

Shadows 681

Chapter 681

Out of the Shadows Tilda's Brilliant Second Life Howard and Santiago walked toward Russell and dropped to their knees in front of him, their faces streaked with tears. The sight of his children breaking down finally stirred Russell's wounded and shattered heart. "Dominic, Howard, Santiago ... it's already good enough that you're here... it's enough..." His voice shook as he wept. "I know I've let you down, seeing your father like this. I just can't hold on anymore. Your mother has been hurt again and again, and I've been powerless to stop it.

I'd rather it be me than her. You need to understand that you need to... Moisture spilled from Russell's lifeless eyes. " The man who once stood tall and unyielding now collapsed beneath his own grief. "I know... we all know... " 1 Dominic and his brothers had always known their father. The blows that struck Blair pierced Russell's heart even deeper than theirs. The one who bore the worst pain was not her sons. It was Russell, her husband. No one on this earth loved Blair more than Russell. His love was stronger, heavier, and deeper than words could carry.

Russell valued Blair more than his own life. If giving up his breath could restore hers, he would make that choice without a second thought. Dominic and his brothers had grown up watching it, day after day. Russell's love for Blair had gone beyond flesh and vows. It had become a truth etched into his very soul, leaving marks that could never be erased. That devotion between their parents was what they themselves dreamed of finding. dub But the woman Russell had protected so carefully, the one he held as though she might vanish at a touch, had endured two brutal accidents in only a few months.

1/3 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 Still, the return of Dominic and his brothers sparked a faint light in Russell's fading spirit. Dominic told Justin and Kayden to remain behind and tend to their father.

He and the others stepped outside to demand answers from Wade about Blair's condition. "The doctors said they managed to save her life, but the injury to her head is severe. She lost far too much blood. Not long ago she went through that major surgery after the Sunlight Plaza disaster, and she never regained her strength. Now she's surviving only because of the machines in the ICU. No one can say if she will wake up. If she could, Dad wouldn't have fallen apart like this ... " The news struck Dominic and his brothers like ice in their veins. "She went to the bathroom with Kyla.

Kyla was supposed to stay with her. How could this happen? Damn it!" Santiago snapped, his anger spilling out. He wanted to blame Kyla for this. Blair's leg was crippled. She could not even stand without help. Yet Kyla had stayed outside instead of steadyng her. That single failure had led to a catastrophic fall, leaving Blair's skull broken and her future dangling by a thread. And Santiago's bitterness toward Kyla only deepened. She had staged that scandal that exploded online, framed Tilda, forced her to walk away from the family, and abused the Jenson's trust.

They had given her a place, only to be betrayed and disgraced. Resentment was impossible to contain. "Enough, Santiago. What's done is done. Blame won't fix it. We have to think about what comes next." Dominic forced his tone to stay steady. He had to force himself to remain calm. With Russell destroyed, both the Jenson family and the company were left leaderless. 2/3 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 If Dominic, as the eldest, let his composure crack in front of his brothers, everything would crumble. Enemies would take their chance, and the Jensons would lose it all.

He had always understood what his parents taught him. Building an empire was hard, but holding on to it was harder. Many eyes watched in silence, waiting for Jenson Group to stumble. As the heir his parents raised, Dominic had known this truth since he was young. Every gaze fixed on him now, heavy with expectation, waiting for him to speak. After weighing it all, Dominic finally broke the silence. "I'll go to the company and handle the rest. You boys stay here and take care of Dad and Mom. And the Endralsia deal ...

Howard, call my contact and tell him the land deal outside the city is off for now. Something major happened here at home. We can't push forward yet. We have to keep our ground steady. Expanding abroad will take longer, and we'll do it piece by piece." His words meant casting aside a year of careful planning in Endralsia. The chance had been perfect. Walking away now meant another chance like it would be nearly impossible to find.

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There was no way around it. With the Jensons facing a storm this heavy, Dominic, as the oldest son, could not leave Cetherland for Endralsia to follow through with his original plan. If something happened to Blair while he was away, Dominic would carry the regret for the rest of his life. Russell's mind was already too broken to bear the burden of Jenson Group. The only one left to shoulder it was Dominic. If their enemies struck now, when they were already bleeding from every side, then even the most profitable victories overseas would count for nothing.

A home torn apart here could not be replaced with triumphs abroad. Dominic's thoughts flickered to Tilda. Master , if it were you in this position , you would make the same choice . "We get it, Dominic!" The moment he gave his orders and stood firm, Wade and the others finally let go of the breath they

had been holding. They had feared that after seeing Russell and Blair broken like this, Dominic might collapse too. If even he fell, then they would have nothing left to lean on.

Whenever the Jensons had stood on the edge of ruin, the one person who never faltered, the one who carried everything, was Dominic. Among the siblings, he had always been their shield. He had been their protector when they were children. He was their protector now. He would be their protector in every tomorrow that came. They had not only been blessed with Russell and Blair as parents. They also had Dominic, a brother who stood tall when the ground beneath them gave way. Dominic's voice carried both strength and regret. "I'm sorry, brothers.

