course, he was incensed.

Yes, that has to be the reason.

As midnight approached, Morris and Tiffany were abruptly awakened by a commotion outside.

"What's happening? Can't anyone get a decent night's sleep around here?" Tiffany complained as she pulled on a robe and stepped into the hallway, her expression irritated. Morris, equally annoyed, followed her.

Mr. Hobson burst in, his face glistening with sweat. "Sir, this is not good! The Bennetts are here, they've arrived!"

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Chapter 27 A Blind Fate

“What?!” Morris exclaimed, a surge of panic washing over him. Tiffany felt her heart skip a beat as anxiety gripped her.

They shared a glance, a silent exchange of fear that their scheme might have been uncovered.

As father and daughter stood in tense silence, Xander entered with a commanding stride that seemed to drop the temperature in the room.

His presence was formidable, and Morris and Tiffany felt the weight of it, their nerves fraying under his scrutiny.

“Mr. Bennett, what brings you here at this hour?” Morris asked, trying to mask his unease with a veneer of ignorance.

Xander gestured to Leo, who nodded and signaled to the guards, “Bring them in.”

Within moments, the vagrants were ushered inside, their faces bruised and battered, barely recognizable.

The sight of them sent a chill down Morris and Tiffany’s spines, their skin growing pale with dread.

“Mr. Xander, please have mercy! We were coerced! They sent us! We didn’t know she was your wife! Spare us!” the vagrants pleaded, collapsing to their knees in desperation.

Tiffany, panicking, pointed at them, “They’re lying! I never instructed them to do this! They acted on their own! What does this have to do with us?”

Her outburst caused Morris to break out in a cold sweat, stumbling back to clutch the sofa for support.

“Dad, what’s wrong?” Tiffany asked, oblivious to the grave mistake she had made.

Xander’s gaze, cold and unyielding, turned toward Tiffany. “They haven’t revealed any details, yet you seem to know quite a lot.”

Shock coursed through Tiffany’s veins

Tiffany’s eyes widened, her jaw dropping as she realized her error.

After a long pause, Tiffany attempted to deflect the situation, her tone shifting to one of feigned innocence.

“Xan, it’s not my fault. We were meant to be engaged, but Isabel forced herself into the picture. She’s the one to blame!”

She moved closer to Xander as she spoke, her silk nightgown clinging to her form, highlighting her curves.

Leo watched her with incredulity. He knew many had tried to seduce his boss before, but all met unpleasant ends.

“Leave!” Xander commanded, his voice cutting through the air like a blade. His eyes, sharp and intense, pinned Tiffany in place, rendering her too terrified to move.

Leo’s expression was one of grim certainty as he thought, In this world, only Isabel could cross my boss and emerge unscathed.

Morris wiped the sweat from his forehead, his nerves clearly frayed. He stepped forward, his voice laden with desperation. “Mr. Bennett, please reconsider this. Your grandmother and the Perkins have a deep bond. If not for this connection, your nanny wouldn’t have facilitated this marriage.”

Xander’s face remained an impassive mask. “You should count yourselves lucky. Without that link, the Perkins would be nothing but a memory in Solaria by dawn.”

Morris gulped, the sound echoing his dread.

Xander’s gaze swept over the disheveled vagrants before settling on Leo. “Get these people to the police station.”

“Yes, boss,” Leo answered, his tone clipped.

With that, Xander turned and made his way to the door.

Tiffany, torn between fear and reluctance, gathered her resolve and hurried after him.

“Xan, wait-”

Xander halted but didn’t turn. “From now on, the Perkins and the Bennetts have no further connection. If you harm her again, you will face repercussions beyond your worst fears.”

Tiffany stood stunned, her voice caught in her throat as she watched him leave.

Fury and frustration churned within her, bubbling over into a tempest of rage.

She clutched her nightgown tightly, wrinkling and tearing it in her grip.

