

Shadows 331

Chapter 331 The Kiss Jude's research team was so advanced that it could probably compete with big national labs . " If I explained the theory , it would take three days and nights . Want me to try ? " Jude asked . " Uh ... Forget it . I hate studying . I'd rather just enjoy this ." Tilda pushed away her curiosity . Today was too perfect for boring talk about science . She sat on the flower - covered swing . Yes ... this was real . Jude stood behind her , gently pushing . Her red gown floated in the air as she held on to the ropes . She squinted , catching the faint smell of wind and snow .

He must have set up something to bring the storm inside . It wasn't cold . It actually felt nice . Click - clack . Click - clack . In the shadows , Tilda heard something that sounded like camera shutters . But she didn't care . She swung until she was satisfied . " Alright , Jude , I'm done . " " Okay . " His voice was soft . The swing slowed to a stop . She started to stand when the hall suddenly lit up . Lights flooded the space . No one else was in sight . But music filled the room . First , a cello . Then the piano joined in . It was a well - known Christmas song . And then ...

Jude stepped in front of her . He dropped to one knee and held Tilda's hand . His face was serious , almost reverent . The proud and noble king actually dropped to his knees The people hiding in the dark were shocked , their faces full of disbelief . Jude knew very well that others were watching . They were his loyal men , always ready to follow him . 3. But even in front of them , Jude still went down on one knee to Tilda .

That alone showed just how much she meant to him - the woman he had worked so hard for , even flying all the way to Motrar himself just to plan Christmas Eve . " May I have the honor of asking the most beautiful lady tonight to dance with me ? " His deep , smooth voice showed the charm of a true gentleman . Tilda had once told him his smile looked very handsome . So , right now , Jude gave her a warm and gentle smile straight from his heart . " Of course . " At this point , what reason did Tilda have to say no ? She took his hand . Together , they moved to the music .

His left hand rested lightly on her waist . His right hand held hers . From this close , Jude could see the smooth curve of her cheek . It was so delicate that it looked like it could break . He caught her sweet scent too . It made him want to kiss her right there . Thump , thump , thump . He swallowed hard . The woman he loved was in his arms , but he had to hold himself back . After all , he was still just a man . This was straight - up torture . " Your steps are great , Tilda . Who taught you ? " he asked , trying to distract himself . " I'm self - taught . You know Omega - types ...

We pick things up fast . " Also , you know what the ending of this song means , right ? " Her words nearly stopped his heart . Jude picked this song for their dance , but he also hid a little secret reason inside it . That secret was easy to miss . But still , Tilda caught it And she even said it out loud ! The very next moment , as the music was about to end , Tilda stood on her tiptoes and kissed Jude on the lips . Just like Jude had wished for . When this Christmas waltz ended , the princess would kiss the prince .

Just like the last line of the song says , " A kiss falls into my heart . " If Tilda had ever taken dance lessons , she would've known this famous piece . And she would've also known the story about the final kiss . This was the " trap " Jude had planned all along . Even Jude felt nervous inside . If Tilda had pretended not to get it and brushed it off , it would mean Jude still hadn't done enough , that he hadn't won her heart . But ... Tilda answered him . She broke every doubt with that kiss . She gave back all the love Jude had poured out to her . The Christmas waltz finally stopped .

Tilda pulled away , tilting her small face up in Jude's arms . Her red lips had left a mark that belonged only to Jude . Thump , thump . Her heart raced fast . She was falling deep into Jude's eyes , which were burning darker and deeper with desire . That kiss was really just a sudden impulse from Tilda . Because the moment she remembered the kiss at the end of the song's story , she had already guessed why Jude chose this piece . During the whole dance , Tilda had thought of so many things , especially all the moments she'd shared with Jude .

And finally , she just couldn't hold back anymore .

Chapter 332 Passed Out That kiss went straight to Tilda's heart . She snapped awake . Her face turned bright red in an instant . It wasn't about courage . It was her heart choosing that moment . That kiss was her answer to Jude . But as reality hit , she realized how bold she had been ! This was her first kiss . In 20 years of being single , she had never kissed a man . The famous dark web Queen had now turned into a simple girl - a girl blushing and trembling in the arms of someone who truly cared . " Tilda ... thank you .

" Jude pulled her into his arm , wrapping her slim waist tightly . His lips parted , and his soft voice brushed her ear like a warm breeze . Tilda pouted a little . " You even picked a Christmas dance song for this . If I didn't respond , I'd just look like I was stringing you along . " " Then I'd gladly be strung along by you . " Everything Jude did for her was from the heart - before , now , always . Jude leaned in , slowly and carefully . He got so close that he could see his reflection in her pupils . He could almost count her long lashes .

