

Shadows 631

Chapter 631 You Really Do Know Your Tea Tilda hadn't expected to run into someone she knew at the abbey. The moment Devin's gaze landed on her, recognition flickered instantly. "Well, look who it is. Never thought I'd see you here, Tilda." She arched a brow. "You know who I am?" "Of course. Since you came to pray, why not stop by afterward? I bought a small plot here and built a cabin-it's perfect for visitors." This wasn't the broken, withdrawn figure Jude had once described.

Devin didn't look like a man who had locked himself away from the world, ignoring even his son after his wife's death. Standing there with a young monk's hand in his, Devin seemed composed, his eyes calm, like the surface of a quiet lake. But there was no emptiness in them-only a gentle glimmer in the sunlight. He didn't look like a man whose heart had turned to stone. "I see. Lead the way, then." "Gladly." Devin led her toward the main hall. After lighting candles and incense, Tilda sat, closed her eyes, and bowed her head before the statue of Christ. I should have prayed sooner .

I don't know if God is real , but I do know this - I've been given another chance at life, and I still carry every memory of my past . That's undeniable . Since I've been granted this beginning , I won't waste it. No matter what lies ahead , I won't back down. Whether good or bad, right or wrong... that judgment belongs to God . She set her candle in the center of the chapel and laid down her small prayer board. When she opened the Bible, a verse stood out at once: Trust in God's timing. A quiet, knowing smile curved her lips. Yes. Let things unfold as they're meant to .

Fate has its own path. As long as I stay true to myself and make the choices I believe are right, that's enough . Other people's judgments don't matter. All that matters is the faith of those I love . After leaving her offering, Tilda stepped outside, where Devin was waiting. 1 "Where's Nick?" she asked. "The photographer just took him to get ready." Tilda glanced at the crew moving equipment nearby. "Make sure the parents and photographers keep a close watch on the kids.

I'd hate for anything to go wrong here." Devin regarded her evenly. "You're not as cold as people say." "And what do they say?" she asked lightly. Normally gossip didn't bother Tilda. ÚBut this was Jude's father. And even if Jude tried to hide it, Tilda could sense his real feelings- especially since she'd lived through something similar herself. Jude still cared for his father. And no matter how much love Devin had withheld, one day Tilda would still stand before him as his daughter-in-law. Besides, Devin didn't fully match either Jude's memories or her own impression.

Curiosity stirred in her chest. "Fools waste time comparing themselves to others," Devin said quietly. "The wise learn to focus on their own path, and admire what others do well." Tilda blinked, surprised. "You don't sound at all like the man I've heard about. You sound more like a monk." A faint smile touched his lips. "I intend to become one. But the abbot says I'm not ready to let go of the world, so he won't allow it. For now, I just come here every day and live quietly." With that, Devin started toward a modest wooden cabin. Tilda followed without a word.

The cabin had grown over the years into something that felt like a true home. Inside, the air was cool and fresh, carrying a trace of grass and flowers. By the window, several pots of daffodils reached for the light. Beyond them, mountains rolled into mist beneath a bright blue sky, golden sunlight spilling over the ridges, while eagles circled overhead, searching for prey. A small tea table sat near the window, a stove ready for water. Paintings hung on the walls, soft curtains framed the panes, and a fainting couch rested in the corner.

The space radiated quiet grace, a retreat hidden from the world. 2 "Sit. I'll put the kettle on. The spring water here is sweeter than anywhere else." Devin filled the pot, stoked the fire, and soon the kettle was singing. He poured carefully, brewed a cup, and set it before her. Tilda lifted it, breathed in, and smiled. "Silverwood Reserve." Devin's eyes lit up. "You can tell just from the aroma? You really do know tea." "This blend is rare-one of the finest.

The leaves are pale with copper streaks, with a faint floral note, almost like lilac. The taste is smooth and rounded, with a gentle sweetness and a lingering hint of wood. The liquor glows clear, golden-green in the light."

Chapter 632 The Truth Tilda picked up another box of tea from the table. Instead of fumbling with it like a beginner, she pinched a few leaves between her fingers and studied them. "This is Ridgewell Snowbud. Its fragrance is like nothing else-rich, crisp, distinctive. It's the crown jewel of Ridgewell teas. The mountains there stay veiled in mist, the soil dark and fertile. When steeped, the buds rise upright in the cup, long and slender, their tips dusted with a fine white fuzz that looks like snow on orchids. That's why people also call it Orchid Snow.

"According to legend, two princes once adored this tea, so it became popular among regular folks. They're very rare and expensive, too. But for you, the Bells' fourth son, it's just another cup." "That old title doesn't mean much," Devin replied. "Still, you're right-I can't shake the bloodline. No matter how far I've stepped from the Bells, I'll always be Abram's fourth son." He lifted his cup of Silverwood Reserve, savoring it slowly, a faint smile with a trace of bitterness curving his lips. "I never cared for this stuff before.

