

Until You're Mine / Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 191:



His phone exploded with replies as the secretaries buzzed with disbelief and excitement.

“What’s going on—did something major happen? Mr. Scott never leaves this early!”

“Wait, does this mean we get to go home on time for once?”

“No way, right? Edwin, you sure about this? Don’t get us all excited if Mr. Scott’s just stepping out for a minute—he practically lives at the office!”

Edwin, being the lead secretary, was typing out a response when he suddenly collided with Dylan ahead. He stuffed his phone away in a flash and blurted out, “Apologies, Mr. Scott!”

Nervously, Edwin glanced up, bracing for a cold reprimand. To his amazement, Dylan wasn’t wearing that usual frosty mask. Instead, there was a genuine smile—something he could hardly process. The infamous poker face, smiling? It felt like a glitch in the matrix.

Dylan, having just fired off a reply to Christina’s message, hardly noticed Edwin’s panic—he was still buoyed by a surprisingly good mood.

In a rare display of generosity, Dylan granted the entire secretarial staff an unexpected half-day reprieve. “You’re all free to leave early once you finish up, and don’t bother coming in until after lunch tomorrow.”

Dylan’s abrupt halt—right in Edwin’s path—had been triggered by a message from Christina, which he’d paused to answer with unusual focus.

After delivering his instructions, Dylan strode away, a small but unmistakable smile curving his lips, leaving Edwin rooted in place, wide-eyed and speechless.

For Edwin, it was as if he'd just witnessed something out of a dream. Could this really be the same Dylan he'd worked with all these years? It felt as if someone else had taken over his body.

Buzzing with disbelief and anticipation, Edwin immediately dropped the news in the department group chat. He explained that Dylan had not only approved an early dismissal but had also granted everyone a free half-day off the next day, as long as their work was done.

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The announcement spread like wildfire, and the entire secretarial team erupted in disbelief.

“Is this a prank? Did someone hack Edwin’s account to mess with us?”

“Edwin, are you serious? Did Mr. Scott really say that? Maybe he’s been bewitched or something! Or worse, is something wrong?”

“What’s wrong with you? Who cares? We’re leaving early and getting a bonus morning off! This is basically a modern miracle!”

“Do you think Mr. Scott’s finally found someone special? Maybe he’s planning a big romantic date, and he’s so happy that he’s letting us go early. If so, his girlfriend is a godsend.”

“Not likely. Mr. Scott has always been all business—he doesn’t care for dating, and he’d never get giddy over anything so simple.”

The truth was, Edwin himself was desperate to uncover the reason behind Dylan’s sudden generosity—but he didn’t dare ask. His curiosity gnawed at him, an itch he couldn’t quite scratch.

Dylan returned to the Banriew Estates villa with a rare spring in his step, but his good mood evaporated the instant he spotted a guest in the living room. The lines on his face sharpened, and his brows flickered just enough to reveal his displeasure. What was Elliott doing here, of all places? Christina hadn’t mentioned a word about Elliott’s presence when they’d spoken earlier.

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Catching Dylan's confusion, Christina explained, "Elliott just dropped by to chat about some drifting techniques—something about racing." Earlier that day, not long after Christina had ended her call with Dylan, Elliott had shown up at her door. She still remembered how, back in Rockland, Elliott had stepped up for her when Brendon tried to cause trouble. She hadn't forgotten that.

"It's nearly dinner," Dylan said, his underlying message impossible to miss. Of all the moments to show up, Elliott had chosen the most inconvenient one. Elliott's intentions couldn't be more transparent.

Before Christina could respond, Elliott offered a grin at Dylan. "My apologies. I ran into an issue with my race car and couldn't figure it out. I thought I'd drop by for Miss Jones's help. Didn't really think about the timing, to be honest." Turning to Christina, he added with genuine regret, "I hope I'm not crashing your dinner plans, Miss Jones."

"It's alright," Christina replied without missing a beat. "I've got four servings of steak and pasta ready. If you don't mind, you're welcome to join us for dinner."

Originally, Morse had been slated to join them after his session, but he'd canceled at the last second. That extra serving of steak and pasta turned out to be just right for Elliott.

"Mind? Not in the slightest," Elliott replied, flashing a look at Dylan that almost dared him to object. "I'd be delighted to stay."