His fingers pressed gently against her waist as his heart raced . His blood felt as if it were on fire . That short kiss earlier hadn't been enough . He wanted more . Tilda didn't pull away . So Jude kissed her cheek . Her skin was soft , pale , and smelled faintly sweet , just as he had imagined . His lips froze for a second at the feeling . Tilda squeezed her eyes shut , her whole body tense like a drawn bow . " Tilda ,

don't be scared . I won't hurt you . If you ever feel bad , just say it , and I'll stop ." Only Tilda knew how nervous she was .

Her heart was beating so fast it was almost painful . Before she could reply , Jude kissed her again . This time , he didn't hold back . All her thoughts melted away . All she could do was let it happen . The sun rose . Tilda slowly opened her eyes , still dazed . She was lying in a bed with flower - print sheets , tucked under a heavy quilt . Her head was fuzzy . She couldn't remember how she got here . " Morning . " Jude walked over with a mug of steaming milk . Tilda glanced at the window and saw daylight . " Did I ... fall asleep ? I don't remember anything !

" She quickly grabbed the mug and took a sip . Ah ! Hot , hot ! Her tongue burned , and she stuck it out while blowing cool air . " Slow down . No one's taking it from you . " Jude smiled at the rare sight of Tilda looking flustered and sleepy . She's mine now ... When she the milk , her mind cleared . And then she remembered what had happened before she passed out . Oh , no . I fainted ... because of Jude's kiss ! That's so embarrassing ! Right now , she wanted to crawl into a hole and die . She peeked at Jude in panic .

" I'll get a car to take you back , " Jude said , turning his eyes away guiltily .

He knew what had happened . During their kiss , she had gotten so flustered that she almost forgot to breathe . He should've stopped . But he wanted a little more ... and a little more . Until she fainted . He knew it was his fault . His joy had accidentally hurt her . Tilda blushed , nodding quickly . " Yeah , I should go back . If Dane can't find me at the hotel , he'll worry . " Really , she just needed space .

That kiss had left her so embarrassed she couldn't face Jude . She needed to calm herself down . Back at the hotel , a message from Dane popped up . " Tilda , are you still sleeping ? We've already had breakfast . " " I'll be there soon ! " She slipped back into her room quietly and finally sighed in relief . She hurried to change into fresh clothes . When she opened the door , Dane and Mystro were standing right there . Tilda smiled brightly , acting natural . " Oh , hey , guys ! " " Hey . We knocked earlier , but you didn't answer . We thought you were still asleep . " Anyway , come eat .

Mystro already planned today's sightseeing " " Perfect ! "

Chapter 333 Going Skiing Tilda took the tray from Dane . " Thanks , Dane ! This is perfect . It's all the food I love ! You guys come in and sit . I'll eat quick , and then we can go out . " The hotel room was huge . It was more like an apartment than a room . Tilda bounced around with the tray like a happy little bunny , grinning ear to ear . Mystro and Dane followed her . " Dane ... don't you think Tilda's acting extra

excited today ?" Mystro whispered . He had picked up on something weird . Dane pulled out a small notebook . " Yeah , I think so too .

But maybe she's just really happy . Nothing else . " When they walked into the living room , Mystro frowned a little . " Tilda , why does this place smell like someone else has been here ? " Tilda froze . " What do you mean ? " Seriously ? Is Mystro's nose sharper than a dog's ? Can he actually smell Jude ? She tried to stay calm , but her voice shook . Mystro and Dane both gave her a look . It was impossible for anyone to hide things from them , even Tilda . But after a moment , they didn't press . They figured the hotel staff had walked in earlier .

Tilda quickly pretended she was starving and focused on eating . Four days flew by . Santiago was finally discharged from the hospital . " How are you feeling , Santiago ? Still hurting anywhere ? " " Kayden ... when did you start talking so much ? You used to be the quiet type . Honestly , I could've left two days ago . Staying here this long was torture . "

Kayden squinted at him . " Studying abroad gave you some guts , huh ? Since when do you talk back to me like that ? " Santiago instantly backed down . " Sorry , Kayden .

I know you're just worried . That's why you're acting like this . " Santiago was the youngest in the family . Other than Wade , all his brothers were taller , stronger , and scarier . Everyone was placed below Kyla in the hierarchy . He never stood a chance against them . Kayden nodded . " Good . Glad you understand . " Then he headed for the door . " Wait , where are we going ? " Santiago asked . " To ski . " " What ? Are you serious ? I just got discharged ! " Santiago's jaw dropped . He thought Kayden would take him for a walk in the nice weather .

It had snowed yesterday , and the sun was shining bright today . Perfect for a stroll in Fairville . But skiing ? Right after leaving the hospital ? Kayden shot him a look . " What , are you scared ? Didn't you say you were fine now ? " Santiago rolled his eyes . " I'm not scared ! I'm actually great at skiing . No joke . " " Then get in the car . " " Fine ! Let's go . " The only ski resort in Fairville was way out in the suburbs . Kayden stood with his arms crossed , staring at the snowy forest . He seemed to be lost in thought . Santiago bit his lip .