At a time like this, I can only leave Mom and Dad to you. There's no one else I could trust with them." Howard pressed a steady hand onto Dominic's shoulder. "Don't apologize. You've taken on the heaviest responsibility, and we all know it. Our strength isn't the same as yours, but we'll do what we can. We'll take care of Mom and Dad. You go handle Jenson Group. We'll have your back here. You don't need to worry." 1/3 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 Dominic bit down on his lip, then nodded hard. "Howard, I'm counting on you." Santiago and Wade spoke together.

"Go, Dominic!" Just as Dominic turned to leave for Jenson Group, the sound of rushed footsteps filled the hall. A man in uniform came quickly, his polished shoes striking the floor with sharp, steady rhythm. "Excuse me. Which one of you is Russell Jenson?" Dominic stepped forward without hesitation. "I'm his oldest son, Dominic. Officer, are you here about what happened to our mother?" The officer shook his head. "We are here to arrest Jenson Group's chairman, Russell Jenson. He is under suspicion of being involved in multiple bribery cases.

He must come with us to the station for questioning." The words froze Dominic and his brothers in place. Dominic's voice rose, shaking. "What did you just say? No, that can't be true! Officer, there must be a mistake! My father would never take bribes! He has always lived honest, always cared for this country. He has given so much to charity. He has lived with integrity. There is no way he would do something like this!" The officer hesitated, his tone softening. "I've heard of Mr. Jenson's reputation. But the law works based on evidence.

We are here because there is both physical proof and witness testimony. Do not interfere. If he is innocent, the courts will clear his name." Evidence. Witness testimony . Dominic and his brothers stared, lost and reeling, unable to grasp it, but they could not stop the officer as he pulled out the arrest warrant. At that moment, the door to the hospital room swung wide. Russell came out, his body shaking

as he pushed aside Justin and Kayden, who tried to hold him steady. His clouded eyes sharpened with sudden clarity as he looked at the officers. "I knew. I knew this day would come.

I don't know who set this trap, but I will work with the investigation. I'll tell them everything I know." 2/3 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 The weight of his words was crushing. Dominic and his brothers could not understand them fully, but deep inside, they felt the officer's accusations might not be completely false. The officer stepped closer. "Come with us, Mr. Jenson." "Very well. But first, allow me a moment with my sons." "Of course. We'll wait by the elevator." The officer stepped back and left. Dominic's voice broke, raw with desperation. "Dad, what's happening?

How could they accuse you of this? There is no way it's true!" Wade and the others spoke over him. "Yeah, Dad, we don't believe it either! There's no way you would do something like that!" Russell looked into the fierce trust burning in their eyes. His own gaze fell, and a long, heavy sigh escaped his lips.

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"Boys... this time they beat us without us realizing it. We have already lost. Hear me now. This is not the moment for long speeches, I will go to the authorities and confess everything. I will accept the punishment that is mine alone. You must protect what remains of Jenson Group. Keep enough money and strength to shield yourselves. Then take your mother to Motrar and find Blaise. "No matter what happens, do not look back. Do not worry about me. I can face what comes. The one you must guard above all else is your mother. Do you understand?" Dominic spoke. "Dad ...

you mean the accusations are true?" Russell's interjection came sharply. "Promise me, Dominic. Stop asking questions. If you still trust me as your father, then do exactly as I tell you." The weight of his words struck the room like iron striking stone, before a harsh cough ripped through him, leaving his body trembling. Dominic's fists clenched so tight his knuckles turned white. Tears spilled down his face, but at last, he forced a broken nod. "I understand. Dad ... I'll do everything you asked of me." "Dominic ..." Justin and the others choked on their grief, voices raw and cracking.

Their eyes brimmed with tears, and it felt as if the world itself had collapsed. They had just begun to rise again after losing Tilda. They had just started to see light at the end of that long tunnel, only for the world to collapse once more. What had the family done to deserve this? Or was it because of the cruel way they had cast Tilda aside that fate had turned its hand against them? Russell spoke to them, "Listen to me. Do as your brother tells you.

The greatest mistake I ever made was refusing to take responsibility for this company, and believing Kyla's lies that drove Tilda away and destroyed her. Perhaps it is because of those sins that the Jensons have come to this fall, and Blair has suffered so terribly. This is the punishment I deserve. "Now I must stand like a man and carry the weight of my choices. I cannot run anymore. This burden has crushed me

for too long. I always knew it would come to this. The only one I cannot stop worrying about is Blair. Only you, my children, can save her now.

Protect her with everything you have." His eyes found Dominic once again. "Go home. In my study there is a safe. The code is 386436. 1/3 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 Inside is the emergency money I set aside for the day when our family stood at the edge of life and death. That day is now. Take it. Use it to settle what must be settled here, then take everyone to your Uncle Blaise." Dominic's voice shook, but he nodded. "Yes, Dad. We will. I promise." Howard and the others could barely force the words through their sobs.

