

Shadows 581

Chapter 581 A Father's Resolve : Russell knew it-whatever end he met, he deserved it. He'd made peace with that. But this time was different. This time, he had to rise as a true father and shield his daughter-no more hesitation. He needed to make up his mind. "Dad ..." "Wade, don't tell your mom about this yet. No need to worry about Blair. She should be focusing on her rehab right now. Things haven't reached the point of no return. Let's wait and see for now." "Okay." Still, Wade had made his own decision too. To protect Tilda's life.

As her brother, he would stake everything-even if it meant turning against Jude himself. Meanwhile, in the dressing room at Austin Hotel. Tilda had no idea what was going on in Russell and Wade's minds. She was busy finishing Dane's makeup. She leaned back, checked her work, and smiled with satisfaction. "There, take a look, Dane. Do you like it?" She'd kept it light and clean, which made his sharp features stand out even more. Even without a smile, with every feeling locked deep inside, years of silence left faint stiffness in his face. His looks were almost too much to take in.

When he pressed his lips together and gazed into the distance, he carried a kind of wisdom that no ordinary person could ever overshadow. His eyes brimmed with the cosmos itself, holding stories and visions far beyond ordinary sight. "Tilda ... it looks good ," Dane said, his hoarse voice softened by warmth. "I'm glad you like it. Now, put on your suit. I'll fix your tie. You're the star tonight!" "Can you believe Liam? The guy saw the crowd and bolted to his room to sleep.

Total social phobe." She laughed as she pulled out a tailored black suit and a tie dotted with tiny blue stars, all while grumbling about Liam. "I didn't really want to come either..." Dane gave a helpless shrug. He was never one for parties. The government preferred he kept a low profile anyway-someone like him, a top scientist, wasn't supposed to be in the spotlight. But the launch of Cetherland's first 4nm chip lithography machine had shaken the world. He couldn't avoid it this time. "Don't worry, I'm right here. I'll play bodyguard and spokesperson.

It's just one night-you'll survive." Her smile lit up the room, playful and confident. Dane reached out and ruffled her hair. He didn't need words. The gesture said it all. "I'm counting on you, Tilda." Austin Hotel, main hall. Guests mingled and laughed, glasses clinking. Russell moved through the crowd, catching up with business partners, his voice lively. Then, out of nowhere, a figure appeared beside him. Russell's eyes went wide. "Mr. Oliveson?

What brings you here?" It was Sheldon Oliveson-the owner of the Morloss Hotel in Endralsia, head of Oliveson Group, and the man who controlled the lifeblood of Endralsia's oil economy. Back when Hotel Morloss was taken hostage by terrorists, he had been there too. He'd even crossed paths with the Jenson family, and they'd gotten along well. Sheldon showed up now in a deep red tailored suit, a pin gleaming on his chest. He lifted a glass of '82 Lafite and smiled. "What's this, Mr. Jenson? You're allowed here, but I'm not? Hmm?" "Of course not," Russell said quickly.

"I just didn't expect to run into you here. Endralsia is a long way from Dugan, isn't it?" "Far or not, I had to come! When the country takes the trouble to invite me to witness this lithography team up close. That's an honor for the nation. How could I stay away?" Sheldon was known everywhere as a patriotic entrepreneur, even more so because he lived overseas. For years, he had poured countless sums of money, shipments of supplies, equipment, and scientists back into Cetherland-beyond measure.

In his youth, he had gone to the front lines himself, braving bullets and cannon fire, manning planes and artillery for the motherland. He'd been awarded Cetherland's Medal of Peace and Patriotism, honored in the grand hall itself. Wherever he walked, respect rose unbidden. Not just for his wealth and power, but for the patriot's heart that stirred all who met him. "This time, Mr. Jenson, I came looking for you," Sheldon said, lowering his voice. "There's something I'd like to ask." "Tilda Jenson ... she's your daughter, isn't she?" Tilda? Russell and Wade both stiffened at the name.

Why would Sheldon suddenly bring her up? Russell answered carefully, "Yes, Mr. Oliveson. Tilda is my daughter. May I ask what business you have with her?" "Mr. Jenson, could we step aside for a moment?" "Of course." Russell shot Wade a quick look. Wade gave a small nod. Then Russell followed Sheldon to the round window ledge, wine glass in hand. Outside, the moonlight poured across the fountain, the endless lawn, and the brilliant lights glittering over it all .

Chapter 582 The Genius Revealed Sheldon finally spoke. "Mr. Jenson, I've confirmed it. The person who helped the Endralsia police break into the Hotel Morloss network that night, the one who saved us all-it was Tilda." Russell let out a quiet breath. "So that's what this is about ... " "From your expression, it seems you're not surprised. You already knew, didn't you?" "To be honest, yes. I thought at first maybe Tilda had upset you somehow. But no-my eldest son, Dominic, told me what happened. She saved my wife and son. For that, I'm deeply grateful." Sheldon chuckled. "Mr.