" Kayden , you didn't just come to see me , did you ? " Kayden didn't even hide it . " Seeing you was part of it . But the real reason is that Tilda's still in Motrar . I want to see her . " Santiago almost choked . Damn . I expected that answer , but hearing it out loud hits differently . We grew up as brothers , but Tilda , the girl who betrayed the Jensons , is all they focus on ? Unbelievable .

But Tilda was precious to the Jensons now . If Santiago said one wrong word , he'd be roasted alive . So , he stayed quiet .

He'd just watch what happened . He wanted to see what made Tilda so special that even his brothers couldn't forget her . They were ignoring him because of her . " But Kayden , " Santiago finally asked , " what does skiing have to do with Tilda ? " Kayden explained , " I've been making arrangements these past few days . Since she's still in Motrar , she'll probably visit popular places . " And if she wants to ski , this is the only resort nearby . I already set someone up to watch for her and get tickets . " Kayden was famous , so of course , he had connections .

Even the mayor of Fairville was in his circle . Through him , Kayden chose this exact resort . If Tilda were in town , she'd definitely show up here . He'd been waiting for days , and finally , today was the day ! Santiago stared in shock . " So you had me discharged today , not because you cared about my health ... but because you found out Tilda was going skiing ? "

Chapter 334 Up to Fate Kayden replied , " Both . " Santiago paused . And just like that , Santiago's place in the Jensons dropped straight to the bottom . At the ski resort , Tilda showed up in full gear with Mystro . She stretched under the warm sun . " Phew , this is my first time skiing in Fairville . Too bad Dane couldn't make it . " They had planned to ski together . But last night , the lab sent Dane an emergency call . There was a serious problem with the machine they were building . No one else could fix it but him .

Just having Dane guide them over videos and phone calls wasn't enough . Dane had to fly back in person . He wanted to stay with Tilda , but he knew this was bigger than him , and he had to put personal feelings . aside . So Tilda arranged a special flight for Dane and his team to return to Cetherland . Once that machine was done , then they could relax . Mystro patted Tilda on the head . " It's okay , Tilda . I'm here with you . We'll have lots of time to see each other now . " Tilda nodded . " You're right . No use crying over something we can't control .

" Just then , the loudspeaker buzzed . " The couples ' ski race will start at 2 p.m. Teams can sign up at the track . " The winning pair will get awesome prizes ! " Tilda's eyes lit up . " Whoa , a race ? Mystro , wanna do it together ? " " As long as you're happy , Tilda . I'm in . " " That's what I wanted to hear ! " She linked arms with him , and they went to register . Mystro wrote down his full name , Mystro Kerrigan .

No one would guess this was the world - famous painting prodigy .

The staff glanced at Tilda's name and then at the two of them , bundled up tight with sunglasses and hats . " All set . Here's your pass for security purposes . You may enter . " " Thanks . " They scanned their cards and grabbed their gear before walking to the starting line . " Wow , lots of people signed up , " Tilda said , scanning the crowd . To her , none of them mattered . With her and Mystro together , the win was already theirs . But then , out of the corner of her eye , she spotted two familiar figures . Her stomach dropped . No way . Could it really be them ?

Just as she tried to look closer , one of them answered his phone . الله ام As if he had some kind of sixth sense , Kayden lifted his head . His eyes met hers . Tilda's mouth twitched , and she looked away immediately . But that single look was enough . She knew . It was her brothers , Kayden and Santiago . Why are they everywhere ? " What's wrong ? " Mystro asked quietly , catching her mood . " Just saw two annoying pests , " Tilda muttered . " Want to quit the race ? " Mystro stayed calm . Anyone who made Tilda talk like that had to be bad news .

Today was supposed to be a day just for her and Mystro , and he wasn't about to let anyone ruin her good mood . " No way , they're the ones who should leave . Why should I walk away just because they're here ? " The air I've breathed should feel like poison to them ! " I'm not gonna let the Jensions bother me or shake my feelings anymore .

Because they don't deserve it ! If we run into each other , then fine ! Whoever messed up should be the one who looks stupid ! And if Kayden and Santiago even think of giving me trouble , I'll make them regret it !

Kayden pressed his lips together . When his eyes met Tilda's , he felt her shock , her coldness , and her clear disgust . It was obvious that the hatred in Tilda's heart ran very , very deep . Just feeling it made Kayden sink into a heavy sense of helplessness . Can such hatred ever fade ? Can we ever fix it ? Either way , Kayden would only do what he believed was right . The Jensions had hurt Tilda first . They were the ones who had done her wrong . So Kayden would give everything he had to make up for it . As for whether Tilda would ever forgive him , that was up to fate .