When Jude's mother-the love of my life-died in childbirth, I drifted from place to place, trying to outrun my grief. Along the way, I picked up habits and bits of knowledge that seemed pointless at the time. "But later, they mattered. Even the abbot at Serenity Abbey praised my tea and visited often. I asked him again and again to take me on as a student, but he always refused. "In time, I settled into this rhythm. When I'm idle, I come here. I watch flowers bloom and fade, clouds drift by, and share tea with friends.

Away from the Bells, away from the chaos, I don't have to dwell on the past. It feels like peace." Tilda tipped back her cup in one smooth motion, her eyes never leaving him. "You're nothing like the man Jude described-or the rumors I've heard. So who are you really?" "You've probably been told I was a man who crumbled after his wife died, who became an empty shell, worthless and broken. "And Jude... I doubt he ever spoke well of me. I was a failure as a father, too weak to protect him. He has every reason to hate me. I gave him life, but nothing beyond that.

I was cold as stone," Devin glanced at her, his smile edged with self-mockery. "I've heard about you and Jude, I'm glad he found someone like you. In some ways, you're like his mother." Tilda's lips curved faintly. "If you're being this candid, then don't hold back. Tell me the truth. Jude's been carrying that wound all these years because of your absence. Even if he won't admit it, I can feel it." Devin didn't reply right away. He poured tea, cup after cup, for her and for himself.

By the fifth cup of Silverwood Reserve, he finally looked her straight in the eye and set his cup down. "From the moment I learned about you and Jude, I wanted to meet you. But until now, I never had the chance. Maybe our meeting here was meant to happen. And you're right-at least with you, I won't pretend. I'm not who the stories say I am. "When Heidi, Jude's mother, died in childbirth, it was like the world ended. My life was shattered. I lost my drive, my confidence, even the will to keep going. "When she carried Jude, we dreamed about the future. After she was gone, none of it mattered.

And worse-I was too ambitious. In trying to seize control of the Bells, I made enemies inside DY Group's headquarters. My own brothers stood aside, waiting for me to collapse." "I was like a crippled tiger, wounded and declawed. If I hadn't withdrawn completely, I might not have lasted long. Even if I wasn't forced out, I could've been 'accidentally' killed. And if I couldn't even protect myself, how could I have protected Jude? He might not have lived to see adulthood." Tilda listened in stunned silence, unable to speak at first. Then a thought hit her. "So ...

are you saying Jude's grandmother took him in because of you?" Devin nodded. "Yes. I begged her. She didn't want me and my brothers tearing each other apart. But both she and my father knew the Bells

and DY Group would collapse if none of us proved strong enough to lead. The fight for the top wasn't just between brothers-it was constant. Other branches of the family, allies waiting in the wings ... all of them were circling, ready to strike."

Chapter 633 Till Death Do Us Part 26 Devin went on, "My parents never micromanaged us brothers. Their rule was simple-whoever proved strongest would inherit the Bell legacy. I told my mother I wanted no part of it, that I'd step aside and refuse to compete. Naturally, my brothers thought I was bluffing. So I signed a contract with my parents, handing Jude over to them. "I knew only they had the power to bring out Jude's full potential. He wasn't like me-he couldn't grow up under a weak and broken father like I was. Part of the deal was that I gave up every parental right to him.

No matter what my parents did, I had to stay silent and never interfere. "If I broke that promise... they would have killed Jude in the name of 'fairness.'" So that's the truth . And Jude survived all of that ? In its own way, the Bell family was far darker and more ruthless than the Jensions . At least the Jensions ' cruelty was only aimed at me . They still showered my seven brothers and Kyla with love , raised them with the best of everything , instilling values , and gave them every chance to thrive .

In the Jenson household, the kind of vicious sibling rivalries that ruled the Bells were unthinkable-strictly forbidden. Tilda had no doubt Abram and the others would have harmed Jude if it suited them. She had already seen how merciless powerful families could be. To them, the future of the family outweighed everything. Anything could be sacrificed- sometimes even lives. People were just pawns, stepping stones on the path forward. But when the person at risk was someone she loved... A raw ache spread through Tilda's chest for Jude. "Devin, if you can tell me all this, then why not Jude?

Before, you were afraid of your father and the rest, but now Jude is the head of the Bells. What's left to be afraid of? "If he knew how much you cared, it would mean the world to him!" Devin shook his head. "Back then, Jude lived with my parents for years. He was just a child. Can you be sure they didn't leave something hidden behind as insurance? I know them too well. Even the smallest slip could have cost Jude his life." He let out a weary sigh.

