

Shadows 591

Chapter 591 Unbelievable : "Uh... what are you all talking about? I don't understand a single word. Can someone explain it to me?" Sheldon looked miserable. He had no clue what Russell and Wade's broken words meant. "This Tilda might really be my daughter. "Mr. Oliveson, I had no idea Tilda would be speaking for Professor Kerrigan today. That's the truth. Tilda already cut ties with the Jensions. As her so-called father, I only realized at the very end ... that I never actually knew my own daughter." Russell's voice was bitter.

At this point, it wasn't even about whether Tilda would forgive him. The more he saw her, the more he felt he had no right to even ask for forgiveness. He'd once had the chance to know her. He'd once had the right. But he never cared. Now, when he wanted to, he found himself further away than ever. Russell realized he didn't know Tilda at all. Everything she revealed was far beyond what he could imagine. She could do things even he himself could never manage. With that in mind, how could he beg her for forgiveness? Wade's heart sank, too. He clenched his fists in secret.

He thought he was the most worthless brother in the world. Maybe even the most worthless man. Clive had been right all along. Wade had never once tried to understand Tilda-not even a little. He should've guessed sooner. Last night, he'd seen Tilda with Jude at the party. Everyone at that party was there by invitation-only people connected to the lithography project. But Wade hadn't thought about it deeply. He just assumed Jude had brought her in. If that were true, why had Jude shown up alone at first ?

Shouldn't they have walked in together ? The only explanation was that Tilda herself was part of the team. She had more right than anyone to attend the livestream and the party. Sheldon looked at Russell and Wade's devastated faces, not knowing what to say. All he could do was sigh heavily. Meanwhile, Alfie and Maurice, sitting beside Jude, were stunned. "Jude, did we hear that right? Are you sure the name was Tilda?" "That's a pretty rare name. It can't just be a coincidence ... or maybe it really is?" They both turned to Jude for confirmation. Jude's lips curved slightly. "It's her.

No doubt." But his eyes seemed to be saying something else. Look , my woman is brilliant , graceful , and beautiful . It was obvious he was showing off. Alfie and Maurice exchanged helpless looks. Of course, Jude had to brag. They clicked their tongues. "Unbelievable ... She's really Tilda! She's amazing." Even groups Dane. like Woodward and Rowse could never dream of getting close to someone like A young genius who built the 4nm lithography machine? The government would guard him like treasure. They'd never let him get tangled up with private companies. And what had the announcer just said?

Tilda is his junior? She'd even helped with the research ? OMG . That was insane . At that moment, Alfie's phone buzzed. It was a message from Una. : "When Tilda goes up, get me a photo of her speaking! I'm stuck watching the livestream, but I want a picture to keep." She'd even added a blushing emoji. Alfie's eyes softened as he read it. "Alright." he replied. Meanwhile, in Slosa, some people were thrilled, but others were miserable. Back at the Jenson estate, Blair's whole family sat in the living room, glued to the TV.

Blair clutched a handkerchief, wiping tears as she watched. She was overwhelmed that Cetherland had finally earned respect on the world stage. But Kyla thought it was boring. So what if they built some chip? What does that matter to me ? In her mind, it was better to think about how to deal with Tilda and take over the Jensons' fortune. That was her future. Still, since everyone else was so emotional, Kyla pretended to be too. She faked a teary face to match theirs. But when Tilda's name came up, the Jensons froze-including Kyla.

The fake tears on her cheeks hardened in place, Her lips dropped from a smile into pure shock. She couldn't help but shout. "What... what is going on?"

Chapter 592 Proud of Her The moment those words were spoken, everyone turned their eyes to Kyla. Darell and the others knew her too well. That slip wasn't an accident-it came straight from Kyla's heart, full of jealousy toward Tilda. At the same time, guilt twisted in their hearts. They had been around Kyla every day, yet never noticed her real nature. How blind have they been? Kyla caught herself and quickly put on a mask of innocence. "Hey, does anyone know about this? That woman ... she has to be Tilda, right?"

Oh my gosh, I was shocked when I heard her name!" Blair didn't suspect a thing. She was confused too. "Probably someone with the same name. How could it be her?" After all, how could Tilda possibly be tied to something like this? Kyla quietly breathed a sigh of relief. Of course. A lowlife like Tilda could never show up in a world broadcast at a national event. That stage was for the leading creators of the lithography machine project. Super geniuses. That man looked so young, so brilliant, so flawless.

Even Kyla, who had met Tobias and Jude before, had her heart race when she saw Dane for the first time. To her, all three men were nearly impossible to choose between. Tobias was gifted with sweet talk. He always knew how to lift Kyla's mood and he always made her feel like she was the center of his world. Then there was Jude-the powerful CEO of DY Group and head of the Bells. Kyla adored his untouchable aura, the way he stood above everyone else, cold and commanding. And Dane, the lead creator of the lithography machine project, made him no less impressive than Jude.

He was the kind of man the entire world fought to have. Life with him would mean no worries, not for one lifetime, but for generations. For Kyla, just seeing him on the broadcast felt like a reward. She even let her imagination run wild. What if all three men proposed to her at once? Which one should she accept? The thought made her torn. But one thing she couldn't accept was this-why did every remarkable man end up orbiting Tilda? Then the screen cut to the scene that smashed her dream to pieces.

