

## Shadows 611

Chapter 611 Under Tobias's Spell Kyla had no idea. Tobias was already controlling her mind without her knowing. "Tobias, I don't know what I'd do without you ... You feel like the light that rescues me in my dark life. You light up my world and chase away the cold. You won't leave me, right?" she asked. "Silly girl, how could I ever leave you? We've been together so long. Don't you know how I feel?" Tobias whispered. His voice was soft, but to Kyla it sounded like a demon's whisper from the depths. Kyla felt like she was sinking in water, clutching the last lifeline.

His words gave her the strength to fight with all her will to break out into the water surface. It saved her from drowning. She couldn't help but sob and said, "Thank you, Tobias, thank you This time, these tears were real. They proved she had completely fallen for him. ..." "Kyla, I know our first meeting was an accident, and getting close started as a kind of deal. But in the two years I've known you, I've come to see you for who you are-fragile, sweet, someone who needs protecting. "My heart keeps drifting toward you. Especially when I see you cry, so helplessly, it pains me.

Seeing you like that in the hospital in Endralsia, and hearing you're in trouble now-I feel the same. I want to see you, to hold you and give you warmth and comfort." "Tobias..." Kyla cried even harder. Tobias's words came straight from the heart. It felt like some attack she couldn't block. They cut through her shell. Kyla knew that after hearing these words, she couldn't resist him anymore. From then on, she only wanted to live for Tobias. "All right, my little princess," he said softly. "You're crying so much you'll make me ache. Smile for me, okay?

I didn't say these things to make you cry. I want to see you happy." "Okay." A After a few more sweet words, Kyla realized she had almost reached home. "Tobias, I'll tell Mom and Dad like you suggested. I'm almost there. I have to go. Talk later..." "Kyla, may I have a goodbye kiss?" he asked. "Oh..." Kyla's cheeks flushed red. She glanced around nervously, making sure the driver's eyes were still on the road. Then she puckered her lips and gave him a playful kiss. "Haha, Kyla, thank you.

You're adorable." "Stop it, Tobias! You're so bad ... always teasing me," she said, half-shy, half-thrilled. Her heart fluttered with the playful flirtation. Kyla loved everything about Tobias-the tall frame, the sharp looks, the air of confidence. Most of all, she loved that dangerous charm, the way he stayed close, spoiled her, and made her feel like she was the only one. To her, he was the Prince Charming she had always dreamed of. For the first time in her life, Kyla had tasted this kind of happiness. Was this what people called falling in love?

Was this how it felt to fall in love for the first time? No schemes, no tricks, just a girl giving her whole heart to one man. Kyla was ready to do anything just to stay in Tobias's warm embrace. Lost in the glow of romance, she didn't notice the driver watching her through the rearview mirror. He rolled his eyes so hard it was a wonder they didn't stick. To him, this customer looked a little crazy. He just wanted to drop her off and be done with it. After hanging up the phone, Tobias's eyes darkened with something else entirely. "Kyla, Kyla ...

Under my lead I will push you, step by step, into hell. You'll have no choice but to betray your family. Then you'll stand by my side and help me take their fortune." He whispered to himself, his smile turning cold. "Don't blame me. If I don't do this, I'll never meet Malcom's expectations. I'll never earn my place in my family. I'll never take back what belongs to me." Tobias knew Malcom's two wives had already started noticing him. They didn't care how many illegitimate kids Malcom had outside.

What they couldn't tolerate was an illegitimate child with real talent—one that threatened their status. If it weren't for Tobias's sharp mind and luck in surviving danger, those two women would have killed him long ago. Even now, with Malcom's protection, Tobias knew his safety was fragile. If he failed to prove himself, if he lost Malcom's favor, danger would come again. He had to succeed. Fast. He had to show Malcom that Crown Group couldn't grow without him. Only then could he carry out his final plan. "Mr. Lowell, I'm with my shower." The bathroom door opened.

A woman stepped out, wrapped in a towel. She was 39, with striking curves, wine-red curls, and eyes that sparkled with practiced allure. Despite her age, she had taken good care of herself. Tobias tossed his phone aside, walked over, and pulled her into his arms. Breathing in her perfume, he looked spellbound. "Sweetheart, I'm dying here. I need you now."

Chapter 612 Merely Another Pawn "Mr. Lowell, I couldn't tell when you were telling the truth or lying to me. Were you just talking to another woman, hmm?" "No, I swear. You're the only woman in my heart." Tobias leaned close and kissed the strands of her hair. The woman turned, hooking her finger under his chin. Her eyes gleamed with mischief. "Tell me, Mr. Lowell. Do you want me for my money or for my influence? Tell me the truth." Tobias held her hand and pressed his cheek into her palm, nuzzling against it like a spoiled puppy. His smile was dreamy. "Can't I be greedy?"