In only a handful of days, blow after blow had fallen upon them. Blair had suffered two terrible accidents and now lay trapped between life and death. Russell, the man who had always held their respect, had fallen into despair and now faced arrest for bribery. The father who had loved his country so dearly now stood accused of crimes his children could not bear to believe he had committed. Yet the way he spoke left no doubt. The charges were real. The truth could not be denied. The Jensons were collapsing. Jenson Group was crumbling. These were Russell's final instructions to his children.

At last, he closed his eyes and exhaled a long, weary breath. He turned, his gaze falling on Blair through the glass of the ICU. She lay unmoving, lost in the silence of her coma. His hand rose, trembling, until his palm pressed against the cold glass. His eyes shone with tenderness, sorrow, and a longing that could never be eased. ... "Blair I am leaving now. I should have left long ago. I am so sorry. I should have listened to you. Now everything has fallen apart, and it is all because of me. "Maybe this is the punishment for my sins.

I told you I loved you, that I would give my life for you, yet I refused to hear your voice again and again. I lost Tilda because of it. I destroyed everything. And I caused your suffering too. "This time, I will not run. Blair ... I finally understand what it means to turn back before it is too late, but the lesson came too late. I cannot stay by your side when you need me most. I am not worthy to be your husband. Thankfully, our children are grown. They have the strength to stand on their own and to take care of you. "Go with them to Motrar. And if the day comes when you wake...

wait for me. Wait until I return from prison. When that day comes, there will be no regrets left between us. I promise." 213 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 But Russell's voice cracked like a whip. "Do not follow me! Listen to me! You know what must be done. This fight is mine alone. Take care of yourselves. Take care of your mother.

As long as you live in safety, the Jensons will live on!" Every one of them stood frozen in place. Their hearts broke as they watched him walk away, and not one of them could take another step forward.

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Russell's figure shrank as he walked farther down the long hallway, his shadow stretching thin beneath the pale hospital lights. In that instant, the man who once ruled boardrooms and shook the business world as the head of the Jenson Group seemed to rise from the ashes. The despair that had once clung to him fell away, and in its place came a surge of raw, burning strength. A police officer stepped forward, snapping the icy steel cuffs around his wrists, then pulled a black cloth over him. His tone was firm, steady, and unyielding. "Mr.

Jenson, you'll need to come with us now." Even the officers struggled to believe what they were doing. This was the man who had poured fortunes into community projects, built schools, founded organizations that helped young dreamers turn ideas into companies, and lifted the nation into greater prosperity. How could such a man fall so far? But the truth stood unshaken. People could know a face, yet never a heart. And in the eyes of the law, there was only one word that mattered, evidence. "Alright." Russell's reply was quiet but resolute.

His steps struck firm against the floor as he moved ahead. Yet each stride felt strangely light, as though a weight had finally been torn from him. The blade buried deep in his chest had at last been ripped free. The cost of that act was crushing, nearly unbearable, but it brought him the only thing he still craved. Redemption. The Jensons had weathered storm after storm. Russell had long sensed this day would come. He had braced himself for it. "Dad..." Dominic and the others stood as if emptied of soul and spirit, their eyes hollow, their bodies frozen.

None of them noticed what stirred behind the ICU door. Blair, whom the doctors had deemed lost to a permanent coma, let tears slip from her sealed 1/4 11:27 Sun, Oct 12 Her fingers twitched, dragging across the sheets with desperate effort. Between ragged breaths, she forced out a voice that trembled on her lips. ... sell ... " "Rus... "No ...

stop ..." The End (The Jensons found out about the previous life's story, and everyone would now sing Kumbaya as they danced around a bonfire) It felt as if her heart had known what was happening, sensing that the man she loved was about to be swallowed by danger. Her mind fought within a pit of black fog, groping blindly, clawing for a way out. A sudden surge of fierce fighting spirit would rise

within her, the raw urge to see him, to shield him. Her body weighed her down like stone. The climb toward waking seemed impossible. Yet still she fought the dark. Russell was in peril.

She could not remain trapped in this void. She had to open her eyes. She had to face Kyla. She had to demand answers. Why had Kyla betrayed her? Why had she chosen to ruin her? Wake up. My body, wake up now. The machines around her screeched, their alarms shrill and relentless, the glowing lines on the screens leaping in frantic waves. Meanwhile, Russell rode the elevator down, flanked by officers on either side. As the doors opened, a sudden flood of reporters surged forward, cameras flashing bright, microphones shoved in his face. "Mr.

Jenson, is it true the police have arrested you for bribery?" "Mr. Jenson, can you explain yourself? You're known across this country as a man of honor. 2/4 11:28 Sun, Oct 12 "Sources claim there's strong evidence against you, and that it happened more than once. How will this affect Jenson Group's stock?" The officer's jaw tightened, his voice sharp and clipped. "No comment. We are carrying out official duties. Please move aside." The arrest was supposed to be silent, hidden from the world. Yet the press had found it anyway.