The woman who walked side by side with Dane in front of the live cameras was Tilda. Who else could it be? Her light makeup highlighted delicate features that turned heads instantly. She wore a sharp suit pulled together with an Hermès belt, high heels clicking against the floor. Her hair was tied back in a clean ponytail. She looked fresh, bright, and impossible to ignore. Her eyes, deep and unreadable like still water, seemed to pull people in. Every move radiated confidence and ease. A faint smile lingered on her lips. She didn't just look good-she looked like she belonged there.

If anyone deserved the title of International Image Ambassador, it was her. Since Tilda was Dane's junior, stepping in to give this speech was no small task. On such an important stage, she had to carry herself with dignity. Could she win over the world with her words? Everyone was waiting to find out. The pressure was overwhelming, though no one needed to say it aloud. "Tilda..." The moment she appeared, countless hearts stirred. Wade and Russell had already figured out Dane's real identity, so they weren't surprised.

When Tilda stood side by side with Dane in front of so many cameras, their stomachs twisted. They knew how crushing that weight could be and couldn't help but worry about her. It was such an important event. If Tilda made even one mistake at a moment like this, the consequences would be crushing. Tilda could end up mocked worldwide, her name dragged through the mud forever. For the Jensons, the revelation hit like a bomb. "Mom, that's Tilda!" Kyla blurted, then turned toward Blair. Blair opened her mouth, but no words came.

The truth was too shocking for her. She had never imagined that Tilda would be worthy, or capable, of standing on a stage like this -delivering a speech broadcast across the globe in Dane's place. A wave of pride and shock surged through Blair, so strong it filled her whole body. This was her daughter-her real daughter, whose true identity she had never known until now. To see her stand in such an important place, carrying such honor, was beyond anything Blair could have dreamed. "She really is Tilda. I have to admit, I've lost to her," Blair couldn't help but blurt this out.

Her tears broke free, rolling down her cheeks. She quickly pulled out a handkerchief to wipe them away. Blair couldn't stop smiling. It was a smile full of joy and pride. Kyla, watching it all, felt like her heart was being torn apart. Blair had been her only support at home. Although Blair's heart had started leaning

toward Tilda, she still kept a place for Kyla. Everyone else in the family already treated her like she was something to avoid, like she carried a sickness.

Chapter 593 Invisible A Now Tilda stood on the stage, exactly as Kyla had feared. Moreover, she was linked with Dane. Blair's eyes changed. On the TV screen, when she saw Tilda, her eyes carried not only guilt but also pride and admiration. It was the kind of look she had never given Kyla, even back when Kyla was her favorite daughter at home. "Yeah. Mom's right. Tilda really is amazing," one of the brothers said. "This time, none of us saw it coming.

Turns out, Tilda is so remarkable." "We're her brothers, but none of our achievements can compare to hers." Darell's voice was filled with sarcasm. His words were aimed at Kyla. She had just let her true nature slip, and that alone disgusted Darell. He saw her try her best to cover it up, eyes flashing with contempt every time Tilda's name came up, and brush it off as someone with the same name. Darell said that deliberately to make her uncomfortable and embarrass herself. Other siblings quickly joined in. "Yeah, Tilda really is incredible." They hadn't noticed Kyla's slip the way Darell had.

They were less sensitive, simply speaking from the heart. Each of them had achieved the greatest success possible for their age in their fields. But compared to what Tilda was doing for the country, their accomplishments suddenly felt small. Tilda was on another level. She was amazing. Every word from her brothers felt like a knife stabbing into Kyla's heart. It twisted deep, making her chest ache until she could hardly breathe. The pain drove her to the edge of madness. Uh... Mom, I need to use the bathroom," Kyla blurted, trying to get out of there.

The pain inside her was unbearable. She couldn't think, couldn't react, and couldn't do anything but find a way to escape this place. This room felt like pure torture. To sit here, smiling, while Tilda shone on live television for the whole world to see? To watch as Tilda's glory pushed her down, grinding her beneath its weight, leaving her crushed forever? Kyla couldn't do it. She really couldn't handle that pain. What hurt even more was the silence. No one heard her. No one cared. Every eye was locked on the screen, on Tilda's flawless face.

Kyla's words vanished into nothing, like she was invisible-like she wasn't even there. She didn't know how she managed to walk out of the living room. Her face was pale, her body trembling. She could barely keep her balance. All she wanted was to lock herself in the bathroom and cry her heart out, to let out the grief that was drowning her. But the sound of the host introducing Tilda echoed from the living room, followed by waves of applause. Every clap felt like a death sentence pressing down on her.

Those praises were chasing her down the hall like a nightmare threatening to swallow her whole. Just as she reached the bathroom door, she overheard voices nearby. "Wow, I can't believe it's really Ms. Tilda! She's incredible! And so composed on live TV too, Her skin is flawless, she's stunning, and she totally got the best of Mr. and Mrs. Jenson's genes. I'm jealous!" "Who would've thought? Back when she lived

here, Ms. Tilda couldn't hold a candle to Ms. Kyla. Then she leaves, and suddenly she's the star the whole world is watching.

