

Shadows 641

Chapter 641 She'll Never Sell Herself Preston couldn't hold back. "Dad, how could you not tell me about something this important? You kept me in the dark and just dragged me here to talk to Russell and Blair! Did you even think about what I might want?" Not to mention, Tilda and the Jensons were completely estranged now-there was no way she would agree. Thinking of her cold, disdainful attitude, Preston felt his anger flare. This has been humiliating from the start . What the hell are we even doing ?!

Ryan didn't even glance at Preston and just kept his eyes locked on Russell and Blair. "I'm just here to talk things over, but I'm dead serious about this. Russell, Tilda, I hope you'll really consider this!" "Ryan, if it weren't for Daphne and Preston, I swear I'd slap you for being so selfish, reckless, and arrogant!" Blair trembled with rage "You call this helping the Jensons? You're actually screwing us over! Do you really think we have any right to ask Tilda to go through with this marriage? The moment we bring it up, she'll hate us even more-she'd probably want to kill us herself!"

"And another thing! Preston and Kyla have always been perfect for each other. Their union is what our families truly want. Kyla only stepped back because of Tilda. Nowyou're using their happiness as some kind of bargaining chip? Do you even care about the kids at all? All you think about is your own gain!" Blair shook with fury. Ryan's actions disrespected not only Russell and Blair but also Tilda, Kyla, and Preston. What is he even thinking ? Does he really believe we will blindly drag Tilda into a marriage she doesn't want ? Forget the fact that Tilda has cut ties with us.

Even if our relationship hadn't been broken, I would never force her into a union for profit. This is a terrible idea from the start! "Blair, don't rush to say no just because you're mad. I know you have always wanted to make amends with Tilda. My proposal gives you a reason, and it'll provide her a way out too. I'm not crazy-1 know exactly what I'm doing." At his core, Ryan still had absolute confidence in himself as head of his family, as well as in the power he commanded. After all, he was a Bell! In Slosa, aside from Jude, who was controlling DY Group, even Marcus couldn't match Ryan.

If it came to a showdown, Ryan wouldn't flinch. All he needed was leverage. If Tilda agreed to honor the marriage and marry Preston, Ryan would gain the Jensons' support, plus countless advantages from Tilda's influence and connections. He would gain access to Dane and the rest of Tilda's network. He would only win, never lose. "You probably don't know this, but Malcolm, chairman of Crown Group, once tried to make Tilda his goddaughter, and she flat out refused!" Russell snapped.

"What did you just say?!" Ryan's jaw dropped in disbelief. Even Malcolm noticed Tilda and moved before I could? And the most shocking part is ... she said no? Tilda had turned down a golden chance to become Crown Group's heiress. By saying yes, she could have instantly become the most prestigious socialite in all of Cetherland's business circles. "You heard me. It's true. Tilda can even turn down Malcom, so don't even think you stand a chance. Even if your father stepped in, Tilda wouldn't hesitate to say no!

"With her temper, maybe Jude has a tiny shot, but for a powerless family like yours that can't control the entire Bell family? Forget it. If you're so desperate to humiliate yourself in front of Tilda, be my guest. But I'm not joining you!" As he spoke, Russell felt a swell of pride. Any other woman, faced with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity like this, would have been over the moon, practically jumping at the chance. But Tilda was different. She had her own pride and her own dignity. She was like the moon in the sky, a presence most people could never truly understand.

They could only admire her from afar. Even if it had nothing to do with Crown Group's power, Tilda would have had every reason to accept Malcom's offer just to get revenge against the Jensons. The moment that news got out, it would hit the Jensons hard, and they would feel absolutely miserable. But she didn't. She refused to tie herself to anyone else's label. She lived for the people who mattered to her and for her own happiness and joy; she would never sell herself for some massive reward.

Chapter 642 We Won't Make the Same Mistake Again Tilda was Russell and Blair's daughter—the very embodiment of their love, carrying their blood and growing into a remarkable young woman. The saying "the student surpasses the teacher" fit her perfectly. Russell knew that through their mistakes, they had driven her away. Yet when he looked back at all that Tilda had accomplished, pride swelled in him despite everything. He knew shame was what he should feel. But no matter how wrong it seemed, that pride refused to fade.

It was undeniable proof of the bond between the Jensons and Tilda. "Russell, our families have been close for years. Why do you have to talk like that?" Ryan's face darkened as the words left his mouth. The confidence he had clung to—the sense of leverage and control—collapsed the moment Tilda refused Malcom's offer to become Crown Group's heiress. Ryan knew Malcom all too well. Back when Abram was still leading DY Group, Crown Group had been their fiercest rival. Ryan had studied every trick, every ruthless move Malcom ever made.