Jenson, you worry too much. How could Tilda ever offend me? I've never even met her. Now, she's the one who saved me-and the Oliveson Group. That night was huge. The whole world heard about it. If anyone had been hurt, I could never have borne the responsibility." Even recalling that night sent a chill down his spine. Everyone at that Morloss banquet had been high-ranking, wealthy, important Cetherlanders. By comparison, Dominic and Blair weren't even considered top tier. Even if this wasn't what Sheldon wanted, it was still his hotel where it all happened.

And that banquet-the Cetherlander Group's gathering-had been hosted by him. Whatever the fallout, Sheldon would have to face it. "If it weren't for Tilda, there's no way it would have ended with zero casualties and the terrorists wiped out. I didn't just come back for this reception. I came to thank her face-to-face. She did me a huge favor-one I'll probably never be able to repay." "That's good to know. But, Mr. Oliveson, I'm sure you found out about our situation with Tilda. To be honest, we wronged her. If you want to meet her, it's best not to involve us.

Otherwise, she'll only get angry." His expression turned heavy, and he sighed. "Family matters are messy," Sheldon said gently. "It's not my place to interfere. But seeing you like this, I can tell you regret what happened. If you keep trying, I believe one day Tilda will see it. In the end, she's still your daughter." It was the kind of comfort that carried little weight, but it was all he could offer. Russell gave a bitter smile. "I hope so ... though I don't dare expect much anymore." 12:55 Sat , Oct 11 M...

Looking back on everything, all he dared hope was that Tilda's hatred for the Jenson family wouldn't deepen further. Anything beyond that felt out of reach. Just then, cheers erupted from the hall. "Looks like the team has arrived. Come on, let's go see." "Alright." Russell and Sheldon stepped back into the hotel. The Lucien-style castle hall stretched vast enough to hold 5000. Brilliant chandeliers blazed overhead, while rows of fine wine and lavish desserts glimmered under the light.

Down by the circular fountain stage, plainclothes SWAT officers were already on patrol. Manfred himself was leading the operation. The lights dimmed. "Ladies and gentlemen, good evening. Welcome to tonight's banquet. I am ...' The opening dragged on, stuffed with clichés and bits of foreign phrases. " When it finally ended, the host, aware the crowd was full of powerful figures, didn't dare waste more time. "Now, let us welcome the members of Cetherland's lithography machine research team!" Applause rippled through the hall. Faces lit with anticipation.

Several members from the Hetsa base filed onto the stage. The host introduced each of them, listing their credentials and accomplishments. Finally- "Please welcome the head of the lithography machine project-Professor Kerrigan!" When Dane stepped onto the platform, the entire hall froze. What-? Revealed Were their eyes playing tricks? The leader of the 4nm chip lithography machine project was this young, striking man? ... They had all expected some elderly Nobel Prize-winning professor. Everyone whispered about the name Dane Kerrigan.

What kind of prodigy could carry such responsibility at his age? What kind of genius could achieve what the world thought impossible? In the corner, Jude stood alone, wine swirling in his glass. His aura was so dark and oppressive that no one dared breathe too loudly near him. A few people thought of greeting

him, but the moment they caught his look, their courage evaporated. They backed away quickly, like children who hadn't gotten the prize they wanted. Maurice strolled over with a glass of wine in hand. His cream-colored suit set off his sharp, wickedly handsome features.

He clinked his glass against Jude's and grinned. "Jude, what's with that look? Like the world owes you a few billion. Lighten up, man."

Chapter 583 When Jude Softens Jude took a slow sip of wine. "It's nothing ... " Nothing? Come on. You don't notice the five-foot bubble around you? No one dares get close. "You've got that look like you're about to kill someone. I swear, I'm the only idiot brave enough to come talk to you right now." Maurice muttered, shaking his head. He almost wished he'd snapped a picture of Jude's face just then-see how Jude explained that one away. "Where's Alfie?" Jude asked. "Don't even mention that bastard. I'm cutting him off."

Today he barely talked to me-too busy glued to his phone, chatting with his girl. So what if he finally found a woman he likes? Big deal. Doesn't mean he can ditch his buddies. "You know what they say-women come and go, but buddies are for life. We've known each other since we were kids, and now he won't even look at me? Just because of some girl? Not talking to me? Me! Maurice! Since when have I ever taken crap like that? I swear, it's driving me nuts!" He let loose, ranting about Alfie and pouring out all his frustration and anger in one go.

When he finally finished, it felt like a weight had lifted. He could breathe easier. "He found someone he likes? Who is it?" Now that was rare. Very few things in this world could surprise Jude, but Alfie finding a woman he actually liked? That one did. Maurice rolled his eyes. "Who knows? He's guarding it like treasure. Says he won't tell until it's settled, acting all secretive. Please. He just wants to rub it in my single face." Jude's voice stayed calm. "Maurice, you're not getting any younger. It's time you found someone too."