“Tiffany, stop. He’s not someone you can manipulate right now,” Morris said, his tone heavy with resignation as he placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"I refuse to accept this! The position of Bennett family matriarch was mine by right! That interloper has not only belittled me but has also usurped everything that was meant for me. I will not let this stand! I will take back what's mine!" Tiffany's face twisted in rage, her eyes blazing with a searing intensity.

Morris's expression darkened, his own frustration evident. "Didn't you hear Mr. Bennett's warning? If you make another move, you'll not only seal your own fate but drag the entire family down with you."

"I won't fail again. This mistake was a lapse, but next time, I'll succeed. Dad, help me. If we prevail, you'll be Xander's father-in-law, and our family will rise with us!" Tiffany begged, gripping Morris's arm tightly.

Morris hesitated, his face a mask of conflicted emotions.

"Dad, I've come up with a plan!" Tiffany's eyes sparkled with a new idea.

"What's your plan?" Morris asked, his interest clearly piqued.

A mischievous grin spread across Tiffany's face. "We can have Grandpa step in. He could arrange a meeting with Xander under the guise of apologizing for the situation. While he's there, we'll slip something into Xander's tea. Once he's incapacitated, I handle the rest."

Morris hesitated, clearly torn.

"Dad, don't hesitate! If we let this opportunity slip, the Perkins will be entirely severed from the Bennets" Tiffany urged, her voice urgent and insistent.

At that moment, Albert walked in.

"Tiffany's plan isn't without merit, Albert said, his tone grave.

"Dad, why are you here?" Morris asked, bewildered.

"Can I really stay away when such a serious matter is unfolding?"

"What are you implying?" Morris asked.

Albert sighed deeply before speaking. "We were once a small, insignificant family. Our real growth began after Tiffany's engagement with the Bennetts. Many companies sought us out, eager to use our connection to the Bennetts for their own gain. This is how we grew to our current status. If our ties to the Bennetts are severed, many of our partners will likely withdraw and seek other opportunities. The Perkins could face a serious decline."

Morris absorbed Albert's words, worry etched on his face.

"So, you think we should proceed with the plan?"

Albert looked at Tiffany. "In my long life, I've encountered many types of people. My belief is that Xander's interest in that woman is likely a façade. If Tiffany can successfully execute her plan, we might propel the Perkins to new heights."

"I agree," Tiffany said, her enthusiasm growing. "I don't think Xander truly cares for that woman either?"

Morris looked from Albert to Tiffany, weighing their arguments.

"Alright, if you're both convinced, then we'll go all in and see this through!"

The next morning, Isabel slept late into the day, the sun already high in the sky.

"Mmm-" She stretched, trying to shake off the remnants of a restless night.

Despite a full night's sleep, she still felt the weariness from the previous day's events.

After a quick wash, she left her room and found Xander and Samuel already seated at the breakfast table.

Starving, Isabel had missed breakfast and now faced the prospect of lunch.

Just as she picked up her cutlery to start eating, her phone buzzed with an incoming call.

She had expected it to be Reggie but was surprised to see Colin's name on the screen.

Wasn't he the one who had cut ties with her in the hospital? Why was he calling now? She wondered.

"What's this about? Speak," Isabel said, setting her phone on speaker so she could continue eating.

"What kind of tone is that? Is this how you talk to your father? Did I raise you to be so disrespectful?"

Colin's voice was harsh and disapproving.

Xander glanced briefly at Isabel's phone but said nothing.

Samuel looked irritated, his appetite ruined by the interruption.

“You never bothered to teach me anything. You were too busy with your new wife’s daughter to pay any attention to me,” Isabel said, her tone as casual as her eating.

Colin fell silent for a moment, clearly recognizing the sarcasm in her voice.

“You treat her and her daughter as if they were your enemies, yet they genuinely care about you.”

“Pfft-” Isabel choked on her food.

Samuel covered his bowl with a scowl, glaring at Isabel. “Can you be more careful? You’re almost spitting food into my bowl.”