For years, every time Jude looked at him with those eyes filled with hope ... Devin's heart broke. More than anything, he wanted to tell Jude the truth. Jude was his most precious child-the one he would've given his life for without hesitation. He was the son that Heidi Bell and he had brought into the world. Even if Devin had failed as a father, how could he watch Jude's hopes rise and collapse over and over until he went numb, unable to speak of it anymore?

He had kept silent not because he didn't care, but because he lacked the courage-and the right -to risk Jude's future just to earn forgiveness. "So, Ms. Tilda, I ask this of you as a father who failed. I'm telling you only because you're the woman Jude loves. He looks at the world and clings to love the same way I do. That's the one thing that still gives me pride. "Please, if you and Jude do marry, promise me you'll never leave him. Be good to him. Right now, you are the only light in his empty world. If he ever lost you ...

I don't dare imagine what would become of him." Tilda couldn't even name the emotions swirling inside her as she left Serenity Abbey. She only remembered nodding silently to Devin in his cabin. It had felt like making a vow. Her feelings had never been clearer. In this world, Jude was the only man who could stir her heart. They shared the same rare Omega bloodline. They had endured the same kind of merciless lives. And yet, they were each other's one person-the one who made their pulse race, who brought comfort, who gave them a sense of safety. Still, life stretched long ahead of her.

She had been reborn at 19, and now, a year later, she was still just a college junior. She refused to let the Jensons' betrayal punish her twice, to rob her of joy or destroy her trust in others. Because in this life, she had already found what she'd lost before-true friends, family, and love. She was living a life happier than most could dream. And yet, the word "marriage" carried a weight all its own.

She would have to summon all her strength to face Jude's gaze and, in front of witnesses and a minister, finally vow the words: Till death do us part.

Chapter 634 All Rested on His Decisions & Before meeting Devin, Tilda had only pictured marrying Jude as a hazy idea, far off in the distance. She used to think... maybe they weren't meant for marriage at all, just love. That felt like the safest, happiest way to live. But after opening up to Devin and seeing the depth of Jude's hurt, Tilda finally understood where her heart truly stood. Just as Jude would stay by her side even if the whole world turned on her, he would fight for her and stand as her rock. Now it was her turn.

She was determined to sweep away the shadows the Bells had cast over Jude. From this day forward , I will never let the man I love suffer again . Devin personally walked her down to the base of the mountain. Before they parted, Tilda turned to him. "Could I get your contact info? I swear nothing from today will ever be shared, but if I ever want to reach out, I hope you'll be open. I still want to understand more about Jude." Devin's face lit up with a hint of surprise before he nodded. "Of course. I'm always around. Whenever I have time, I come to Serenity Abbey.

You can join me for tea in my cabin, and we'll talk." "Sounds perfect." Tilda slid into her Porsche Cayenne and pulled onto the highway. For a moment, she hesitated, then her expression tightened, She gripped the wheel and steered straight toward DY Group headquarters. She didn't call Jude. She wasn't

even sure he was in the office, Something deep inside urged her-she had to see him now. Just see him. At DY Group headquarters, Tilda stepped out of her car and walked right in. The receptionist's eyes went wide. "Wait... are you Ms. Tilda?"

Tilda made no attempt to hide herself. Her face alone was enough of a pass. After everything that had happened, almost everyone in Slosa knew who she was. "I'd like to see Mr. Bell. Is he in his office?" "Mr. Bell is in a meeting... but you need an appointment. His schedule's completely full today "I have an appointment." Tilda cut her off. "Search for the name Tilda." The receptionist froze, then checked the system. Sure enough, there it was-a meeting booked under Tilda's name. That's odd , she thought.

I don't remember seeing this yesterday ... Maybe I overlooked it . "My apologies, Ms. Tilda. Please take this pass to the elevator-you'll find Mr. Bell on the 67th floor." "Thank you." Of course, Tilda had arranged the meeting herself, quietly slipping it into DY Group's system. She wanted to see Jude at work without warning him first. Her curiosity burned hotter than ever. She swiped the pass and rode the elevator up to the 67th floor. Stepping out, she noticed how still the corridor was, the marble floors gleaming, the walls sleek and modern.

She followed the faint sounds ahead, careful not to draw attention. Outside the glass-walled conference room, she finally saw him-the man she loved. Jude sat at the head of the table, listening intently as a subordinate presented. His face was sharp, intent, with no trace of softness. With perfect features, hair immaculately styled, and a tailored black suit that looked sculpted onto him, he radiated an aura almost inhuman. For a moment, he seemed more like a machine than a man. His long, pale fingers rolled a pen between them, and even that slight motion made the

presenter stiffen in fear. Here at DY Group, Jude was law. No one dared cross him. Every word, every glance, carried weight. With a single comment or a flicker of expression, he could shake the foundations of Slosa's business world. Lives, fortunes, reputations-they all hinged on his decisions. Jude didn't speak until the product manager finally . His voice was cool, exact, and merciless, slicing through the proposal and pointing out every flaw. Each word hit with surgical precision, leaving the room reeling.