Russell lowered his head and kept his silence as the officers led him into the waiting cruiser. Behind him, the storm of cameras burst in wild flashes, each photo a nail sealing his fate. Even without his words, the pictures were enough. The journalists had struck gold. Their only task now was to rush back, write, and release the story before anyone else. By nightfall, the internet roared to life. [Breaking News! Jenson Group's Chairman Russell taken from hospital by police] [Shocking turn of events!]

Jenson Group's leader caught in bribery scandal] [Just landed in Motrar, here's what I think about the Jenson case ...] [Top investors reveal how Russell's arrest will shake the market. Read it now, don't miss out.] The list of trending searches burned hot. Screenshots and videos of Russell being placed in the cruiser spread like wildfire. No one could deny it. The nation erupted with whispers, curiosity spinning into a frenzy. The fall of a billionaire over bribery was not new. The public was desensitized to that kind of news.

Such scandals often flared for a day, then faded beneath the latest celebrity rumors. But this was not the same. Russell was not just any chairman. He was Tilda's father, the very Tilda who had torn him down. Their feud had once split the nation's attention, and now, with his arrest, that memory rose again, loud and bitter as ever.

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Tilda's rise had already shaken the world to its core. She unmasked herself as X, taken the world championship for herself, and stunned everyone when she was revealed to be the protégée of Professor Kerrigan, the brilliant architect behind Cetherland's lithography machines' development. Her name spread like wildfire, impossible to ignore. Her beauty was sharp enough to conquer the entertainment industry, and her cool, untouchable presence only magnified the effect. Crowds adored her.

She carried influence that never faltered, brilliance that no one could deny, and a face that belonged on every magazine cover. With such a mix, it was no surprise that every spotlight found its way to her. Now Russell's scandal exploded across every social media and every news app. That scandal was amplified even more by the sheer gravity of Tilda's fame. The Crown Group's push behind the scenes felt almost pointless. "Holy hell, that's the chairman of Jenson Group we're talking about! I saw him once at an event. The man looked like he was carved out of stone, all dignity and authority.

And now he's caught in a scandal this huge? The police actually arrested him!" "Please. You've got to start keeping up with the news. Stuff like this happens all the time. You can't ever really know what's behind the curtain with people." "Exactly. I've been a fan long enough to watch idols go from heroes to frauds. Every time I thought someone was flawless, the truth cracked me open. That's why I stopped believing in those polished images years ago." "Thank God Tilda got out before the ship sank. If she'd stayed tied to the Jensons, she'd have gone down with them.

Their dirt would have dragged her under too." "Tilda's story fits like a movie script. She's that tragic genius who knew when to walk away. Just two weeks after they welcomed her back, she was already gone. She must have seen through them. Tilda is untouchable." The noise of public opinion swelled louder, rising like a storm across every screen. In the center of it all, Tilda sat curled up in the corner of her bed. She held a copy of *How the Steel Was Tempered* open in her lap, her expression calm and unshaken by the chaos beyond her walls.

After answering a flood of worried messages, she stood and walked to the tall window. She gazed out at the glowing skyline, her eyes calm, reflecting the countless city lights flickering across the horizon. The city kept moving, flawless and steady, its rhythm unchanged by the fall of any one man. 1/3 11:28 Sun, Oct 12 Her gaze sharpened, cold and knowing. "So this is where we are. Now the real show begins. I'll watch it unfold. The curtain is almost ready to close." The pieces she had laid were sliding into place.

With Kyla and the Jensons locked inside her web, the grand act would play out as she had envisioned. Dominic was the first to return to the Jenson estate. The staff, many of them loyal for decades, rushed to meet him as soon as he stepped inside. Their voices shook with dread. "Mr. Dominic, tell us it isn't

true. Did Mr. Jenson really..." The sentence broke apart before they could finish it. The weight of their eyes pressed down on him. Dominic forced himself to stand steady. "I'm sorry. This time ... Dad isn't coming back." "No... That can't be real.

We saw the news blowing up, but there's just no way. Mr. Jenson would never do anything like that. We've worked for him more than ten years. We know him. We trust him. It has to be a mistake, Mr. Dominic. It has to be." Dominic's voice cracked under the weight of exhaustion. "Samantha, I want to believe that too. But the truth doesn't bend for anyone. I don't know the whole story, but judging by how Dad carried himself ... it's real." The silence that followed was heavy. Even those who wanted to fight the truth had no words left. "Excuse me.

I need to collect a few things." Dominic walked past them and entered Russell's study. He crouched before the safe and punched in the code his father had given him. A sharp click sounded as the lock released. Inside were stacks of documents and several bank cards. He checked each item carefully, comparing them against the list his father had prepared. When everything lined up, he pulled out his phone and dialed his most trusted aide. His instructions were firm. Prepare his five younger brothers and Blair for immediate departure to Motrar. And there was the thing with Kyla too.