“It’s not my fault. This old man’s comments are just too funny,” Isabel said, wiping her mouth with a smirk. Colin’s voice grew more accusatory. “Who is that man with you? Are you seeing someone else on the side?” “Pfft-” Samuel choked again, clearly shocked by the misunderstanding that he might be Isabel’s lover. Isabel shot Samuel a sidelong glance. “You were just complaining about my eating habits, and now you’re making a mess yourself.”

“Just-”

“Enough,” Xander cut in, stopping the bickering before it could escalate further.

“Are there more men in your life? Isabel, how many are you seeing?” Colin demanded, his tone rising in anger.

Isabel rolled her eyes, her frustration evident. “Do you think I’m like you, cheating on your wife with multiple women? They’re just friends.”

How dare this girl speak to me like that!

But he wasn’t calling to argue today.

“Anyway, your mother has found a potential match for you. She’s arranged a blind date for you this weekend.”

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Chapter 28 His Jealousy

When Colin made his announcement, Xander’s fork stopped mid-air. His gaze, intense and brooding, settled on Isabel’s phone.

Isabel clicked her tongue and glanced at the phone. "Find me a good match? Does Amelia even have it in her cold, black heart? I'm curious—who's she trying to set me up with? It better not be some ancient relic in his fifties or sixties."

"What exactly did you expect? With your current reputation, do you think you'll attract a wealthy playboy?" Colin's tone was laden with derision.

Isabel raised an eyebrow, recognizing that Amelia was indeed trying to trap her in a difficult situation.

"What's wrong with my reputation? The one who cheated was that asshole, and the so-called innocent woman was merely playing a part. I'm the actual victim here."

"I don't have time to debate this! You're going on this blind date this weekend!" Colin's voice was commanding and uncompromising.

Isabel picked up a meatball and chewed it slowly, her posture relaxed and defiant.

"And what if I choose not to?"

"You dare!"

"Oh, I absolutely dare.

"You—"

With a beep, Isabel ended the call and swiftly blocked Colin's number.

Samuel watched her actions with a smirk, shaking his head. "You're quite the obedient daughter."

Isabel caught the sarcasm in Samuel's voice. "Would you want a father like that?"

Samuel rolled his eyes, too irritated to continue the discussion.

Xander glanced between Isabel and her phone, his brow furrowing. "You're really not going to go on the blind date?"

"I'm already married. What's the point of a blind date? It would only make you look foolish."

Isabel's flippant remark was oddly pleasing to Xander.

"Don't flatter yourself. You think you're significant enough to embarrass my brother?" Samuel said with irritation.

“Stuff it!” Isabel tossed a fish ball into Samuel’s bowl.

Samuel stared at the fish ball, grimacing at the thought that it might have been tainted by Isabel’s cutlery.

As he was about to discard it, Xander reached over and retrieved it with his own cutlery.

“What a waste of food,” Xander said, a trace of disapproval in his voice, before he popped the fish ball into his mouth.

Samuel’s eyes widened in disbelief.

What was this? His typically meticulous older brother was actually eating something touched by someone else?

This was unbelievable.

“Bro, Isabel touched that fish ball!” Samuel said, his voice filled with incredulity.

“Is that a problem?” Xander asked, his tone indifferent.

Samuel’s mouth fell open. He struggled to form a response.

It wasn’t just a problem—it was a major issue!

Before Samuel could regain his composure, Xander shifted his gaze to Isabel.

“He has a strong aversion to germs. Make sure you don’t serve his food for him.”

Isabel nodded, noting how the brothers shared similar peculiarities.

“Got it,” Isabel said, then remembered something. She looked at Samuel. “After lunch, don’t hurry back to your room. I need to give you a shot and change your bandages.”

“Understood,” Samuel said, lifting his leg with some difficulty. Although the movement was strained, he managed to elevate it a bit.