Abram had made it a rule that no Bell should ever forget such a formidable opponent. For all his schemes, Malcom had forced DY Group to fight harder, to push itself higher, until it finally reached the top. Being at the top was lonely and scary. Without rivals, ambition dulled, and success grew stagnant. Resting on old victories only meant being overtaken by new challengers and crumbling into irrelevance. That was before Jude arrived. He seized control of DY Group with flawless precision and strategy, lifting it far beyond Crown Group's reach.

Only then did Crown Group fade into the background. Compared to Jude, he was older, but veterans like him never truly lose their power. His experience and foundation were still powerful. Next to Crown Group's influence, Ryan's own family was nothing. Against such a towering figure, he himself had no choice but to suck up and play nice. And now, Tilda had rejected Malcom outright. Ryan cursed under his breath. Malcom was a force of nature, someone Ryan feared as much as respected.

That fear now twisted into anger, covering his humiliation. The confidence he'd worn minutes ago felt like a series of invisible blows across his face. () They left no bruises, but the humiliation burned! It was worse than any real slap because it wounded his very pride. "You want to talk about family ties? Ryan, if you actually cared about them, you wouldn't be here saying such nonsense today! "We don't trade our children's lives for business. Who they love and who they marry is their choice, not ours. We would never use their marriages as bargaining chips to climb higher!

"You know exactly how Preston and Kyla feel about each other. They grew up side by side with a bond no outsider could deny. And yet you still speak like this! You've disrespected us, disrespected Preston, and disrespected Kyla! If it weren't for Daphne's sake, I would've said far harsher words! "Come on, honey. We're leaving." "Yes" Russell, furious, couldn't stay another moment. He pushed Blair's wheelchair forward, walking out without looking back, leaving Ryan behind with fists clenched and eyes burning. Preston's gaze flicked between his father and the couple leaving.

He opened his mouth, but no words came, The truth pressed against his chest: he no longer felt tied to Kyla. His feelings had shifted. What he felt for Tilda was deeper, stronger. But knowing she could never return those feelings crushed him completely. His pride was shattered into pieces. Both women he had ever loved would never be his. "Russell! Blair!" Ryan slammed the table, glaring at their backs. "When did you two get so self-righteous? Always preaching about what's best for your kids! What a joke!"

"At the end of the day ... wasn't it you who drove Tilda away from the Jenson's? Wasn't it you who severed ties with your own daughter? And you dare to lecture me!" Russell and Blair stopped in their tracks, hands trembling. Preston rushed to cut in, desperate. "Dad, stop! They're hurt enough already!" If this keeps going , will our families be torn apart completely ? ... "It's because we failed so badly before that this time, we refuse to make the same mistake again!"

Chapter 643 We Know How You Feel "Ryan, I don't care what you think now or how you might spin it later-the Jenson's will never betray Tilda again!" With that, Russell pushed Blair's wheelchair forward in steady, determined strides, leaving without so much as a glance back. Behind them, Ryan slowly gathered himself, a faint edge of regret creeping into his thoughts. He had expected them to turn down

his suggestion about Preston and Tilda, but he hadn't intended to sever ties with the Jensons completely.

It was always wise to leave some room for future cooperation-especially since the Jensons had the Jenson Group standing behind them. If he burned that bridge entirely, even he might not be able to manage the consequences. But the words were already out. Now all he could do was wait for tempers to cool and look for a chance to apologize. "Preston, go "Alright." after them and tell them I'm sorry." Preston understood how serious this was. Without hesitation, he hurried after them. By then, Russell had already called for a luxury car through a premium ride service. Blair let out a shaky breath.

"Honey, thank you. Having you here makes me feel so much lighter. "You're silly, Russell teased gently. "After everything we've been through, all the storms we've survived, and you're still thanking me? If you keep talking like that, I might actually get upset." Blair reached back to hold the hand he was using to push the chair, biting her lip. "The thing is ... Ryan isn't completely wrong. If I hadn't made so many foolish choices that drove Tilda away, I would've argued back at him. But the words you just spoke... they gave me hope.

They reminded me that it's not too late for us to make things right." Yes, their mistakes belonged to the past-nothing could erase them. But giving up, letting failure define them, that would be the real tragedy. That would turn Blair into someone she despised: a woman who knew she was wrong yet refused to change. At least now, they could speak with conviction. They could promise never to make the same mistakes again. They would never hurt Tilda again. "Yes. The greatest fault lies with me.

Tilda's leaving is on my shoulders. As her father, I failed her when she needed me most-I turned cold, I misunderstood her again and again. When I look back, I can't imagine what madness made me so cruel. Tilda is our daughter. We lost her for 19 years. I nearly gave up on searching. And when we finally found her... I didn't treasure her as I should have. It took losing her all over again to learn what regret truly means. "I don't deserve her forgiveness. I can hardly call myself her father, let alone face her. But Blair, we have to live with our conscience.

