

A Thousand Faces Hide The Genius Heiress' Wrath

Chapter 21:

If she owned up to her oversight, would Janice consider asking JE for assistance?

“Mom, it hurts,” Delilah whimpered, drawing Laurie back from her reverie. “Mom, why is this happening? Janice gave me the design. Why then is she trying to humiliate me? She’s fully aware your company is falling apart. Why hasn’t she reached out to JE? Is Janice really this cruel?”

These words extinguished the nascent guilt stirring within Laurie. “She’s nothing but an ingrate who despises seeing us succeed.” Laurie shot Janice a look filled with deep scorn. “Are you happy now? Do you need Delilah to collapse right here for your satisfaction?”

Janice returned her gaze with a mocking smile. “If she passes out, I’ll send her to the hospital. You don’t need to worry.”

“Mom, my head is throbbing. I just want to go home,” Delilah moaned, pretending to be ill. Inside, a storm of rage brewed, her desire to dismantle Janice growing stronger by the second. This day was meant to be her shining moment, one where she would soak in everyone’s admiration. Instead, Janice’s scheming had shattered her image, likely ending her aspirations in the fashion industry.

Laurie, too, had nearly succumbed to a pang of unwarranted guilt toward Janice. If she hadn't caught on quickly and extinguished those feelings, Laurie might have fallen prey to Janice's manipulations.

"Okay! Let's head home," Laurie agreed, steadying Delilah as they moved to leave.

"Wait just a moment!" Janice called out, stepping in front of them with a cold, impassive face. "It seems you're forgetting something."

"Janice, what else could you possibly want?" Laurie's voice crackled with fury, her patience thinning under Janice's relentless pressure. "Delilah is in pain and needs medical attention immediately."

"Her headache is none of my business," Janice stated coldly, her gaze icy as she looked between the two. "She still owes me for our bet."

Delilah's expression changed. "Janice, I'll honor it. But my head is throbbing right now."

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“Oh please, cut the act,” Janice scoffed, her voice dripping with disdain. “You don’t have a headache. You’re just too embarrassed to show your face around here.” The surrounding crowd started to snicker and boo.

“Werent you all high and mighty earlier? And now, caught red-handed for plagiarism, you hide behind a fake illness? Who do you think you’re fooling?”

“I swear, I’ve seen some actors in my time, but your performance tops them all. You’re settling that bet today, come what may!”

“Shame on you, Mrs. Edwards. Your precious daughter isn’t so perfect after all. A thief and a sore loser—does the whole Edwards family revel in disgrace?”

Faced with a loud, jeering crowd, both Laurie and Delilah found themselves in a difficult position.

“I’ll eat mangoes!” Delilah weighed her options and realized that she had very little choice in the matter. She knew that if she reneged on the bet, she might as well say goodbye to the fashion industry.

“Although I feel terrible, I need to hold up my end of the bet.”

“Don’t be rash, Delilah!” Laurie interjected, her brows furrowed in concern. “This is a trap Janice has set for you!”

Delilah shook her head and blinked several times to force the tears out of her eyes. “It’s okay, Mom. As a member of the Edwards family, I can’t bring shame to our family name. It’s just five kilograms of mangoes, right? I can do it!”

“Delilah...”

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Chapter 22:

“Are you two done with your little show yet?” Janice interrupted impatiently with a snap of her fingers. “If you’re going to eat, then hurry up!”

Right on cue, two burly security guards came in with a basket filled with mangoes.

Delilah's face turned grim as she took in the sight of those large, ripe mangoes. Janice had clearly come prepared. She had even brought the mangoes in advance.

Janice flashed Delilah a mocking smile and gestured toward the basket. "Please, Miss Edwards."

Delilah gritted her teeth and plopped down in front of the basket. She grabbed a mango and began to eat.

The crowd watched in bewilderment. They were no strangers to such bets, but they had never seen one that involved eating a whole basket of mangoes before.

Aiden glanced at Janice with a faint smile. She was certainly surprising. But was this all it was? Was she really just going to make Delilah finish an entire basket of mangoes?

He fiddled with the bracelet around his wrist. A voice in his head told him that Janice had more tricks up her sleeve.

Meanwhile, Delilah continued to eat mango after mango. On the outside, she looked like someone on the brink of a breakdown. Deep down, however, she was feeling quite smug. The mangoes were pretty sweet, after all.