Truth be told, Samuel wasn’t fond of Isabel’s apparent interest in his brother, but he couldn’t deny her skill. Despite numerous doctors and expensive treatments, his leg had remained as unresponsive as a rotting stump, steadily deteriorating.

After the meal, Isabel washed her hands and approached Samuel, carefully pulling away the blanket from his leg.

Every time Isabel exposed his leg, Samuel blushed. He wore short shorts to make the treatment easier.

Though already 24, his disability had kept him from close contact with women, making Isabel the first to see him so vulnerable.

There was something strangely magnetic about her focus, and she was undeniably attractive. Still, Samuel couldn't shake the feeling that her interest in his brother wasn't entirely sincere.

Beauty was not just skin-deep.

"All done," Isabel said, setting aside her tools. She then turned to the maid who had been waiting nearby. "Is the medication warmed up?"

"Yes, ma'am," the maid replied.

"Bring it over," Isabel commanded with a calm authority.

The maid complied, delivering the bowl of medicine to Samuel.

He peered at the dark, viscous liquid inside, its appearance more repulsive than any he had encountered before. The thought of drinking it was almost unbearable.

"Quickly, before it cools. Are you afraid of a little bitterness?" Isabel's voice carried a teasing note.

"You're the one who's afraid!" Samuel retorted, rolling his eyes. He braced himself and reached for the bowl.

"Better not be scared. This batch is far more bitter than what you've had in the past," Isabel warned.

As her words sank in, Samuel's determination faltered, and his forehead twitched involuntarily.

Isabel had clearly noticed his distaste for bitter flavors and was pressing his buttons.

"If you're not afraid, then drink it. Let it sit, and it will lose its effectiveness."

Samuel took a deep breath but remained hesitant.

With a practiced ease, Isabel produced a milk candy from her pocket and extended it to Samuel. "Here, take this."

Samuel's gaze fixed on the candy, momentarily taken aback.

Xander, positioned between them, clasped his hands in his lap. His expression was stern, and his eyes were shadowed. Watching Isabel's gesture, he felt strangely irrelevant.

"Hmph! Do you think I'm a child?" Samuel snapped, diverting his attention from the candy. "It's just that the medicine was too hot. I'll drink it once it cools down."

He tilted his head back and grimaced as he swallowed the medicine. Each gulp tightened his features as the bitter liquid sloshed down, threatening to make him gag.

Had it not been for his concern about appearing weak in front of Isabel, he might have stopped midway.

After finishing the bowl, Samuel felt drained. He snatched the milk candy from Isabel, tore off the wrapper, and popped it into his mouth.

The sweet, creamy taste offered immediate relief, but as the flavor settled, he regretted his choice. Isabel would undoubtedly use this against him.

As if on cue, Isabel's voice interrupted his thoughts.

"This medicine must be taken three times a day. By next week, the dosage will increase. Keep extra candy handy. Don't feel ashamed for needing it; it's merely to counteract the bitterness and prevent you from vomiting, which would waste the treatment." Isabel said, her tone firm as she looked straight at Samuel.

Samuel's eyes widened in surprise, his expression a mix of confusion and curiosity.

He had braced himself for Isabel's usual sharpness, yet she spoke to him with an unexpected kindness, almost as if she were comforting a child.

Xander checked his watch, noting the 31 minutes that had slipped by. He had been relegated to the role of a mere observer, and it irked him. Did they truly see him as a mere shadow in their conversation?

With a sense of determination, Xander stood up abruptly, hoping to shift Isabel's focus from his brother.

Yes, he managed to get her attention, just like he wanted.

However, before Xander could even appreciate the shift in attention, Isabel's gaze flickered back to Samuel. It was as though Xander's presence was of no consequence.

"In about two weeks, you should be able to stand with support," Isabel said with a reassuring tone.

Samuel's spirits lifted at the news. The idea of standing once more, of not having to look up at everyone, filled him with a renewed sense of hope.

At that moment, Xander's hand moved decisively, placing itself between Isabel and Samuel.