Can't I want it all?" She laughed softly. "You are a perfect lover. Even knowing what you're after, I still find myself willing to give everything to you." She traced his face with her fingers, her touch slow and lingering. "Out of all the men I've been with, you're the most dangerous. I've always known a man like you could never be tied down forever. One day, you'll break free and leave me." "At least you're mine for now." Her lips curled into a smile. "That's enough for me. Whatever you want, I'll give it to you.

Just fuck me hard and give all the pleasure a woman could ask for!" Her gaze burned with desire as she pulled him closer. She had felt the wetness between her thighs. For a brief, unsettling moment, Tobias thought he saw Tilda's face instead of hers. It flickered in his mind like a flash of light, gone before he could catch it. Tobias blinked, breaking under the woman's hungry gaze. His mind snapped back to reality. Tilda... She would never look at me that way. Haha ! A crooked smile tugged at his lips.

I must be losing it-thinking about Tilda, even now, The next second, Tobias swept the woman into his arms and carried her straight into the bedroom. Kyla had no idea she was nothing more than a pawn in Tobias's game. When she went home, she paused at the door and took a deep breath before she stepped inside. "Kyla, you're home?" Blair had just her rehab exercises. Darell and the others were at her side, handing her towels and fruit to help her recover.

When Blair saw Kyla, she smiled warmly and waved at her daughter. Kyla moved closer and took Blair's hand as she knelt at the wheelchair. Blair reached out and held her hand gently. Behind them, the brothers seemed uneasy. Their expressions were slightly off. Kyla caught every bit of it. In the past, Kyla might have felt crushed when her brothers pulled away from her. But now, with Tobias standing behind her, she didn't feel so alone. His presence gave her a shield, and because of that, their coldness no longer cut her so deeply. "Did you have fun today, Kyla? You should go out more.

You've been stuck at home for so long; I've been worried sick about you." Blair's voice was full of concern. "What happened wasn't anyone's choice, but at least we're still alive. Life has to move forward. Keep a good positive outlook at life and work together with the doctors. That way your face will heal faster, you understand?" Blair's worry for Kyla's state of mind never stopped. She had been watching her daughter's moods every day, afraid the girl would sink too deep. Still, no matter how much she tried, it wasn't enough. This kind of wound needed strong willpower to get through.

Today, though, Kyla had asked to go outside on her own. That was something. Blair's heart lifted. At least it was a sign her daughter was willing to step out again. "I know, Mom. These past weeks I made you worry. I'm so sorry." Kyla's voice broke as she started to sob again. Her eyes were red; tears flickered in her eyes. "Silly child," Blair said, stroking her daughter's head with affection. "You're my angel. You don't ever have to apologize to me." Darell and the others remained silent when they heard that.

If Mom ever found out the truth about what Kyla had done ... Gosh! Just the thought of it made their stomachs drop. Should we let mom learn about the truth ? If she did, she would lose her mind . Watching her now, so tender and loving, these thoughts swirled in their mind. Kyla, please, don't do

anything foolish again. Don't disappoint the family any more than this. But Kyla's face showed a storm of thoughts she kept hidden. Blair noticed at once. "Kyla, did something happen when you went out today? Look at your brows, all tense. Did someone hurt you?"

Tell me, and I'll make it right for you!" "No, Mom. It's nothing, really." Kyla forced a weak smile to hide her thought, but she suddenly gasped in pain. "Kyla, what's wrong?!" Blair's voice shot up, panic breaking through. Then she saw a dark purple bruise spreading across her daughter's foot. "Kyla, your foot! What happened to you?!"

Chapter 613 The Truth Slips Out A Kyla quickly explained, "Mom, it's nothing. I just slipped and fell; that's why I look like this." Blair stared straight into her daughter's eyes and shook her head. "No, Kyla. You're lying! Tell me the truth. Who hurt you? I'll deal with them myself. I swear, I won't let anyone bully my daughter!" Bang- The sound echoed in Darell and the others' hearts like a funeral bell. If Tilda had heard those words, they couldn't imagine how she would feel. Kyla looked at Blair. She looked like she was deeply moved. After wiping her tears, she sniffled hard.

"Actually, Mom, when I went out just now. And I saw Tilda." "What? Tilda?!" Blair froze in shock. Darell and the others were stunned too. Tilda again? "Kyla, are you saying ... your injuries came from Tilda?" "Of course not, Mom, don't get me wrong. I fell because I was chasing after her. I saw Tilda with Mr. Lowell. I got so nervous that I tripped when I tried to ask what was going on." In the past, Kyla would have twisted the story to make Tilda look guilty, pushing the family to hate her even more.

But now, with how much the family's attitude toward Tilda had shifted, Kyla couldn't risk that. Instead, she had to spin it carefully-share the story without seeming like she was scheming. Darell and the others, who had already seen through Kyla's true nature, frowned ever so slightly, They remembered how often she had used the same tricks before. Back then, no one paid much attention. But looking closely now, every move of hers seemed staged, like she was putting on a show.