It was all she could do not to laugh outright at Janice's foolishness.

If she were truly allergic to mangoes, just a couple of them would have been enough to kill her.

Unfortunately for Janice, Delilah was not allergic at all. If Janice was hoping to see her convulse and die from an allergic reaction, she was in for a massive disappointment. Delilah sneaked a sly glance at Janice as she reached for another mango.

"Are the mangoes delicious, Miss Edwards?" Janice suddenly asked, causing Delilah to pause.

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Delilah wiped the pulp from the corners of her mouth and forced a bitter smile. "Are you satisfied now? You must be very happy to see me in such a sorry state."

Instead of replying, Janice signaled to Layne beside her.

Having received her cue, Layne instantly opened her laptop.

In the next second, the large screen in the venue lit up again. “Here’s a video to spice up your meal,” Janice told Delilah with a wide smile.

Delilah’s heart skipped a beat as she whipped her head around to look at the screen. The moment she recognized the video that was being played, she froze.

“This video... Is it surveillance footage from the Edwards family’s residence?”

It didn’t take long for the main characters of the video to appear—Delilah and Laurie.

Everyone was puzzled. What was the point of this video? But that question was answered soon enough when they heard Delilah speak from the screen.

“Mom, I think my allergy is acting up. Am I going to die?” In the video, Delilah was lying in Laurie’s arms, looking weak and fragile. “Why did you give me mango pudding, Janice? You know I’m allergic to mango. Do you hate me so much for taking your place in the Edwards family?”

The crowd was dumbfounded by the scene, and their eyes darted collectively to Delilah, who had been in the middle of munching on a mango.

The current scene was a stark contrast to the one on the screen—Delilah looked like she might indeed keel over and die at any minute in the video.

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Chapter 23:

“A mango allergy? That’s odd. She’s eating them with such relish!”

“What an eye-opener! She claims to be allergic to mangoes, yet she’s been enjoying them in front of us.”

“Is this a medical marvel? Who would have known that a mango allergy can be cured so efficiently? It turns out you only need to wrongfully accuse an innocent person.”

Laurie rushed forward, waving her hands frantically. “Turn it off. It’s not what you think! Delilah’s allergy was a misunderstanding!”

“A misunderstanding?” Aiden interjected, catching Laurie off guard. “She claimed that a single mango pudding was enough to almost kill her, yet here, she has eaten several mangoes without contracting a single rash. Is that what you call a misunderstanding?”

Laurie was stunned into silence. She looked over at Delilah, a flicker of doubt passing over her eyes.

Indeed, Delilah had seemed like she was about to die after she had eaten the mango pudding. But now, after eating so many mangoes, she looked perfectly fine. Had she actually framed Janice back then?

Delilah caught the suspicion in Laurie’s eyes and panicked. If her lies were exposed here and now, would Laurie and Connor allow her to stay with the Edwards family?

“I feel terrible, Mom.” Delilah dropped the mango and reached for Laurie, her face already turning pale as a sheet. “Help me. I think my allergy is acting up again.”

And just like that, Laurie’s budding doubts were dispelled. It only took one look at Delilah’s pitiful state, and all she felt was concern for her dear daughter. “Are you sure you’re feeling ill? Don’t scare me!”

“I’m not lying, Mom. I really...” Delilah didn’t get to continue her words as her head tilted to one side. She had fainted.

“Delilah! Someone, call an ambulance!” Laurie frantically shouted to the onlookers, but nobody made a move.

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Everyone in the crowd was smart enough to know that Delilah was pretending yet again. But Laurie’s judgment was clouded by her emotions, and she completely fell for her adopted daughter’s trick.

Janice had to give Delilah credit—the girl was quite an expert at manipulation. Even when she was on the brink of being exposed, she still had the presence of mind to think of a new ploy and feign an injury.

“I know a bit of medicine myself,” Janice said as she stepped forward.

“Don’t you dare!” Laurie stopped her with a fierce glare. “It’s your fault that Delilah has fainted! And you still have the nerve to touch her? Like hell I’d let you!”

“Do you really believe she is unconscious and not simply pretending?” Janice looked Laurie up and down, finding her biological mother’s stance laughable. Everyone present could tell that Delilah was only faking it, yet Laurie chose to turn a blind eye to the obvious.

“I’ve taken care of Delilah as my daughter for over ten years! Of course, I know when she is pretending and when she’s not!” Laurie huffed with indignation. “Someone, hurry and call an ambulance!”