Who else could catch that many errors from a single presentation? The product manager broke into a cold sweat, nearly collapsing under the weight of it, stripped of defense and crushed by the pressure.

Chapter 635 That's What I Like to Hear Afterward, Jude told the product manager to redo the presentation, fix every flaw he'd pointed out, and bring it back for another round. The product manager exhaled heavily, relief washing over him as he hurried back to his seat. At least the proposal hadn't been tossed out, and for now, his position at DY Group was still safe. The meeting dragged on for an hour. When Jude finally said, "We're done here," the room practically erupted with silent gratitude.

The executives felt like prisoners finally set free, nearly stumbling as they rushed for the door. Within moments, the vast conference room was empty-except for Jude and Vassal. Vassal stepped forward with

a laptop, ready to review the minutes and outline the next steps of the multimillion-dollar project. Jude had five secretaries managing his workload-elite professionals with master's degrees from top universities worldwide. Smart, unflappable, and precise, they kept his empire running without a hitch. Out of them all, Vassal held the most weight.

Acting as Jude's right hand, he was essentially the company's second-in-command and never far from Jude's side. Whenever Jude was in the office, Vassal was always the one standing closest. Expression unreadable, Jude adjusted his suit jacket, lifted his custom energy coffee, and took a measured sip. Then he stood, his stride purposeful as his long legs carried him out of the room, the cut of his tailored slacks emphasizing his confidence. And then his nose caught something-faint, but unmistakable. He turned toward it and froze.

His gaze locked on a presence that seemed to bend the air around her. "Hey, Jude." Tilda waved, her smile soft, her eyes warm. "Tilda?!" Jude's voice dropped into a whisper, as if he wasn't sure she was real. "Yeah, it's me. Sorry for barging in. I just wanted to see you at work. I promise I'll stay out of the way." "It doesn't matter. Even if I had a meeting, I'd want you here. Just having you nearby is enough." Hearing her voice, seeing her in front of him-Jude knew instantly this wasn't a dream.

The woman who filled his thoughts day and night was standing right there. He turned sharply to Vassal. "Handle the rest. And make sure no one disturbs me until I say otherwise." "Yes, sir." Vassal didn't need it spelled out-Tilda was everything to Jude. One glance at his reaction made it crystal clear. She was the future Mrs. Bell, the one person who meant more than the entire world. Vassal had been with Jude for years, yet this was the first time he'd ever seen such emotion cross his face-excitement, joy, shock, even nerves.

This was nothing like the Jude he knew-the man who never flinched and who ruled with icy calm, ruthless precision, and absolute control. If someone told Jude's men overseas that their iron-blooded leader had actually fallen for a woman-head over heels in love-they would have laughed it off. The very idea that Jude could feel something as human as love would have sounded insane. Whether Tilda's presence was a blessing or a curse for a man destined to command the world, Vassal couldn't say. But one thing was undeniable: through her, Jude had gained a glaring weakness.

And yet, seeing Jude's emotions laid bare, all sparked by one woman ... At the very least, it meant he was happy. And since their boss's happiness was worth more than their lives, Tilda too became someone Vassal and the others would lay down everything to protect, their rightful "lady boss." Jude led Tilda into his office. "Jude, I already told you-if you're busy, just go work. Don't mind me. I only wanted to watch

you. They say a man is at his most attractive when he's completely absorbed in his work." " But to me, nothing matters more than you.

Work can wait." If anyone who'd known the old Jude heard those words, they would've thought they'd lost their minds. When Jude first took control of DY Group, he was the definition of a workaholic. It seemed like nothing in the world could move him except business. People used to joke about when their handsome, tyrannical CEO would finally collapse from exhaustion. Some even questioned if he was human at all-his stamina was inhuman, more machine than man. So for that same man to say something like this now?

It was like watching a comet slam into the earth-apocalyptic. Tilda laughed softly. "Now that's what I like to hear." Jude drew her down onto the couch beside him, their fingers interlacing. Tilda rested her head against his shoulder, her eyes slipping shut as though she'd found the safest place in the world -her own private sanctuary. She murmured, "You smell so good... I woke up early today, then drove straight here. I'm exhausted. I just want to lean on you and sleep."

Chapter 636 What It'll Be Like if We Get Married Jude threaded his fingers through Tilda's hair, breathing in the soft, sweet scent. His voice went. low and tender. "Do you want to fall asleep in my arms?" "Let's start by leaning on you first, then I'll sleep in your arms later. You're already mine, anyway. I can do whatever I want-do you even have a choice?" Tilda nuzzled against him like a little kitten, her warm, soft body pressing lightly against him, sending thrilling shivers through Jude's chest. The scent of her hair was the deadliest drug in the world.