Both Samuel and Isabel turned in surprise to face him.

What is he up to?

Xander leaned closer to Isabel. "Hand it over," he commanded.

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Chapter 29 The Snobbish In-Law

"Excuse me?" Isabel blinked at Xander's hand, clearly puzzled. What was he asking for?

Samuel shared her confusion, equally baffled.

"Candy," Xander stated flatly.

Both Isabel and Samuel were momentarily speechless.

Xander wanted candy?

The notion was almost unbelievable.

It was a terrifying thought, to be exact.

"I thought you hated candies, Xander?" Samuel asked, struggling to comprehend.

Xander met Samuel's gaze with an indifferent look. "Aren't you the same? Didn't you just have some?"

"No, no, it's different! The medicine was so bitter," Samuel defended himself.

"Likewise. There's a bitter aftertaste in my mouth," Xander said, his tone devoid of emotion as he continued to spin his tale.

The room fell into an unsettling silence, a quiet so thick it felt almost palpable.

After what seemed like an eternity, Isabel retrieved a milk candy from her pocket and handed it to Xander.

“Will one be sufficient?”

Xander’s eyes drifted to Isabel’s pocket.

“Are there more?”

“Yes.” Isabel extracted a small handful of candies and placed them into Xander’s hand.
“Is this too many?”

Xander accepted the candies and turned to head upstairs, closing the door behind him as he retreated to his room.

Isabel stared at the closed door, her mind struggling to grasp what had just transpired. She looked at Samuel, bewildered. “What’s going on with your brother?”

“How should I know?” Samuel was just as confused, unsure of what to make of the situation.

As soon as Xander popped a candy into his mouth, he received a call from Albert.

The caller ID made the purpose of the call clear. It was Albert.

He declined the call.

The number was blocked.

Moments later, another call came through. This time from his mother, Ivana Shade.

Xander frowned, already anticipating the reason for the call.

“Mom, are you calling to intercede for the Perkins?”

“You’ve always been perceptive,” Ivana responded with a hint of frustration.

“There’s no need to intercede. What they did is unforgivable.” Xander’s expression darkened as he recalled the scene he had nearly missed, envisioning how the girl might have been harmed.

“I’ve heard the details. It’s because of that girl you married on a whim. Xan, I know how you are. Once you’ve made up your mind, it’s nearly impossible for anyone to sway you. But consider your grandmother’s wishes. According to the engagement, you were supposed to marry Miss Perkins. That was her final wish. If it weren’t for that, I would have arranged for you and Rachel to be together a long time ago,” Ivana said with a weary sigh.

Xander absentmindedly played with the candies Isabel had given him, his mind drifting to her charming and mischievous smile.

“I didn’t disappoint Grandma. I went to city hall on the wedding day as agreed. It was they who broke the contract, not me.”

“Alright, I get it. Since you and she are not meant to be, I won’t press it. Truthfully, I’d rather you marry someone we know better. Rachel has loved you since she was a child and hoped to become your wife. You –” Ivana’s words were interrupted by Xander.

“I’m already married. Let’s leave this topic. If there’s nothing else, I’ll hang up.”

“Alright, alright. I won’t bring it up again. On to the matter at hand—Albert called me earlier. He hopes you can give the Perkins family a chance to make amends. He wants to arrange a dinner at the hotel. He’d like you to join him whenever you’re available,” Ivana explained.

Xander was prepared to refuse without hesitation.

“Xan, remember, he’s already 70, and your grandmother had a good relationship with him. It would be difficult to refuse him, especially for her sake. Don’t make her spirit grieve.”

Reluctantly, Xander agreed.

“Then the night after tomorrow. I’m tied up during the day.”

“Good, I’ll let them know.”

Two days later...

As Isabel was about to leave early in the morning to meet Beowulf, Samuel intercepted her.

“You can’t go out just yet.”

“Why not?” Isabel asked, puzzled.

Samuel blocked the doorway, refusing to let her pass. You just can’t go out right now.”