One of her bodyguards finally reacted and called the nearest hospital.

The ambulance arrived in a matter of minutes, and Delilah was carried away.

Janice wasn’t really bothered; she had more or less anticipated this outcome. If it was that easy to tear off Delilah’s mask, then life wouldn’t be half as entertaining.

She wanted Delilah to sink into the deepest recesses of despair first and experience every stage of grief for a prolonged period of time. She wanted the Edwards family to see for themselves exactly what kind of person they had raised and cherished for over a decade. Most of all, she wanted them to understand that without her, the Edwards family was nothing.

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Chapter 24:

“Miss Edwards...” Layne approached Janice to ask for instructions, but she cut him off by raising her hand. She then turned to address the crowd.

“Everyone, on behalf of JE, I would like to apologize to all of you. What was supposed to be a well-organized fashion design competition has turned into a farce. I’m sure JE herself is sorely disappointed by this twist of events. As her representative, I hereby place Delilah Edwards on the blacklist of the fashion design circle. Such a disgraceful excuse of a human being has no place in our industry.”

Needless to say, the audience was in full support of Janice’s decision. She had JE backing her up, so even those who disagreed did not dare to protest.

In the backstage lounge, Layne stood to one side, keeping a respectful distance from Janice. She sat back on a couch, skimming through the competition report in her hand with a bland expression.

“Transfer the championship to the runner-up,” she said, tossing the document aside. “Regarding today’s incident, I want you to personally handle the matter of public relations. Make sure the Edwards family doesn’t get the chance to exploit what happened and cause us more trouble in the future.”

“Understood.” Layne contemplated for a moment before asking, “Why won’t you claim the championship yourself? You did register as a competitor.”

Janice gave him a sidelong glance. “I initially entered the competition to gain Laurie’s approval. But now, I don’t need it anymore, so the championship holds no meaning for me.”

Layne was sharp enough to understand the underlying implications of her words. He could only sigh to himself. The Edwards family had unknowingly cast away an immense, almost unimaginable fortune. If they found out that the internationally renowned fashion designer, one of the elite few who held sway over the industry’s resources, was the very daughter they chose to disown, would they regret it?

“My identity shall remain confidential.”

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“Yes, of course.”

After that, Janice got up and exited the lounge.

Aiden had been waiting for her outside. When she emerged, he wheeled himself over to meet her. Without missing a beat, Janice moved behind him and took hold of the wheelchair's handles.

"Were you waiting for me?" she asked.

"Isn't that part of my duty as your husband?" Aiden said, his voice tinged with amusement.

Janice leaned close to whisper in his ear, "But isn't our marriage nothing more than a business transaction? If you keep saying things like this, I might take them seriously, you know."

They were so close to each other that Aiden could feel Janice's warm breath brush against his ear and cheek. His skin tingled from the faint contact, causing an unfamiliar thrill to race through his veins. But he quickly suppressed the feeling.

"Please keep your distance, Janice. The moment you cross the line, our agreement is over."

Janice shrugged. “You’re the one who flirted first, so what are you complaining about? Can’t handle it?”

She noticed the subtle reddening of his ear and almost scoffed in disdain. Did Aiden really think he could tease her and get away with it?

“Fine, I won’t say such things again!” Aiden wasn’t at all pleased to realize that Janice didn’t play by the rules. Nor was he amused by the fact that his impulsiveness had almost backfired on him. Now, he was feeling embarrassed and awkward.

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Chapter 25:

Janice straightened, both her tone and expression turning serious. “Well, is there something you want from me?”

“Alcott Green is back.”

“Alcott Green?” Janice raised an eyebrow. Alcott was Aiden’s biological father. Yet, Aiden addressed the man by his full name. Their relationship must be strained.

“He heard about our marriage registration and rushed back to ask about this. I’ll bring you to visit him later.” Aiden paused and glanced up at her. “You know what to do, right?”

“Of course.” Janice smiled, flicking a strand of her hair over her shoulder. “If I don’t show you what I bring to the table, I’ll end up getting discarded, won’t I?”

Aiden said nothing, but the cold gleam in his eyes was enough to answer her question.

“All right. You will see my worth as your wife.” With that, Janice wheeled Aiden to the exit, her confidence leaving him squirming in unease.