The joy of meeting someone you truly love-once you feel it, you'll never escape it. You won't want to." Maurice froze, staring at him like he'd grown a second head. "No way. Jude, if you'd said that a year ago, I would've sworn you were possessed. That's not the Jude I know. "If I recorded you right now and played it back for your people-or anyone who knows you- they'd think I faked it with AI. Nobody would believe it." He wasn't kidding.

If he hadn't heard it himself, he never would've believed Jude would sound like one of his nagging aunts at family gatherings, urging him to settle down and have kids. This was Jude-CEO of DY Group, head of

the Bell family. The man who never believed in love thought it was just weakness, a fool's game. To him, women had only ever been a way to carry on the family line. Love? That was nonsense. He only had to crook his finger, and women lined up from Dugan to Priuma, desperate to climb into his bed. Jude shot Maurice a cold glance. "Believe me or don't. I don't care." "See? I knew it."

Deep down, Jude still cares about me. I've got a spot in his heart-unlike that bastard Alfie, who ditched his buddy the second a woman showed up." Maurice spoke in a playful tone, grinning as he tried to sling an arm around Jude's shoulder. But one deathly glare froze him in place. He pulled his hand back quickly, rubbing it awkwardly against his pants. "But Jude, finding a woman you actually like is so hard. I've met plenty-different countries, different backgrounds. I've even tried talking to a lot of them. But none of it felt real. No spark, no heartbeat, no connection.

Just bodies filling needs. They only ever wanted my looks or my money... He sighed. "Is there some trick? Some fast way to find a girl you actually like? Why don't you introduce me to someone? Ever since you got tied down, you look half out of it. I want to try love too-try heartbreak. That way, when I write my memoir, it'll feel more real!" "I have no idea. Go to hell." That was Jude, alright. For a second, Maurice almost believed the man cared. But just as quickly, Jude was back-the same old Jude who tormented him until he wanted to drop dead. Maurice clutched his chest dramatically.

"That hurt. But... yeah. That's the Jude I know. Hasn't changed a bit. "Damn it, why am I actually kind of happy about that? What if I really am some kind of masochist? No way. I'm a normal guy!" While Maurice wrestled with his thoughts, Jude's phone buzzed with a notification. It was one of the few he had marked as a priority. The sound snapped him to attention. He whipped out his phone instantly, as if the world on the other end could not wait.

The moment he saw the message, his icy expression softened, as if the weight of the world had suddenly lifted from his face.

Chapter 584 Shelter in His Arms Jude didn't say a word. He just turned to leave. "Jude, where are you going? Wait for me!" "I'm meeting Tilda. Why would I want you tagging along? Go entertain yourself." Maurice was speechless. He stood frozen, staring after Jude. This time, it wasn't his imagination. He'd seen the curve of a smile on Jude's lips. He'd heard that smug, almost show-off tone. Oh, come on! Jude was really flaunting his love life in front of him-the eternal single friend! Maurice had thought Jude was different from Alfie, but no. They were exactly the same.

Same breed, same smugness. Damn it. Up on the second-floor corridor of the Austin Hotel, Jude finally slowed. The hallway was empty. Then two soft hands slipped over his eyes from behind. A playful voice teased, "Guess who?" The scent drifting off her skin was all he needed. His lips curled into a smile. "Tilda... why did you make me wait so long?" Tilda still hadn't shown up, and Jude was restless. He had

been waiting so long for this chance to see her, only to be stood up. The game of pulling close and pushing away, the torture of waiting-this was the first time Jude had ever felt it.

And it came from the woman he loved most. He spun, caught her hands, and pulled her into his arms. He buried his face against her, greedy for her warmth, her scent. That hug had been too long in the making. He thought he might break from the ache of it. "I couldn't help it," Tilda said lightly. "Dane's the star tonight. I had to stay by his side. "Sneaking away to see you now is already a miracle.

You'd better be grateful." Tilda rested quietly in Jude's arms, feeling the warmth of the man she loved most, the steady beat of his heart. At that moment she was just a woman, soft and small. She never wanted to be the strong one all the time, fighting storms alone. That kind of strength was exhausting. But after so much pain and betrayal, she'd had no choice but to put on a mask and act strong. Deep down, all she wanted was shelter. She wished she could hide beneath someone's protection, live like a carefree slacker, and spend each day doing only what she wanted. No heavy worries.

No endless plans. All she needed was to live in the present, knowing that one day someone would hold her hand tightly, lead her forward, and give her the simple, carefully built happiness she longed for. Since leaving the Jenson family, she had found new bonds-mentors, buddies. And Jude. A love that ran both ways, fierce and certain. Jude..." Tm here" Jude..." Tm right here! She whispered his name as if to prove he was real. He held her tighter, giving her the safety no one else ever could.