Once it touched him, he could only lose himself, becoming hers completely. "Alright... I'm already yours. Do whatever you want. I won't resist." "What? You make it sound like I'm forcing you. Do I seem that desperate?" Tilda made an exaggerated face. Am I overthinking? Or is there something suggestive in his tone ? Jude dropped his gaze, his voice thick with longing. "I wish you'd take the lead. It isn't you who's desperate-it's me." His warm breath skimmed Tilda's ear, loosening a stray hair and sending a ripple of goosebumps through her.

She felt a shiver at his teasing nearness, her heart picking up speed. She almost reached up to touch his forehead. Is this guy running a fever? He's Mr. Bell-the powerful CEO everyone respects. He's supposed to be dominant, composed. Why is he acting like a lovesick schoolboy? Finally, Tilda laughed out loud. "You're such a flirt!" "Can I take that as a compliment?" Jude leaned in, his eyes intense and unblinking. Their noses nearly touched, and the little brushes of breath between them made everything electric.

Jude's face was dangerously captivating-eyes deep enough to drown in, perfectly arched brows, sharp, sculpted features, high cheekbones, and lips gradually darkening with desire.

"Ugh! I can't hold back anymore!" Tilda gave in. She grabbed his hands and pushed him back onto the couch. Straddling him, she threaded her fingers through his tie and sank her teeth into his neck. It wasn't violent-just a soft, intimate nip between lovers. Her pale teeth grazed his skin and sent a jolt through him.

In that moment, it felt as though roses were blooming throughout his veins. Jude let out a low, rough grunt. It was as if Tilda had planted herself inside him, a flower rooting through his blood. There was no escape-and he didn't want one. All Jude wanted was to give himself over to her, a ruler undone by beauty, helpless beneath the spell of her smile. When Tilda's playful "punishment" ended, he sat up, licking his lips with a teasing grin. "That's it?" Jude still looked unsatisfied. She only nibbled like a kitten-why stop so soon ? She shouldn't hold back .

"I'm not a vampire," Tilda said with a huff. Jude pulled her close, cradling her like a priceless treasure with a possessive curve on his lips. "Of course, you can only bite me and drink my blood." "Yeah, yeah, yeah... our blood types are rare, and we're bound together. If I drank anyone else's, I'd probably throw up." A little teasing broke the tension; the charged air relaxed into laughter. "Did your trip to the abbey go well today?" he asked. "What happens at an abbey?"

I went to a place called Serenity Abbey." Tilda had only texted Jude that she was headed to the countryside to pray; she hadn't named the place. She watched him as she spoke. A Sure enough, when she said "Serenity Abbey," his expression shifted, just slightly. Tilda noticed and let out a quiet breath. I knew it—Jude knows Devin is at Serenity Abbey . He still cares about his father . That makes sense . No matter how ruthless he seems , family ties run deep .

Even he can't completely ignore them , especially given Devin's situation. She wasn't sure whether Jude understood Devin's worries, but she knew she couldn't yet tell him the whole truth about Devin leaving Jude in Abram's care as a child. This time, Tilda made up her mind. "So, Jude ... have you ever thought about what it would be like if we got married?"

Chapter 637 Take the Initiative Jude stared at Tilda in shock. He couldn't believe she'd actually said that. Tilda pouted. "We've already hugged, kissed, done everything a couple does. And now, you want to back out? You're really telling me you won't marry me?" Jude panicked, stumbling over his words. "No! Tilda, that's not what I mean! I've been waiting for this moment longer than anyone. If you want, we can get married today!" Seeing how flustered he was, Tilda laughed and pinched his cheek. "Relax, I'm just messing with you.

After everything we've been through, how could I not know how you feel about me?" "Then ... should we do it now? Should we get married?" Jude ached to see Tilda's name listed as his wife, written beside his own. "Of course, we'll marry, but there are more important things we need to deal with first, don't you think?" Her tone shifted, suddenly serious as she looked at him. Jude caught her hand, his voice low and desperate. "That doesn't mean we can't marry right away. We could keep it quiet-no one ever has to know. You can choose any day you like...

What is this, some marry - now, love - later melodrama ? We're not actors , and I'm no starlet . But ... Jude's gaze pulled her in, making her hesitate. Should we just go through with it ? She had already made up her mind that he was the only man she wanted. Tilda had never been one to drag her feet-when she decided on something, she acted. "I can't yet. I need to take you to meet my three seniors, and we have to find our mentor first. He has to meet you before we make any decisions. By the way, I asked before if you could help me track him down.