Hatred burned inside him at the thought of her, but he knew he had no choice. If not for Kyla, Tilda would never have left. If not for Kyla, he wouldn't have been blinded by trust and lost the greatest teacher he had ever known. But Kyla was Blair's daughter now, at least in the public eye. She was the only way Blair could balance the weight of her guilt toward Tilda. She might even be the spark to wake Blair from her coma. So she had to go with them. For Blair's sake.

Darrell was still stuck in Yvoria, unreachable, and there was nothing Dominic could do about it. As for himself, he stayed behind. Russell's scandal was a wrecking ball aimed straight at Jenson Group. Competitors hiding in the shadows would leap at the chance to strike. The danger was enormous. But Dominic could not run. He was the eldest. The weight of the Jenson name fell on his shoulders. If he abandoned it now, the empire built over decades would collapse overnight, falling into another's grip.

Dominic would never let his father sit in a prison cell and hear that the company he had built with sweat and blood had been reduced to dust.

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Just then, Samantha appeared at the end of the hallway. Her eyes were red and swollen, and she was wiping at her face.

When she spotted Dominic, she quickly brushed away the tears and tried to steady herself. "Mr. Dominic, what's wrong?" she asked. Dominic's voice was sharp. "Samantha, do you know where Kyla went?" She blinked, startled. "Ms. Kyla? I thought she was still with you at the hospital, looking after Mrs. Jenson. I haven't seen her since yesterday." "That's not true. Dad forced her out the very first day Mom had her accident. She hasn't been near the hospital since then." His words stopped cold, his thoughts turning heavy. Kyla hadn't been home since yesterday. So where was she?

A chill seeped into his chest. She had been gone for two whole days. Her phone was shut off. She had vanished. Kyla... had Russell's rage broken her down? Had she run away? Or worse, had she gone somewhere to end her life? Damn it. Why now of all times? It had not even been two full days yet. He couldn't file a missing person's report. 1/3 10.16 Mon, Oct 13 He forced himself to soothe Samantha with a weak excuse, then quietly sent men to search for Kyla. Dominic had no choice but to push forward.

Tomorrow's shareholder meeting had to be secured, and the board could not be allowed to collapse. While Dominic sped through the city streets toward the Jenson Group tower, his phone lit up with Justin's name. He answered quickly. "What is it, Justin? I'm already heading to the office. I've given orders for your trip to Motrar to look for Uncle Blaise- "Dominic!" Justin's voice burst through, trembling with excitement. "Mom is showing signs of waking up!" The words struck Dominic like a physical blow.

His hand faltered on the wheel and the car swerved close to a concrete pillar before he yanked it straight again. "You're serious?!" "It's true! The doctors are checking her right now. They all say it's a miracle. They thought she'd stay like this forever, but she keeps calling out for Dad. She knows something's wrong with him. She's worried." Dominic sucked in a deep breath. "Listen, Justin. You and the others stay right by Mom's side. The moment anything changes, call me. I can't leave now.

If I don't handle tomorrow's meeting, Jenson Group will fall into someone else's hands." "I know, Dominic. Don't worry. Mom is safe with us." When the call ended, Dominic pulled his car over to the curb. He dug out a cigarette, lit it, and drew the smoke deep into his lungs. He inhaled in a few heavy pulls, crushed the butt under his heel, and climbed back behind the wheel. The haze in his mind cleared with the burn of nicotine. Everything had crashed down on him so fast that numbness had almost swallowed him whole. At least now, in the wreckage, there was one fragile spark of hope.

His purpose sharpened. He had to protect the empire Russell and Blair had fought to build with decades of sweat and sacrifice. When Dominic arrived at Jenson Group, he wasted no time calling together Russell's most trusted men, the gentlemen who had watched him grow up and trained him since he was

a boy. They came in with shaken faces, the headlines fresh in their eyes. "Dominic, tell us this isn't 2/3 10:16 Mon, Oct 13 true. Did Russell really do this?" Dominic stayed silent, and that silence told them more than words could.

One of the men broke, his voice raw with disbelief. "Good Lord, no! I've known Russell since college. He would never do something like this. I know his temper, I know his heart. Something about this is wrong. It has to be wrong!" These men were Russell's oldest allies, the ones who had stood beside him through the birth and rise of Jenson Group. None of them wanted to believe. But Russell had been taken away in handcuffs, and his own words hinted the scandal was real. The truth was unbearable, but it hung heavy over them.

Dominic straightened, his voice cutting through the silence with conviction. "Gentlemen, we can't waste time. Tomorrow's shareholder meeting will decide everything. We must keep the board steady. Jenson Group is sailing into a storm that may last years. I will not allow it to collapse, because this company is my parents' life's work." His eyes burned with fierce urgency. "If you believe in who my parents are, if you believe there's more to this story, then I beg you to stand with me. Help me hold this company together.