She even became the junior of a tech giant!" "You think Mr. and Mrs. Jenson regret it now? Back then they treated her so poorly she left the family bitter and broken. And now she's turned against them." "Of course they regret it! If it were me, I'd be kicking myself every day. Look at Ms. Kyla-she dropped out of school, went through that accident, and her face is scarred. Occasionally when the sun hits her, you can see the surgery marks. When she tries to make an expression, it looks so dramatic.

Her face just sags-it's scary." "Even without the scars, there's no way Ms. Kyla could ever compete with Ms. Tilda. Back then, Mr. Jenson didn't care much about Tilda. But lately? It feels like he's all about her. Honestly, I think he's stopped caring about Ms. Kyla altogether." Listening to the servants whispering in the break room, Kyla couldn't take it anymore. Fury boiling inside, she stormed straight toward them. The servants froze at the sight of her. The servants, gasping like children caught stealing cookies, dared not utter a word. "M-Ms. Kyla ... " One of them stammered.

Kyla glared at them with eyes sharp enough to kill. "What? Cat got your tongue? Didn't you have so much to say? Say it to my face! Talking behind someone's back-what does that prove? No wonder you spend your whole lives working as servants!" She spun on her heel and stormed off. On any other day, Kyla would never have lost control like this. She would never blurt out offensive words like this. Kyla always worked hard to keep up her image-kind, graceful, someone to be admired at home.

Chapter 594 Marriage Arrangement This time, Kyla was truly furious. Her anger clouded her judgment, and she didn't care about keeping up appearances anymore. The Jensons had already pushed her aside. One by one, they all started favoring Tilda. Why should she keep up with her pretense? Living this way was exhausting. What made it worse was that the servants' gossip wasn't lies-it was the truth. Truth that Kyla couldn't deny. And once she admitted it, she would always be under Tilda's shadow, forever crushed beneath her. No way out. No chance to rise again.

The servants watched Kyla storm off. Once she was gone, they whispered to each other. "She almost gave me a heart attack. Ms. Kyla actually hears us! Didn't see that coming!" "I've never seen her so furious before. Guess we really hit a nerve. Well, who can blame her? If I were her, I'd also be worried about being kicked out of the house and losing all this wealth. After all, she's adopted. How can she compare to the real daughter who's shining in the spotlight now?" "Hey, didn't you see her face just now? Her expression was so twisted, it nearly gave me a heart attack.

I swear, I saw deep scars on her face. For a second, I thought I was staring at some vengeful ghost!" "Now that you mention it-ugh! Don't remind me! It was terrifying." "So, where do you think Miss Kyla went? I saw her heading toward the bathroom." "Where else? She's probably hiding in there crying. I've

heard sobbing from the bathroom before, but I never pry. Now it makes sense. It must have been Ms. Kyla. With her face scarred and her family caring less about her every day, she probably has nowhere else to let it out. Honestly.

She is kind of pitiful." Meanwhile, at the Bell Residence, Abram had gathered the family together. He wanted everyone to make time and watch the live broadcast that was being aired worldwide. A This was the most important national event in years-a technological breakthrough that broke the monopoly of foreign powers. The unveiling of the 4-nanometer chip lithography machine signaled the rise of certain industries. For corporations like theirs, it was the perfect chance to strike gold.

Because of this, Jude had attended the family gathering. Marcus showed up with his eldest son, Nathan. Ryan and Preston also came. As for Rebecca, Abram had already ordered her to be sent overseas. Daphne's death hadn't been made public. After these days of grief, Preston had changed. The crushing pain of losing his mother had eased into something calmer. He no longer lashed out the way he had at the start, blaming Ryan for everything. He understood Ryan's situation now. If his father fell, the entire family would collapse with him. The Bells weren't like the Jensons.

If they showed the smallest weakness, their relatives would pounce on them like wolves, tearing them apart until nothing was left. There was Marcus and his family in the front, Jude pressing hard from the other, and Abram looming behind. None of them were easy to deal with. Leonard showed up alone. As for Jude's father, Devin, he was unreachable-so that option was gone. Now, when Tilda appeared on screen, every Bell in the room reacted. Abram raised his eyebrows, a sly smile tugging at his lips as if he already saw where this might lead. Nathan froze in surprise.

Then his heart surged with excitement. No wonder he'd been drawn to her at first sight. His "prey" wasn't just beautiful-she had power. Real power. He had underestimated Tilda. At first, he thought she might just be a passing fling, maybe a potential match if she turned out suitable. Now he was determined. He had to have her. Marrying Tilda would strengthen their branch of the family and win Abram's favor. But no one was more stunned than Preston. "This ... how is this possible? Is that really Tilda?

How did she manage this?" Ryan's brow furrowed slightly. When he saw Tilda, it stirred his memory. His son still had a marriage arrangement with Tilda. The Bells and the Jensons had agreed to it long ago, and it had never been broken. A sudden thought flashed in his mind. Maybe... just maybe, this marriage arrangement could be the breakthrough they desperately needed. The Bells no longer watched the

broadcast with innocent curiosity. Every mind in the room was scheming. Meanwhile, on stage, Tilda picked up her speech. After a brief introduction, she began to give her talk.

Her words flowed smoothly. She showed no fear, no hesitation. Her confidence was refreshing, almost dazzling. With her poise, she could have been a national spokesperson. Near the end of her speech, Tilda's eyes caught on a line that was added to her draft, something she hadn't seen before. Her brow arched slightly. Almost without thinking, she glanced at Dane. He met her look with warmth, his steady eyes filled with encouragement.

Chapter 595 A Stage of Glory : In that moment, Tilda understood everything clearly. * Dane began his speech. "Today, I would like to give special thanks to my teammates and to my mentors, Mystro, Liam, and Tilda. They gave me guidance and incredible support throughout this project. "Because of their help and cooperation, I was able to reach this point and successfully create the 4-nanometer chip lithography machine. "The journey was brutal. Years of hard work nearly collapsed at the very last step.

Just one mistake, and the entire project would have ended in failure." Dane had written those words himself. He mentioned the names of all of his juniors. At first, Tilda and the others didn't want him to mention them in his speech. It would be enough for him to bring up their mentor. But once they left, Dane added their names in his draft anyway. Those words came straight from his heart. He wanted the whole world to know. Even though they preferred to stay humble, refusing to take credit, at least through this speech people would understand-these people truly played a role in the research.

This was their honor. He couldn't take that away from them. When the speech ended, Tilda bowed once more toward the cameras. Then she stepped back and left with Dane. The audience burst into loud applause. Countless people praised her speech. "That young woman has a bright future. She can't be more than twenty, right? If she keeps growing, who knows what she'll achieve?" Look at this-Professor Kerrigan let Tilda speak in front of the entire world, live on broadcast. That's how much he values his junior.

He's lifting her up, sharing his glory with her." "Are you kidding me? You think this is just some personal speech? This is the keynote address for the successful creation of a lithography machine! It's about national pride. No way Professor Kerrigan would make decisions lightly about who speaks here." "This speech must have been written by Professor Kerrigan himself and reviewed by the top leaders. That means it's real? Did Tilda actually play a role in the research?" "If that's true, then this girl is incredible.

I'm blown away! I always thought those top scientists were either from overseas or already old. Who would've guessed that someone as young as Professor Kerrigan could pull this off? It's a blessing for our nation; the new generation has outshone the old!" "No kidding! And don't forget, she's the biological daughter of Russell Jenson, the chairman of Jenson Group. Goes to show-like father, like daughter."

"Exactly. Remember, her parents started from nothing and built Jenson Group into one of the biggest companies in Slosa, even famous worldwide. That's impressive enough. But Tilda?

She's outshining them all! If I were her parents, I'd die of pride." "Yeah, but they let that precious gem slip right through their fingers. I bet they're regretting it now, probably racking their brains for a way to bring Tilda back into the family." "Even so, Jenson Group is just a corporation. Compared to Professor Kerrigan's favorite junior and the rising star of science, they don't stand a chance. Do you think she even cares about the Jensons anymore? Not likely." After all, a company couldn't compare with a scientist valued by the nation.

Dane was the project leader of the country's first 4-nanometer chip lithography machine. That achievement alone was enough to put his name into history books, both at home and abroad. Behind the scenes, countless countries were already reaching out to him. All of them hoping to lure away this once-in-a-generation genius. Power, money, status-if Dane wanted them, all he had to do was lift a finger, and they'd come pouring in. As Dane's prized junior, Tilda certainly wouldn't bother with the Jensons, who had once despised her. The morning voices came from every corner, sharp and merciless.

Wade and Russell pretended not to hear, wearing calm faces. But their fists were clenched so tight their knuckles turned white. They stared at the young woman standing proudly beside Dane on stage. She was radiant, untouchable, and forever beyond their reach now. To say they didn't regret it would be a lie. They realized now just how foolish they had been. Back then, they never saw Tilda's talent. They thought she was nothing more than a quiet, invisible nobody-worthless.

And in doing so, they lost a rare, priceless gem. No-that wasn't even the whole truth. They had chosen to ignore her. They never once tried to understand their own blood-her thoughts, her talent, her everything. Now, every sneer and every insult thrown at them was what they deserved. They had to bear it. The memories of how they had treated Tilda cut Russell and Wade to the bone. Both of them wanted to slap themselves, over and over, until their faces burned. Their stupidity made them want to cry.

"Next," the announcer's voice rang out, "we will showcase the chip produced by our nation's very first 4-nanometer lithography machine!"

Chapter 596 A Moment of Pride "After the chip is unveiled, it will be placed in the National Museum for display!" The moment the chip was pushed onto the stage, countless cameras flashed. Everyone wanted

a shot of this rare achievement. It was now fully exposed to the eyes of the entire world. A Looking at the tiny 4nm chip, no one could imagine how much effort, time, and energy been poured into it by scientists day and night. Such a small piece held the dedication of an entire nation's brightest minds. had This chip wasn't just technology. It was a symbol of unity and strength.

It was proof that the country could stand tall on the world stage, moving to the very frontlines of innovation. Once again, pride surged in every Cetherlander's heart. The live broadcast ended perfectly. Wade and Russell left the venue in a hurry, while Sheldon stayed behind. He needed to meet Tilda. Backstage, in Dane's private lounge, the team had already gathered. Tilda popped open a bottle of champagne. "Cheers!" she said. They clinked glasses, celebrating their success together. "Congratulations, Dane and Tilda; your speech was a huge success." "Yeah, I was sitting up there with Mystro.

Tilda, you were amazing!" Mystro and Liam kept showering Tilda and Dane with praise. Tilda grew embarrassed, waving her hands quickly. "Alright, alright, we're all family here. You don't need to flatter me so much. I might start to get arrogant." "Hey! Don't pick on Tilda too much, Dane said with a laugh, though his sharp gaze landed on

Mystro and Liam. B It was filled with a silent warning. "We're not teasing her! Dane, come on!" they replied, mock-crying dramatically, which made the whole room burst into laughter.

While the seniors were still bickering, Tilda pulled out her phone and waved it at them. "Rain just sent a message!" The text was a mix of complaints and blessings. Rain wrote about being swamped with work, crying that there was no way to make it to Dane's big event. Still, at the end, he congratulated Dane for finishing such a huge project. Even if he wasn't there in person, his heart was with them. Just then, Manfred walked in. "Queen, someone wants to see you. It's Sheldon, the chairman of the Oliveson Group. You should know the name." "Sheldon?" Tilda's eyes narrowed slightly.

Of course she knew him. Even Mystro and the others had heard of him. He was one of the most famous entrepreneurs who had taken his business from Cetherland to Endralsia. He controlled a large share of Endralsia's oil industry and was known worldwide as a patriotic businessman with a record of bold achievements. "He says it's important. Since I know him well, he asked me to pass along the message. If you agree to meet, I'll give him your contact info. "Alright. I've always admired Mr. Oliveson.

Meeting such a remarkable businessman is an honor Tilda already guessed why Sheldon wanted to meet her. He was a capable man and once the owner of Hotel Morloss. Maybe he had figured out who had led

Endralsia's troops in hacking into the hotel's system, stopping the terrorists without a single casualty. That evening, after the celebration dinner wrapped up, Tilda headed to the place Sheldon had chosen. It was at Beach at Dugan, a stretch of coast the Oliveson Group had already marked for development.

Sheldon had made some arrangements. Tilda passed security without trouble and soon arrived at his seaside villa. Sheldon stood on the second-floor balcony, dressed casually with a glass of red wine in hand. When his bodyguards told him Tilda had arrived, he turned and walked down to greet her. "Nice to meet you, Ms. Tilda," he said warmly, extending his hand. "Mr. Oliveson." Tilda shook his hand lightly. Sheldon studied her calm expression, her eyes as deep and unreadable as the dark ocean outside. He instantly knew she wasn't ordinary. With a smile, he asked, "Ms.

Tilda, you're smart enough. Do you know why I invited you here?" Tilda's tone was even. "I don't. Please, explain it to me." He chuckled. "Ms. Tilda, there's no need to be modest. You're the one who stopped the Hotel Morloss attack. The fact that I sought you out means I already have solid proof it was you. "You hid yourself well, but I kept digging until I found out the truth. My family and I owe you a great debt. If you hadn't stepped in, the crisis could never have ended so smoothly. You created a miracle of zero casualties!

That shook up every international security agency that deals with terrorism. Even my top-of-the-line security system at the hotel was broken through as if it were nothing. "After that, I had the system rebuilt from the ground up, no gaps, no flaws. But I suppose, if someone like you decided to hack the system, it would probably be something easy for you."

Chapter 597 A Promise from Sheldon Sheldon grew more and more excited as he spoke, drifting off topic. Tilda could already guess what this was about. She cut in before he rambled further. "Mr. Oliveson, I admit I did it. But I never wanted anything in return. Mr. Parker brought me the job. Back then, Hotel Morloss was caught in the middle, with so many national industries being impacted by the incident. Considering all the sacrifices you have made for the country, I couldn't stand by and do nothing." She gave a small shake of her head. "If you want to thank me, you don't need to.

I understand." Sheldon fell quiet when he saw how calm Tilda was, without a trace of selfishness in her words. He stopped his rambling, and his respect for Tilda grew. "Ms. Tilda, you amaze me. You pulled off something so huge, but you walked away without asking for credit. You even gave up putting your name on the lithography project. People like you ... there are far too few in this world." Tilda shook her head lightly. "I only did what I felt was my duty. That machine was the result of years of hard work from Dane and his team. I would never claim their glory.

If you came here just to thank me, I've already heard it, Mr. Oliveson. Please, don't carry it on your mind." She leaned back and added, her voice steady, "If every choice in life had to serve a purpose,

wouldn't that be exhausting? I'm no saint, just an ordinary person. Yes, many things I do have reasons behind them. But not everything. Sometimes, I act simply because I want to. Whether I succeed or fail, as long as I feel at peace afterward, that's enough." Her words struck Sheldon deeply. He straightened, his tone solemn. "Now I understand. Ms. Tilda, I was shallow.