Always playing the victim to get sympathy, always throwing dirt at the people she disliked. Using them like weapons, pointing them to deal with people she wanted. "Mr. Lowell? You mean Malcom?" Blair was startled. "Why would Tilda meet up with Mr. Lowell?" She knew Malcom. The Lowells and Jensons had been on good terms, but only on the surface. In the world of top corporations, friendships were always built on profit. Blair and Russell had always been on good terms with the Lowells, but they weren't naive enough to trust them completely.

At that level, every connection was built on profit. Each company took what it needed, smiling on the surface while guarding its own interests. But now Malcom was suddenly getting close to Tilda ... Blair felt a dark sense of dread creeping in. "Mom, I ... I..." Kyla stammered. Her face was full of hesitation, as

if the words she wanted to say were too heavy to speak out loud. Blair grew nervous and gripped Kyla's shoulders. "Kyla, tell me the truth. Why did Malcom go to see Tilda?" Kyla's lips trembled before she forced herself to speak. "Mom... it was Mr. Lowell.

He wanted to make Tilda his adopted daughter." "What?!" Blair and her sons shouted at the same time, their faces full of shock. "T-it's true, I heard it myself. Mr. Lowell proposes this to Tilda. I don't know if she agreed, but that's why I ran after her to ask. On my way back, I kept debating whether I should tell you. But this is huge. If something happens later and I keep it a secret, you'd blame me for not warning you," Blair fell silent. Three brothers exchanged uneasy glances, not sure what to say. Finally, Blair sighed.

"Bring me my phone. I have to tell Russell about this." "Alright, Mom," Darell opened his mouth but decided to hold back. He wanted to ask Blair what would happen if Tilda really accepted Malcom's offer. What would they do then? What would become of their family? But he kept the words inside. Kyla darted her eyes. She had already played her part. Whatever storm hit the family wasn't her problem. Maybe the messier things became, the better for her. If their attention turned elsewhere, she could slip information to Tobias.

Not only for the man she loved, but also to plan for her future and earn money from it. Even though Kyla had hopelessly fallen in love with Tobias, when it came to survival, she never forgot the most important thing: money. When Russell got Blair's call, he rushed back home. "Blair, is this true? Did Malcom really do that?" "Kyla saw it herself. It's real, Russell. Tell me what's going on. When did Tilda even meet Malcom? And now he wants to adopt her? Malcom is supposed to be our business partner. Why would he do this?" Blair's voice grew sharper, her anger rising with every word.

Chapter 614 A Bitter Betrayal Blair coughed hard. : Malcom's move was a humiliation toward the Jenson's. Russell quickly tried to calm her down. "Blair, take it easy! Don't get worked up. Remember what the doctor said-you need rest right now!" "I- I know. I won't let anger ruin my health. That would just play right into the hands of those schemers." Blair took a few deep breaths, forcing herself to calm down. But inside, her rage still burned hot. She clenched her teeth in rage. Damn you , Malcom ! He didn't even give us the notice .

And now he wanted to adopt Tilda as his daughter ? What on earth is he doing ? This move is nothing short of betrayal ! Malcom was trying to steal away the daughter Blair had carried for nine months. She nearly died giving birth to and longed for over 19 years. He knew full well that Tilda and their family were at odds. Wasn't this just taking advantage of their pain? When Blair finally steadied her emotions, Russell thought about the situation for a moment. Finally, he said, "I'll call Malcom directly and ask him what's going on." "Call him! You must!

He owes us an explanation!" On the other side, Malcom saw Russell's name flashing on his phone. After being humiliated by Tilda carlier, he had already calmed himself. "Oh well, didn't expect him to call this

fast." Malcom narrowed his eyes, a dangerous light in them. He had already prepared what to say the moment he made this decision. Malcom lit a cigarette, took a drag, and then answered. "Russell, what's the matter?" "Malcom, I heard you want to adopt Tilda as your daughter.

Is that true?" Russell's voice carried sharp anger. Darn you , Malcom ! You asshole ! You knew very well that Tilda is my flesh and blood . After all that had happened between us , I already carried endless guilt toward Tilda . Tilda carried Russell's blood in her veins. Russell no longer dared to hope she would forgive him for the past or return to the family. But what he could not accept was Tilda becoming someone else's adopted daughter-especially when it came as a betrayal from a friend. That hurt worse than death.

"Before I answer your question," Malcom said coldly, "I want to know-did Tilda tell herself?" you this The way he said Tilda's name made it sound like it was already decided. In that moment, Russell felt as if his own flesh and blood was about to be stolen away by another man. Rage exploded inside him. "Right now I'm the one asking!" Russell snapped. "Malcom, you answer me first!" "If you won't tell me, Russell, then I'll hang up. And you'll never know my reasons-or how this ends." "You bastard!" Russell's face burned red. He never thought Malcom would threaten him.

His whole body shook with anger. "Malcom, what on earth are you doing? We've known each other for over 20 years. We've never had bad blood, and we've worked well together as business partners. I can't believe you'd pull something like this!" Blair finally couldn't hold back. Malcom raised his brow, calm as ever. "So, you really do care about Tilda as your daughter. Russell, think carefully. Tell me-was it Tilda who told you about this?"

"No!" Russell snapped. "It wasn't her! I have no reason to lie.

Someone overheard you talking to Tilda and told me! So don't twist this, Malcom. Unless you give me an explanation today, I swear I'll cut all ties with you. I will never work with your company again!" Not Tilda? But back at Twilight Tea Room , only the two of us were there . How did other people find out ? Who could it be ? A shadow flashed across Malcom's mind. Could it be Tobias ? Only his son knew about today's meeting with Tilda and what they planned to discuss. But no, Tobias had no reason to leak this . And Russell had no reason to lie. Whatever.

Malcom forced his thoughts into order and finally spoke. "I saw you fighting with Tilda that day. Later, I told my wife about it. We both felt sorry for Tilda. She's talented, and she's been through a lot." He gave a soft sigh. "I only mentioned the adoption to Tilda in passing. My idea is to help ease the tension

between you two. Think about it. Tilda has cut ties with your family completely. Things are so bad between Tilda and your family. But if she became my adopted daughter, I could use that bond to slowly convince her to forgive you and go home.

"Wouldn't that be a good thing?" His excuses were flawless. No cracks to find. But to Russell, that didn't matter. The very act itself was enough to ignite his fury, "To hell with your excuses, Malcom! I don't care what you meant. I'm warning you-stay away from my daughter! And don't you ever bring up adopting her again!"

Chapter 615 A Daughter's Choice "Tilda is still my daughter," Russell said firmly. "She carries my blood. No matter how bad things get between us, it's none of your business! For the sake of our 20 years of friendship, I'll let this go. But hear me, Malcom-don't you dare push this any further!" "Don't worry," Malcom replied coldly. "Tilda already refused me. She made it clear she would never become my adopted daughter." Russell didn't answer. He simply hung up. Beep, beep, beep. Malcom's hand tightened around his phone. Then he spun and slammed it to the floor.

The screen shattered into pieces. Yes, he could understand why Russell was furious. But who did the Jensons think they were? The Crown Group he led was stronger than the Jenson Group now. They used to stand alongside giants like DY Group. And yet Russell dared to hang up on him? To yell at him? To treat him like dirt? Disrespect him? Father and daughter really were cut from the same cloth. No manners. No respect. No wonder they were both so irritating. Back in the Jenson Villa. Russell let out a long breath. "Blair, you heard it. Tilda turned him down." "Good..."

good..." Blair pressed her hand to her chest, relief flooding her face, The tightness in her expression cased at last. If Tilda had really agreed to be Malcom's adopted daughter, Blair thought her heart would have broken into pieces. It would have been like the world shouting: Look-because of your family's mess, you drove away such a gifted daughter. Now she's rather become the heiress of the Crown Group than come home to you. Blair knew she had no right to regret.

: She had prepared herself for the day Tilda would never forgive them. & But when it came down to it-her child, her flesh and blood, becoming another family's daughter-she couldn't bear it. "If only we could talk to Tilda again," Blair said softly, biting her lip and speaking genuinely. "After all this, I realize it's not just guilt we carry. What I can't stand is the thought of her getting tied to someone else's family. It would break my heart. I'll be in such pain that I can't breathe." "Blair ..." Russell's chest tightened as he looked at her.

The image of that night flashed back-the night Tilda humiliated him. He hadn't been able to fight back at all. The last time Tilda showed up, he had practically tricked her into visiting Blair in the hospital. That was pure luck. Hoping for another chance now to sit down and have a real talk with her felt impossible. Russell loved his wife more than life itself. But even as he watched her sink into sadness, he couldn't bring himself to promise her that he could bring Tilda back for another conversation. In the living room, Darell and the others waited anxiously.

Kyla stood silently in the corner. No one knew what she was thinking. Inside, Kyla felt torn. Part of her wanted Tilda to become Malcom's adopted daughter; part of her didn't. If Tilda did, her family's attention would be pulled in all directions. They might fall into chaos, and no one would be watching Kyla. That would give her the chance to slip in unnoticed. During her recovery over the last few months, Kyla had thought about stealing company secrets and selling them to Tobias for money. But Darell, Justin, and Kayden had pushed aside all their work to stay home and take care of Blair.

Bit by bit, Kyla could feel it-they didn't trust her anymore. Trying to get her hands on any valuable information had become far harder than before. And yet, if Tilda didn't become Malcom's adopted daughter, Kyla wouldn't feel so jealous either. As she wrestled with these thoughts, Russell pushed Blair's wheelchair into the living room. Justin rushed over. "How's it going?" Russell smiled with relief. "Tilda refused Malcom. She didn't become his adopted daughter." The weight lifted instantly.