From then on, even if the sky fell, Jude would be there to shield Tilda, holding up the world so she could laugh and play without fear. The warmth burning in her chest this time had nothing to do with the call of their shared Omega bloodline. It was simpler than that. Just a woman's attachment, her affection for a man, stirred a quiet resonance between them. Their embrace was nothing complicated. It was simply two people holding each other, as tightly and as purely as they could.

Her cheek pressed deep against his chest. His chin rested gently on her hair, his hands wrapping around her slim waist with gentle care. The corridor was dim, lit only by moonlight spilling through the windows. The noise below, the glittering lights of the city-none of it touched them. They were like an island cut off from the world. In the silent, empty corridor, nothing else mattered. The presence of just the two of them was enough. The night wind of late March in Dugan carried a sharp chill, but in the heat of each other's arms, it barely mattered. They didn't need words.

The silence carried all the longing they'd been holding back. They talked every day, without fail, like a couple in a long-distance relationship who clung to their connection through a screen. But now, face to face, they could finally hold on for real. The warmth of the hug, the beat of their hearts-those things spoke louder than words. It was a promise whispered through touch. "The breeze of spring in March, the summer rains of June, the golden leaves of September, and the winter frost of December "... through every season, I'll be there.

Hand in hand, we'll walk slowly, taking in the world's beauty, leaning on each other... .. never apart, never letting go... They stayed like that for a long time. Until a phone rang and shattered the stillness. Reluctantly, Tilda slipped from his arms and pulled out her phone. A message from Dane lit up the screen. "Where are you?" Dane asked. She typed back quickly.

"In the bathroom." Then she held the screen up to Jude, stuck out her tongue, and teased, "Jude, I have to get back to my bodyguard duty." He caught her hand, refusing to let go. "Can't you stay?" How could he let go now, after tasting this kind of warmth?

Chapter 585 Name a Star : Jude wanted nothing more than to hold Tilda in his arms forever, to lock her away in a golden cage where she would only belong to him. A dangerous light flickered in his deep eyes. "Pass. Tomorrow I still have to help Dane with his speech, and later I need to go over the script with him. Don't be fooled by how I look-I'm busy too! But of course, not as busy as the CEO of DY Group..." Tilda rolled her eyes when she saw his reluctant expression. "Well, I told Dane a little white lie. Since I said I was in the bathroom, he won't rush me. Erm...

do you want to say something? Just holding me like this feels a bit stuffy." Truth was, Tilda didn't want to leave Jude so soon either. "Alright," Jude said. He took her hand, and with their fingers laced together, they crossed the corridor and stepped out onto the rooftop. The moment they left the hotel, the wild night wind hit them like a storm. But with Jude standing beside her, Tilda felt completely safe. His broad frame blocked the worst of the wind, and she leaned openly against him to hide from the cold. "Wow, Jude, look at the sky!" Tilda suddenly pointed upward.

Jude followed her gaze. The sky was filled with stars. A bright, full moon hung high, glowing beautifully. In the past, even if Jude had seen a night like this, he would've felt nothing. To him, scenery was meaningless-no beauty could stir his heart. But now, with Tilda by his side, everything was different. He saw her smiling face, then followed her gaze to the glittering sky. 1What should have been just another night now looked like a fairy tale painted in the colors of a rainbow. It was stunning.

So this was how the world could change-how everything he once dismissed could suddenly matter-because of her. Jude's heart, once cold and still like dead water, began to soften. He noticed little details he'd always overlooked before. All of this was because of Tilda. He knew it made him vulnerable, something he once despised. But for Tilda, he accepted it. Even if it went against everything he used to believe, he didn't care. Tilda kept talking to herself. "Isn't it beautiful? The view out here in the country is so open and bright.

You'd never see this in the city." Suddenly, she felt a quick kiss land on her cheek. She covered her face in shock. "Jude! You ambushed me! That's not fair!" A smile tugged at his lips. "If you like the stars so much, then I'll buy you the rights to name one." "That's not so simple! You can only name a star if you discover a new one yourself." "No problem. I'll invest twenty billion dollars to build a rocket ship. The future belongs to space anyway. Sooner or later, I'll find a star no one's seen before-and I'll name it after you." Damn. Being rich was really nice .

He could throw around twenty billion dollars like it was nothing Tilda rose on tiptoe and poked his forehead. "Fine. I'll be waiting for it then..." A star named after her... it didn't sound so bad. Jude's voice turned gentle. "It's windy out here at night. Are you cold? Do you want me to put my jacket on you?" "I'm not a princess. Besides, with you as my shield, why would I be afraid of a little wind? But you'd better be ready. If you're going to be my man, you'll have to listen to me and do as I say.