We must admit that this daughter was lost to us once already. If we cling too tightly now, we'll only break her spirit again. Do you understand?" Russell's sorrowful words cut deep, squeezing Blair's chest until it hurt. Tears brimmed in her eyes. "I'll ... I'll try, darling." Justin's condition was the result of her losing control, and it even caused her relationship with Tilda to further collapse. Even Kyla had been dragged into the fallout. Blair knew it was time to let go. The guilt, the bitterness-it had to be released. Tilda's life was her own now, beyond their control.

Blair no longer had the right to call herself her mother. "Russell! Blair!" Preston finally caught up to them. "I'm sorry... We're truly sorry. My father spoke harshly because he was too worked up. Please forgive him..." Russell exhaled softly. "This isn't on you. I know you and Kyla grew up side by side, practically as childhood sweethearts. You'd never agree with Ryan's plan. It's his greed that made him think of such nonsense. Tell him that if he can't let it go, our families won't even remain friends."

"Actually Preston hesitated, then steadied himself.

"I've only ever seen Kyla as a sister. Nothing more, "What?!" Russell and Blair froze in disbelief. "What are you saying? Haven't you always had feelings for Kyla? We've watched you grow up together-we know how you feel. Or are you saying this now just because she was scarred, because she's no longer?" "No. You've misunderstood. Kyla turned me down again and again, so I gave up. I chose to see her as a sister instead. I didn't want to keep chasing something I could never have.

Maybe it's selfish, but I just want a life of my own."

Chapter 644 Somehow We Just Clicked Preston lied, though a twinge of guilt gnawed at him. He couldn't admit that Kyla's disfigurement had cost her the Jensons' favor and left him uncertain. Worse still... his feelings for Tilda had grown even stronger than what he'd once felt for Kyla. I'm such a selfish, fickle guy. I don't think there's anyone else who ends up falling for two women at once like this. "Preston, you—" "Enough, Blair. Don't say another word." Blair opened her mouth to argue. But Russell cut her off with a shake of his head.

The two exchanged a glance, instantly understanding each other. All she could do was sigh heavily. They had missed their chance. "I understand, Preston. I won't bring this up again." "I'm sorry. Thank you for understanding me." "No... it's you who should forgive us." As Russell and Blair walked away, Preston felt his racing heart finally ease. In the end, he'd said it out loud. No matter what Russell and the others might think of him later, Preston knew he could never take Kyla back. It had to be said. Better to rip off the band-aid than drag it out. Night fell.

At the Nightingale Bar, Tilda and Una had returned after a long absence.

Tilda sipped the bar's newest cocktail, the "Mona Lisa". She looped her arm through Una's and grumbled, "Una, look at you-you're super famous now. I've been chasing you forever, and you finally show up? What a good friend you are." "Oh, Tilda, don't get me wrong-I finally figured out the tweaks you gave me and designed my own game. Once I put it online, it caused quite a stir! "I've been pulling all-nighters, patching 2.0, then 3.0, hehe!"

Once I get enough followers, I'll start a game studio, maybe even an esports team. Getting closer to that dream feels incredible!" Una babbled on, buzzing with excitement, and quickly pulled up the 4.0 version of her mobile game for Tilda. "Try it out, and tell me what needs work. Alfie gave me some really helpful notes. This single-player game is finally shaping up!" Tilda pretended to glare. "Ha! Una, I was wondering why you suddenly agreed to come out tonight. It's just so you could get a free tester, isn't it?" Una grinned. "Don't be mean.

When I launch the studio, you'll be an investor-we'll be founding partners, sisters in business. When the money comes, I won't forget you." Tilda scoffed. "So you want to freeload on my work and my money? Look at you, already acting like a full-blown capitalist." "Sob... Tilda, you jerk! How can you say that? I'm gonna cry!" They laughed as Tilda loaded Una's 4.0 build and played for a while, then raised an impressed eyebrow. "Not bad-small budget, but the impact and level design are solid.

There are gameplay ideas I haven't seen elsewhere, and they blend well with the Lovecraft-style theme, which makes it more fun. "On a five-star scale, I'd give it four right now. That fifth star depends on longer playtesting. But it's already a polished, entertaining product. Una, when did you get this sharp?" Una pouted. "I might not be as brainy as you, but I'm not dumb, I was one of the top SAT scorers in Slosa!" "Mmhmm, sure, you're the best.... Here's a round of applause for you!" "Tilda, who've you been hanging out with? Since when do you start roasting me? Hmph ...