Darell and the others all let out a long breath. For them, the idea of Tilda turning to another family was more painful than death itself. Kyla rolled her eyes. A strange, twisting feeling rose inside her. Kyla couldn't tell if it was joy or disappointment. But then she thought, It's fine. Tilda didn't become Malcom's daughter. That leaves her with the higher status. She remained as the only daughter of the Jensions. Opportunities would come, sooner or later. She just had to wait. "Alright," Blair said with a bright smile, "tonight let's all go to Sky Dining.

It's been so long since we've had a meal out together. Dinner's on me." "Sounds great!" The others chimed in. Seeing Blair's happy, glowing face stabbed at Kyla's heart. The sting was sharp enough to make her turn away. She slipped out of the living room quietly, and not a single person noticed her leave.

Chapter 616 Lonely Shadow : This time, Kyla felt like she had completely disappeared-like she was nothing more than thin air. She locked herself in the bathroom, biting her lip until it hurt, her eyes brimming with tears. "Mom... even you've changed. To you, I'm nothing more than Tilda's stand-in!" "You're just happy Tilda didn't end up as someone else's adopted daughter. You're so happy you've forgotten I even exist!" The only person who could give Kyla comfort now was Tobias. She sent him the news and waited for his reply. Soon, a message came. "Don't overthink it, Kyla.

You did your part. Whatever happens next isn't on you." "Tobias, my heart hurts so much." She typed the words, ready to pour her feelings out to the man she loved. But then her fingers trembled. She quickly deleted the message. She couldn't let Tobias know just how fragile her place at home was, completely overshadowed by Tilda. If he knew, it would ruin everything between them. After all, their relationship had started out of mutual benefit-they were using each other. Tobias only cared because she was the Jensons' most pampered heiress. "Alright. I get it," she finally typed back.

That evening, everyone was set to meet for dinner at Sky Dining. Blair and Russell shared some cake and tea that Kayden had baked for them. It gave them just enough energy before heading upstairs for a nap. At the company, Wade was holding things down. They texted him the plan to meet for dinner at Sky Dining. Out on the balcony, Darell lit a cigarette. He didn't smoke often, but tonight he took a long drag, rubbing his aching temples. "Smoking's bad for you, Darell." Justin walked out to join him. "I know.

But right now, this is the only thing that makes me feel a little better." Darell gave a bitter smile, took another deep breath of smoke, and then crushed the cigarette out. Suddenly, his expression twisted in pain. He clutched his head with one hand. "Darell, what's wrong? Is it your head? Didn't sleep last night?" "It's nothing." Darell shook his head. Last night, he'd started dreaming again. It wasn't like before, when Silva first gave him the charm. Back then, he had dreamless, peaceful nights and woke up refreshed. This dream was different. Strange.

He was standing in thick fog, his body was trapped and frozen in place. A sharp, eerie laugh echoed around him. In that laugh, he heard disappointment in others, disgust toward himself, and despair at life. He was sure the voice belonged to Tilda. But it wasn't just her-mixed in were voices that stirred his blood. They were his family's voices. One word spun in Darell's mind: Regret. What did that mean ? After that dream, what could have happened? Why would both Tilda and the rest of the family be full of regret?

If there really was a parallel world, maybe in that one Tilda had died. Maybe the family hated her, saw her as a curse, even celebrated her death. Why would they regret this ? Did they face the same issue as our world ? The dream only lasted about 20 minutes before he woke up. Every so often, his head still throbbed. His instincts told him the charm's power was wearing off. He texted Silva, asking if there was a way to stop the dreams from ruining his sleep. Silva said she couldn't help right now.

She would need to search old records at Yaflana's national library to see if there was a cure. He asked her to do her best. So much had already happened that his old atheistic beliefs were starting to crumble. At the same time, he couldn't stop thinking about the dream. Even if it exhausted him, he wanted to

know what came next. After Howard smashed Tilda's memorial frame, what happened after that? Why did this new dream leave me feeling so cold, so hollow, like all hope had been stripped away?

"Honestly, Darell, when I first heard Kyla talk about this, I thought Tilda would say yes to Mr. Lowell and let him adopt her," Justin said. "She had no reason to say no. Crown Group is way above our company in every aspect. If she agreed, it would've been the perfect way to humiliate us and get her revenge. She knew it would crush us." Justin leaned against the balcony railing, tilting his head back toward the evening sky. The breeze ruffled his hair, sunlight sparkling in his eyes as his voice grew brighter. "So tell me, Darell.

Do you think Tilda refused because she doesn't care about us anymore? Or maybe, deep down, she still does. After all, we're her real brothers by blood."

Chapter 617 I Wronged Her "Dad and our other brothers wronged Tilda so badly that she lost all hope in family. She gave up on us completely. But even then, she didn't get back at us by letting Mr. Lowell adopt her. If... I mean, if we tried harder, maybe we could win her back- " "Justin," Darell cut him off sharply, his voice cold, "I know people need goals and hope to keep going. But false hope only makes things worse. You have to understand that." He didn't want to give Justin even a shred of comfort. Because in this, Darell saw no hope at all. Not even a shred.