I've truly learned something today. But I didn't come only to thank you. More importantly-I want to give you a promise." Tilda raised an eyebrow. "A promise?" "Yes" His voice grew firm. "You've helped me more than I can say. If living by your own will is your way, then mine is this-I never leave a debt unpaid. I owe you, and I must repay it." I know you're smart, experienced, and have plenty of connections," Sheldon said. "But I've lived sixty years, and I didn't waste them. If the day ever comes when you need my help, just say the word.

I'll give it everything I've got, no questions asked." Tilda was quiet for a moment. Then she nodded. "Thank you, Mr. Oliveson It was a reward she hadn't asked for, yet it cost her nothing to accept. And who knew-one day, it might come in handy. For Tilda, there was nothing to lose-only something to gain. After the conversation ended, Sheldon offered to send someone to take Tilda back. She refused. Tilda hailed a cab herself. She got out on a quiet street near the hotel, wanting to take a short walk before heading back.

Tomorrow, Dane would lead the team to Jeselton to handle countless details. Manfred had already taken on the heaviest share of the workload, but there was still much left. Even though Dane didn't want to, there was no choice. They were the team that had built the nation's first 4nm chip lithography machine. Too many meetings and too much business waited for them. Once the party ended, Dane had to rest. Liam stayed close to him to help with his recovery. Mystro had an art exhibition in two days and would be flying out tomorrow.

After this short reunion, everyone was pulled back to their own lives. The moments from today still played clearly in Tilda's mind. Her heart felt warm. Even if they had to part ways, she understood something deeply: their hearts were still connected. As long as that bond stayed true, no matter where life took them, they would always be tied together by an invisible thread. A thread that would never break. As she walked toward the hotel, a figure suddenly stepped into her path. Tilda didn't expect to see him here. "You?" Her face turned cold. Why was Russell here?

She knew he had attended yesterday and today. That didn't matter-she couldn't stop him, so she ignored it. But her hotel? How could he possibly know she was staying there? Unless... he had followed her? Knowing the Jensons, with their shameless and underhanded ways, Tilda had no doubt they were

capable of something like that. When Russell first heard her voice, he thought his ears were playing tricks. "Tilda... you? What are you doing here?" He wondered if it was the alcohol.

Maybe he was too happy today, drank too much, and was seeing things. He rubbed his eyes hard. Otherwise, how could it be possible to bump into Tilda on the street? Earlier today, people had mocked him because of Tilda's glory.

Chapter 598 An Unexpected Encounter Aa (Deep down, Russell still felt proud of Tilda. Proud that such a brilliant daughter was his. Even though he knew he no longer had the right to feel that way. But tonight was different. The celebration was too grand, too important. It was a national milestone, something that made every patriotic citizen's heart race with pride. Overcome with excitement, Russell dragged a few close business friends who had also attended the occasion to a pub. They drank heavily in celebration. Drunk but elated, Russell booked the nearest hotel.

He texted Wade to let him know and decided to walk there on his own. The night air would help him sober up. Almost like fate, his steps led him down a quiet side street. And there, he ran into Tilda. A cold wind blew past. Russell sobered quickly. The moonlight revealed her shadow-clear and real. Not a dream. Not a trick of the mind . It's Tilda. For a moment, Russell's confidence crumbled. He grew timid. "Russell," Tilda snapped, anger simmering in her voice. "You once promised me that if I agreed to visit Blair in the hospital, you'd back off for good. That was the deal.

Yet here you are again- following me, even finding out where I'm staying!" "No, Tilda, that's not it!" Russell stammered. "I swear, I wasn't following you. I just happened to be walking here and ran into you. I was drinking earlier-I just left the pub. I booked a hotel nearby. That's the only reason I'm here! I'm telling the truth!" Cone was the powerful image of a chairman. What stood there was a powerless father, speaking to his daughter with desperate humility. Tilda could smell the alcohol on him. Her face stayed cold as she brushed past him, not wanting to waste another word.

She had no desire to tie herself back to the Jensions. Nothing good ever comes from them. Whether Russell followed her here or not didn't matter-he wouldn't be bold enough to track her. Tilda had erased her identity so thoroughly that uncovering where she stayed would take someone with power greater than a Queen. Russell had always been full of tricks. Tilda knew that better than anyone. He was a master at reverse psychology and subtle manipulation.

More than once, he had struck at her weakest spots, pushing her into doing things she swore she wouldn't-like visiting Blair in the hospital. She had to admit it: Russell hadn't built his company into a

household name by chance. He'd risen from nothing, carving out his empire in Cetherland's cutthroat business world. The man had real talent. But Tilda had already laid her countermeasures against him. She had planned her moves long ago. Tonight was supposed to be a day of joy, and she refused to let a chance meeting with Russell spoil it. "Tilda..." His voice trembled.

He could feel the hatred rolling off her like a wave. His fists tightened at his sides. He wanted to say something—anything—that might stop her from walking away. The words hovered on his lips, but they wouldn't come out. His chest tightened, the pain sharp, as if someone had gripped his heart in a fist. So many things he wanted to tell her. And only to her. But apologies? He had said them too many times already. He had even begged for her to forgive his mistakes. But those weren't the words Russell had in mind today. He only wanted to pour out the pride he felt for Tilda.