"And even if the whole world turns against me, you'll stand by my side and fight with me. No matter if I'm right or wrong, you'll support me unconditionally. Got it?" "Got it," Jude said without hesitation. No matter how unreasonable her demands were, he always agreed without a second thought. Tilda's eyes curved with laughter. "Really? Hmm, that's worth praising, but I still need to test you for a while to see if you can keep it up." "Then spend the rest of your life watching me. Don't look away. Don't leave me. I'll prove it to you...

Tilda, for the rest of my life, you'll mean more to me than even my own life." "Alright then. I'll be watching..." Under the moonlight, Tilda stood in front of Jude, her smile blooming like a flower. Her light makeup, fair cheeks, lips tinted red, long hair blowing in the wind, and lashes that trembled like butterfly wings-all of it reflected in Jude's clear eyes. Every detail, every piece of her, was etched into his heart.

Chapter 586 A Bridge Between Us "So... shouldn't I get a reward?" Jude leaned closer. His deep, magnetic voice was tempting. "And ... what kind of reward do you want?" La "Tilda, you know. Don't torture me." His eyes locked on her lips. Earlier, she'd only kissed his cheek, and it hadn't been enough. He kept wondering how sweet her lips would taste. His throat tightened. A kiss, with the warmth of breath and the taste of each other, was the most intoxicating thing. Tilda touched her finger to her lips.

"Say something nice to make me happy, then I'll kiss you." Jude's voice dropped low. "Once, I read a line from a writer. Back then, I didn't care about it at all. I even thought it was foolish. But after meeting you,

I looked it up again and felt it differently. I want to tell you. "In the middle of the hills and streams, I want to hold your hand and walk across this bridge. On the bridge are blossoms and green leaves, and beneath it are families by the water. One end of the bridge is youth with dark hair. The other end is old age with silver strands." Tilda's heart skipped.

"Are you using words from *A Bridge Between Us* to win me over?" Jude didn't answer. He just held her hand and with his other hand, brushed a strand of her hair. Then his lips came down on hers without hesitation. The taste was so sweet he couldn't resist. In an instant, he was lost in the whirlpool of her kiss. Under the moonlight, the two of them were wrapped in romance, "Alright, I really have to find Dane before he worries. Jude, you can go have fun by yourself for now." 1/4 12:56 Sat, Oct 11 M... Jude's mouth tightened. "Worry about what?"

You're an adult. It's not like you're going to disappear... He hated how she cared about another man. He wanted her whole heart, all to himself. "Jude, don't be stubborn. Life is long. I'll have plenty of time to keep watching you." "Fine." He would try to set aside his possessiveness, to be more patient and accepting of the people around Tilda. But... That was hard. It meant changing his very nature. Still, for Tilda, Jude was willing to try. At that moment, Wade came upstairs to get some air. He had just graduated, and this was his first time attending such a high-end party.

Talking with the older businessmen-men who were shrewd, guarded, and full of hidden meanings-was stressful. He was terrified of saying the wrong thing, or missing something important, and creating trouble for Russell. "So this is what Dominic went through back then... I really am a newbie. 'All I did before was hide behind Dominic's protection while I chased my own dreams. "I was way too selfish. Tilda was right." He gave a bitter smile. Wade always thought about helping his family.

But in reality, his family had been silently protecting him instead. Just standing next to Russell at a gathering like this made Wade feel so pressured that he could hardly breathe. So how much more must Dominic have carried, as the eldest son, all these years? And yet, Dominic never said a word about it. He always protected them, always stood tall as the reliable big brother who could handle anything. The Jensons weren't like other wealthy families.

They didn't fight tooth and nail for power or tear each other apart for the chairman's seat. Now Wade realized he didn't just owe Tilda-he owed so many people. He suddenly wanted a cigarette, just to let out the frustration in his chest. But as he reached for one, movement caught his eye. His gaze sharpened. Two figures in the shadows. He couldn't make out one of them. But the other figure-he

knew without a doubt. Tilda. Seeing how close the two of them were, Wade's mind immediately jumped to one thought. That man... is it Jude? Is my bad feeling about to come true?

As Wade's thoughts churned, Tilda and Jude finally separated. And the first to walk toward him was Jude. Jude narrowed his eyes. A dangerous aura radiated off him. Just his presence-dark, overwhelming, like a king descending into someone else's world- crushed the air out of Wade's lungs. It felt like invisible hands were squeezing his heart. Every nerve in his body screamed the same warning This man was someone he could never afford to provoke. Compared to Jude, Dominic's danger level wasn't even close.

Chapter 587 Too Late : No wonder the whole party tonight-filled with the nation's top business leaders-seemed to revolve around Jude. His mood alone set the tone, and nobody dared cross him. Everyone only wanted to get on his good side. Jude stopped in front of Wade. "What are you doing here?" The words dripped with contempt. Since Tilda cut ties with the Jensions, Jude's loyalties followed hers- whoever she hated, he hated. The only reason Jude hadn't crushed the Jenson family already was that Tilda wanted to play this game her own way. "Mr.