He had tasked his confidant to thoroughly investigate Janice’s background, and he had just received the report. Everything appeared to be in order, and all her records were clear.

However, one distinct fact had immediately caught his attention: most of the details about Janice's past were vague, as if someone had deliberately blurred them on paper to hide key information.

For instance, what exactly had Janice experienced at the orphanage? What had she done after being taken back by the Edwards family? There was little to no information regarding these areas.

And today, Janice had dropped the bombshell that she was close friends with JE. There was no mention of the fashion icon in any of Janice's records.

Perhaps most intriguing of all was the fact that the Edwards family had been in decline before Janice had returned. After she came back, however, the family business experienced a remarkable turnaround.

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Aiden cast another sideways glance at Janice, who was wheeling him forward without a care in the world. She had an innocent charm about her, but it didn't take long to realize she possessed a certain edge as well. She truly was what most would call an enigma.

At the Green family residence:

“Where has Aiden gone off to now?” Alcott barked, sweeping a cold glance over the household staff. They tensed under his gaze and instinctively lowered their heads in fright. “Why are you kicking up a fuss as soon as you return?”

Nina Green, Alcott’s wife, descended the stairs. Despite being over fifty, she still had a slender figure and a youthful glow to accompany it.

Trailing behind her was Bart Green, Alcott’s illegitimate son.

Bart looked harmless with his gold-rimmed glasses and gentle, scholarly demeanor. It was a stark contrast to Aiden’s aloof and domineering personality.

Alcott’s expression softened considerably upon seeing Nina and Bart. “I heard that he registered his marriage with Connor’s daughter today. Yes, they had an engagement, but that doesn’t mean they could just register the marriage without telling us.”

“Aiden has officially married that girl?” Nina frowned, visibly puzzled by this development. “But Aiden has always been a sensible man. He would never act so recklessly. Is it possible that this is all a misunderstanding?”

Alcott walked over to take her hand and led her to the sofa. “I had my men confirm it. They have indeed registered their marriage.”

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Chapter 26:

Nina sat down, lost in thought.

Alcott and Bart exchanged a glance before sitting on either side of her.

“Nina, my concern lies in the fact that this girl has publicly severed ties with her family. Without any social standing or a strong background, she is far from worthy of marrying into our family.”

Nina refrained from commenting on the subject. She simply said, “Let’s wait for Aiden to arrive and clarify things. I trust that he has his reasons for doing what he did.”

Alcott sighed and gave her a wry smile. “You spoil him too much.”

“Could it be that Aiden just married her to secure the shares left by Grandpa?” Bart asked in a low voice.

As the words escaped Bart’s lips, both Alcott and Nina frowned. “Bart, how did you know?” Nina’s voice was sharp, her eyes boring into him with intense scrutiny. “To my knowledge, only Aiden, your father, and I were privy to that.”

Bart hesitated for a moment before admitting, “Aiden told me.”

“He told you?” Nina’s eyebrows furrowed, her piercing gaze unwavering.

A wave of anxiety washed over Bart, but he managed a nod, his voice barely a whisper. “I regret speaking out. However, I hoped to prevent any misunderstandings between you and Aiden.”

“Bart, rest assured, neither Nina nor I will hold this against you,” Alcott said, his voice calm and reassuring.

Bart cast a grateful look at Alcott before continuing, “When I was brought back to the Green family, Aiden warned me against desiring the family’s fortune. Despite his

disability, he claimed he would remain the rightful heir. He believed that marrying Janice would ensure his claim on Grandpa's shares and solidify his control over the Green family."

"Is that truly what he said?" Nina's tone was incredulous, her gaze locked firmly on Bart, as if trying to decipher his thoughts.

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Bart, feeling the weight of her stare, quickly averted his eyes. His voice was filled with sincerity. "Aiden is thinking too much. I am just thankful to be taken in and have no intentions of challenging Aiden's claims. My only desire is to take care of you and my father when you're older."

"Oh, you truly are a considerate boy." Alcott exhaled a deep breath of relief, his voice tinged with newfound ease. "Neither Nina nor I hold any grudge against you."

Nina remained quiet, her eyes fixed on Bart with a contemplative gaze.

Initially, she had been skeptical about accepting Alcott's illegitimate son, but following Aiden's accident, Alcott had proposed that Bart return to support Aiden, and she had reluctantly consented.