"I'm asking you from the bottom of my heart." He bent low, bowing deeply before them. The eldest among them stepped forward, his voice thick with emotion. "Young man, you don't need to bow to us. We built this company alongside your parents. We would never stand aside and let it fall apart. We believe in Russell. There must be another truth behind all this. And when Russell clears his name, Jenson Group must still be standing strong. That's what loyalty means."

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"That's it! We start pulling everything together now and get ready for tomorrow's shareholders' meeting! Ha! This feels just like the old days, back when we were young and working night after night in this company. I can feel the fire rushing through my veins again!" "Don't get carried away. Watch yourself or your blood pressure will flare up. You're not that young anymore. You're turning into an old man." "What's that, you asshole? You want to fight?" Dominic's throat tightened as he looked at them. "Thank you, gentlemen.

"Thank you so much." The room filled with movement as they turned their focus to the files. With the old men lending their hands, even though the situation outside the walls was dire, the rhythm of their work stayed calm and steady. The air carried a quiet weight, like the fragile start of something extraordinary. Then one of them let out a sharp breath. "This is odd. Why has so much of Jenson Group's public stock slipped away recently?" "What do you mean?" Dominic and the others rushed closer. One glance at the numbers, and their faces hardened.

The public stock had indeed drained at a shocking pace. It had been swept up by multiple firms, spread out in different bursts. Breaking it apart like that made the pattern harder to catch. Once those shares piled high enough, they would turn into a force no one could ignore. And no one would move like this unless they had known Jenson Group was about to stumble. Otherwise, collecting scattered stock made no sense. Such a move would be exposed in time. Dominic's chest sank before he burst out. "This is terrible! News about Dad's case is spreading too fast. Tomorrow our stock will crash.

When it bottoms out, those firms will move in again. 1/3 10:17 Mon , Oct 13 And the enemy would never give him an opening. They could dump their stock halfway and pocket staggering profits. The figures were not millions, but billions. Jenson Group's cash flow could never match that.

If they failed to take the stock back, the hidden hands buying in would rise as the largest holder, with absolute control over the company. "So the one behind all these quiet buys is the very person pulling the strings in this disaster." The vice director spoke the thought that haunted them all. Dominic scanned the list, his eyes halting on a name he knew. His lips pressed tight. He pulled out his phone. "Gentlemen, keep quiet. Just listen. I need to confirm this." They watched as he pressed the call. The tone droned through the room. The call was answered quickly. "Dominic, it's late.

What's so pressing that you have to call me at this hour?" Malcom's voice showed no sign of sleep, no weariness. He had been waiting for this call. "Malcom, are you the one behind the firms quietly buying Jenson Group's stock?" Dominic asked flat out. The room froze. Every gaze locked in disbelief. Malcom of Crown Group ? 3/2 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 "Malcom, I saw a name on the list I know well. It belongs to a Crown Group branch that handles building materials.

Years ago, Dad pushed me to work with them. And no one without deep resources could buy enough to shake Jenson Group. "If this whole play is yours, meant to swallow us whole, then since you'll be at tomorrow's meeting anyway, why bother keeping up the act?" The silence stretched. Then Malcom spoke low. "Dominic, you are sharper than most people. No wonder Russell trusted you. I respect that. I respect you." The words landed like a confession. "Malcom, I know business is built on profit, not loyalty. But tell me this.

Is there more to my father's bribery case, or did he truly do it?" "I know your father's character. He would never. But none of that matters now. He cannot escape it." Malcom paused for a moment. "Dominic, Jenson Group is no longer yours. While you still have time, take your brothers and your

mother and walk away. If you push forward, you'll lose everything. No one will save you. You cannot beat me." That was all. The line clicked and went silent. The office filled with heavy stillness. Even Russell's oldest allies let out tired sighs.

"Dominic, take what you can while there's still something left. As long as you live, there's always another day to fight back. You have to bite down on this and endure."

Chapter 688

Dominic tightened his fists until his knuckles turned white. His voice cracked with emotion as he said, "But gentlemen, I still want to try." "You idiot!" The old men who had spoken with warmth just minutes ago lashed out with sudden fury. Dominic stiffened. The words he wanted to say vanished from his tongue. "Do you even realize what you are saying? Crown Group has been planning this strike for years. Russell was dragged into a scandal that shook the market to its core. We failed to notice the public shares being snatched away right under our noses.

We are already too far behind. This fight is . "To charge forward now is nothing but reckless bravery with no thought behind it. Do you want Russell to come back and see nothing but a mountain of debt crushing this family? That would bury us forever. If you waste everything here, you will never rise again. But if you protect what little remains and endure, there will be a day when Jenson Group can be reclaimed. "Do not forget your father's hopes, and do not forget ours.

Even if Jenson Group is gone today, you still have the strength to rebuild elsewhere, somewhere Crown Group cannot reach. If you choose to act so foolishly, then you will truly disgrace yourself." Dominic bowed his head, his lips trembling. "Gentlemen ... I am sorry. I understand." He bit down so hard that his mouth filled with blood. The metallic taste spread across his tongue, and shame tore through him like fire. He had given everything. He had believed he was chosen for He thought he was strong enough to carry it all. greatness.

