

## 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 Jensons 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 Jensons. 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 Jensons 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 Jensons 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 Jensons 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 Jensions 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 Jensions ' 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 Jensions 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 . 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 . ﴿ ﴾ 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 Jensons would be ridiculed again . People would say the Jensons 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 . ↗ 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 Jenson's 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 .