Since his return, Bart had shown nothing but exemplary behavior and unwavering commitment to the family. Over time, Nina's defenses softened, and she began to accept his presence, albeit just on the surface.

"It seems everyone's here."

A crisp voice cut through the quiet, snapping Nina out of her reverie.

"Aiden, you're back!" Nina exclaimed as she moved towards him, only to halt abruptly upon noticing Janice standing a step behind him.

With a smile, Janice introduced herself smoothly. "Hi, I'm Janice." The introduction caught Nina off guard, unsure of how to respond.

"Allow me to introduce her," Aiden interjected with a warm smile, turning to face Alcott and Bart. "This is Janice, my lawful wife."

"Bullshit!" Alcott bellowed, slamming his hand on the table with force and pointing at Aiden in a mix of shock and anger. "Since when is marriage a matter to be taken so lightly?"

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Chapter 27:

Aiden shot Alcott a chilling glare, his tone firm. "That's just your opinion. I'm fully committed to Janice."

"Janice has severed ties with the Edwards family. She's no longer their heiress. How can she aspire to be my daughter-in-law?" Alcott retorted sharply, completely disregarding Janice's feelings.

After a fleeting exchange of glances with Alcott, Janice faced Aiden, opting to stay quiet. She was still navigating the intricate web of the Green family's dynamics and preferred not to comment hastily.

With a scoff, Aiden pointed at Bart and remarked, "So, how does the mistress's son have the right to step foot into this house?"

Alcott's face contorted with anger, and he raised his hand, agitated. "How dare you disrespect your father like this? I need to set you straight!"

"Alcott, what do you think you're doing?" Nina cut in sharply, halting him mid-gesture. "Did Aiden say something wrong?"

"Nina, how can you say that? You have praised Bart before!" Alcott's voice rose in disbelief, his expression growing darker, though he found himself unable to lash out at Nina.

"He may be a good boy, but that doesn't alter the fact that his mother is a mistress. I accept him because he's there for Aiden," Nina explained, her words slicing through the tension.

Bart stood to the side, head lowered, fists balled at his sides, his mind swirling with thoughts.

"Let me be clear today, Alcott!" Nina declared firmly. "As long as my son is content, I will support whoever he chooses as his partner."

As Janice processed Nina's remarks, her eyebrow arched, revealing a newfound appreciation for her mother-in-law. Nina's affection for Aiden was unmistakable and deep-seated. In the dynamics of the Green family, it appeared Nina wielded more influence than Alcott.

Alcott's expression hardened, a visible sign of his dwindling authority within the family. He found himself unable to counteract Nina's challenge. After all, Bart was his illegitimate son. He couldn't defend Bart openly, or it would only further anger Nina.

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"Please don't argue because of me," Bart interjected, his complexion ashen. "Just being back is a blessing immense enough. I wouldn't dare ask for more."

His eyes briefly met Aiden's as he added with a subdued smile, "I can tell Aiden genuinely loves Janice. His happiness is all that matters to me."

"Bart, you are so compassionate," Alcott exclaimed, a sigh escaping him. "Such an understanding soul! Unlike another son of mine who seems bent on defiance."

Nina cast another glance at Bart, her expression softening. Despite her earlier sharp words, Bart hadn't taken offense and continued to show empathy toward others. It was unfortunate that such a gentle soul was the child of a mistress—an obstacle to her complete acceptance of him.

Janice's lips twisted into a wry smile, her eyes twinkling mischievously at Bart. Ah, that tone, that touch of tragedy—how strikingly it mirrored Delilah!

“Bart, would you mind taking Aiden out to the garden?” Alcott suggested. “Nina and I need to have a word with Janice.”

“Did I agree to that?” Aiden raised his head with defiance, his presence as imposing as Alcott’s.

“You ungrateful bastard! Since when do I need your permission to converse with Janice?” Alcott’s voice boomed with displeasure.

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Chapter 28:

“She is my wife. As her husband, it’s my responsibility to protect her,” Aiden responded, his tone casual yet firm.

“It’s alright, Aiden,” Janice interjected, her voice a soft whisper in his ear. “This could prove to be a perfect chance for you to recognize my value.”

Aiden’s brow furrowed as he turned to look at Janice, his eyes searching hers for any sign of apprehension. Yet, she seemed serene, her demeanor undisturbed by the situation.