Yet the enemy had already sunk into their core while he stood blind, realizing only when it was far too late. This was not just defeat. This was total ruin. Malcom's schemes were filthy and cruel, but none of that mattered. Crown Group had found the weak point, and Jenson Group was shattered. In the business world, fairness does not exist. 1/3 10:17 Mon , Oct 13 He forced his shoulders straight and his voice steady, shaping himself into a man who could turn the tide alone. With the help of his uncles, he calmed the panic in the room and steadied the investors' trust. Questions rose about Russell's bribery case. Dominic dodged with careful words, saying little, leaving the decision to the courts. But he knew

deep inside that nothing could stop Crown Group from swallowing them whole. Some of the shareholders in that very room had already been bought.

Shares were slipping out of their hands. If he tried to hold Jenson Group at any cost, Crown Group could simply walk away and sell. The Jensons would be forced to buy those shares at prices beyond reason. Dominic would have no choice but to accept. And even if Jenson Group survived, it would be nothing but a hollow shell drowning in debt. Crown Group would leave richer than ever. When the meeting ended, Dominic and his elders counted what scraps they could save before the company fell apart. They confirmed the sum and prepared to cut free before the collapse dragged them down.

Once it was , Dominic rushed to the hospital. Justin and the others were standing outside Blair's room. The moment they saw him, their voices burst out. "Dominic!" Dominic's chest tightened. "How is Mom?" "The doctors are still inside. She can open her eyes now, but she cannot speak yet. Still blessing. It is more than we hoped for." ... it is a 213 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 ... A 86 Dominic finally breathed out, his shoulders loosening.

"That is good. Justin, when Mom is strong enough, get everything ready. I already made arrangements. By the day after tomorrow at the latest, you will leave for Motrar to find Uncle Blaise." "So soon? Dominic ... does this mean something happened at the company?" "We walked right into their trap. After I thought it through, there was only one path left. We have to let go of Jenson Group. Once we gather strength in Motrar, we will return to Cetherland and take it back." They were losing the company. His words sank heavy into the air, and Justin's eyes dimmed like a flame smothered in ash.

They had feared this day might come, but hearing it said aloud tore at them. Jenson Group was Russell and Blair's creation. It was their pride, the heart of the family. They believed it would last for a lifetime. Now, in a single blow, it was gone.

Chapter 689

"Mrs. Jenson is stable. For her to wake up this soon is nothing less than a miracle. Her own will to live pulled her back. I do not suggest much conversation yet, but she insists on seeing you. Go in, but do not stay long. She must not wear herself out." "Thank you, doctor!" With his permission, the six Jenson children hurried inside. The tubes and wires that once covered Blair were mostly gone, leaving only the essentials.

Her eyelids were heavy but open, her breaths shallow. Dominic's chest thudded so hard he thought his ribs might break. He darted forward, unable to hold himself back. "Mom, are you okay?" Blair turned her eyes toward him with effort. Her voice scraped weakly against her throat. "I ... I am fine... Where is

Kyla? Tell me where she is... "1 Her first words were of Kyla, and even in her fragile tone there was bitterness. "Mom, Kyla... she..." Her voice was too faint for them to catch the anger laced within it. Dominic could not bring himself to reveal that Kyla had vanished two days ago.

He feared it would crush Blair's strength the moment she heard it. He steadied himself and said, "I already took care of Kyla's papers. Mom, we need to hold on a little longer. We are leaving for Motrar to stay with Uncle Blaise. I will stay behind to manage what comes next for Jenson Group." "No! Dominic, that is not the truth. The reason I am lying here... is because of Kyla!" Blair forced every ounce of strength into the words. Her children froze in shock. It took a long breath for them to understand. Howard, always the most fiery, erupted first. "Kyla ... did this?

Mom, what exactly are you talking about?" Blair gasped for air. "I don't know why... I treated her with kindness. So why would she want me gone?" 1/3 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 Russell's focus had been torn away, and Crown Group stormed in, gutting Jenson Group from the inside. They had taken most of the stock from the shareholders' hands.

All of it was only possible if one thing had been true. It was not just Blair falling into a coma. Crown Group had already known that Russell would be dragged into the bribery scandal. The only person who could have fed them that truth was Kyla, the one they had once trusted without question. She must have uncovered something back then and kept the evidence hidden. It was Kyla who betrayed the Jensons. It was Kyla who pushed them into ruin. Dominic's chest swelled with fury until he thought he would rip apart.

The rage was so sharp that he wanted to wrap his hands around her throat and end her himself. His brothers reached the same dreadful thought. Their faces turned pale as chalk. They had kept Kyla close for Blair's sake, hiding what she truly was from the world. That mercy had bred disaster. They never imagined she held proof powerful enough to doom them, proof she used to conspire with Crown Group and sell the family out. Dominic dropped to his knees beside Blair's bed, clutching her hand with a grip so tight it shook. His voice was heavy with desperation.