Though credit where it's due-Alfie helped with a lot of the design ideas." Mentioning Alfie made Una flush slightly. Tilda noticed immediately.

"You and Mr. Alfie have been hanging out a lot lately, huh? When did you two get so close?" "Ah... now that you mention it, I don't really know. Somehow we just clicked." Una's confusion was genuine. When had her relationship with Alfie gotten so tight? She had wondered before and could never find an answer.

Chapter 645 Why Settle for Just One Fish Now that Tilda had asked, Una still couldn't fully wrap her head around it. Even Tilda hadn't anticipated it-somehow, Alfie had quietly, almost imperceptibly, captured Una's heart. "Do you have feelings for Mr. Alfie?" Tilda's question struck Una like a lightning bolt. She froze, mind racing. When she finally met Tilda's serious gaze, her cheeks flamed bright red. "T-Tilda, what are you talking about?! Don't joke like that! Alfie and I ... we're just friends!

There's no way!" "But your behavior doesn't exactly scream 'just friends," Tilda said, hand on her forehead. In the past, she might have let Una brush it off. But now, having someone she herself cared for, Tilda could clearly see that Una was in love-even if she was trying to pretend otherwise. Though Tilda felt a twinge of hesitation, she knew falling in love was natural, even good. It was one of the most

human of emotions. A strong, supportive partner could inspire ambition and fuel dreams-as long as one didn't lose themselves or fall for a deceitful rogue. The problem was Alfie.

He was the future heir of the Woodward Group, one of Slosa's most eligible bachelors. Yet he fell for Una? Tilda didn't doubt Una's charm. She only worried that Alfie might toy with her feelings, discarding her once the novelty wore off. She couldn't allow that. She needed a way to gauge his sincerity. "Alright, Tilda, you're teasing me. Alfie's the future heir of the Woodward Group. My family isn't even close to his in status or influence," Una said, shaking her head. "So how could anything ever happen between us? We're just friends. I'm realistic.

Besides, a marriage between families like ours would never get anyone's blessing. Alfie's family expects him to marry a woman of equal standing-a beautiful, influential heiress who could benefit both the family and his career." Seeing Una grow more downcast, Tilda laughed and tapped her forehead. "I haven't even said anything yet, and your mind is already going there! You claim you have no feelings for Alfie and that you're just friends? Who would believe that? Look at you, already imagining marrying him!" "What ... I-I..." Una stammered, unsure how to reply.

"Having feelings for someone isn't a crime. You don't need to hide it. I've met Alfie-he's handsome, has that aristocratic aura, and is incredibly capable. For any girl, he's undeniably attractive. "If he doesn't feel the same, fine. But if you truly have feelings for him, all these excuses are meaningless. Giving up love because of social barriers isn't love at all!" Una had never really imagined a future with Alfie. No... it wasn't that she hadn't thought about it-she just hadn't dared.

Thinking too much of it only risked giving herself false hope. "I know family status matters, but you have me as your best friend. With me by your side, as you grow into your best self, matching with the Woodward Group will be easier than think. you "The real question is ... do you have the determination to become the best version of yourself for Alfie? If you don't think he's worth it, then we'll just focus on living comfortably for now." Tilda wasn't speaking lightly. She wasn't giving Una everything for free. To thrive in the Woodwards' world, Una had to be strong.

She already had talent and gifts. In her own field, she would shine-but she needed time and space to grow. Only then would people respect her and take her seriously. Tilda knew that better than anyone. After a pause, Una said, "I don't want to think about all that right now. I just want to focus on my game and fight for my dream. Once I succeed in my career, then I'll think about love." Tilda patted her on the head. "Exactly. I knew you weren't gonna be a lovesick fool.

Career comes first, always-doesn't matter if you're a guy or a girl." "Oh, I'm not stupid, I won't let love cloud my judgment. I need to get strong and achieve something first. I'm not relying on any man!" Once the topic was out in the open, Una gradually smiled again. She downed a whole "Mona Lisa" cocktail in one go, exhaling with satisfaction. "Yes! Money first! Make money! I'm going to get rich! Then I can choose any man I want. Why settle for just one fish when there's plenty in the sea? Hah!"

Chapter 646 Slosa's Ultimate Bachelor Una jumped to her feet, glass in hand, spinning in wide circles with a triumphant, gleeful laugh. that drew a few curious glances. Tilda quickly grabbed her arm. "Alright, girl, that's enough-don't go getting drunk already. This is only your first drink, and you're wobbling like a sail in the wind. Who told you to go at it so hard..." Blushing, Una shook her head, swaying slightly. "I'm not drunk! I can keep going! I want to make money! I'm going to create tons of hit games! I'm starting a company, forming an esports team, going pro..."

