

A Thousand Faces Hide The Genius Heiress' Wrath

Chapter 1:

“Janice, how vicious you can be! Do you even realize what you’ve done to your sister? You’re going to learn your lesson today!” Laurie Edwards snarled, her rage boiling over as the whip struck her daughter with a brutal, echoing crack. The sharp snap reverberated through the vast mansion, silencing the servants, who stood as still as statues, not daring to utter a single word.

Despite this, Janice Edwards remained stoic, her slight frame quivering as she clenched her teeth tightly, bearing the excruciating pain that seemed to tear through her skin.

“I brought you back, gave you everything you needed, and offered you a place to belong. Is this how you thank me?”

With each word, Laurie’s arm swung, leaving deep, crimson streaks on Janice’s back. Her face turned pale, yet her gaze remained steady, a spark of resolve in her eyes. Perhaps she had become numb to such brutal punishments.

“Now, apologize to Delilah,” Laurie panted, standing with one hand on her hip, her eyes blazing as she glared at Janice.

“Why should I apologize when I’ve done nothing wrong?” Janice met Laurie’s gaze, her voice firm, each word a defiance. Laurie’s fury peaked at Janice’s unyielding stance. Gripping the whip tightly, she declared, “Then I will not stop until you apologize today.”

At that crucial moment, Delilah Edwards, Laurie’s adopted daughter, clutched Laurie’s arm, her eyes brimming with tears as she implored, “Mom! Please, no more hitting Janice. It’s actually my fault—I never told her about my allergy to mango.”

“Delilah, your heart is too big. She nearly got you killed, and yet here you are defending her,” Laurie sighed, patting Delilah’s hand gently, warmth flooding her voice. “She’s just malicious. In her desperate bid for attention, she gave you mango pudding, knowing full well about your allergy. How utterly cruel, don’t you think?”

“But I swear, I didn’t know!” Janice protested, tears welling up in her eyes as she faced the tight-knit pair before her. “I really didn’t know about her allergy!”

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“Still making excuses?” Laurie snapped, landing another strike on Janice. Her words were icy and biting as the sting spread across Janice’s skin, sending a shiver down her spine.

Ever since Janice had returned to her family, any dispute involving Delilah invariably ended with Janice taking the blame. No matter her arguments or the evidence she presented, it was always brushed aside as deceitful.

When Delilah had fallen down the stairs, she had accused Janice of pushing her, and their parents had sided with Delilah without a second thought.

Even though Janice was their flesh and blood, it seemed she held a lesser place in their hearts than Delilah, the adopted daughter. In their eyes, perhaps she was nothing more than a schemer, always out to hurt Delilah in order to win some affection.

Delilah cast a sympathetic glance towards Janice. “Mom, I understand where Janice is coming from. After all, I’ve taken her place as your daughter for over a decade. If I were in her shoes, I’d probably feel bitter too. Maybe if I leave, she’ll finally feel at peace, and the family can heal.”

Her words, coated in a veneer of concern, were a clever ruse to cast Janice further into disfavor, and Laurie swallowed the bait wholeheartedly.

Janice’s heart sank deeper into despair, a silent tally of grievances against her family mounting with each passing moment.

In an instant, a sharp whip cracked against her back, snapping her back to the harsh present. She locked eyes with Laurie, whose gaze was frosty and filled with contempt.

Laurie’s voice cut through the air, icy and sharp. “Just look at Delilah, always so thoughtful and polite! If you were even half as considerate, I’d be over the moon. Yet here you are, denying your mistake, as if you’re doing it on purpose just to piss me off.”

Janice stood her ground firmly. “I’ll tell you once more, the pudding I gave her had no mango in it. If you doubt me, just check the grocery list!”

“Why even bother checking? It’s not like Delilah would deceive us about such things.” Laurie, her faith in Delilah unshakable, saw no need to confirm the items listed for shopping.

“Mom...” Delilah’s voice trembled, her act delicately woven with vulnerability. “If it eases Janice’s mind, then perhaps I did wrong her.”

“Delilah, please, don’t cry. You don’t deserve to suffer this way. I’ll make sure that ungrateful girl is held accountable.” Laurie’s gaze hardened, her grip on her whip tightening, her authority palpable. “If you don’t want to apologize, that’s entirely up to you. In three days, Every will host its first fashion design contest. If you give your design draft to Delilah, I’ll let this go.”

Again?

Those icy words pierced Janice, sending a deep shiver through her being.

Throughout the year, she had tirelessly given in, desperate for a sliver of her family’s acknowledgment and praise.

From the start, the bedroom had been hers by right. But they coaxed Janice into surrendering it, claiming that Delilah had grown attached to its comforts.

Even her rightful identity as the Edwards family's daughter had been obscured, all to safeguard Delilah's pride.

The list of such sacrifices seemed endless.

To stay with this family and gain their favor, Janice had given up more than she cared to admit.

But now, Laurie was pushing her to give up her design draft for the fashion contest, with her future hanging in the balance.

"Say something," Laurie urged as Janice remained silent. "Have you lost your voice?"

"Mom, please," Delilah interjected, gripping Laurie's arm and shaking her head. "Janice is competing too. What will she do if she hands over her draft to me? Though I feel confident about winning..." She paused, coughing weakly, her frame quivering as though she might faint. "I don't think my health allows it."

"She caused you harm, so it's only right that she makes amends." Laurie locked eyes with Janice, her stare penetrating. "I'll ask you one last time—are you giving up the draft or not?"

Janice's chest tightened as she took a deep, uneven breath. "Mom, aren't I your daughter too?" she asked, her voice breaking slightly.

"You claim to be my daughter, but you disregard my wishes?"

This overt display of favoritism broke Janice's heart completely. She closed her eyes, her voice barely a whisper. "I'll let her have the draft."

A sly smile flickered across Delilah's face. While Janice was often too yielding, her design skills were top-notch. With Janice's draft in hand, clinching first place seemed all but guaranteed.

"You do have a conscience after all," Laurie remarked, one eyebrow arched as she nonchalantly flung the whip aside and offered Delilah a warm smile. "With Janice's design draft, you can stop stressing about the competition. Just relax and enjoy the award when it comes."

"Thanks, Mom," Delilah responded, her face lighting up with a joyful grin. Yet, shortly after, a timid look crossed her face as she glanced at Janice. "But won't Janice resent me for using her draft?"

"Would she even dare?" Laurie's voice turned frosty as she fixed a stern gaze on Janice. "If she harbors any resentment, she'll find herself out on the streets. The Edwards family doesn't keep the ungrateful around, family or not."

“What if Janice accuses me of stealing her design?” Delilah’s voice was tinged with worry.

“Then I will ensure that every bit of her involvement is obliterated, crediting you alone.”

Laurie’s harsh words stunned Janice, her heart sinking deeper into despair with each passing moment.

Had her year of endurance and compromise been in vain?

“Huh!” Janice scoffed, a bitter laugh escaping her as the final remnants of her hopes disintegrated, leaving her utterly disillusioned with the family.

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