Chapter 335 All Fallen for Kyla's Tricks At the very least , Kayden couldn't just stand by and dump everything on someone else . He couldn't watch their sister , who had been missing for 19 years and should've been protected , turn into a bitter enemy full of hate . Thinking this , Kayden walked straight toward Tilda ! Santiago also noticed her . While he studied her quietly , he saw Kayden moving . He quickly grabbed Kayden's arm . Lowering his voice , he asked , " Kayden , what are you doing ?

You're not seriously going to walk up to Tilda , Santiago remembered how Tilda treated him during that race in the Rocky Mountains . Took the fourth Jenson son , the golden boy , a world - famo , poser . Don't lower yourself like this ! " If Kayden went to her now , he believed it would end badly . Kayden would just get humiliated . " If you're scared , then stay here and do nothing . But you'll regret it later ! "

Kayden's voice was cold . He pulled his arm free and then strode straight toward Tilda . Santiago froze . He's lost it ! He must've lost his mind ! Or maybe ...

I'm having a nightmare . Yes , this is definitely a nightmare ! But the snow and wind hitting his face felt too real . He even pinched his own leg . Ouch . That hurts ! This was no dream . Santiago could only cry inside and accept it . " Hmph ... I'm not going to embarrass myself . You're just too soft . " Tilda betrayed the Jensons - why even bother with her ? Just cut her off and let her rot .

Besides , the Jensons already have Kyla . Who needs another sister ? " He kept telling himself this , but his body betrayed him .

Step by step , he found himself drifting closer to Tilda and Kayden . Mystro noticed Kayden coming and watched carefully . Tilda , on the other hand , froze . She wanted to turn and run . But then she thought , Why should I run ? I haven't done anything wrong . It's the Jensons who keep bothering me ! They're so freaking annoying ! Her anger boiled up . She even wanted to punch Kayden . But then he stopped in front of her . Tilda tensed up , like a hedgehog ready to spike . She glared coldly at him . " Since I came here with Mystro and I'm in a good mood , I don't want to fight .

Say what you want and leave ! " " Tilda , I just happened to see you , so I came over to say hi . " After all , I'm your brother . Like it or not , nothing can change that we're related by blood . " I know you hate us . You hate our family for being cold and for all the pain we gave you . But as your brother , I can't give up on you . I won't . " Kayden looked straight into her eyes . If she wants to throw her hate at someone , let it be me . As her brother , I'll carry it all . If that can give her even a little peace , it's enough . S & S P 2 = That's all I can do for her now .

Mystro had planned to block Kayden and protect Tilda because he could sense that her anger was aimed at this man . But when he heard Kayden call himself her brother , he stepped back . He had looked into her history with the Jensons , but only the surface . for Kyla's Tricks He knew she hated them and never wanted to talk about it . Since she didn't bring it up , he never asked . That was their silent understanding . Now that Kayden had come , this was her personal matter . He couldn't step in , not unless he wanted to make things worse .

Tilda fell silent . ٨٣ , L To be honest , out of all her Jenson brothers , she didn't hate Darell , Justin , and Kayden that much . Back then , these three had accepted her as their sister and treated her better , without emotional abuse . Right now , Kayden's eyes were sincere . He wanted to take her anger and wash away her hate . But ... how could that ever go away ? The old Tilda - the one treated like a pawn by

the Jensons - had died in a fire long ago . She would never forget how , at that life - or - death moment , the Jensons had all stood by Kyla , trusting her .

They had watched Tilda get poisoned and burned alive without showing their faces ! Even Darell , Justin , and Kayden , who claimed to treat both sisters the same tricks They had all fallen for Kyla's

Chapter 336 Please , No Fighting The brothers all treated Tilda like an ugly scar . They wanted her gone , erased forever . Deep inside , Tilda wanted revenge . She wanted to crush the entire Jensons . She wanted them to suffer in the worst way , a pain worse than death . In this family , everyone had been cruel to her . No one was innocent . On the side , Santiago listened to Kayden . He felt something stir in his chest . He figured that even the cold , stubborn Tilda might feel a little moved by Kayden's words . Just as he thought that . Tilda spoke . " Done talking ?

Now , leave . " She spat out those words mercilessly , her voice sharper than ice . There was not a single trace of emotion . She wasn't moved at all . She then turned around and grabbed Mystro . " Mystro , let's go . " " Alright . " Her firm tone told Mystro everything . She had no more hope for her so - called family . Even with Kayden lowering himself and begging , her heart stayed frozen . Kayden lowered his eyes , sadness flickering in them . His words had been real , from deep inside . But Tilda wasn't touched at all . It frustrated him to no end . He had never felt so powerless .

Just as he tried to say more , Santiago , who had been moved earlier , saw Tilda's reaction . He snapped with anger . He strode forward . " Stop right there ! " But Tilda acted as if she hadn't heard . She just kept walking . Being ignored made Santiago burn with rage . He rushed forward , but Kayden stopped him .