Dylan's expression hardened into something glacial. Elliott's very presence rubbed him the wrong way.

"Food will be ready in a sec," Christina said. "You two grab a spot—I'll go get Chloe." With that, she slipped out of the room.

The moment Christina disappeared, a heavy, electric silence fell between Dylan and Elliott, as if the whole room was holding its breath. Neither man flinched. Both exuded an effortless confidence, each refusing to be the first to look away.

For a second, Elliott felt his certainty flicker, but pride kept him firmly in place.

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Christina soon wheeled Chloe into the dining area, instantly sensing something strange in the air—a tautness that prickled at her nerves. Yet, with Dylan and Elliott sitting calmly at the table, it was hard to pinpoint the cause. Were it not for the lack of black eyes or split lips, she might have assumed there had been a scuffle.

A cheerful voice broke the tension. “Dylan,” Chloe called out, her smile warm and inviting.

“Dylan.” He stood up smoothly, moving to take charge of the wheelchair and help settle Chloe at the table.

“I heard Elliott dropped by tonight. Glad to have you!” Chloe said, turning to him with a welcoming smile.

“Appreciate it, Miss Scott. And thank you, Miss Jones, for having me,” Elliott replied, polite and easygoing.

“Let’s see if dinner lives up to your standards. Go ahead and dig in,” Chloe replied, her voice light.

“Okay,” Elliott responded, carefully cutting into his steak and sampling a bite. He took his time savoring the flavor before offering an approving nod. “This is really good.”

“Happy to hear that,” Chloe said with a small laugh, lifting her glass. “Let’s have a toast!”

Dylan, Elliott, and Christina joined her, glasses raised, chiming together before each of them took a drink.

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“I’ve got some updates to share,” Christina said, drawing all eyes to her.

“Is it good news, Christina?” Chloe asked, practically bouncing in her chair. “Don’t keep us in suspense!”

A smile broke across Christina’s face. “Absolutely. There’s finally a clue about Woodfort.”

The bombshell left Dylan and Chloe stunned for a moment. A flood of joy rushed through Chloe, her thoughts scattered, and happy tears slid down her cheeks.

Chloe blinked in disbelief. “Christina, are you serious? Is what you said true?”

“It’s true,” Christina assured her. “Once we secure the Woodfort, you’ll finally have the prescription you need.”

This lead had actually come from Laretta, who had called Christina earlier. However, Laretta had kept the source a secret, stressing that Christina couldn’t reveal her involvement to anyone.

Laretta had simply offered Christina two choices: Christina could either pick it up the next day or have it sent to any address she preferred.

After mulling it over, Christina had decided to meet Laretta the next day to collect it.

Dylan looked at Christina, genuinely taken aback. “How did you manage to track it down?” He’d pulled every string he could think of, but the Woodfort had remained elusive—yet Christina had managed to get her hands on it.

“A kind benefactor stepped in for me,” Christina replied. “I’d helped her once before, and when she heard what I needed, she offered to help and found it. But she doesn’t want to share how she got it, or who provided it.”

Elliott commented, “That’s incredible. You’re lucky to know someone so resourceful and generous enough to hand over the Woodfort.”

“Tell me how much she wants for it,” Dylan said after thinking for a moment. “I’ll transfer you the money so you can pass it on.”

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With the benefactor preferring to stay in the shadows, Dylan decided to let Christina handle the rest while he covered the cost.

“There’s no need for payment right now,” Christina replied gently. She had tried to repay Laretta, but Laretta had been adamant—if money changed hands, the Woodfort would be off the table. Christina had no choice but to comply.

“If your friend ever needs anything, as long as it’s within reason, I’ll do whatever I can,” Dylan said, his tone unwavering.

“Got it. I’ll let her know you’re grateful,” Christina replied.

Chloe's voice wavered with emotion, a bright smile breaking through. "Christina, thank you—and please thank your benefactor for me as well."

"You don't have to thank me. Your good luck is in the picture," Christina responded with a reassuring smile. It felt as though the universe itself had orchestrated this moment.

"Let's mark the occasion with a toast," Chloe suggested, raising her glass high.

Such a moment certainly deserved to be celebrated. