

## Shadows 281

Chapter 281 Strange Tension Tobias's lips curved into a faint smile . " Alright . I'll be waiting to see if your news is worth it . " His voice was smooth , low , and intoxicating ... It carried a dangerous kind of charm , one that could drag anyone under . Kyla's heart skipped a beat . She thought about Tobias's face - just as handsome as Jude's , maybe even more striking . But Tobias wasn't like Jude . Jude was cold , proud , and untouchable , like some king on a throne . Tobias , on the other hand , wrapped her up with sweet words and a soft , pampering tone .

It was like a spider's web , pulling her in , leaving her unable to escape . Every time Kyla thought about it , her cheeks burned . Her chest tightened with heat she couldn't control . Oh my God ... what is wrong with me ? I love Jude . Jude is the only one . So why am I so obsessed with Tobias's voice ? I'm not the kind of woman who cheats . I'm not ! I only love Jude . Kyla , stop thinking like this ! Five days later , Tilda and the others arrived at the airport . " " Alright , Una . You can stop here . From here , Professor Linscott and I can check in on ourselves . " Una pouted .

" Tilda ... I really wish I could go with you . But I couldn't get the time off . " . Una wasn't as lucky as Tilda . Not only had Tilda finished Shaun's classes early , but she had also qualified for the International College Art Competition . She and Simon were flying to Motrar together . Before they left , even the school's leaders came to send them off . They showered Tilda with praise , hoping she'd bring back a championship trophy and make both the school and the country proud . " Don't worry . Phones make it easy . If you miss me , just call me on video .

And cheer me on while you're at it . " " Of course I will ! I'll get my whole family to watch the livestream and cheer for you ! " Una raised her fist , her eyes burning with determination . " Alright , alright ... " After saying goodbye to Una , Simon smiled warmly . " You and Una are really close . " " Of course . She's the most important best friend I'll ever have . " Tilda's lips curved into a smile . She never hid her bond with Una . But just as Tilda and Simon were about to check in .... They ran into another group , Russell and the others .

this Tilda's mouth twitched . Damn it . I really can't avoid these people , can I ? Russell saw her too . His face darkened . Dominic pulled his suitcase along , his heart tangled the moment he spotted her . He didn't even know what to say . Wade felt the same . So did Justin . Simon instantly sensed the strange tension . " Tilda , are you okay ? " he whispered . This was an airport . Surely they wouldn't make a scene here . Simon had heard about what happened between Tilda and the Jensons .

Since it was her family business , he didn't pry . " I'm fine , " Tilda said calmly . " Just ignore them . We'll check in and get on the plane . " She kept her cool . After all , they were flying to different places . Once they boarded , they wouldn't see each other again . And if by some chance they ended up on the same flight ... She'd rather take the next one than sit near them . They all quietly finished the check - in process . No one said a word . Dominic , Wade , and Justin all wanted to hear Tilda's voice again .

But when they remembered all the pain and fights between them , none of them dared to step forward . Instead , Russell did . " Honey ? " " Dad ? " Blair and the others stared in shock . " Relax , " Russell said . " I know what I'm doing . I'm not here to fight . Stay back . I want to talk to Tilda alone . " Before anyone could stop him , Russell strode over . Blair and the others froze . Wade muttered nervously , " Mom ... Dad - isn't going to hurt Tilda , is he ? " He was worried that Russell might lose control again , like before , and lash out .

Wade would rather be hurt himself than see Tilda get hurt . Trust him , " Blair said firmly . 2/3 PP " He built the Jenson Group from the ground up . He's the man I love and trust . He won't make the same mistake twice . " But even Blair , who thought she knew Russell best , couldn't guess why . Why is he the one approaching Tilda ? Everyone here had a reason to talk to her . But Russell , who hated her most , was the last person they expected to step forward . Tilda and Simon had just dropped off their luggage .

She turned , and there was Russell , standing right in front of her , his face dark and cold . " Get out of my way . " Tilda's voice was sharp , merciless . She didn't even want to acknowledge this so - called " father . "

Chapter 282 Make Peace Tilda grabbed her ticket , swung her bag over her shoulder , and started to leave . Russell didn't even flinch at her cold sarcasm anymore . He was used to it . Even though he felt angry , he forced it down . He reminded himself of why he came here . " Tilda , I'm not here to fight . I'm here to make peace . " " Peace ? " Tilda laughed like she'd just heard the funniest joke in the world . She crossed her arms , finally giving him a little attention . " Russell , hearing that from your mouth is a real surprise .

" When you accused me of hurting Wade without even asking what happened , you sure didn't sound this humble . " Russell clenched his jaw . " I was wrong then . The court already punished me for it . I even apologized to you in public . " " And what about all the lies Jenson Group spread behind my back ? Don't tell me you didn't know about that . Is that your idea of a real apology ? " Stop being so fake in front of me . If you're a man , then own up to what you did . Don't pretend it never happened . It's disgusting . " Her words shut Russell down completely . His face flushed red .

It was almost laughable . Russell had dominated the business world in Slosa for decades . Powerful people had fallen to him , and they all admitted defeat willingly . But today , his own daughter had

cornered him until he couldn't even defend himself . Over and over , Tilda had made him taste humiliation . And it hurt in a way nothing else ever had . He had to admit something to himself . Tilda really had inherited both his and Blair's sharpest traits . Now she was bold , fierce , and proud . Her words cut like a blade , pressing harder and harder .

It was exactly how Russell and Blair had been in their younger years . So this was blood ties . So this was that fatal pull of family . If Tilda hadn't broken away from the Jensions and stood on the other side , Russell might have raised her differently . With her talent , he might have truly invested in her . But ... There are no " what ifs . " Mr. Jenson , if that's all , then Tilda and I have a flight to catch , " Simon said quickly . He stepped in when the tension grew too thick . " Professor Linscott , I'm sorry . I just need a moment with her .

I won't take long . " Russell turned back to Tilda . " Even though I hate to admit it , you've already changed a lot of people in this family . " Dominic , Howard , Wade , Justin , and Kayden - They all feel guilty now . They want your forgiveness . Finished " Kyla , too . After everything that's happened , I know things can't go back to the way they were when you first came home . " But at least ... I don't want to be your enemy anymore . When we fight , the ones who end up suffering are my kids . And I can't accept that . " It wasn't fatherly love that made Russell say this .

It was the pain of watching his sons break down one by one . Tilda had already cut ties with the Jensions . He could act like she was never his daughter . But he wanted his sons to return to how they were before . So Russell was ready to let go of his grudges and start over . " If you want to come back to Jenson Villa , the door will always be open . " If you don't , then fine . From now on , the Jensions won't stand in your way . " Tilda hadn't expected him to say this . In her past life , she had thrown herself in front of a bullet to save Russell . She had spent days in the ICU .

Russell only visited her once . He never bowed his head to her . Not once . But in this life , after she outshone him and crushed Jenson Group underfoot , he was the one backing down . Ha . It's almost funny . In this world , only power gives you status . The squeaky wheel gets the grease . The ones who grovel and sacrifice everything ? They get crushed . The obedient ones ? They get destroyed . The Jensions were nothing but a nest of snakes . Every so - called " right " choice was actually wrong . And the things everyone called " wrong " ? Those were the only choices that ever worked .

Not far away , the rest of the Jensions had been watching the whole time . They were stunned . They never thought Russell would say something like this . Blair lowered her head , hiding the storm in her eyes . These last few days , she had watched her sons crumble because of Tilda . At night , Russell would

sit beside her , whispering his worries . And she had no answers . Their hatred for Tilda had already run too deep . She didn't feel like Tilda was their daughter at all .

Chapter 283 Idiots It almost felt like the Jensons had been the ones who killed Tilda's real parents . When Tilda first returned to Jenson Villa , all the sons spoiled Kyla and ignored her completely . Finished But after Tilda cut ties with the Jensons , they suddenly started paying attention to her , even reflecting on their past actions . Now , watching Russell - so proud and stubborn - lower his head for the sake of his kids , Blair felt deeply moved . She thought marrying this man was the happiest , most correct decision she had ever made in her life . But then ...

" Russell , you once promised to find out who leaked to the press . The person who exposed that I was the real daughter . " Did you ever find them ? " Tilda's voice was cold , her eyes like ice . No matter what Russell did - even if he died - that ice would never melt . " I ... Russell's face stiffened . He hadn't expected her to bring this up now . " You didn't investigate , did you ? What are you so afraid of , Russell ? Are you scared that the person behind it is the one you least want to suspect ? " Then what's the point of trying to make peace with me ? I've never mattered to you .

Whether I lived or died never had anything to do with your family . " Tilda pressed on , her words cutting deeper and deeper . She forced Russell to drag up the suspicion he had buried long ago . The one he suspected most was Kyla . Because if she had done it , she stood to gain the most . No one else even had the motive . But Russell didn't dare think about it too much . He couldn't bear to accept that possibility . If it was really Kyla . How could he face the daughter he had adored for 18 years ? All the sweet memories would shatter in an instant .

And how could he face Tilda , the daughter who had been missing for 19 years , only to return and be framed and disowned ? " You've got nothing to say , huh ? What's wrong with you people ? Why do all of you suddenly act like saviors , showing up in front of me like I can't survive without you ? " Well , newsflash - I've been living just fine without you . Better than fine . Happier than ever ! If you're blind to that , maybe you should go see an eye doctor . " Tilda turned on her heel . Professor Linscott , let's board . Don't waste time on these idiots .

" " Uh ... okay . " Simon nearly choked on his own words . She had just called the Jensons idiots . Right to their faces . Honestly , in all of Slosa , only Tilda would dare . Finished " Oh , one more thing . Someone here is supposed to be leaving the country today . All the Jensons in Slosa showed up , except ... no Kyla . " Let me guess . She's pretending to have a fever so she can't get out of bed . She probably said she wanted to come , but you told her to rest , so she had no choice but to stay home . Am I right ?

" You're really going to leave someone suspected of betraying the Jensons all alone in your house , Russell ? You trust her that much ? " Tilda tossed out those words out and watched Russell's face darken . " Enough , Tilda ! I came here to reconcile , but that doesn't mean you can slander Kyla ! " You have no proof of anything ! " Russell couldn't bring himself to doubt Kyla . But he also couldn't stop the storm in his chest from tearing at him . He was too shaken , so he turned his anger on Tilda instead . " Yeah , you're right . I don't have proof .

Just pretend I was being unreasonable . " Tilda waved her hand . " I'm leaving . Bye ... " She didn't want to waste any more words on Russell . In the Jensons ' eyes , Kyla was pure , kind , and innocent . An angel who could never betray them or do anything cruel . Tilda knew it was pointless to argue . It was Russell who disgusted her first . Otherwise , she wouldn't have brought it up at all . Either way , she got what she wanted . Tonight , Russell wasn't going to sleep . Dragging her suitcase , Tilda walked off with Simon . Russell returned to Blair with a stormy face .

" Honey , don't be angry . " That's just how Tilda is . Don't take her words to heart , " Blair said softly , trying to calm him . She had heard everything Tilda said . She didn't believe Kyla could be guilty , not in her heart . But she worried Russell might know ... Forget it . It's almost time . Dominic , go board with your mom . Be careful . Call us when the plane lands . " " Okay , Dad Dominic nodded . " Justin , Kayden , Howard , Wade - while Mom and I are gone , I'm counting on you to watch over the Jensons and Jenson Group . " " Got it !

Everyone watched Blair and Dominic go through security and disappear into the terminal . " Dad . " Wade asked , " are you heading straight to Jenson Group now ? "

Chapter 284 Once Doubt Takes Root " I just remembered something I need to do . I'll head to the office later . You all go handle your own stuff first . " " Okay ... " Russell left in a hurry . Justin and Kayden were about to leave , too , but noticed Howard and Wade lingering behind . " Howard , Wade , what's on your mind ? " Justin asked . " Nothing . Let's go , " Wade said . He and Howard exchanged a look . They didn't need to say more - they both knew what the other was thinking . Tilda's words earlier hadn't only shaken Russell . They had gotten under their skin , too .

Back when the scandal about the real Jenson daughter hit the trending search , Wade had been present . Howard had been one of the first to rush back and learn the details . W Now that both had softened toward Tilda and no longer hated her , they could finally think calmly about what really happened back then . Her words left a chill in their hearts . A suspicion they couldn't stop ... a suspicion aimed at Kyla . Is Russell heading back to Jenson Villa right now ? Meanwhile , Kyla had slipped past the cameras and the house staff , sneaking into Russell's study .

She had been waiting for the right chance . Until now , there had always been too many people around . Russell worked at Jenson Group most days . But Kyla hadn't dared sneak into the study before , The Jensons were completely bewitched by her . But if anyone caught her in the act , no one would believe in her innocence again . So she chose today . Everyone was at the airport seeing Blair and Dominic off . Kyla faked being sick , so she got to stay home . Plenty of time . A perfect plan . Even the security cameras were dealt with .

Wearing gloves to avoid leaving prints , she went straight for the documents . She remembered exactly where they were . Last night , she had brought drinks and dessert to the study and saw them .

She yanked open the drawers , flipping through papers . Finally - found it ! Kyla quickly snapped several photos with her phone , put everything back neatly , and slipped out of the study . After destroying the evidence on her phone , she came out of the bathroom and let out a sigh of relief . But suddenly ... A figure appeared in front of her .

" Ah ! " Kyla gasped , almost falling . Luckily , the man caught her . " Kyla , are you okay ? " " Dad ... She swallowed hard . " You ... you came back ? Didn't you go to the office ? Did Mom and Dominic already leave ? " " Yes . But what are you doing here ? " This was the third floor , where Russell and Blair's rooms were , along with Russell's study . There was a bathroom here , sure - but every bedroom had its own private one . If Kyla really just needed the restroom , why wouldn't she use her own ? And she was supposed to be sick in bed . Why would she wander here of all places ?

Finished " I felt a little better , so I wanted to go up on the rooftop for some fresh air and sunshine . But on my way down , I suddenly needed the restroom so I came here . " ... Kyla steadied her voice , forcing calm . Still , the tiny quiver betrayed her nerves . Normally , Russell wouldn't have thought twice . But after hearing Tilda at the airport earlier , every little detail about Kyla seemed suspicious now . Once doubt takes root , it only needs a little push to grow . And then nothing can go back to the way it was . " Daddy , what's wrong ? " Kyla asked carefully .

She could feel his mood shifting . " Nothing . I just came back to grab some files . I'll head to the office soon . " Kyla , if you're sick , don't wander around . Rest and drink water . That's the fastest way to recover , okay ? " " Yes , Daddy . I understand . I'll go rest now . " Hearing his gentle words , Kyla finally relaxed a little . Once she left the floor , Russell's expression darkened again . He rushed back into the study and checked everything carefully . No signs of tampering .

He even checked the cameras .

Nothing showed Kyla entering the study . On the footage , she walked straight toward the rooftop stairs . Later , she came down again . But the timing was off . The gap between her bathroom trip and the rooftop footage was 15 minutes . Russell frowned at the study's camera . Something about it felt wrong . But he couldn't quite put his finger on what .

Chapter 285 Losing My Mind " Am I imagining things ? No , Russell . You can't let Tilda get in your head like this . " Kyla is such a kind and innocent girl . How could she ever do something like that ? " Russell kept telling himself that over and over . But somehow , almost without thinking , he pulled out his phone and called someone . The line connected quickly . A surprised voice came through , " Mr. Jenson , what can I do for you ? " " Do you remember that trendy search incident I mentioned before ? And the editor of that gossip site ? " " I remember , but that was a long time ago .

Why bring it up now ? " " I want you to dig into what really happened ." There was silence on the other end . Russell frowned . " What's the problem ? " " It's not that . Just ... it's been a while . I heard that the editor resigned and moved overseas . It's going to be tough to track anything down . " If Russell had pushed for an investigation back then , before the editor left the country , the Jenson Group could have uncovered the truth easily . But now , after all this time , the editor was gone - who knew where - and most of the traces were probably wiped clean .

Strangely , Russell felt relieved hearing this . Almost grateful . Wait . Why am I feeling this way? That was basically admitting Tilda's words had gotten to him . Had he really started doubting Kyla ? Russell steadied himself . " Anyway , just do what you can . See if there's anything left to find . " " Mr. Jenson , can I ask .. why now ? After all this time , what made you want to dig it back up ? " I thought you already knew the answer back then . " " You don't need to know . Just handle it . " " Alright . " The call ended . Russell sat back in his chair and rubbed his temples .

" I'm not doubting Kyla , " he muttered . " I just ... I need to know the truth . " Otherwise , every time Tilda brings this up , it makes me feel like a fool . Like she thinks I'm an idiot . " When Russell finally grabbed his things and went downstairs , he spotted Kyla . " Kyla ? Why are you up again ? " " I just came down for some water , Daddy . Are you heading out ? "

" Yeah , I got the files I needed . I have to get to the office . " Her gaze dropped , trying to hide the sadness in her eyes . " I'm sorry , Daddy .

The Jenson Group needs help right now , but I can't do anything . Finished " Today , when Mom and Dominic left for their trip , everyone went to see them off . But I was stuck here with a fever , and you all had to worry about me , too . I'm useless ! " She slapped herself in frustration , tears dripping onto the floor . " Kyla , stop that . You're only a freshman . You're just a kid . The fact that you even care about

the family this much makes me proud as your father . " The guilt and self - blame on her face looked so real . Russell's doubts vanished instantly .

He rushed forward to stop her from hurting herself . This isn't an act . It can't be . Russell , what the hell is wrong with you ? How could you even let Tilda's words make you doubt Kyla - the girl you raised as your own daughter ? I must be losing my mind . " Daddy , I'm sorry ... I was just discouraged for a moment . Lately , I feel like I'm no good at anything . I even wonder if I deserve to be your daughter . " But I'll work harder . I can't let you down . " Kyla threw herself into his arms , wiping away her tears . Her eyes burned with determination . 1 " Kyla , I know you will .

You're our little princess . We've seen your effort and your talent . " Don't overthink things . Just rest and get better . Once you're feeling well again , I'll have your brothers take you out somewhere fun . You need to relax . " " Thank you , Daddy ... " Russell left the Jenson Villa . Sitting in the backseat of his car , he stared at his palm . God , I was terrible just now . I actually doubted her . Kyla , I'm sorry . I was wrong . I must be crazy to let someone like Tilda make me question you . Russell left . The moment Kyla returned to her room , her expression changed .

" Good thing Daddy still trusts me . After this , he shouldn't have any more doubts ... " She quickly sent a photo to Tobias , then called him . " Tobias , I need your answer now . I want 30 million dollars in my account today ."

Chapter 286 Fearless Commander " Okay , Ms. Kyla . Give me ten minutes . " Tobias replied quickly . " I'm glad to be working with you again so soon . 30 million dollars will be in your account today . " " Good . " Just in time . Kyla's eyes gleamed with pride . Today was the day Tilda flew to Motrar . Tilda , enjoy your last moments of glory . When the International College Art Competition begins , you'll be nothing but a laughingstock . You'll suffer endlessly . مـ بـ يـ لـ Finished Tilda and Simon had already landed in Motrar . As soon as Tilda stepped out of the terminal , her phone rang .

" Andy ? " She raised her brows , then answered . " Andy , I just landed in Motrar . I was about to send you and Una a WhatsApp message to let you know I'm safe . What's up ? " " Turn around , " he said . Curious , Tilda turned her head . She immediately spotted him - wearing a blue down jacket , long golden hair shining under the lights , and those bright green eyes sparkling as he waved at her . His pale skin and towering six - foot - three frame made him stand out in the crowd instantly . Not to mention his face , as handsome as a global superstar . " Andy ! " Tilda was shocked .

Dragging her suitcase , she ran over . " What are you doing here ? " " Surprise ! I happened to be here on a business trip . But once I knew I had the chance to see you become world champion in person , how could I miss it ? " His smooth , neutral voice carried so much affection . " Are you sure you're not too busy ? I don't want to bother you . " " No worries . Henry's here with me on this trip . I dumped all the



work on him and promised him a big dinner when we get back . " So now we get to hang out while we're in Motrar . " " Haha , perfect !

We always said we'd meet up in Jeselton , but it never happened . Lucky break this time ! " Just then , Simon caught up , pulling his suitcase . The moment he got a good look at Andy , his breath caught . His chest rose and fell faster as he stammered , " Tilda , this is ... ? "

Tilda smiled . " Professor Linscott , this is my friend , Andy Saville . " Andy reached out a hand . " Nice to meet you . Tilda's told me about you . It's a pleasure , Professor Linscott . " " Hel ... hello , Mr. Saville . I 444 I have a bold request .

Would you let me use you as a model ? I want to paint you ! Finished " Oh my God , forgive me for being rude . It's just ... I've never seen a man as unique as you . Please , I'll agree to any condition you set , just say yes ! " Andy blinked at Simon's hungry , wolf - like stare . Simon looked like a starving predator who had just spotted the perfect prey . That intensity made Andy shrug . " Um ... He wanted to refuse . Normally , he wouldn't even waste time with someone like Simon . But since he was Tilda's teacher , Andy had to be polite . " Andy , let me paint you too , " Tilda chimed in .

" Well , if Tilda says so , then fine . " Andy always spoiled her like that . Time flew . Five days later , the International College Art Competition finally began . It was broadcast live online . The venue was filled with powerful , influential people . Andy had no trouble getting an invitation and made his way inside . One by one , contestants from around the world stepped onto the stage . A giant screen behind them showed their profiles . Then the camera focused on Tilda . Back home , everyone watching the livestream in Cetherland erupted with cheers .

She stood tall in a sky - blue down jacket , her long hair flowing , lips painted red , her pale face as smooth as porcelain . Her cool eyes rippled with emotion . With her hands clasped behind her back , shoulders squared , she instantly caught the attention of thousands . Everyone remembered the name " Tilda , " the contestant from Cetherland . She looked like a fearless commander . Powerful and striking . Cool and confident . Andy , Una , Jude , Dane , Manfred ... Everyone connected to Tilda , everyone who loved her , was watching . She blazed on that stage like the hottest sun .

She was no quiet moonlight . Her brilliance could burn everything and light up the world . She was a woman meant to shock heaven and earth . The Jensons were no exception . Even if they weren't all in the same place , every member of the family tuned into the livestream . They watched her every move .

Those who had changed their view of Tilda , those who felt guilty toward her , all hoped she would win the world championship and bring honor to their country .

Chapter 287 Myst Russell and Blair had mixed feelings . They hoped Tilda would win the championship . But at the same time , they hoped she wouldn't . If she won , the Jensions would be ridiculed again . People would say the Jensions had cut ties with Tilda . They didn't even realize they had lost the greatest jewel in their crown . The whole world would laugh at them . Now , it was all up to fate . The only one truly enjoying the show was Kyla . She sat in her room , watching the livestream on her laptop . Motrar was in broad daylight . But back in Cetherland , it was already night .

Kyla couldn't hide the twisted joy on her face . Her grin stretched so wide it looked almost terrifying . The past five days had changed everything . With the money Tobias had given her , she had set the stage perfectly . " She had been waiting for this competition to start . This was her chance . Her once - in - a - lifetime opportunity to ruin Tilda , to drag her into the abyss . Kyla pulled out her phone and dialed a number . " It's me . You can start . " " Got it . " She hung up , tossed the phone onto her desk , and even grabbed a snack to munch on .

Her gaze lingered on Tilda , who was shining in front of the cameras . Tilda , remember that smile . Because soon , I'll make it uglier than crying . This year's International College Art Competition brought together contestants from 13 countries . After all the contestants were introduced , it was time for the judges . Unlike the competition back in Cetherland , this event didn't use online voting . This time , the winners would be decided by five judges . Each one of them held a towering reputation in the world of fine arts . The host introduced them one by one .

Myst Then the crowd erupted at the mention of one name . Myst . He was called the greatest art prodigy in a hundred years . He was a treasure of the art world . At the youngest age in history , he had won back - to - back titles at the Picasso Painting Competition . His talent bent rules , broke traditions , and left critics speechless . Everyone surrendered before the brilliance of his work . Many even believed Myst was destined to become the next Picasso or Van Gogh . The moment he appeared , the crowd's energy exploded .

Even Tilda , waiting backstage , couldn't help but look . She had heard of him countless times . They said he was mysterious . Nobody really knew which country he was from . Nobody had even seen his true face . Tilda could have found out easily if she wanted to . But honestly , she wasn't that interested . Still , she had heard that this time , Myst would finally reveal himself in person . And then , it happened . Myst walked out , and the entire world held its breath . What shocked everyone most - he looked like he was from Cetherland .

He stood six - foot - two , with soft , wavy brown hair that brushed his shoulders , and deep brown eyes . He was strikingly handsome , his presence magnetic . But what burned into people's memories most was the tattoo . A delicate spider lily inked above his right brow , swaying like it was alive . One glance at him was unforgettable . When Tilda saw him , a strange sense of familiarity struck her . She could swear she'd seen him somewhere before . But with a face like that - and that unforgettable tattoo - she would never forget if she had . Maybe it wasn't his face , but his aura .

His presence reminded her of someone . But who ? She racked her brain . But the judges were already seated , and the competition began . One by one , the contestants brought their prize - winning pieces to the stage . The judges asked sharp questions Contestants answered .

Myst Each presentation ended with the judges taking an hour to deliberate and score . The competitor with the highest combined score would be crowned champion . Finally , it was time for Cetherland's representative - Tilda . She carried her piece , Snake , onto the stage .

The lights converged on her . In that instant , it looked like she was wrapped in holy light . Wherever Tilda stood , every other scene faded into the background . That was her strange power . Love her or hate her , no one could look away . Some people are just born to shine , to light up the world , to rule , And Tilda was one of them .

Chapter 288 Jealousy Tilda was obviously that kind of person . Myst's eyes lingered on her , and for the first time , a ripple showed in his calm gaze . He had looked detached before , almost bored . Now , there was a rare trace of seriousness . The other judges noticed it right away . They all turned to look at Tilda . This woman from Cetherland really is beautiful . Could it be that Myst is interested in her ? No way , right ? One of the female judges rolled her eyes . Jealousy flashed across her face , but she quickly hid it . On the big screen , Tilda's painting appeared .

Beside it was the original canvas she had placed on the easel . The moment it showed up , the room erupted . Everyone was stunned by the sheer life force radiating from her work . Ame It was like a witch's spell pulling the audience into a quiet , peaceful bamboo forest . Even people who knew nothing about art could feel it . Her piece was without a doubt the brightest star among the 13 contestants . www The others were strong too - after all , they had each won first place back in their home countries to stand here at the International College Art Competition .

Every painting had its own style and strength . But compared to Tilda , they all looked pale and weak . It was like the gap between heaven and hell . Just one step apart , yet an endless divide . The life in her painting drew in souls and told its own story . That was something none of the other 12 contestants could ever reach . The judges stayed silent . Facing a piece like this , any question they asked would

sound powerless . To put it bluntly From the moment Tilda's painting appeared , the winner was already decided .

Even these world - famous figures in the art world all had the same thought . Her talent was terrifying . As long as she kept walking down this road , she was destined to become immortal in art history . 1/3 She would absolutely rise onto the global stage and stand alongside them . Simon , watching from the audience , smiled with relief . He knew victory was already in her hands . That world champion's trophy belonged to Tilda . She was about to bring glory to her country . " Tilda , may I ask - did you complete this painting on your own?

" The sharp , nasal voice carried a heavy Motrar accent . It was clearly not fluent Cetherese . Most of the audience respected Tilda's strength . But behind her computer screen , Kyla was grinding her teeth in jealousy . Even knowing Tilda would be exposed soon , Kyla still couldn't stand watching her shine on a worldwide broadcast . Rage was boiling in her chest . مر Why did Tilda have such talent ? She had been missing for 19 years , drifting like some nobody .

Finished Yet she had surpassed Kyla , the so - called " genius " who had elite training , a perfectly developed mind , and natural talent for painting . Kyla's ears perked when she heard one of the judges speak to Tilda in that bitter tone . Tilda's face stayed calm . " Yes , I completed it on my own - with some guidance from my professor . " At the same time , her mind had already matched the voice to a name . Erica Gardner , 43 , from Motrar . Currently going through her fifth divorce . Erica hated people from Cetherland . She always believed Motrar natives were born superior .

Myst was her only exception . His unmatched talent had forced even the most biased critics to bow down . But it wasn't just his talent . Erica was obsessed with looks . She was a die - hard fan of Myst partly because he was handsome , Every one of her husbands had been young men in their 20s . None of them lasted long under her controlling nature , so every marriage ended in divorce . Tilda didn't think Erica was jealous because Myst had noticed her . She only thought Erica was picking on her for being from Cetherland . " First , let me say this , Erica began .

" The painting is very well done . It has great life and energy . " But doesn't this style feel ... familiar ? " Her words were loaded with meaning , but she didn't go any deeper . The truth was , the painting was outstanding . She just didn't want to admit it . Because Tilda had caught Myst's eye .

It was like a crazed fan watching her idol pay attention to another woman . Jealousy crashed over Erica like a tidal wave . This young little bitch shouldn't think she could get close to Myst just because of a pretty face !

Chapter 289 A Taste of Your Own Medicine Tilda didn't deserve it ! Erica believed Myst needed someone like her - an experienced , mature woman . Someone who loved him deeply . Someone with the right status and power , who could protect his name in history . Someone who took care of herself and could match him on every level . Not some rookie who hadn't even graduated from college . She hadn't hidden her jealousy well . Even with layers of foundation , fine wrinkles showed at the corners of her eyes . Her whole face looked sharp and bitter , almost ugly .

" What the hell is Erica talking about ? Fuck.off ! " Simon almost exploded . He even cursed on a live broadcast . Everyone knew what Erica was hinting at . She was trying to make people think Tilda had copied her painting . The art of painting has been passed down around the world for countless years . In Cetherland , scroll paintings had already appeared more than two thousand years ago . With so many works in existence , it was easy to twist people's thoughts . Once the idea took root - that Tilda's work looked " a little too familiar " -it would stick forever .

People would claim she was copying , even if they couldn't name the exact piece . They'd just say it felt like they'd seen it before . Once that idea was planted , Tilda became guilty in their eyes . Even if she won the world championship , shaking off that stain would be nearly impossible . " Professor Linscott , calm down . Tilda isn't the type to sit back and take the hit ," Andy said . " Just watch how she fights back . " Andy wasn't worried . Tilda had nothing holding her down anymore . No one in this world could take advantage of her now . And sure enough ...

" The world is full of different styles , " Tilda said calmly . " There are endless works , each shining like stars . I don't think learning from those before us and then creating your own path is a bad thing . " The key is how you absorb that wisdom , and how you mix it with your own style to create something new . That's how history remembers you - just like Picasso and Van Gogh , who gave us their own schools of art . " Ms. Erica , isn't that exactly what you did with Crimson Steps ?

You once admitted it was inspired by Red Stilettos from a rising artist at the Lavigne Studio . " Her response was flawless . A taste of Erica's own medicine . Erica's face went dark instantly . Everyone knew what she was referring to . Erica's painting Crimson Steps had won awards , but later it was exposed as plagiarism . She had borrowed heavily from Red Stilettos .

She thought it was safe . The artist was just a rising name , and Erica believed with her experience that a slight change in style would cover her tracks .

But she had been caught . When the scandal grew , Erica spent a fortune to settle privately . She called it " a tribute " and even hired internet trolls to flood forums defending her . Tribute and plagiarism - two very different meanings . The storm eventually died down , but her reputation never fully recovered . Now , in front of a worldwide audience , Tilda had dragged it back into the light . The crowd started whispering . Erica had shot herself in the foot . At first , the public had almost forgotten about it .

But now that Tilda brought it up during a worldwide livestream , the scandal came back to life . Most people watching this competition were artists themselves . They knew about her past scandals . In fact , Erica's whole career had been filled with controversy . Some even claimed her success came from dirty tricks - money . Others whispered it was worse , that she used her looks to sway the association . Erica opened her mouth to defend herself . But Myst's voice cut through the air . " Tilda is right . Erica , you crossed the line . " His tone was calm . Almost casual .