Bell," Wade asked carefully, "was that Tilda you were just with? What exactly is your relationship with her?" "You don't need to know my relationship with Tilda. Wade, do you still think you're her brother?" Jude's cold voice cut through the air. "You ... you and Tilda ... is it really like that?" His words struck Wade like lightning. He had once seen Jude and Tilda together when he went out with Kyla, but he never imagined things would actually develop the way Russell had feared. "I don't owe you any explanation." Jude turned to leave.

But Wade clenched his jaw, summoning courage from nowhere, and stepped in his way. "Mr. Bell, I'm sorry, but you could never make Tilda happy, I won't let my sister be played with. A family like the Bells would never accept her." Tilda's strong, stubborn personality would only bring her danger in that household. Maybe even worse. Jude's eyes narrowed. "I'll protect my woman. I'm the head of my family now. If I want to marry someone, I don't need anyone's approval or permission. 1/3 12:57 Sat , Oct 11 M...

"And another thing-Tilda herself said she has no connection to the Jensions anymore. Wade, stop shamelessly calling yourself her brother." Wade knew he didn't have the standing to argue. But his fists clenched tight, and his blood boiled with the duty of an older brother. He raised his eyes and met Jude's cold, hunting gaze without flinching. "Even if Tilda doesn't forgive us, we've already failed her too many times. We can't afford to fail her again..." Bam! Before Wade could finish, Jude's fist smashed into his face.

The blow sent him crashing to the ground. A tooth flew out, and blood filled his mouth. It was too sudden, too powerful. Half his face went numb. Jude lowered his gaze, his icy stare piercing Wade. "If it weren't for Tilda, those words you just said would've already gotten you killed. "I don't even see trash like you as worth noticing. I don't need garbage like you telling me how to live." His voice was flat, without warmth or emotion. He spoke as if he were describing something as ordinary as the sun rising and setting. That was how little Jude thought of him.

With a single thought, Jude could crush the Jensions and erase their company from existence. Wade didn't doubt it for a second. This short exchange alone made Wade's heart surrender. He didn't dare move. Jude straightened his suit jacket, then stepped hard on Wade's hand. Ignoring Wade's cry of pain, Jude walked away, leaving him sprawled on the floor. It took Wade a long time to gather enough strength to stand. His body trembled, but worse was the fear that now lived deep in his soul-fear of Jude.

By the time the party ended, Russell was waiting in the car, checking his watch, brows drawn tight. Why isn't Wade back yet ? When he texted earlier, Wade had replied that he was busy but would be down soon. Now it was already past 11. The car door finally opened, and Wade slipped in. "Wade, where were you? Why are you so late? "Wait... Your face... " Russell's sharp eyes immediately caught the bruises. "Wade, what happened to your face? Who did this to you?" "It's nothing, Dad. Upstairs was dark, and I was feeling a little down. I just went out for air and...

tripped." "Impossible! A fall doesn't make your face look like this. Wade, even now you're hiding from me? This is clearly from a fight!" Russell's voice was firm, certain. But Wade, remembering Jude's cold and ruthless expression, didn't dare tell the truth. If Russell found out Jude was involved-especially that it had to do with Tilda-he might go after Jude himself.

Chapter 588 Low-Key : It wasn't that Wade didn't want revenge. It was that Jude was simply too dangerous. One wrong move, and the entire Jenson family could be buried with him. "Dad, why would you even think that? This is the Austin Hotel! Everyone here is from the top of their cities. None of them has a grudge against me, so why would anyone suddenly attack me for no reason?" "Hmm..." What Wade said made sense. But no matter how Russell looked at it, those marks didn't seem like something Wade got from tripping.

Still, since Wade insisted nothing happened, Russell had no choice but to believe his words. "Did you even get that injury treated? Do you need to go to the hospital?" "No, no need. I already had the hotel doctor check it out. The swelling will be gone by tomorrow. We've got to attend tomorrow's worldwide livestream of the Cetherland 4nm chip lithography team unveiling. We can't waste time over this." "Fine." Tilda still had no idea what had happened between Wade and Jude. She was in the room with Dane and Liam, going over Dane's speech. "Hmm... yeah, that's about it.

The overall flow feels right now. "Dane, do you see anything else that needs to be changed or added?" Dane shook his head. "No... thank you ... Liam ... Tilda... I'm happy with it." Liam stretched, then checked his watch. "The livestream starts at ten tomorrow morning. It's already one am. We'd better get some rest. Dane, Tilda, tomorrow we have to pick up Mystro, and you'll be on stage with Dane. You need to take care of yourself." "That's right, Dane. Go to bed early. Tomorrow you're the star, so you can't show up tired. We won't bother you anymore." Tilda and Liam left the room.