The truth was, they had already tried everything. That day, all seven brothers stood outside Tilda's house in the pouring rain, begging for forgiveness. Even Russell had swallowed his pride and pleaded with her. But nothing worked. Tilda never once looked back. Instead, she only gave them humiliation and cutting words. If they kept clinging to hope, they would end up with greater despair. After such a harsh reality, Darell couldn't even bring himself to comfort Justin or give him any courage. "Yeah," Justin whispered, his voice trembling. "You're right."

Tilda will never forgive us for what we did. The only reason she didn't let Mr. Lowell adopt her is because she doesn't need family anymore." "I saw it on the livestream," Justin continued. "Her senior treats her like a princess. He gave her honors and recognition we could never give as her brothers. And during the holidays, she wasn't alone-she had people by her side." Tilda had been so happy in that moment. Justin could still see it-the confidence in her eyes, the warmth in her smile, and the brightness that made it seem like she owned everything good the world had to offer.

But that happiness had nothing to do with them. The Jenson's were nothing but clowns, standing on the sidelines, wearing masks of pain while she lived in joy. Justin spoke with a voice full of heartache. He let

out a shaky breath, tilted his head back, and fought hard to keep the tears from falling. His heart felt like it was being torn apart by a thousand blades. Dark emotions swept over him like a nightmare, sinking deep into his mind. He couldn't break free from the chains.

Darell patted his brother's shoulder and tried to comfort him. "Justin, don't drown in sorrow. You never truly wronged Tilda. The ones who should bear the heaviest guilt are our parents." "No, Darell, you have no idea. I did something awful to Tilda when I was little. You know, my autism used to be pretty bad." Justin told Darell the one thing only Kayden had ever known. Darell sat there, stunned, for a long time. He never expected that the girl who changed Justin's life had been Tilda. Justin's autism had suddenly improved after he went for treatment in Montclair. Darell had been thrilled.

He thought his mom had finally found a good doctor, and Justin was healed. He had no idea there was another reason behind it. "In this family, I owe Tilda more than anyone," Justin said. "I didn't even recognize the person who saved me. I was fooled by another woman. Only when Tilda exposed the truth did I wake up. I'm so stupid." "I kept looking for her all these years-she was right in front of me the whole time. When I saw Tilda's photo back then, why didn't I recognize her? Why? She was my light. My salvation.

My life changed because of that piano piece she played!" The more he spoke, the more his emotions spiraled. Dark waves washed over his mind, and reason drained away. He clutched his hair until he felt hollow, then went limp and curled into a ball in the corner of the balcony. "Justin?!" Darell's instincts screamed that something was wrong. It was the same as when Justin used to suddenly lose interest in playing toys and retreat into himself as a child-like an abandoned kid. They called his name and got no response. Darell crouched and patted Justin's face to pull him back.

"Justin, snap out of it! Don't sink into the past!" After Darell kept calling, Justin slowly came back to himself. "Oh Darell, what's wrong with me?" "Justin?!" A cold, terrible feeling washed over Darell. He knew this look too well. It was the same as Justin's childhood autism episodes. Justin usually acted normal, but when he had an episode, it was like his mind and soul were locked in a prison.

Chapter 618 Justin Having a Relapse After finally breaking free from that prison, Justin always forgot whatever he did when his condition took over. When it wasn't too bad, it lasted only 10 or 15 minutes. When it got worse, it could last a whole day. "H-how is this possible? You're supposed to be fine. The doctors said you're fine. Why would it come back now? "Is it because of the guilt over Tilda? The illness she once freed him from ... now coming back because of her hatred?" The thought drained the color from Darell's face.

If Justin's condition really came back, the whole family would be heartbroken. Justin realized it too. His whole body shook with fear. He didn't want to relapse. He didn't want to worry his family again or

become a burden. Clutching Darell's arm like it was his last lifeline, Justin whispered with trembling lips, "Darell, please, don't tell anyone. Okay? Things are already a mess. Mom and Kyla are dealing with enough. And with Tilda's situation, I don't want them worrying about me. They don't need more pressure." Darell agreed. "I get it. That's the best choice. Don't worry, Justin.

You were cured before. This is probably just because you're exhausted from caring for Mom and everything happening with our sisters. You're drained, not sick again. Rest up-I'll take you to the doctor later just to be sure." Hearing Darell's calm voice, Justin slowly relaxed. He muttered, half to Darell, half to himself, "Yeah, that's it. That has to be it. Darell, I'm so tired. I'm going to rest. Call me when it's time to leave for Sky Dining." It sounded like he was trying to comfort himself, planting a thought deep in his mind.

Because if he really slipped back into his old state, Justin would rather die. He wouldn't be the only one suffering; Justin would drag down the people he loved most. By now, his forehead was covered in sweat. He staggered away, barely steady on his feet. Worried, Darell decided to walk him back to his room. 1/3 On the stairs, they ran into Kyla. "Darell, Justin... Are you two okay? You both look pale." Justin flinched at her concern. Kyla caught his reaction sharply. B She noticed the sweat soaking through his shirt.