" Tilda had no choice but to press gently on her pressure points, coaxing her to rest her head on the table until she sobered up a bit. Just then, a surprised voice called out. "Tilda?!" Tilda turned toward the sound and saw Jarrett... And beside him was a well-groomed man-Nathan, Marcus's son. It was the same guy she'd crossed paths with at The Melting Spoon before. Nathan's eyes sparkled the instant he saw Tilda, and he laughed warmly. "It's been so long, Ms. Tilda. I didn't expect to run into you here. What a coincidence, huh?" Tilda ignored him; his gaze always made her uneasy.

She looked at Jarrett instead. "What are you doing here?" Jarrett shrank a little. "Uh... I came to check out the latest PS5 and some new games. Ran into Nathan, and he suggested we have a drink ... So, well, here we are at Nightingale Bar." Jarrett cursed in his mind. I already said I can't handle my liquor , but Nathan still dragged me along. What rotten luck! He had no idea how he ended up in this mess. Usually invisible at the Bells, he had planned to grab the console, go home, and pull an all-nighter. Instead, he ran straight into Nathan.

"Is that so?" Tilda narrowed her eyes at Nathan, her gaze sharp and teasing. Coincidence ? Or did Nathan plan this deliberately... Nathan masked his intentions with a friendly smile. "Since we all know each other, why not share a table? It's more fun with a few extra people drinking together."

Tilda replied coolly, "I need to keep an eye on my drunk friend, so I'll pass. You two men can handle it yourselves." "I'm not drunk! I'm fine..." Una staggered to her feet, eyes glassy. "Let's drink! Keep going! I want more..."

Today's a big career day, gotta celebrate Before Tilda could intervene with Una, Nathan leaned in. "Since she's not had enough, Ms. Tilda, why don't you have another drink? But don't go for anything too strong; there are a few things I'd like to discuss with you." Nathan's look was shamelessly direct. Even Jarrett noticed, his eyes widening. Whoa... Wait ... Nathan actually has feelings for Tilda ? Tilda's beauty and natural charm were undeniably magnetic, especially to someone like Nathan. If Jarrett weren't so loyal and protective, he might have fallen for her too.

Jarrett recalled something he had heard before. You shouldn't meet someone breathtaking too early in life. Once you've been stunned by someone, everything else pales in comparison. A real beauty always has admirers. It wasn't that Jarrett disliked chasing girls. He just hadn't met anyone worth giving everything to. Sadly ... Their bond was destined to stay "just friends." Tilda could never feel anything more for him. Tilda's brow furrowed faintly. She remembered Nathan's suggestive remarks at The Melting Spoon.

Back then, she had rejected him outright and even mocked his height, saying he wasn't worth her attention. After such a blow, she thought he must hate her. And now, he had the nerve to come back again? Tilda had to admit, Nathan's persistence was impressive. Coming from the Bell family and still this persistent? That took some nerve. Just as Tilda was about to speak, another voice rang out. "Una!" It was Alfie!

He was dressed in a deep-red tailored suit, his hair neatly cropped, and his chiseled features looked like marble sculpted by a master. He strode over, long legs carrying him gracefully, eyes full of concern. The moment Alfie appeared, all eyes turned toward him. People might not recognize Jarrett or Nathan, but no one could miss Alfie. Just his height-over six feet-and celebrity-level looks made him impossible to ignore. Alongside Maurice, Jude, and Dominic, he was considered Slosa's ultimate bachelor. A white knight every woman dreamed of.

As Alfie arrived, onlookers couldn't hide their admiration, some staring in awe and envy.

Chapter 647 Threw Herself at Mr Alfie The women were racking their brains for an excuse to get close to Alfie, to leave an impression he wouldn't forget. Alfie wasn't just handsome-he radiated authority. And he was the future heir of the Woodward Group! If any of them could become Alfie's girlfriend, they'd never have to worry about money or luxury again. But right then, in front of everyone, Alfie strode straight toward Una, ignoring the admiring glances of all the women around him!

"Una, how did you get so drunk?" Alfie's tone was part scolding, but mostly filled with genuine concern. Everyone froze. Even Tilda. Sometimes, a single look could speak volumes. Tilda couldn't know if Alfie would always look at Una this way, but for now... it was clear he wasn't just playing around. He probably didn't even realize how his eyes were sparkling, shining like the stars had gathered just for her. It was almost the same way Jude looked at Tilda. Una lifted her head, blinking through her drunken haze.
"Huh... Alfie, what are you doing here... I feel so dizzy..."