Any luck?" The question had almost slipped her mind. Since discovering that Harvey was still alive somewhere, she and her three seniors had never stopped searching. She had even tapped into her Comet Squad clearance and government resources, poring over servers and satellite feeds for any sign of him. But Harvey had left no trace. A man capable of training Tilda and her seniors would never be easy to uncover. If he wanted to disappear, he could. She hadn't been expecting anything when she asked the question.

But Jude's answer caught her off guard. "I think I might have something." "What?!" Tilda's eyes widened. "You actually found a lead on my mentor?" "I've already sent people to check. I didn't want to say anything until I had proof-I didn't want to raise your hopes too soon. But trust me, I'll give it everything I've got. The moment I know more, you'll be the first to hear." Jude had never once broken a promise to her. The only reason he had stayed quiet was that he hadn't been sure. Tilda nodded quickly, her eyes bright. "Yes! Jude, I believe you! I'm counting on you!" Finally!

We're getting close. Even if it's just a possibility , at least there's hope . "Tilda, how do you think I should be rewarded for all this effort?" Jude's fingertips brushed against her lips, his meaning unmistakable. She understood right away. Smiling, she leaned in, straddled his lap, and caught hold of his tie. With a tug, their lips met. When it came to moments like this, Tilda always preferred to take the lead. The next day. After lying in a coma for several days, Justin finally opened his eyes. Wade, who had been at his side, rushed to wake the others. "Dad! Mom!

Justin's awake!" Russell, Blair, Kayden, and Kyla hurried in. "Justin, you're awake! How do you feel?" "Dad... Mom..." Through his dazed vision, Justin saw the familiar faces around him. "H-how did I end up here?" Russell hesitated. "You don't remember anything?" and then ... I don't remember the rest... "I ... I only remember going to Sky Dining for dinner ... and then Ah! My head hurts!" He grabbed his head in pain. Blair quickly soothed him. "It's okay, Justin. Don't force it. Kyla, get the doctor.

Kayden, bring him some water." "Got it!" Kyla returned with the doctor, who gave Justin a full examination. "The trauma caused temporary memory loss. Physically, he's fine now. If you'd like, he can be discharged today. Some rest at home will speed up his recovery."

Chapter 638 Only Need to Look Presentable Russell finally let out a long breath, his voice tinged with relief and gratitude. "That's wonderful news. Thank you, doctor." "Of course. Call me if you need anything." After the doctor left, they went to check on Justin again. Justin admitted he felt a little worn out, and before long, he drifted off to sleep with the IV still running. Russell and the others quietly slipped out of the room. "Maybe it's better this way," Russell murmured.

"If Justin doesn't remember, he won't have to suffer all over again." He couldn't help but feel thankful-almost as if God Himself had erased those painful memories from Justin's mind. If Justin had remembered the constant fighting between Blair and Tilda, he might have collapsed under the stress. The idea alone made Russell's chest tighten. Blair immediately broke down in guilt. "Honey, this is all on me. I'm the reason Justin went through this..." Russell leaned in, his voice firm but gentle. "Blair, we've talked about this.

Rehashing it won't change anything-it'll only make Justin hurt more. Do you really want both of you to relive that misery? What's done is done. We have to look ahead now, not back." "Yes... Mom, it's killing me inside." Kyla sobbed, her voice shaking. "It's all my fault. I've failed this family-I hurt Justin, I hurt you, and I hurt Tilda too..." Watching her crumble, Blair quickly wiped her own tears away. "Alright, Kyla, enough. I won't press it. Your father's right-we need to focus on the future. The blessing here is that Justin is awake and doesn't carry those memories.

That's something to be grateful for." "Yeah... but where's Darell? Why hasn't he come back yet? Did something happen to him?" The question made everyone pause-they hadn't seen Darell since that night. "I texted him," Kyla said. "He told me he's still tied up with something important and can't return just yet." sighed. "Justin has already suffered so much. What could possibly be more important than this?" Still... I trust Darell. If he's handling something else , it must really matter .

He's not someone who forgets his priorities. At least Justin isn't alone . He's safe now , awake , and surrounded by family . That's more than enough for the moment. So Russell, Blair, and Kyla decided to head home, leaving Wade and Kayden at the hospital to keep watch. Once Justin was fully awake and the doctor gave the all-clear, they would handle the discharge and bring him home to rest. But as they walked out of the hospital, they unexpectedly crossed paths with two familiar figures. Ryan and Preston. Blair froze, caught off guard.