What are you doing . Santiago ? " " Kayden , you've already bowed your head . You weren't even the one who hurt her . Why should she treat you like this ? "Why should we all pay for what someone else did ? Why ?!

" Santiago couldn't hold back , no matter how Kayden tried to stop him . We've never hurt Tilda , but she always looks at us as if we had , ready to curse us at every turn . How dare she ! That's right . To me , none of you Jensons are good . You're all guilty . " So stop acting like you're better than the rest . You're just like Justin - completely disgusting . " Do all of you Jensons enjoy humiliation or something ? I've already made it clear - I don't want anything to do with you . End of story . And yet you keep showing up , pretending to be noble . Who are you trying to fool ?

" Tilda's words were sharp and merciless . She gave no respect to either Kayden or Santiago . Santiago felt his head explode . " Tilda , you little ... " He was about to rush up and slap her . She had insulted both

of them , and now even Justin , someone Santiago respected . This is unforgivable ! But before Kayden could react , Mystro grabbed Santiago's hand . " Get lost ! " Santiago roared and struggled with all his strength . But Mystro's grip was like steel . He couldn't break free . Mystro's dark eyes locked on him , cold and deadly . Santiago froze , not daring to move a muscle .

" The ones who should get lost ... are you two . " Mystro shoved him aside with one hand . Santiago flew back , stumbled , and crashed to the ground . His face was full of shock . He had trained for years , mastering all kinds of martial arts and combat sports , even earning a black belt .

He could even take on five or six men with knives . Yet this thin man crushed him so easily . " You can't even handle me . And you want to get near Tilda ? " Mystro's voice was cold as ice . The mask he usually wore slipped .

The chill he gave off was sharper than the snow around them . The look in his eyes dripped with scorn . This is supposed to be Tilda's brother ? Honestly , he's pathetic . He's nowhere near as strong as I imagined . Tilda is so impressive - how could she have such a weak brother ? Santiago bit down hard , his scarf hiding his twisted face . 5 = 2 He wanted to argue , but he couldn't . Mystro's strength had shut him up completely . People around started staring . Even the staff came forward nervously . " Gentlemen , please , no fighting ... " " Sorry , this is our fault .

" Kayden quickly stepped in to calm things down .

Chapter 337 Just Got Lucky The staff's faces changed the second they realized who Kayden was . But they just explained the rules quietly , then stepped aside . Santiago pushed himself up , red with shame and anger . " Tilda , what's the point of hiding behind a guy ? This is family business ! Why let an outsider step in ? " Mystro narrowed his eyes , sharp and dangerous . Clearly , this guy isn't gonna learn until he gets knocked flat . I held back earlier for Tilda's sake . But now ... maybe I was way too nice . " Outsider ? Mystro is family to me .

Stop pretending we're close . How many times do I have to say it ? I've cut all ties with the Jensons ! " " But if you want a fight , fine . I'll give you one . Step up , and I'll finish you in three seconds . " Mystro frowned . " Tilda , he's not worth it- " " Yes , he's not worth it , but he disrespected you . That , I can't forgive . " " Damn you , you really think you can walk all over me now , huh ? " Santiago shouted , charging at her in a rage . Although I can't fight Mystro , I can handle Tilda ! Smack ! A loud slap cracked across Santiago's face . He froze , stunned .

Kayden grabbed him by the collar , teeth clenched . " Santiago , lose your mind again , and you can get lost ! " " O - okay ... Sorry , Kayden ... Calm down ... " Kayden almost never got mad . But now , his anger and authority as the older brother crushed Santiago instantly . He shrank down , meek as a scared rabbit . Kayden shoved him aside and pushed his head down , making him bow to Tilda . " I'm sorry , Tilda . I

didn't keep Santiago in check . Please accept my apology . " " Gosh , what a mess . Family fighting family . You people are clowns . It's pathetic .

" Tilda didn't waste another word with the two lunatics . She pulled Mystro with her and left . Staying around crazy people too long would rot her brain . Santiago almost exploded . She's so vicious ! And she's my sister ! I can't believe this ! Something is seriously wrong with this world . If Kayden hadn't stepped in , he really would've lost it and hit her . He felt that Tilda had crossed a line . ** Once Tilda and Mystro were gone , Santiago grumbled , " Kayden , why do you put up with her ?

I feel so sorry for you after all you said ! She's outrageous ! " Even after Kayden slapped him , he still wanted to vent . He was used to getting hit by his big brothers - one more didn't matter . " Are you done yet ? Don't forget , Tilda beat Howard . " With your tiny bit of skill , you'd be lucky if she just let you live because you're family . " Kayden looked at Santiago with deep frustration . He just couldn't understand why he never lived up to his potential . Honestly , out of the seven Jenson brothers , the biggest problem wasn't the youngest , Wade , but the sixth one , Santiago .

Santiago really was the hardest to deal with . Even though he had Russell and Blair's great genes and had shown amazing talent since he was a kid , he always acted on impulse , letting his temper lead him into reckless trouble . He never thought about the consequences , never set any limits for himself , and always ended up causing messes . Howard , the fifth , might have had a bad temper and plenty of flaws , but at least he had limits . And because he stuck to those limits , he rarely caused any serious trouble .

Santiago , though , would attack anyone , even a woman , if they just rubbed him the wrong way . " I don't believe it ! Howard must've held back ! No way he lost for real . Tilda just got lucky ! " Santiago refused to believe it . Howard , the WWE world champ , got beaten by that delicate - looking woman ? Impossible . It must've been a trick . Looking at Santiago , Kayden just felt tired . He regretted bringing him along at all . Santiago only dragged him down . Kayden almost wanted to give him another " wake - up punch .

The race was about to start . Tilda and Mystro got number six , so they would start in sixth place . The finish line was several miles past a snowy railing . Whoever crossed first would win . " " Tilda , you're still good , right ? Not upset ? " Mystro asked softly , checking first . He had already looked over the track and even set up a few obstacles . The whole course was watched by drones , and the path they picked didn't have any steep cliffs or super dangerous spots , so there was no need for fancy tricks or risky flips .

Chapter 338 No Room for Mistakes If anything went wrong , whether it was an accident , a fall , or even the slightest slip , medical crews were on standby , ready to rush in . This course was rated at A - level difficulty . One moment of distraction could spell disaster . " Relax , Mystro , " Tilda said with a sharp grin . " Honestly , this championship is mine for the taking . " Since I've got the chance , there's no way I'm handing this title to anyone else . " She said as she clenched her fists , eyes burning with determination .

Seeing that fire in Tilda's gaze , Mystro finally let out a breath of relief . Then the starter's pistol cracked through the air . And so , the race began . The gates then swung open . Mystro and Tilda flashed forward like arrows loosed from a bowstring , surging ahead at breakneck speed . Within seconds , they'd left the other teams trailing behind , grabbing the lead position . Right on their heels were Santiago and Kayden , running as a pair . Kayden's eyes , hidden behind his goggles , flickered as he watched Tilda in first place . For just a moment , something stirred inside him .

But he shook it off and told himself , " Forget it . Focus on the race first . " Whatever was going on with Tilda could wait until the race was . He wouldn't give up regardlessly . He was sure the family would be together again . Meanwhile , Santiago stayed right on Tilda's heels . Unlike Kayden , his head wasn't full of complicated thoughts . In his mind , he had only two objectives . To overtake Tilda . And to take the championship . He wanted to crush Tilda and wipe the grin off her face . Some might call it childish , but Santiago didn't care .

Losing to anyone was acceptable , just not to Tilda .

Kayden saw Santiago push past him , straining to get ahead , and his brows drew tight . " Santiago , you're going too fast . Slow down ! There's a slope up ahead ! " " It's fine , Kayden . Just watch . I'm going to win this championship ! " " You're crazy . This is doubles skiing . We have to stay in sync . Stop fixating on the others and think about holding steady ! " The words snapped Santiago back to his senses . Right . He had almost forgotten .

This was doubles, not a solo run . Victory only counted if both crossed the finish line together . Even if he blazed past everyone and first , it would mean nothing . Just then , a sharp pain tore through Santiago hand gripping the ski pole . It had to be from the clash earlier with Mystro . The pain threw him off for a split second , and his skis nearly gave out beneath him . " Santiago ! " Kayden lunged forward and caught him , steadying his balance just in time . " ... Thanks , Kayden . " Even with his stubborn pride , Santiago couldn't help but thank Kayden .

He had almost gone down hard . It was like spinning out in the Rocky Mountains race - crashing here would have been beyond humiliating . " Watch yourself ! Next time I might not get the chance to pull you back up ! " Kayden snapped . That slip cost them . Two more teams surged past , chasing after Tilda and Mystro . By the time Santiago and Kayden regained momentum , they had already fallen back to fourth place . Tilda and Mystro , still holding first place , reached the first slope .

The drone cameras caught every second as the two launched into a flawless 360 - degree spin in midair , landing cleanly and charging forward again toward the finishing line . The crowd erupted in gasps and cheers . This was only a sprint event , not a freestyle showcase . No one was supposed to waste time on tricks . Yet their spin was so precise , so perfectly in sync , it looked less like two people and more like mirror images moving from the same mind . The balance was seamless , flawless , almost eerie .

It even made the audience wonder if the two of them had been breathing in rhythm as they pulled it off . If style points were on the table , Tilda and Mystro would have scored a perfect ten . Even seasoned pros couldn't have matched the beauty of their performance . Meanwhile , Santiago and Kayden fought their way back after stabilizing , clawing into second place with sheer technical skill . But Tilda and Mystro were still way out in front .