“Aiden, don’t worry. I won’t let your father intimidate Janice,” Nina chimed in, her declaration affirming her acceptance of Janice as part of the family. Without another word, Aiden maneuvered his wheelchair towards the garden, his face set in a stoic expression. Bart hastened to keep up with him.

With a subtle gesture, Alcott dismissed the household staff lingering nearby. The room soon emptied, leaving only him, Janice, and Nina in the tense atmosphere of the living room.

“Janice, surely you understand the importance our kind places on social standing,” Alcott began, his tone patronizing as he attempted to unsettle Janice. “Once, you were the heiress of the Edwards family, engaged and deemed a worthy match for Aiden. Now, estranged from your family and stripped of your title, do you truly believe you still deserve him?”

Nina observed in silence, her gaze fixed intently on Janice. While she had come to accept Janice as her daughter-in-law, Nina was eager to understand what attributes Janice possessed that had so thoroughly enchanted Aiden.

Janice maintained her composure, her voice steady and clear as she addressed Alcott. “I’m quite familiar with the formidable reputation of the Green family. As the head of the leading family in Efrery, your influence and valor are unrivaled. But I must ask — does a family of such stature still require alliances with others?”

Alcott’s face clouded over at her question. “What exactly are you implying?”

“I’m questioning whether the future heir to the Green family even has the freedom to choose his own partner. If not, then perhaps the claim of being the leading family is more fragile than it seems.”

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Her words visibly shocked Alcott, leaving him momentarily speechless. Nina, however, couldn’t help but display a flicker of admiration in her eyes. This cast-aside daughter of the Edwards family was proving to be quite fascinating.

“The strong should ally with the strong, a principle as old as time itself,” Alcott’s demeanor was stern, unforgiving. “What makes you think you are worthy to stand among the strong?”

“Mr. Green, I once held you in high regard, believing only a man of strategic genius and vision could raise the Green family to its eminent position,” Janice sighed. “However, seeing you today, I’m deeply disappointed. What principle are you speaking of? Is it not

merely a convention crafted by the strong of old times? Those who cling to such outdated principles cannot truly be considered strong.”

“You...” Alcott stammered, jabbing a finger at Janice, his words faltering in disbelief.

He had grossly underestimated her; Janice’s sharp retorts cut deeper than he had ever anticipated. Her composed facade and articulate responses belied her reputation as the family’s underdog.

“Alright,” Nina intervened, her voice a soothing balm over the flaring tempers. “I now see what Aiden sees in you, Janice. I accept you as my daughter-in-law.”

“Thank you,” Janice replied, offering Nina a warm, grateful smile.

“Nina, how can you so readily accept her? This is about our family’s honor,” Alcott protested, his frustration evident as he raked his fingers through his hair.

Nina fixed him with a stern glance. “Our family’s honor is shaped by our deeds. Should anyone challenge it, they’ll face our full might.”

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Chapter 29:

Janice's eyebrow arched, a silent nod to Nina's bold declaration.

"Something's wrong!" A servant burst into the room, gasping for air. "Bart has been pushed into the pool by Aiden."

"What?" The room erupted in collective astonishment as everyone rushed outside.

Reaching the garden, Janice found Aiden stationed in his wheelchair, a steely gaze fixed on Bart, who was sprawled on the ground.

"Bart!" Alcott dashed to Bart's side, whose face was ashen, water dripping from his hair.
"Bart, you've got to be alright."

“It’s not Aiden’s doing, Dad. I slipped,” Bart murmured, barely opening his eyes.

“And you’re still covering for him?” Alcott’s voice rose in disbelief as he stood, his hand lifted to strike Aiden. Yet, he paused, his hand frozen mid-air, arrested by Aiden’s icy, piercing stare.

“Thinking of hitting me, are you?” Aiden’s voice was cool, a stark contrast to the heat of the moment.

“You’ve endangered your brother, an act I cannot overlook. Surely, you must answer for this,” Alcott asserted, his tone resolute yet tinged with uncertainty. Yet he faltered, a sense of dread creeping up on him at the thought of actually striking Aiden.

“Alcott, let’s not get carried away,” Nina interjected, her hand reaching out to lower his. “Let’s at least hear Aiden out.”

Alcott huffed, his anger simmering as he retorted, “I’d be intrigued to hear this explanation.”

With a shrug, Aiden admitted, “I pushed him in, as you all saw.”