"What are you doing here?" Preston stepped forward, his tone full of concern. "We heard Justin was admitted, so Dad came with me to check in on him. How's he doing?" Seeing a chance to prove herself, Kyla gently spoke up. "The doctor said he's stable. Once he's fully awake and the tests confirm everything's fine, he can go home to recover." "Kyla... your eyes..." Preston's gaze lingered on her face, and he noticed the exhaustion etched around them. "You must have been running yourself ragged looking after Justin." But when his eyes landed on the scar across her face, his concern faltered.

Mixed with the worry was something colder-unease, even disgust. In his mind, she no longer resembled the sweet, beautiful Kyla he used to admire. The last time they'd met, her face had been hidden under bandages. He had been too consumed by grief over Daphne's death to notice much else. Now, standing in the sunlight, her features were plain to see. And for Preston, it was jarring- almost unsettling. The girl he had once adored felt gone for good. He thought he'd hidden his reaction well. But Kyla, always sharp at reading people, instantly caught the flicker of distaste in his eyes.

The realization stabbed through her like a needle, sharp and merciless. She reminded herself that the man she truly loved was Tobias, who adored her no matter what. Still, that didn't erase the sting. Preston had no right to look at her like that. He's always just been my backup , a puppet I played around with. How dare he look at me with disdain ! Tobias is the best . No matter what I look like , he will never reject me . Unlike Preston , who only cares about appearances !

Ryan also noticed Kyla's scar, his brows knitting slightly. But unlike Preston, he wasn't the type to fuss over looks. To him, as long as Kyla could be a proper wife to Preston and fulfill her role as a daughter-in-law, her appearance was irrelevant.

Chapter 639 Is She Really Not Doing Well? Ryan only cared about finding someone who could bring real value to his family. Back when Daphne was alive, she had pushed hard for Kyla to marry Preston and cancel his engagement to Tilda. Ryan had backed her up because Kyla was the Jenson's heiress, their prized daughter. As long as Preston ended up with Kyla, the alliance between the Jenson's and the Bells would give his family a powerful edge. But now, Kyla was no longer an ideal choice. Her beauty had been destroyed, and even her own family had stopped valuing her.

The woman Ryan wanted for Preston now was Tilda-the dazzling, world-renowned junior of Dane, gifted with extraordinary talent. That was why Ryan brought Preston to see Justin this time. After some polite conversation, Ryan asked to speak privately with Russell and Blair. Blair, eager for news about Daphne, agreed right away. That left Kyla standing there. She lowered her head like a small, abandoned puppy, her voice soft and trembling. "Then ... I'll just go home first ... " Blair's heart ached at the sight.

"Can't Kyla come with us?" Ryan answered evenly, "This is business, not a family chat. The kids don't need to sit in." The truth was, anything he was about to say would only upset Kyla, so it was better if she stayed behind. "Let's go," he urged. Russell was more than happy to leave her out. Watching Kyla cry and play the victim in front of Blair disgusted him. Keeping her away was the wisest choice. Ever since he discovered her true colors, everything she did looked fake to him. He couldn't believe how blind he'd been before-completely fooled by her act.

"Kyla, you've done a lot looking after me and Justin," Blair gently said to her, "Go home and rest. We'll talk with Ryan and Preston, and then we'll be back soon." Kyla forced a brittle smile. "Alright." And just like that, she was left behind. The four of them walked farther and farther away, leaving Kyla with nothing but her broken heart. Standing in the sunlight, she felt as cold as if she were trapped in the dead of winter. Her whole body went numb, drained of warmth.

Her fists tightened slowly at her sides. Shame and fury boiled up inside her. From the day she was born-even as the Jensons' heiress-she had never felt so small, so completely discarded. In the past, no matter how delicate the topic was, all she had to do was put on a pitiful act, and Russell, Blair, Ryan, and Preston would always let her sit in. She was only ever left out if she excused herself. But now? Her pitiful act didn't move anyone. Even when Blair tried to speak up for her, Russell's decision carried the most weight. Kyla had been erased-treated like she didn't even exist.

"Damn Preston, Ryan, the Jensons ... " she hissed under her breath. "You're all so obsessed with Tilda that you don't care about me anymore. Fine! You can't blame me for just protecting myself. You drove me to this! You started this, so don't blame me when I fight back!" Her words were as much a warning to others as they were a vow to herself. Her face twisted, looking fierce and almost feral. Passersby looked at her as if she were a dangerous lunatic. They hurriedly covered their eyes and left, afraid that if they stayed one second longer, Kyla might notice and come after them.

Meanwhile, Ryan led Russell and Blair into a nearby lounge and booked a private room.

Preston couldn't understand why his father insisted he come. It was Ryan's meeting, not his. Given Preston's current standing, he shouldn't have been involved at all. But since Ryan demanded it, he kept quiet and followed. A Once they had warmed up with a few sips of tea, Blair finally asked the question that had been gnawing at her. "Ryan... how is Daphne's treatment at Motrar going? Why haven't we heard a word from her?"