Dane stared at his prepared speech, pressed his lips together, then suddenly picked up a pen and added a few more lines. The next day, Tilda and Liam stood at the back VIP staff entrance of the auditorium, waiting anxiously. "Probably stuck in traffic," Liam said. "Tilda, maybe you should head back and stay with Dane. You're going on stage with him anyway." "It's fine, Liam. We still have an hour. I'll wait a little longer." As soon as she said it, Tilda spotted a familiar figure. She quickly waved. "Mystro!

You finally made it!" Mystro jogged over, a little out of breath. "Whew, I really almost got stuck in traffic. I was afraid I'd miss it. I didn't expect Dugan's morning rush to be this brutal ... " "But you made it. That's what counts. Today is Dane's big day. Even if he won't say it out loud, he definitely wants all of us here." "Where's Rain?" "The Skin Organization still has a lot of serious problems. Rain's been swamped. If he doesn't fix them, innocent people could get hurt. I told him not to come and to focus on handling things.

So, he can only watch Dane's medal ceremony online." "That's a shame..." The three of them laughed and chatted as they headed to Dane's dressing room. Inside, Manfred was talking with Dane. When he saw them walk in, his face lit up. He greeted them warmly, then said with regret, "Queen, Mystro, Liam, are you really not going to let us add your names to the official team list? We already held an internal vote-even the research members all agreed unanimously to include you." Mystro smiled, "Forget it. I prefer to stay low-key. Too many titles just drag me under the spotlight.

I'm fine with just being known as an artist." "I've got social anxiety, Liam added. "So that's a definite pass for me!" "I'll pass too," Tilda said with a grin. "Alright then, I won't push you. It's rare enough to see people who contributed so much still staying this humble. Mystro, Liam, come with me. I'll take you to your seats. "Queen, I'll be counting on you to help Professor Kerrigan later." Tilda nodded. "Got it. Mr. Parker, Mystro, Liam-you don't have to worry." Before leaving, Mystro gave Dane a light hug.

"Dane, congratulations. It's my honor to have such an incredible senior. I'm really glad I can be here for this big moment in your life." "Thank you ... Mystro ..." Dane's voice still came out broken and halting,

but the hoarseness was much better than before. It had to be from his persistence with vocal training, along with the medicine Liam gave him. Little by little, it was all changing Dane's body for the better. Hearing his voice again ...

Chapter 589 Chaos Mystro froze for a moment. Suddenly, his nose burned, and his eyes stung. : "I've never really seen Dane speak with my own eyes before. And now ... I'm so happy I could cry." He quickly turned away, tilting his head back and taking a deep breath so the tears wouldn't fall. Today was a day of celebration. Crying would just look ugly. Mystro walked over to Liam, threw an arm around his shoulders, and laughed. "Liam, this is all thanks to you. Whatever you want, just say it. I'll do my best to make it happen." "Come on, Mystro. I'm your junior.

I've helped so many people, so of course I'd help Dane too. Look at you-if I hadn't been able to treat him, you probably wouldn't have let me live it down." He grinned and added, "Besides, you should thank Tilda, too. Without the experience she shared from her earlier treatments, I wouldn't have figured out a new method so quickly." Tilda held onto Dane's arm and raised her brow. "Liam, you really don't like taking credit. You're the one who deserves the most thanks. I wouldn't dare steal that from you." Mystro looked at them both and shook his head. "Forget it. I'm thanking both of you.

Whatever you need in the future, just ask. I'll make sure it happens." "Fine, we'll remember that promise," Tilda teased. After the group left laughing, only Dane and Tilda were left in the room. "Tilda... are you nervous?" Dane asked suddenly. Tilda turned and saw the worry in his eyes. After all, this was a live broadcast to the entire world, with a huge audience in front of them. Of course, there was pressure. Anyone would be lying if they said they weren't afraid. A normal person would probably freeze on stage, unable to speak. "It's fine.

As long as you're with me, I'm not afraid of anything. And besides, I've been through 1/3 12:57 Sat, Oct Back when I trained with our mentor, I faced challenges way harder than this. Didn't we survive those, too?" She leaned her head gently against his shoulder as she spoke. Dane reached out and patted her head affectionately. "Thank you ... Tilda ..." "1 "Don't thank me. I'm your junior. It's only right that I support you. You spoil me so much-I should give back. Everything happens for a reason.

I believe real effort and true feelings always go both ways." She smiled, then tugged his arm. "Alright, it's about time. We should get going." "Okay." The guests took their seats one by one inside the grand and solemn hall. The ceremony officially began. As the livestream started, the broadcast was mirrored across platforms worldwide. In seconds, countless viewers flooded into the chat. [Press 1 to gather!] [My keyboard's not keeping up!] [I wanna see the legends who built the lithography machine!] [Damn! Every guest in the audience is a big shot.