What was going on with him? Darell spoke calmly. "It's fine. Justin's probably just tired. I'll take him to rest for a while." He wrapped an arm around Justin and led him toward his room. "Are you sure he's okay? Justin, do you need to see a doctor?" she asked. "No, I'm fine." But sweat was already forming on Justin's forehead again. He clutched Darell's arm tightly. Darell could tell his brother's emotions were fragile, dangerously close to being swallowed by those dark thoughts again. He quickly led Justin away, almost as if escaping. Kyla stayed where she was, eyes narrowing.

Something was clearly wrong with Justin. She remembered when they were kids-before his autism improved-Russell and Blair often rushed him back to his room the same way. No way. Could his autism be coming back? Wasn't he cured? Kyla's eyes shifted as her thoughts spun. She wasn't sure what was really happening with Justin, but she made a mental note. With everything that had happened lately, it wouldn't be shocking if his autism came back. And if it did, even better. The more chaos in the family, the easier it would be for her to reach her goals. Night fell.

( The Jenson's headed to their reservation at Sky Dining. After a short nap, Justin's condition improved. He looked steadier, though he still spaced out from time to time. Darell leaned close, speaking just loud enough for Justin to hear. "Are you okay now?" "I'm fine. Really, I feel much better." Justin gave him a reassuring smile. Then his eyes moved to the front, where Blair and Russell walked hand in hand,

laughing happily. "I don't want what happened earlier to ruin dinner for everyone. Look at them-everyone's smiling.

Just seeing that makes me feel better. It makes me believe my autism won't come back." Darell pressed his lips into a thin line. "Tomorrow I'll take you to the doctor. Don't overthink it, Justin. Keeping a good mindset is the best way to stop it from returning. We cured it once-we won't let it return and hurt you again." Justin's eyes softened. "Thank you, Darell." Together, the family stepped into Sky Dining. They didn't know. As the Jensons stepped into the elevator ...

Chapter 619 A Risky Bet A flashy green limited-edition Lamborghini Poison screeched to a stop outside Sky Dining. Theo jumped out of the driver's seat. He tossed the keys to the valet without a second thought and hurried to open the back door for Tilda and Astrid. "Queen, I heard Sky Dining hired a new chef. They're trying out some new Flonche-style dishes. I brought you here to taste them. See? I treat you right. "Too bad Jarrett and Zach couldn't come," Theo sighed. They had stuff to do.

Missing this dinner is their loss." He grumbled as he tried to score points through his gentleman act with Tilda. Tilda stepped out of the car, hands in her pockets, and raised an eyebrow at him. "Don't think a little sweet talk gets you out of my tests. You four spent months training at the Jeselton base under Mr. Benedict. By now, you should've learned plenty. Next time, I'll make the challenge harder. If you fail ..." She tilted her head. "That's on you." "Haha! Queen, I'm not scared of your trials anymore." Theo grinned. "After training with you and all those top dogs, I've leveled up.

I'm only doing this because I admire you, not because I'm trying to dodge a test." He rubbed his hands together, pouting dramatically like a wronged husband, his eyes full of fake sorrow. Hmph ! What a bully ! She just doesn't get me. She thinks I'm sweet-talking to dodge the test . It hurts ! Tilda smirked. "Since you're so confident, fine. But if you fail, I want you running around the base naked-for two miles." The words hit like a thunderbolt. Theo's brain completely short-circuited. Astrid burst out laughing. She held onto Tilda's arm and teased, "Yes!

That's perfect, Queen!" Theo looked like he might cry. "Wait, Queen, isn't that a bit extreme? You're not trying to embarrass me on purpose with some impossible challenge, right?" He was confident in his skills, sure. He'd just boasted like crazy in front of her. But what if he failed? Running two miles naked around the base? As the tall, handsome heir of the Woodwards, people would definitely crowd around, snap pictures, and blast it all over the news.

It wouldn't just embarrass him-his family would probably strangle him for shaming them like that. "Don't worry," Tilda said coolly. "The tests are the same for all four of you. I treat everyone equally." Theo patted his chest in relief. "Phew. Sounds good. I'm ready, Queen. Ask me anything." The group chatted

and laughed as they took the elevator up to the top floor of Sky Dining. The host at the entrance spotted Theo right away and greeted him respectfully. "Mr. Theo, your table's ready. It's in Section C, table 21.

Should we start serving now?" "Of course. I'm starving." Tilda and her friends had just reached their reserved table. They were about to sit down when a loud crash came from behind them. Crash! "N-no way! Tilda, what are you doing here?!" A voice, irritating and out of place, echoed through the air. Tilda turned her eyes mechanically and saw Kyla standing there, wide-eyed in shock. She was speechless. Seriously? Did I step out today under the worst luck imaginable? Or had I run into something cursed? This is the second time I bumped into Kyla in one day.