Deep down, even he thought he was shameless. : Whether Tilda was doing well or had gained great honor—what did that have to do with him? What right did he have to claim that pride? Just then, two figures appeared. "Russell! Wait! You are Tilda?!" It was the two business partners who had been drinking with him earlier at the pub. Tilda recognized them right away. They were two giants in the business world from Urathe City and Piross City. Ashby Sinnett and Malcom, Tobias's biological father.

Ashby was sixty-three, bald, and heavyset, weighing close to four hundred pounds. At only five-foot-five, he wore a custom suit that barely disguised his bulk. His face was always red and always smiling, and when he walked, he looked like a jolly Santa Claus. But no one should mistake him for harmless as someone who rose to the top in Urathe. Ashby was backed by nearly a century of family wealth, connections, and resources. His business instincts were razor sharp. Malcom, on the other hand, was a different kind of figure altogether.

Chairman of Crown Group and one of Piross's most powerful men. Aside from his two wives, who managed his home and social affairs, and a long trail of public scandals, Malcom—now fifty-five—still carried the sharp looks of his youth. He appeared closer to his mid-thirties. At six-foot-one, with a body kept strong through regular workouts, he cut an impressive figure. The burgundy tailored suit he wore only made his presence more striking. Time hadn't dulled him—it had refined him. The lines on his face gave him a steadier, more mature edge, which made him even more dangerous.

Malcom was the kind of man who could draw women in like moths to a flame. Many would give everything for him, blinded by the charm that no one seemed able to resist.

Chapter 599 Awkward Encounter Years ago, when Malcom took over Crown Group, he wasted no time shaking things up. He pushed the company public, cut out the dead weight, and drove profits to skyrocket. Everyone said Malcom was a once-in-a-generation business genius. His only real rival was

Abram, who ran DY Group. For a while, the two companies battled neck and neck-something no one in Cetherland had ever seen before. If Abram hadn't retired, things might look very different now.

Jude took over and, by his early twenties, transformed DY Group from a struggling firm into an unstoppable giant. In just a few years, he built it to heights never seen before, leaving Crown Group far behind. If things had gone another way, people might still talk about two leading giants-DY Group and Crown Group-instead of DY Group standing on top alone. And now, both Malcom and Ashby showed up here. Tilda found the whole thing strange. Russell's eyes widened. "Ashby and Malcom? What are you doing here?" Ashby laughed. "We saw you walking to the hotel all by yourself.

No driver, no bodyguard. We thought it wasn't safe, so we followed along to make sure you got there." He glanced at Tilda, surprised. "But we didn't expect to see her here. Russell, why are you with Tilda? Weren't you two already-" Halfway through, Ashby seemed to realize something. He stopped mid-sentence, then burst out laughing. "So the two of you finally made peace! I'm so happy for you! I knew it. You're father and daughter-blood is thicker than water. Nothing can break that bond. Tilda, just earlier, when your dad was drinking with us, he was in tears talking about you.

He's so proud of you!" Because it was dark, Ashby couldn't see the expressions on Tilda or Russell's faces. He just kept talking. If he had seen them, he would have understood he had misunderstood the whole situation. Ashby would've shut his mouth right away. Ashby was drunk, carried away by the excitement of meeting Russell and Malcom after so long. He'd had more than a few drinks. Malcom, whose tolerance was much higher, wasn't nearly as tipsy. He noticed something was off and tugged at Ashby's sleeve. "Ashby, stop talking." "What?

Why stop?" Ashby's face was red, his eyes bright like stars. He pointed at Tilda and Russell with a silly grin. "Look at them. Don't they seem fine now? Malcom, aren't you happy We've been friends for years!" : "Wake up, Ashby!" Malcom nearly groaned, wanting to bury his face in his hand. The atmosphere between Russell and Tilda was strange-icy, even. There was no way the father and daughter were making up. This was just how Ashby got when he was drunk-blurting nonsense without paying attention to the mood.

"Hmm..." Malcom's warning finally sank in, and Ashby started to realize something was wrong. He glanced carefully at Tilda and Russell. Crap! Why did the air between father and daughter feel so cold? There wasn't the slightest sign of reconciliation. In the end, he could only clear his throat a few times, trying to cover his embarrassment. Ashby's face burned with shame. He had never been so embarrassed in his life. His voice cracked as he stammered, "Sorry ... I ... I must have said the wrong thing. My bad.

Just pretend we're not here, okay?" If it were possible, Ashby hoped he could turn invisible; that would save him from the embarrassment. Russell froze, completely numb. If this had happened anywhere else, maybe it wouldn't have been so bad. But after Tilda had just accused him of following her? Even though he knew he was innocent, this only worsened it. And sure enough- "He actually praises me and claims I'm his pride in front of you guys?" Tilda's voice dripped with disgust. Saying it out loud felt like she'd just swallowed a fly. Russell's chest sank.