"Mom, I know you are tired, but I need the truth. Tell me how Dad was connected to the bribery case. I cannot believe he ever would do anything like that." Blair's breaths rasped as she forced the words out. "It started with one of the founders of the company. He was your father's college classmate, my classmate, and a friend to the co-founders. To win a project bid, he bribed officials to push Jenson Group forward. By the time your father and I learned of it, the contract was already signed. If it collapsed, the company would have fallen apart.

2/3 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 "I begged your father to tell the truth, but he could not let years of sweat and sacrifice be erased. He cast that man out, saying he left for a better job. Even the co-founders never knew. Your father destroyed every record of the bribes. But the truth has a way of clawing its way out. "This haunted him every day. Your father loved this country, and corruption made him sick. Yet betrayal forced the guilt onto him, and he was branded as a criminal. That year you were still studying abroad. You knew nothing." Dominic's breath hitched.

"It was five years ago?"

Chapter 690

No one knew how she uncovered the truth, yet what cut deeper was that she had chosen to keep it. She had hidden the evidence for years, waiting for the moment she could drag Russell into prison and watch the Jensons collapse. She had sold their secrets to Crown Group in exchange for riches that would last her a lifetime.

She had even tried to kill Blair, the woman who had embraced her as if she were her own flesh and blood. Her heart was cruel beyond measure. The Jensons had rescued her. They had raised her for 19 years. They had lifted her from despair and given her every comfort. They had showered her with trust and affection. And this was how she returned it. Dominic let out a harsh laugh. His chest heaved with grief that tasted of ash. So this was payback. It was payback for how the Jensons had cast aside their true daughter. Payback for the way they had shown nothing but coldness toward their own blood.

Payback for how they had adored an adopted child while trampling on the one who was theirs by birth. Now they stood here, broken beyond repair. There was no one else to blame. This was their sin, and they were choking on the ruin it birthed. Blair watched Dominic's expression stiffen, and dread carved its way through her chest. Memories began to align. 1/3 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 ... Her mind slipped back to those days.

Kyla had taken cooking classes. She often baked cakes, pies, and brewed tea, then brought them into Russell's study. Russell had been weighed down with unbearable pressure then. Kyla's presence was like a soft wind breaking into a suffocating room. Her quiet kindness steadied him, and he praised her often, calling her a blessing. Looking back now, it was clear Kyla could tell Russell was in a bad mood. Normally she wouldn't have kept pestering him like that, but for a time she did. Blair had been glad that Kyla could cheer Russell up and hadn't thought more about it.

Russell had erased every trace of bribery. If anyone still had the evidence that could destroy him, it had to be someone from inside the family. It had to be Kyla. And Blair now saw it clearly. Kyla had betrayed them for wealth and had even tried to end the life of the very woman who raised her. A deep stab of pain twisted in Blair's chest. What crime had she committed to deserve this? She could understand Tilda's anger. The Jensions had hurt Tilda too deeply, all because of Kyla. Blair could accept betrayal from her. But Kyla? For 19 years they had given her everything.

Everything a Jenson girl could've hoped for. Blair had given her fine clothes, the best schools, and even cured her genetic illness. Every season's limited designer bags, dresses, and jewelry had been hers. Russell and all seven brothers had adored her. People whispered that the Jensions spoiled her too much. Blair never cared. She poured into Kyla all the guilt she held for the harm done to Tilda. She had even wounded her real daughter because of it. And this was how it ended. It was unbearable.

2/3 10:17 Mon, Oct 13 Blair's only thought now was to face Kyla, to look her in the eyes, and demand an answer. Why had she done it? Why had she betrayed them? What wrong had the Jensions done to her? The machines by her bedside shrilled with piercing alarms. Dominic rushed forward. "Mom, please, calm yourself. You cannot let this consume you. Right now, the only thing that matters is your recovery." Blair gasped for breath. "Do not worry, Dominic. I will not die. I know my own strength. Russell has fallen. Jenson Group is crumbling. Kyla betrayed us.

I cannot give in. I must hold on." Her voice trembled with fury. Justin hurried to call the doctor. A sedative slid into her vein, and slowly her body slackened into sleep. The children stepped out into the hallway with grim expressions. Howard's rage exploded the moment they were out. "I cannot take this. I am going to hunt down that snake Kyla! She poisoned Mom and then disappeared so she could escape before Mom could reveal her crimes. She is running away as we speak!" His jaw locked tight, his teeth grinding so hard they nearly cracked. His eyes burned with violent intent.

They had treated her with love, and she had gutted them in return. Howard's mind spun with shame. He had stood by her, defended her, even humiliated Tilda because of her. Now he wanted to tear himself apart for his blindness. And he was not alone. Each one of them who had once placed trust in Kyla now drowned in regret so sharp it felt like it was tearing their skin from the inside out. They had all been fools. Fools who had raised the wolf that tore their family apart.