No, I need another drink... I need to celebrate that Tilda praised the game we designed..." She wobbled, nearly toppling over, but Alfie caught her by the arm, pulling her into his embrace. Feeling her flushed, soft cheeks against him, the faint scent of her hair and skin, Alfie's heart skipped a beat. A completely new sensation washed over him. Countless women had chased Alfie before, but none had stirred so much as a flicker in his chest.

Alfie wasn't like Maurice, who couldn't resist a pretty body.

He usually pushed women away politely because he found them "annoying." But this time he couldn't let go. ... His limbs felt heavy and powerless. All he wanted was to hold her close. In that moment, Alfie realized what he had been feeling all along. This woman , Una ... she's the one . "Whoa!" Gasps rippled through the crowd. The women gritted their teeth, filled with jealousy and fury. She actually threw herself at Mr. Alfie ! How shameless ! How bold ! She's embarrassing all of us educated , independent women with her behavior ! Mr. Alfie, push her away !

Aren't you usually so refined that you wouldn't even touch a drunk woman , let alone one with no looks, no figure , no charm ? Meanwhile, the men buzzed like they'd stumbled onto a scandal, desperate to see what would happen next. Nobody dared to take photos. After all, Nightingale Bar had cameras, and Alfie would come after them. But Alfie couldn't stop them from watching. Everyone was glued to the scene, eating up drama. A big-name scandal was too tempting! They were already counting themselves lucky to witness it firsthand. the "Una, you're drunk. Stop drinking.

I'll take you to the lounge to rest "1 Alfie was about to guide her away when Una vomited. "Ugh!"

Threw Herself at Mr Alfie : It splattered all over Alfie's custom-made suit, worth hundreds of thousands. Even Tilda couldn't help but facepalm. 4 Una, you idiot ! This is mortifying ! Everyone froze. What the hell just happened ? Is this real ? They thought it was a scene straight out of a TV drama. Never in their lives had they imagined seeing it happen in reality. A CEO, drenched in a woman's vomit, right here in a bar ...

In real life, he'd probably be fuming. After the incident, Una sobered instantly. She wasn't usually a lightweight. It was just that the "Mona Lisa" cocktail had hit her all at once, scrambling her brain. Once she recovered, she felt much better. But seeing Alfie soaked in her vomit made her wish she could vanish into the floor. She was mortified. What the heck! What have I done?! "Um... This suit... it's expensive, right? I-I'll pay you back..." Her voice trembled. She knew it was a top-tier, custom designer piece. It easily cost hundreds of thousands.

Her entire yearly allowance didn't even come close. Repaying it would take over a decade.

Thinking about starting her career and already carrying hundreds of thousands in debt, Una felt utterly crushed.

Chapter 648 I'm Not That Desperate Una's expression was the very picture of despair. Alfie, meanwhile, felt like a thundercloud had descended over his head. Out of nowhere, someone had vomited all over him. No one could feel remotely okay about that. And yet, watching the panic on Una's face, a mischievous spark lit up in Alfie's eyes. A "Alright, Una," he said, his tone teasing, "I see you remember what you did. Looks like I don't need to remind you. "And about the compensation you owe me ...

I hope you're ready to make good on that." He reached to straighten his suit, then paused, remembering he was covered in vomit, and withdrew his hands. He cast a glance at Tilda and raised an eyebrow, giving her a subtle signal. Tilda blinked in surprise. Nathan, oblivious to Alfie's hint, saw his chance and quickly interjected. "Mr. Alfie, she didn't do it on purpose. And besides, you were the one leaning toward Ms. Una in the first place. Now you want her to pay up? With your status, that's not a good look if word gets out." Only then did Alfie notice Nathan.

He sized him up coolly, sneering, "Oh, didn't see you there, Nathan. Tell me-do you think I need your guidance on how to handle this?" " You little..." Nathan's face darkened. He hadn't expected Alfie to treat him with such blatant disregard! After all, he was one of the Bells' most promising sons! He'd heard Alfie was tight with Jude, but he didn't think Alfie would get so cocky and start ignoring him. He wasn't gonna just let that slide. And here, in front of Tilda, Nathan had to assert himself. "Fine," Nathan said, forcing a calm smile.

"Whatever this lady owes you, I'll cover it!" Alfie's eyes narrowed. "You'll pay? And who exactly are you? Una, do you even know him?"

"Uh... 1-1 don't know him..." Una's mind was still foggy, and she stared at Nathan in confusion. Several onlookers couldn't help but laugh. Nathan had tried to play the hero, but the woman in question didn't even remember him. Maybe she didn't want his help at all. And yet, somehow tangling with the CEO of the Woodward Group? That was enviable!

Some women even dreamed of pulling a stunt like this. They would throw themselves at Alfie and puke on him, all to leave a lasting impression and climb the social ladder. "Ms. Una and I met briefly before," Nathan went on, his voice louder, full of pride. "Now that she's sobered up, she may have forgotten. As Ms. Tilda's friend, I can't just stand by!" He emphasized his role as Tilda's friend, as if the title alone gave

him authority. Alfie raised an eyebrow at Tilda. "Tilda ... is this guy your friend?" Tilda slid a hand into her pocket and shrugged. "He's crazy.

I don't know him." The crowd erupted in derisive laughter. Every boast Nathan had just made now felt like a slap to his own face. "Ms. Tilda, what..." "Don't call my name. We're not close. Alfie, I'll leave Una to you. I'm out." With that, Tilda waved dismissively and started to leave. She had enough self-awareness to know staying would only make her a glaring third wheel. She wasn't interested in interfering with Alfie and Una. "Ms. Tilda!" Seeing her go, Nathan immediately abandoned any pretense of helping Una and chased after her. "Nathan! Tilda! Wait!

Don't walk so fast!" Jarrett, finally catching on, scrambled after them. "Wh-what's going on? Tilda, wait! I'm coming too!"

Una tried to dash off on her short legs, but Alfie caught her. "Una, you still owe me. You're coming with me." Without waiting for protest, he began tugging her along. As for Tilda... well, Alfie trusted Jude to handle her pursuers, so he didn't need to worry. Right now, his focus was entirely on Una. Una blinked up at him warily. "Alfie, what are you doing?

You're not trying to do anything dirty, right? I'm not for sale!" "You ruined my suit," Alfie said, looking down at her tiny frame with mock disapproval. "Shouldn't you help make it right? Why are you talking about selling yourself? Besides, I'm not that desperate. So relax." He thought to himself, I'll fatten her up a little, make her more huggable. Then I'll make my move. "What the heck?!" Una rolled her eyes in fury, practically itching to kick him. He's still such a pain! When they first met, she'd intensely disliked Alfie. And now, somehow, things between them had improved.

But still, thanks to him, she was now hundreds of thousands in debt!

Chapter 649 Always Follow Through Oh, my gosh! Una thought. Just as I suspected from the very beginning, this guy is a complete disaster! After all the chaos, the smoke cleared, and the scene finally settled. The crowd hadn't caught every detail, but they were thoroughly entertained! It was exhilarating! "Ms. Tilda!" Just as the elevator doors were closing, Nathan finally caught up and tried to slip in. Tilda was speechless. The moment he stepped in, she strode straight out again. She shot Jarrett a quick glance. "I don't have time to deal with your insane cousin," she said.

"What ..." "Ms. Tilda, did I say something wrong? If I did something to you, I apologize. I just wanted to help your friend avoid trouble, to make sure she wasn't being bullied!" Nathan pressed forward, blocking her path, his voice jittery as he tried to explain. "Alfie is the future heir of the Woodward Group, one of Slosa's top elites. He's taller, better-looking, more influential, younger, and richer than you. What right do you have to interfere on behalf of my friend? They've been close for a long time! It's just harmless flirting between a man and a woman!

"What my friend does is none of your business! You think she's being bullied? Go get your eyes checked. I'm not qualified to fix you!" Nathan froze. Not only did Alfie completely dismiss me, but even Tilda is treating me with total disdain. I'm the eldest grandson of the Bells ! By rank alone, even Jude, the head of the Bells, considers me his elder! Nathan had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, with everyone bowing and showing respect toward him wherever he went.

Nobody had ever dared to reject him or insult him, even subtly. He was the one who always looked down on others. No one had ever dared refuse him, let alone treat him with contempt. Jarrett stared at Tilda, his mouth forming a perfect "O." He remembered how, at The Melting Spoon, Tilda had mocked Nathan for being short. And now, here she was, dismissing him as utterly insignificant. Why did I have to witness this twice in a row ? I just want a peaceful , uneventful life - maybe go home and play some video games . Tilda walked past Nathan, ignoring him entirely.

She didn't think he'd have the nerve to push further after being treated like this. But today, she was about to teach him a lesson. Nathan stepped in front of her again. "Move!" Tilda shouted, exasperated. Then, in one lightning-fast motion, she delivered a sharp kick straight to Nathan's stomach. Even Nathan, a judo black belt champion with reflexes like lightning, couldn't react in time. He was hurled several feet and crashed heavily onto the ground. A scream pierced through the air. "Ah!" Followed by the sharp crack of breaking bones. Tilda flicked her hair back after the kick. Finally !

That feels incredible! "Cough... Tilda, isn't that a little too much..." Jarrett wasn't surprised by the ferocity of her attack, Judging by the sound of the breaking bones, Nathan would probably be bedridden for a month. Tilda sneered, "Too much? You haven't even seen the real me yet." Jarrett was speechless. A sinking feeling washed over him. "Y-you actually hit me ... Even my parents never hit me... 11 Nathan's face twisted in pain as he clutched his ribs.