Isabel scrutinized Samuel with suspicion, sensing something was off.

Before she could get to the bottom of it, a familiar voice cut through the tension.

“Godmother, this is Isabel. She’s been pestering Xan non-stop and even hit me last time.”

Isabel followed the voice to the entrance. There stood Rachel Lawson, her sharp words slicing through the air, accompanied by a middle-aged woman whose face mirrored Xander's and Samuel's. It was evident she was their mother.

Rachel's use of Ivana's name confirmed the woman's identity beyond doubt.

Isabel turned her gaze to Samuel, understanding his earlier maneuver now. He had stalled her to make way for their arrival.

Clearly, their purpose was far from friendly.

Ivana stepped forward, her eyes sweeping Isabel with a scrutinizing gaze.

"I had you investigated. It seems you're quite the piece of work. Even if someone stole your man, pushing her to a miscarriage was beyond the pale."

Isabel, though married into this family as part of her mission, was not one to tolerate unjust treatment. "Oh? Since you've done your homework, why don't you know that the miscarriage was a fabrication? It wasn't me who pushed her. She staged the fall and used a blood pack to fake the bleeding."

Ivana's eyes widened in shock. Isabel's words were unexpected and unfamiliar to her.

"Ivana, don't believe her. She's lying to save herself. Everyone saw her push the woman at the wedding. There is no fake pregnancy? If the girl was truly faking why would the president of Johnson Group stay with her? Kaleb's not blind." Rachel's urgent whispers reached Ivana's ears.

Ivana mulled over Rachel's argument, finding it persuasive.

"Oh, but Kaleb is blind. He prefers schemers over someone genuine and kind like me. What can I do?" Isabel shrugged with an air of indifference.

"Enough," Ivana said sharply. "The Bennetts have no place for you. Apologize to Rachel and then leave."

Samuel observed the confrontation with mixed feelings. He had wanted Isabel gone, but now that it was happening, he felt an unexpected discomfort.

Isabel met Ivana's stare with unwavering resolve. "And what if I choose to stay?"

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Chapter 30 You Are Unworthy

Isabel and Ivana's gazes locked, the tension between them as taut as a drawn bow. The air seemed thick, charged with unspoken conflict.

Breaking the silence, Ivana retrieved a card from her purse and extended it toward Isabel. "If wealth is what you want, here's one million. Take it and leave."

Isabel cast a brief glance at the card. "Since you've already decided my motives, I won't try to convince you otherwise. You wouldn't believe me, no matter what I say."

Without another word, Isabel pulled out her phone and displayed the transfer record Xander had sent her.

"Look at this. Your son is much more generous than you are—10 times over. Since I'm supposedly here for the money, I might as well hold on to him."

The 10 million was from Xander's previous transfer intended for Samuel's medicine.

Ivana's face reddened with anger. How dare Isabel use her words against her? And she hadn't anticipated Xander's immense generosity.

The 10 million was from Xander's previous transfer intended for Samuel's medicine.

"What will it take for you to leave?" Ivana's voice cut through the room like a blade.

Isabel leaned back on the sofa, crossing her legs and stretching out comfortably. "This place is so nice. Compared to my previous life, it's like heaven. Why would I want to leave?"

"You're completely shameless!" Rachel burst out, stepping forward to confront Isabel before turning to Ivana. "Ivana, are you seeing this? It's only your first meeting, and already she is so bold. I don't want to think what she'll be like in the future! She'll walk all over you!"

Ivana, usually composed thanks to her social training, found her patience wearing thin. Rachel's words had struck a nerve, and Ivana's sense of dignity as an elder felt deeply affronted.

"Do you think you can stay here just because you want to? If I pressure Xan to divorce you, do you really think he'd choose you over me?"

Ivana's words made Isabel frown slightly. To Xander, she was an outsider—his mother held far more significance.

"Mrs. Bennett," Isabel said calmly, "if you've done your research, you should know why Xander agreed to marry me."

