

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 drank 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 . ام الله 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 Jensons 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 Jensons 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 . ፩ 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 Jenson's ! " " 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

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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 , steadyng 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 . ^{۷۸۹۰۹۱} 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 phographer'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 . "