The kick had likely fractured at least two of them, and his stomach felt as if it had been struck by a propeller. Tears threatened to spill. "Oh, then I'll step in for your useless parents and give you a proper lesson, teach you what it means to know when to back off!" Tilda stepped forward and stomped on Nathan's right thigh. "Ahhh!" The thigh is one of the most sensitive parts of the body. Without special training, a hard stomp is agonizing! "Alright, Tilda, don't kill Nathan ... " Jarrett tried to intervene. Nathan was his cousin, after all, and he had come out with him.

If Tilda actually killed him, Jarrett would be in trouble. Though Tilda's murderous glare was scary, he had to step in. "Hmph. Nathan, my patience with you has run out. From now on, whenever I'm around, you'd better stay away, or I'll hit you every time I see you, harder each time! I always follow through!" Seeing Jarrett plead, Tilda finally let Nathan off.

Chapter 650 This Is Your One Chance Given Tilda's current fury, it wouldn't have been surprising if she'd actually beaten Nathan to death. Honestly, the guy's even worse than that clingy, self-important Preston! At least Preston has some sense of shame. Nathan? He's the king of shamelessness, hands down! Tilda couldn't help but think, Is Jude really the only normal man in the Bells family? Do all the others think every woman owes them affection, playing these ridiculous "push-and-pull" games?

Or do they just get off on being humiliated by me? It somehow excites them, making them feel that I'm more desirable because they can't have me! Has their life been so easy that they crave impossible challenges just for sport? "Tilda ... what's wrong with me? Even if you're not into me now, just give me a chance! You might see a different side of me! You'll see how good I am, how serious I am about you, how I fell for you at first sight..." "I have stayed pure and never dated anyone. I've been waiting for the woman who could make my heart race ... and that woman is you!"

From the moment I saw you, I fell hopelessly in love with you! Why won't you give me a chance?" Nathan gritted his teeth, swallowing both pain and the fragments of his pride. His eyes were red as he shouted. I won't believe it. I refuse to accept that Tilda feels nothing for me. I'm the eldest grandson of the Bells! I have wealth, power, status! I'm sure I'm not as worthless as she claims. Could I really be that bad? "Nathan, I'll make this perfectly clear. I'm not interested in short guys with inflated egos who can't read the room, don't listen, and are obsessed with romance.

Guys like you are only treasures to other women. To me, you're not worth a damn!" She flipped him off and walked away, looking cool and effortless, This idiot actually thinks that because he has feelings for me, I owe him anything. And I can tell immediately how much of that so-called "love" is just selfishness in disguise. If I weren't the world champion and Dane's junior, Nathan wouldn't have been this shamelessly clingy. It's ridiculous. Only Jude ... Jude is the only man who's ever loved me for who I truly am.

He loves me because of me, not because I'm Dane's junior, or how much I've achieved. He loves me because I'm the only me in this world. That's all. Nathan collapsed, drained and defeated. The physical pain was nothing compared to the ache in his heart. () Even though he had been initially attracted to her looks, her world champion title, and the perks of being Dane's junior, being completely rejected left him with a deep, almost unbearable sorrow. He hadn't just been chasing benefits-he had genuinely been captivated by her effortless grace.

But that infatuation had never stood a chance. "Nathan, just let it go. Tilda will never see you that way. Women like her ... honestly, I don't think any man is good enough. Let me at least get you to the hospital-your injuries are serious." Jarrett tried to lift him but froze when he noticed the tears shimmering in Nathan's reddened eyes. Holy crap ... Nathan , who's always modeled himself after the suave yet cunning Uncle Marcus , is actually crying. He's really crying . Jarrett felt like the night had already thrown too much at him. His brain couldn't process it. God, I'm exhausted...

I just want this to end so I can go home , shower , and sleep . "Um... Nathan ... I've never dated, so I don't know what it feels like to be dumped ... but you have to pull yourself together and face life." Jarrett forced the words out, trying to comfort him. "Damn it! I'm not crying! I'm just in pain! I will never cry for any woman again! Never!" Nathan wiped his tears and sniffled. It was the first time he'd ever felt this humiliated-rejected to the point of tears. Damn it !! Tilda drove home in her Porsche Cayenne.

She opened her WhatsApp and sent Alfie a voice message. "If you're serious, take care of Una. You know who I am, and Una is my best friend. If you mess around and break her heart, I'll come for you, Alfie. No joke. "If you're not serious, break it off with Una right now. This is your one chance. Miss it, and I won't give you another."