He couldn't find a single word to defend himself. It felt like some secret shame of his had been dragged into the open, exposed under the harshest light. There was no escape. A heavy, wordless shame crashed over him. "Yes, I can see Russell really means it. Tilda, I know things between you two have been rough, but at least today everyone's been amazed by what you did. Your speech was brilliant-it represented Professor Kerrigan and the honor of this whole country.

We're all Cetherlanders here, all carrying the same love for this nation. Even online, people overseas are praising you, saying you give them hope for the country's future." Since Ashby had already spoken up, he had no choice but to keep going. To stop the moment from spiraling any further, he forced himself to keep saying good things about Russell. But to Tilda, those words only sounded like mockery. "If those words had come from you two, I might believe them..." Her eyes cut to Russell, sharp and mocking. "But coming from you, Russell? Of course. You really are a clever businessman.

A capitalist to the bone."

Chapter 600 Shattered Bonds "Tilda ... I-I mean it. I'm not just saying this. You truly are a daughter I'm proud of-someone I can be honored to call mine!" Russell tried to explain, but Tilda cut him off without mercy. "I mean it? Daughter? Don't make me sick! I cut ties with you a long time ago! Anyone else in this world can use the words "proud" and "honored"-but not a scumbag like you!" "Oh, that's right, Russell. Of course, you're being sincere now. Because I'm famous, because I've proven myself.

That's the only reason you brag about me being your daughter, about me carrying your blood. You're just feeding that pathetic pride of yours by clinging to my success. and my status!" Tilda's voice cut deep, every word like a blade. "Russell, how can a man be this shameless? Take a good look at yourself. Back when I was first brought home, I was a nobody that hadn't made a reputation for myself. How did you treat me? And now you put on this fatherly act just to brag about me? Don't make me sick!" Every word felt like a knife twisting in Russell's chest.

What hurt most was her eyes-dark, bottomless, and cold as stone. When Tilda gave him that look, it felt as if she could see through his soul, even the parts he didn't know existed. His lips went pale. They trembled as he tried to form words. "I-I'm not like that, Tilda. For everything I did before, I'm truly sorry.

I know I was wrong. I want to make it right. I want to change." Tilda's response came sharp and fast. "Then why didn't you tell me that when I first came home? Back when I was just Tilda-your daughter who had been missing for nineteen years- why didn't you do this?"

Wasn't it then, when I was the one that you needed to compensate the most? If it hadn't been for your mistakes, I never would've been lost in the first place. Nineteen years! I lived as an orphan for nineteen years! You swore you'd do everything to bring me home. When you finally did, why did you toss me aside? You gave me hope, only to crush me with even greater despair! "And let's not forget-after I left, you, Russell, kept pushing me. Again and again you pressured me, hurt me, and misunderstood me. Some of it the world already knows.

The rest-you know exactly what you did." At those words, Malcom and Owen felt their stomachs drop. Malcom's eyes grew darker, his thoughts turning as he studied Tilda. His gaze was sharp, filled with calculation, weighing her not with warmth, but with profit. Ashby, meanwhile, wanted to kick himself. If he had known this was the truth, he never would've dragged Malcom here to see Russell. Now that they had learned all of this, how could they ever sit down and share drinks with Russell again?

Tilda didn't care what Malcom and Ashby thought. If they were here, fine-let them watch. Let them see what kind of twisted hypocrite their friend really was. "Now you say you know you were wrong. Now you feel guilty and want to make amends?" Her voice was flat and cold. "If I were still that weak, useless girl who only tried to please you, would you say those things to me?" "You'd probably hoped for me to die the second I left home. You'd be praying that this shameful failure who embarrassed your family would disappear. Or that you'd just forget her." Each word hit like a storm.

There was iron in her tone. It crushed the air between them. Russell felt his heart stop. A new kind of grief flooded him. He didn't know what to do. He clenched his fists and bowed his head. He let Tilda pour out years of anger. His nails dug into his palms until blood appeared. He didn't notice the pain. The ache in his chest was far worse than the pain he endured physically. Tilda was right about everything. Back then, Russell was certain Tilda wouldn't survive once she cut ties with the Jensons. In his mind, she had no chance on her own.

Either she would crash and burn, or this was just some ploy-her way of forcing him to bow his head and beg her to return. He told himself that if he begged her to come home, he would give Tilda more say in the family. He dismissed her as a dreamer. He sneered at her rebellion, calling it nothing more than a spoiled habit he refused to indulge. Even if Tilda walked away, Russell believed he already had the

perfect daughter in Kyla. Tilda had never truly mattered to him. If she kept quiet and caused no trouble, he figured he could throw her a slice of the family fortune.

Enough to keep her comfortable for life. But if she refused to obey, if she kept fighting back, then she would get nothing. Not the Jensons' name. Not the title of daughter. Nothing but the gutter. He had even told himself she could go dig through trash if that was what she chose. In Russell's mind, this was generosity. He believed he was the forgiving father, merciful enough to leave her something despite her defiance. Even now, humiliated by her words, he thought offering her money was a grand gesture.

What he never understood was that the inheritance he clung to-so dazzling in the eyes of outsiders-was nothing to Tilda. To her, it was nothing.