But the weight behind his words crushed down on Erica like a mountain . She froze , unable to speak . Her teeth clenched so hard her jaw ached . Her instincts were right . Myst's attention is on that girl from Cetherland . Damn it . Why does this girl get to have Myst's gaze ? Even people who knew Myst well were shocked . He was a genius , a world - class painter . He was eccentric , distant , and hard to approach .

He rarely spoke to anyone , let alone publicly , Yet here , on a global live broadcast , he had stepped in for Tilda , Was it because her talent was so breathtaking that even Myst admired her ? Kyla's jealousy twisted inside her . Why ? Why is Tilda in the spotlight again ? How many great men is this bitch going to lure in before she is satisfied ?

Chapter 290 Plagiarized Myst , Jude , Maurice , Alfie ... Kyla quickly pulled out her phone and sent a message . The reply came at once . " It's done . Check the trending search . " Her screen lit up with a notification . Kyla let out a cold laugh . Finally . Meanwhile , Tilda had already stepped off the stage . The five judges would spend the next hour in a private room , discussing and scoring the works . Tilda went back to her private lounge . She closed her eyes and rested . She was waiting quietly for her moment of glory . But she also knew Kyla would never sit still .

After all , Kyla had made two shady deals with Tobias and pocketed a fortune . There was no way she'd let today pass without stirring trouble . And sure enough . Andy sent Tilda a message . " I just saw it on Cetherland's trending search . They're saying your painting was plagiarized from a famous foreign anime artist - X . " " They also claim your concept overlaps with one of Myst's old sketches . " Tilda's lips curled into a faint smile , and she texted . " So the Jensons finally made their move . " Andy replied . " You look pretty confident . Guess you already saw this coming .

If you need me , just say the word . " Tilda responded . " No need . I already know exactly how to slap the Jensons back in the face . " Right now , Kyla and the Jensons were smug . But when the truth came out and their lies fell apart , they'd be the ones ruined . Andy reacted . " Okay then . I'll sit back and watch . " Back in Cetherland , Una was holding her breath in front of the screen . Ima She was waiting for the championship results . She didn't dare blink . Her 12 - year - old brother Jason was playing on his phone . Suddenly , he shouted , " Una Colon !

Look - there's a trending search saying Tilda plagiarized ! " " Damn it , Jason ! You call her Tilda , but use my full name ? You little ... Wait . What did you just say ? " Una had been ready to roll up her sleeves and teach Jason a lesson , but as soon as she heard the word " plagiarized , " she snatched the phone from his hands . TikTok , Twitter , Quora ... the news was climbing the trending lists at a terrifying speed . The headline read .

" Cetherland's National College Art Champion , now competing in the International College Art Competition - Tilda's ' Snake ' is accused of plagiarism ! " The post compared Tilda's Snake with several works from X , circling similarities in detail and style . It also claimed overlap with Myst's sketches . The trending feed nearly crashed under the surge . Back when Tilda competed in the National College Art Competition , her Snake had already drawn huge attention . And Tilda herself was stunningly beautiful . She had even gained an official fan club on Twitter .

Though she never managed it , the fan base existed . Now , with her representing the country on the global stage , the news had spread widely . And this " scandal hit like a slap in the face . It humiliated Tilda . It humiliated the whole nation . In the comments , keyboard warriors went wild . [ Ha ! What a disgrace . Couldn't be happier ! ] [ No wonder Snake looked familiar . She copied two people ! ] [ She even copied Myst ? Oh my God . He just defended her on a live broadcast . She's so ungrateful . ] [ As an anime fan , X is sacred ! I'll destroy this copycat !

] [ Tilda is a plagiarist ! She should die ! ] Finished [ She doesn't need curses . Just Myst's and X's rabid fans alone could tear her apart . She might not make it back alive ... ] The post got an insane number of likes . Even Tilda's supporters began to waver . The Myst angle wasn't strong evidence . At most , the styles were slightly similar .. Any artist could accidentally echo another's work without knowing . But X - that was different . The style looked way too close . And with Kyla's marked notes and detailed comparisons , even amateurs could see the resemblance .

This attack had been planned carefully . They had saved it for today , when Tilda was on the world stage . That way , the blow would be fatal . The Colon family was furious .

Damn it ! Who dares slander Tilda like this ? Unforgivable ! " " I'll roast them alive in the comments ! " Una's eyes burned with fire . 6 O O Even if she stood alone against the crowd , she would defend Tilda without hesitation . Her fingers flew across the keyboard like a machine gun . One insult after another . One hater came - she blasted them .

Two came - she blasted them both . Her parents were no calmer . The Colons trusted Tilda completely . They grabbed their phones and ordered the PR department of the Colon Group to handle the trending search crisis at once .