I just spotted the CEO of Yarborough's leading corporation!] The national anthem played. The research team for the lithography machine took the stage. The broadcast introduced each member in both English and Yvorian, giving their names and areas of expertise. But the moment the host officially announced Dane as the lead creator of the 4nm chip lithography machine, the world was shocked. Nobody expected such a young, handsome man to be the head of the project. (WIT? This young? Are they joking? Or is he some rich kid who got handed the title?) 12:57 Sat, Oct 11 M...

[Are you crazy? Who would dare fake something this big? The whole world is watching. This is definitely real!] [He looks like he's in his 20s. And damn, he's good-looking! My idols don't even compare to him.] [Does Professor Kerrigan have a girlfriend? If not, I'd like to apply! If he does, forget I said anything!] [Hope he's open to guys too!] [Are you out of your mind? Don't compare pop idols to a national hero. That's insulting.] [Hey guys, I'm Justin, been training for two and a half years. I like singing, dancing, rapping, and ...

basketball, baby!] [Baby, baby, baby, ooooh-] [Beliebers in the chat, can't hide it now!] [Okay, this chat's going off track.] Governments around the world scrambled to respond. They launched backup plans and began urgent investigations to find out who Dane really was. But their databases turned up nothing. Even the most powerful systems in Motrar had no record of him. "Shit! Who the hell is Dane? "Why is there no trace of him anywhere? Has Cetherland's info protection really reached this level?" Intelligence agencies everywhere were thrown into chaos.

Meanwhile, in Slosa, the Bell family was also watching the livestream closely.

Chapter 590 Riddle : Families like the Jensions, the Rowses, the Colons, the Woodwards, even Rain, who was far overseas, countless citizens of Cetherland, and people of every race around the world were watching this livestream. A conservative estimate put the worldwide audience at 800 million. And the number was still climbing fast. That was a terrifying figure. It showed just how shocking and exciting this breakthrough really was. Cetherland's success in developing the 4nm chip lithography machine had stunned the entire world.

No one dared look down on this nation that was slowly waking up. Every member of the 4nm lithography project was awarded a medal. The room filled with thunderous applause again. Russell, Sheldon, and other veteran business leaders were already tearing up. Their clapping was harder and louder than anyone else's. They knew how hard it had been to bring this lithography machine to life. And before this news exploded online, not a single person or country had known about it. Back then, many Western nations thought Cetherland was hopeless.

They mocked it, saying its tech was garbage and it was stupid to challenge advanced countries. They didn't even think it was worth following. But now, Cetherland had done it. They had what seemed impossible-even something their own citizens hadn't believed in. This research team felt like a gift from God to Cetherland. It marked a new beginning. It meant Cetherland could break stereotypes, rise above doubt, and create a miracle no one had expected. Next came the speech from Dane, the core leader of the team. Everyone waited eagerly. Then the announcer's voice broke in.

"Professor Kerrigan isn't feeling well, so he won't be speaking today. After discussing it with him, and with his recommendation and permission, the speech will be given by his junior. "She helped him with the lithography machine research. Please welcome Professor Kerrigan and his junior, Ms. Tilda!" The hall went silent. Nobody had expected this. It took a moment before the applause started. But Tilda's name alone shook many people to their core. Russell and Wade almost jumped to their feet. Their eyes went wide.

Only a shred of reason kept them from making a scene. The moment her name was spoken, it sent ripples through the room. Dozens of eyes turned toward Russell and Wade. Those looks carried curiosity, mockery, speculation-every kind of emotion. Everyone remembered the lawsuit between Russell and the daughter he'd found again after 19 years-Tilda. Could this be the same Tilda ? The name matched perfectly . Sheldon, sitting beside Russell, spoke in shock. "Mr. Jenson, what's going on? Is Tilda connected to Professor Kerrigan? She's giving his speech? Could she be the same person?" "Uh... Mr.

Oliveson, I honestly don't know." Russell was just as stunned. "No, Dad, wait. We've seen Professor Kerrigan before! "When we went to find Tilda, the man holding her hand... I just remembered! He looked exactly like Professor Kerrigan!" Wade smacked his forehead. No wonder Dane had always seemed familiar. He just couldn't place him at the time. Back then, Dane and Tilda had walked out of the apartment wearing hats and masks. But when Wade thought about Dane's build, and especially those unforgettable eyes, he realized it.

The man with Tilda had been Dane . "That man... "1 Russell started to remember, too. His face darkened. All this time ... Tilda had someone that powerful by her side ? Russell suddenly wondered how much he really knew about his own daughter. She was a riddle. When she'd lived in the Jenson villa, she'd been weak, invisible, and easy to ignore. But after cutting ties with the Jensons, she became like a different person. She showed sides of herself that even the family had never seen. And now she was tied to Dane, the chief of the lithography machine project.

She was also the mysterious anime artist "X." And the hacker "X." And now she had connections like this... Tilda, how many secrets are you still hiding from us ?