" Kayden , we can't just sit back like this , " Santiago shouted . " We have to win ! Otherwise , Tilda will never take us seriously ! " ' ... I know . " For Santiago , victory meant more than pride . Only if he won would he have the right to face Tilda , to hand over what he had been carrying for her . Losing would leave him powerless , unable to even look her in the eye , let alone show her how much he cared as a brother . " Santiago , no more rookie mistakes . This isn't just about Tilda . " No matter who we're up against , the goal is the same - first place . Got it ? " " I got it !

" The brothers pushed harder , their skis cutting into the snow with renewed force . Once Santiago cooled his head , the rhythm between him and Kayden finally clicked . Years of growing up together , years of practice on the slopes , had honed an almost instinctive bond . Bit by bit , their speed climbed . The gap between them and the leaders began to shrink . Then the second steep drop loomed ahead . Tilda and Mystro launched off it like eagles taking flight , soaring high before landing smoothly on the downhill slope and charging forward without losing an ounce of momentum .

Chapter 339 A Narrow Escape The pace quickened as the racers surged toward the finish line . Santiago and Kayden launched off the slope , eyes locked on Tilda and Mystro still ahead . The gap was closing , and they knew this was the moment to go all in . They both accelerated hard . On a downhill like this , one slip in control could mean disaster , but winning was all that mattered . From the front , Tilda caught the sound of skis tearing faster behind her . A quick glance over her shoulder confirmed it .

Santiago and Kayden were barreling straight toward them , recklessly pushing their speed . Mystro gestured with a signal only seasoned skiers would recognize . " They're coming up . Should we push harder ? " Tilda shook her head . " Ignore them . We stick to our rhythm . " Holding first place meant no reason to panic . Instead , it was Kayden and Santiago who were desperate . Pushing that hard could only drain focus and control . One wrong move could ruin everything . Tilda knew . Kayden was cautious , controlled - mistakes were rare .

But Santiago , proud and reckless , had at least a 90 % chance of cracking under this kind of pressure . It was kind of ironic . In her previous life , Tilda had studied every mood , every flaw , every strength of the Jensons just to win their approval . Now , all that knowledge had become her greatest weapon . Tilda waited in silence , steady as a hunter lying in ambush , certain her opponents would make the first mistake . སྒྲོལ་ སྒྲོལ་ Santiago's focus narrowed to a single point as the gap between him and Tilda shrank . He didn't even dare to blink . They were so close now .

Tilda and Mystro hadn't picked up speed on the downhill - cowards .

But the finish line was right ahead . He had to push harder . If he didn't push harder , they would cross before he could catch them . The thought ignited his instincts , and without realizing it , Santiago pushed for even more speed . Then pain ripped through his wrist . His control faltered in an instant , his technique breaking apart . Damn it . The thought barely formed before Santiago threw himself into a defensive roll .

His body tumbled across the snow , thrashing wildly as his ski pole flew from his hand . And just his luck Of all directions , it had to arc straight toward Tilda . The crowd watching the live drone feed erupted in a gasp . At this speed , a direct hit could have been lethal . Was Santiago trying to take her out on purpose ? " Tilda ! " Mystro noticed and shouted . Tilda's eyes narrowed . Planting her own pole into the snow , she vaulted sideways in a clean , sharp hop and slid back into line , dodging the strike with inches to spare . It was such a close call .

The crowd exhaled in relief , the tension breaking all at once . " Santiago ! " Kayden's chest tightened as he saw Santiago crash . He forced himself into a hard stop on the slope and cut away from the race to get to Santiago . Meanwhile , Tilda and Mystro never looked back . They crossed the finish line cleanly , taking first place . Kayden abandoned the race and rushed straight to Santiago's side . " Are you okay ? " " It hurts a little , but it's nothing serious , " Santiago muttered . 17 O || | O T 2/4 11:14 Wed , Sep 17 DMM .

He'd reacted on instinct , shielding the vital spots just in time . The snow softened the impact , making the fall far less brutal . Compared to the wreck he'd had on the Rocky Mountains course , this was nothing . Without that cushion , tumbling downhill at that speed would have been certain death . The medics arrived within seconds , strapping Santiago onto a stretcher . They then rushed him toward the infirmary . Kayden glanced once toward the finish line , where Tilda and Mystro stood . Then he turned away .

Right now , Santiago's injuries came first . At the finishing line , Mystro leaned closer and spoke quietly , " You knew this would happen , didn't you ? " " Of course . The Jensons never understood me . But I know them inside out . " Funny , isn't it ? What I once thought was family turned out to be the ones who hurt me more than anyone else ever could . " A fall like that won't kill Santiago . " Tilda said in a light and detached tone . There was a clarity in her voice , as if she had already seen through all of it . Whatever bonds she had once craved from the Jensons were gone .