Ivana glanced at Samuel, seated in his wheelchair, and realized that Isabel's words were indeed true.

"Don't be deceived like Xan was," Rachel continued, her voice low but insistent. "She's young, and while she may know medicine, can she really be better than the renowned specialists we've consulted? She's merely using this situation to get close to Xan, hoping that by bedding him, she can secure her place as his wife."

Ivana, accustomed to the intrigues of high society, had seen these manipulative tactics before. Rachel's accusations resonated with the familiar ploys of ambitious women she knew well. With each word, Ivana's disdain for Isabel grew sharper, as if it were a tangible thing.

"Do you acknowledge it?" Ivana's voice cut through the tension, her finger pointing accusingly at Isabel.

Isabel's smile was serene as she responded, "Yes, I do."

She confessed?

Her straightforward admission left the room in stunned silence.

Isabel continued, "I'm after Xander's wealth and intend to become the mistress of this house. Beyond that, I plan to drug him, strip him of everything, and ensure that I have his child, leaving him with no choice but to be bound to me forever."

Ivana and the others stared, disbelief etched into their faces. They had encountered shameless behavior before, but none so audacious as Isabel's open declaration of her intentions.

"You—leave now! You are unworthy to be part of the Bennetts!" Ivana's face was a portrait of fury.

Isabel turned to Samuel. "Do you wish for me to leave as well?"

"I—"

"I keep my promises. If I say I'll have you standing within two weeks, then you will be standing within two weeks," Isabel said with unwavering resolve.

Samuel's hands rested on his legs, his heart caught in conflict. He wanted Isabel gone to protect his brother, yet he was weary of his confinement to the wheelchair.

"Hmph! Sam, don't let her deceive you. She cannot heal your legs." Ivana's disdain for Isabel intensified, wishing for her to disappear from their lives immediately.

Rachel, observing Ivana's reaction, cast a smug glance at Isabel. "Just wait—your arrogance won't last. Soon, you'll be cast out of the Bennetts."

Isabel approached Samuel, her gaze shifting back to Ivana. "Mrs. Bennett, you seem solely concerned with your eldest son. What about your younger one?"

"What are you insinuating? When have I ever stopped caring about Sam?" Ivana's chest heaved with anger.

"Really? If you care so much, why not ask him about the state of his legs?" Isabel's stare was unflinching as she confronted Ivana.

Rachel stepped forward, her tone sharp with disbelief. What's the point in asking? She can't fix Sam's legs

—

"Keep out of this," Isabel snapped, shooting Rachel an exasperated look.

Rachel, initially stunned by Isabel's commanding demeanor, was now bristling with fury.

Before Rachel could retort, Ivana's voice sliced through the tension

"Enough. I'll prove that this woman is no more than a charlatan." She turned to Samuel, her voice urgent. "Sam, tell me has her treatment made any difference

Samuel's fingers clenched the blanket over his legs, caught in a battle between hope and skepticism.

"I... I don't know..."

"Samuel, if I leave now, you may never stand again. You'll spend the rest of your life in this cold wheelchair, always looking up at others."

With each of Isabel's words, Samuel's grip on the blanket tightened further.

"Besides, Xander made his own judgment. Do you think you're smarter than him or something?"

This struck Samuel like a revelation.

His brother's insight was well-regarded, and if anyone could discern Isabel's true intentions, it would be him. Despite the uncertainties, Isabel had not yet crossed any critical boundaries with his brother....

And his legs... he wanted to stand.

He wanted to stand!

Resolutely, Samuel raised his gaze to Ivana. “Mom, she might really be able to help with my legs.”

“What?” Ivana’s shock was evident, and Rachel’s reaction mirrored hers.

“Sam, what are you saying? Don’t be deceived by her—how could she possibly-” Rachel’s protest was abruptly silenced as Samuel pulled back the blanket and slowly lifted his feet, exerting visible effort.