“Why would you do that?” Nina pressed, her expression a complex mixture of worry and disappointment. “Aiden, this isn’t like you.”

Aiden turned to Nina, his gaze steady. “Mom, how do you think I’m supposed to be?”

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Nina, caught off guard, struggled for a response. The son she knew was collected, assured, and articulate. However, since the accident, he had become noticeably more reticent and reclusive.

“Nina, you heard him,” Alcott interjected sharply. “He confessed to pushing Bart into the pool. It’s time I teach him a lesson, lest he escalates to graver actions.” He then commanded the servant to fetch a stick.

“Wait,” Janice cut in, piercing the charged silence. “May I say something?”

“What is it?” Alcott snapped, clearly annoyed.

Positioning herself behind Aiden, Janice eyed the pool thoughtfully. “I’m puzzled as to why you’re so certain Aiden pushed him into the pool.”

“He confessed to it. Are you suggesting he lied?”

Janice shook her head, her sigh heavy with frustration. “Prejudice often leads to dire outcomes. Just because Aiden confessed, does that truly mean he’s guilty?”

With a sharp furrow of his brow, Alcott retorted coldly, “What is it you’re trying to say? Or perhaps you’re just trying to defend him?”

“Oh, the irony,” Janice responded with a dismissive wave. “To think, a prestigious lineage like the Greens, entrusting their name to someone as inept as you. If it weren’t for the solid foundation laid by Aiden’s grandfather, the Green family would’ve crumbled by now.”

“What did you just say?” Alcott roared, his hand raised menacingly as if ready to lash out.

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Chapter 30:

“Stop!” Nina cried out, stepping protectively in front of Janice. “Janice, what have you uncovered?”

Meanwhile, Aiden watched the exchange silently, his expression unreadable.

Despite Janice’s plain appearance, there was something undeniably soothing about her demeanor, an almost luminous quality that captivated him.

“I stumbled upon a rather curious anomaly,” Janice replied with a knowing smile, her gaze turning to Bart, who stood soaked from the plunge.

As their eyes locked, a visible shudder of anxiety rippled through Bart, who quickly averted his gaze.

Catching this subtle cue, Janice’s smile broadened just slightly.

“I’m intrigued—how did Aiden, in a wheelchair, manage to send Bart tumbling into the pool?”

“It was me—I stumbled in myself,” Bart murmured. “It wasn’t Aiden’s doing. Just blame it on my own clumsiness for slipping while trying to push him.”

“Really now?” Janice’s smile radiated warmth towards Aiden, yet seemed laced with menace when she turned to Bart. “But it seems you were rather clumsy, weren’t you? To slip from such a distance and miraculously end up diving into the pool.”

“What?”

The crowd filled with murmurs of confusion.

Their faces twisted in bewilderment; no one could grasp Janice’s insinuations.

“Janice, what are you getting at? If you’re just tossing around baseless claims to confuse us, I suggest you stop,” Alcott interjected, his expression tightening with displeasure as a servant handed him the stick he had demanded.

Nina fixed her gaze on Janice, her voice sharp and insistent. “Are you certain Bart fell in on his own accord?”

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“Absolutely.” Janice exhaled a sigh, gesturing towards where Aiden sat quietly. “Aiden has been right there the entire time, not moving an inch. And from his spot to the pool? It’s quite a stretch. Really, how feasible is it for someone disabled to push this illegitimate son into the water? Though, if the illegitimate son lost his footing here and then took a flying leap into the pool—well, I suppose it’s not entirely beyond belief.”

Upon hearing that, Aiden let out a chuckle.

He found Janice to be even more intriguing and audacious than he had first thought.

Her consistent references to “illegitimate son” clearly made Alcott and Bart grimace with displeasure.

Aiden found her outright mention of disability a bit too blunt and unnecessary, though.

“Janice, I appreciate you standing up for me,” Aiden cast a brief glance at Bart. “To be honest, I did push him into the pool, and somehow, he lost his footing and took a flying leap into the pool. Had my disability not hindered me, I might have been able to pull him back. Thus, my failure to act essentially equates to having pushed him.”

Janice rolled her eyes, both amused and shocked by Aiden’s biting irony. “If that’s how you see it, then I guess I’m involved as well. As your wife, had I been there beside you, I surely would have helped to pull him back.”

At this, Nina couldn't help but burst into a suppressed giggle. She quickly covered her mouth as she realized the timing was poor.

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