The only thought she carried now was to push Kyla into play like the pawn she was . And then wait for the Jensons to taste ruin , a downfall so crushing it would be worse than death . That was the only satisfaction worth holding onto . " Tilda , if you ever feel like talking , I'll be here . I'm a listener you can count on . " If you don't want to talk about it , then fine . I'll just keep believing the Jensons were nothing but bullies to you . " And if we ever run into them , even if we can't take them down , there's no reason to show mercy . " " You really are the best , Mystro .

You always know exactly what I need . Love you . " She playfully raised her hand , fingers forming a heart . Meanwhile , Kayden stayed with Santiago in the infirmary . After treatment , the doctors confirmed it was nothing serious - just some bruises and surface cuts . With disinfectant and fresh bandages , he was cleared to rest .

Kayden pressed his lips together . " Stay here for now . I'll go check on things outside . "

Chapter 340 Not Worth It " Kayden , don't tell me you're going to see Tilda again . " Enough , Kayden . You've done more than enough for her . I've watched you . She's not worth it . She really isn't . " I don't want you humiliating yourself in front of her anymore . Promise me , let's stop chasing after Tilda . Please . " Santiago just couldn't understand it . Tilda had taken the championship . Kayden had been eliminated altogether because of Santiago's crash . And now Kayden still wanted to go face her ? With that venomous mouth of hers , she would tear him apart .

Santiago didn't even want to imagine how harsh it would be . Maybe Tilda was right - maybe Kayden really did have some kind of masochistic streak . Why else would he walk straight into humiliation ? " Santiago , I know you didn't mean it . But when you went down , your ski pole flew straight toward Tilda . " If she hadn't dodged in time , do you realize how much damage it could have done ? You might have killed her . " The memory of that still made Kayden's stomach twist . It wasn't the same as Santiago instinctively shielding himself .

If a flying ski pole at that speed had struck her head , or her spine With no way to defend herself , Tilda would've gone rolling straight down the slope . And that could have been fatal . No exaggeration . " I ... " In that split second , all Santiago could do was protect himself . Panicked , he let go of his ski pole . And he hadn't even noticed that it almost hit Tilda . " I ... I didn't mean to , " he muttered , his voice weak and unconvincing . Kayden had no reason to lie about something like this .

The thought of what could have happened and the damage that pole might have caused made Santiago's chest tighten . It was more than he could handle . Luckily , Tilda had reacted fast enough to dodge . " If I thought you'd done it on purpose , I don't care if you're my own brother - I'd beat the hell out of you . " Now shut up and focus on healing . " With that , Kayden spun around and walked out of the infirmary . " Damn it . I really didn't do it on purpose . No matter how much I hate Tilda , I'd never stoop that low .

" The way Kayden looked at me ... It's like he actually thinks I did it on purpose . Damn it ! " His resentment toward Tilda only deepened . If it hadn't been for her , Kayden never would have spoken to him so harshly . He scoffed . Meanwhile , Tilda and Mystro were already holding the trophy . She looked at their photo together , both of them smiling with the prize in hand , and allowed herself a small grin . " Our first ski race as partners ended perfectly . Definitely worth the trip . " This picture needs to be framed when we get back , " she added .

" Something to keep as a memory . " Mystro rubbed his chin , studying the shot . He studied the photo of him and Tilda , the two of them looking almost perfectly matched . He had to admit , he was happy with the photographer's skill . And the angle was spot - on . " Tilda , you'll be heading back to Cetherland soon , won't you ? " " Yeah . I've spent enough time here in Motrar . The New Year's coming up , and while people celebrate it here too , nothing feels as comfortable as spending our traditional holiday back home . " " Yeah ... " Mystro seemed lost in thought .

" Mystro , you're thinking about going back to Cetherland for the New Year's , too , aren't you ? It's only three days away . " " We'll see , " Mystro said with a hint of mystery , already plotting to surprise both Dane and Tilda if he could . " But , Tilda , still nothing from Liam ? " " I asked someone to punch a hole through the signal blockade , but the surveillance there is too heavy . It's going to take time . " From what I've hacked through the surrounding cameras , he hasn't left that underground military base .

It's been 40 days already ." She bit her thumb lightly , worry clouding her expression . " Don't worry , Tilda . He's Uncle Harvey's disciple . There's no way he went in unprepared . " And didn't you already catch traces of the safeguards Liam left behind on the feeds ? " www " I hope so Anyway , Mystro , we've played around enough . Let's head back . And don't forget . You promised to model for me . " Since she would be leaving soon , Tilda wanted to finish this one important thing . She had imagined it countless times .

How Mystro , with his calm face that still had something sharp underneath , would look in her painting . For her , it was both nerve - wracking and exciting . " Fine , I'll do whatever you say . But once you're done , it'll be my turn , " Mystro teased . " Don't worry , Mystro . We've got plenty of time today . " Her eyes lit up . " Oh , right - let's send our championship photo to Dane . He should have landed in Cetherland by now . "