"I've sent messages and called, but she never answers. Is she really doing that badly?" At once, Ryan and Preston stiffened and exchanged a quick look with Russell. Russell shook his head and gestured for them to let him explain. Ryan cleared his throat. "Daphne is ... essentially like a vegetative patient now. She's in a coma with no signs of waking. Machines and nutrient drips are keeping her alive. The doctors say her chances are about fifty-fifty, but no one can predict when-or if-she'll ever wake up." "What?!" Blair went pale, as if lightning had struck her.

She had feared something terrible, but hearing it spoken aloud hit harder than she could bear. If things weren't this dire, Daphne wouldn't have ignored her messages for so long.

Chapter 640 You Can Fix Your Relationship No one expected things to turn out this bad. "Why... Why did this have to happen to Daphne ..." Blair's voice broke, and she quickly covered her mouth as sobs escaped. Tears poured down her cheeks. Daphne had been her closest friend for decades. Russell reached over and touched her arm gently. "Blair, breathe. She's not gone yet. There's still hope-things could turn around." Hearing him, Preston lowered his head, clenching his fists so tightly that his nails bit into his palms. The sting grounded him.

It was the only way to dull the grief pressing on his chest. More than anyone, Preston wanted to believe what Russell and Ryan were saying-that Daphne wasn't gone. She was still alive. Even if she was lying in a hospital bed, unresponsive and hooked up to machines, at least there was still a thread of hope. If she died ... then everything would truly end. Everything. Blair finally pulled out a tissue and dabbed at her eyes. "I'm sorry... I just lost it for a moment ..." "It's fine," Russell said softly. "We all feel the same. Seeing her like this is unbearable.

All we can do now is trust the doctors, trust the equipment at Motrar ... and maybe pray for a miracle." Ryan's words sounded sympathetic, but something about his tone set Preston on edge. He pushed the unease aside, forcing himself to stay quiet. Blair nodded quickly. "Yes, you're right. We can't give up hope! Ryan, if there's anything we can do, just tell us. The Jensions may not be as wealthy as the Bells, but we'll stand by you however we can." Ryan cleared his throat and shifted the conversation. "Of course...

Well, actually, the real reason I asked you here today is because of Preston." "Me?" Preston looked up, stunned. He had no clue what Ryan was up to. Russell and Blair exchanged puzzled glances. Ryan pressed on, "Do you remember back before Preston and Tilda were even born, our families agreed on a marriage arrangement?" He made sure to emphasize Tilda's name. Russell and Blair stiffened, instantly understanding. "Ryan ...

don't tell me you're seriously bringing up that old agreement now, of all times?" "That's exactly what I'm doing," Ryan replied without hesitation. "Preston's in his 20s-he's at the right age to start a family. I have only one son. Rebecca was sent overseas and can't come back. And Daphne ... Well, you know her condition. So naturally, my focus is on Preston. "Tilda's success speaks for itself.

If we honor the marriage agreement, it would be a win-win for both families." The conviction in Ryan's voice left Russell and Blair staring at him in disbelief, wondering if he had completely lost his mind. Preston, still frozen, struggled to process what he was hearing. His thoughts flashed to Tilda's cold, disdainful eyes, the way she had always looked at him like he was beneath her. She had forced Rebecca to mutilate herself and then banished her overseas. By all logic, he should hate Tilda. He should want her gone, even dead.

And yet, no matter how much trouble she caused, his heart still pounded at the memory of her sharp, breathtaking face. God, what's wrong with me ? I actually want this to happen . I want to marry her . No... Maybe I'm just trying to twist this into revenge . Kyla's face is ruined now , and I don't love her anymore, but could I really fall for my enemy ? Blair finally regained her composure and shook her head firmly. "Ryan, you've lost it. Daphne's condition is devastating, but that doesn't mean you get to chase after some wild fantasy!" "I'm not delusional," Ryan said flatly.

"With the Bells' wealth and power, we're more than a match for the Jensions. Preston has every advantage-he's my only heir and will inherit everything. If Tilda becomes his fiancée, she'll rightfully be Mrs. Bell, "Wouldn't this be the perfect chance to repair your relationship with Tilda? If she's even a little willing, this could fix everything." Russell's expression hardened, his voice sharp with warning. "Tilda is a world champion now- Dane's star junior, recognized across the globe. And suddenly, you remember a dusty old marriage pact?

Suddenly, you want her for Preston?" "That's part of it," Ryan admitted without shame. "But honestly, I always wanted Tilda for him. She carries Jenson blood, and this union would strengthen both families." His tone was lofty, but the truth was obvious-if Tilda hadn't achieved international fame, Ryan would never have thought of her again. He wouldn't even want her cleaning Preston's shoes, let alone marrying him.