The first was at Twilight Tea Room. Now the second- here, at Sky Dining. Oh, great. What if the whole family is here too? "What's going on?" Russell, hearing the crash, had no choice but to come over and check, even though he hated the idea of Kyla causing another scene. The moment his eyes landed on Tilda, they widened in shock. "It's you ... Tilda." Tilda rubbed her forehead in frustration. Of course. Just like the saying-speak of the devil, and he appears. The very last people she wanted to see had shown up.

Theo knew how messy Tilda's history with her family was, so he kept his mouth shut. This wasn't his fight. Still, he stood firm at Tilda's side, his face cold and steady, a silent shield at her back. His presence said it all. If Tilda gives the word, he'll throw himself into the fight for her without hesitation. "Uncle Russell... 11 Even Astrid hadn't expected to run into Russell and his family here. It felt like fate- A twisted fate that tied back to Tilda. "Astrid, you're here too?" Russell's eyes stung like something sharp had struck him. Astrid was family-Tilda's cousin.

Yet here she stood at Tilda's side like real family, not just cousins who shared blood.

Chapter 620 A Broken Bond So this was the truth. Tilda wasn't rejecting the Jensons' bloodline. What she was really rejecting were the very parents who gave her life and the brothers who were supposed to protect her. Still, things turning out this way was Russell's own doing. He had no one to blame but himself. No one would blame Tilda. Everyone could see his mistakes had pushed her to this point. Russell's eyes clouded with conflict as he stared at Tilda. When he caught the icy look in her gaze, memories of that humiliating night came rushing back. His chest tightened.

He turned away. "Let's go." "Dad, but Tilda's still here..." Kyla acted surprised, though inside her mind raced. Deep down, she felt a burst of joy. If Russell said this, it meant he had finally given up hope on Tilda. Even if he still missed her or carried guilt, there was no chance she would ever come home. Russell opened his mouth, wanting to say more. But Tilda cut in, her voice sharp as a knife. "Don't ruin my dinner. Go back to your section. I don't want disgusting people at my table." The cruel words left Russell speechless, like his lips had been split open by a blade.

"Theo, Astrid, let's sit at our table. Ignore them." "Okay," Astrid let out a soft sigh. Even though she was a Jenson, the moment was unbearably awkward. She couldn't cut ties with Russell's family-after all, he was her uncle who had spoiled her since childhood. But still, she stood firmly by Tilda's side. Bond Not just because Tilda was her light, the one who had changed her life. But because right was right. The Jensons had wronged Tilda so badly that even Astrid thought they had gone too far.

Now they regretted it and wanted forgiveness, but it was Tilda's choice whether to forgive them. No one else had the right to interfere. "Dad," Kyla whispered, her face full of pity as she looked at Russell. Russell said nothing. He just wanted to leave as quickly as possible. The more Russell felt Tilda's coldness, the more his heart ached-like it was being cut into a thousand pieces. He could barely breathe. The joy of coming to Sky Dining was gone without a trace. Now all he wanted was to get away from here-away from Tilda.

More than anything, he didn't want the rest of the family to know she was here. But the very thing he feared most came true. "Honey! Is that Tilda?!" Russell's worst fear finally came true. He froze when he saw Justin pushing Blair's wheelchair toward him. His heart thudded. Quickly, he rushed forward, trying to draw Blair's attention away from the figure behind them. "Darling, what are you doing here?!" Russell blurted out. "Russell, I saw you and Kyla arguing with someone, and you never came back. I got worried, so I came to check on you. Wait! Tilda? Are you Tilda?" Russell was too late.

Blair had already seen her. Her breath came faster, as if she couldn't believe what was right in front of her. Justin's hands tightened around the wheelchair handles when he saw his sister. His head dropped, unable to face Tilda. Just seeing her pulled him straight back into memories of her cold rejection and merciless words. That darkness inside him-always lurking-started spreading again, threatening to consume him whole. Tilda narrowed her eyes, her voice sharp and dangerous. "Russell, get your family out of my sight.

I'm not saying it twice." So much for luck tonight. Running into the Jensons? Tilda had dealt with enough sickening encounters like this to build an immunity. She only wanted them gone-fast. They'd booked different sections of the restaurant. And yet, here they were. It drove her insane. They'd already cut ties, fallen apart, and sworn never to interfere with each other again. Tilda had kept her side of the deal. Why were the Jensons clinging on, looking guilty, and trying every trick to win her back? Every time she saw that expression on their faces, she felt like she'd swallowed a fly.

Back then, they didn't want her. They gave her nothing but cold shoulders and silence. Now they paraded around with regret, acting sincere, begging to mend things. Tilda felt like she was dealing with

lunatics. "Uncle Russell, Aunt Blair-you need to leave! Kyla, Justin, take them out of here!" Astrid urged. She could feel the creepy pressure rolling off Tilda like a storm. If they pushed her any further, they would suffer a worse fate. "Alright, alright. Darling, let's go . " Russell finally snapped out of it and turned to wheel Blair away.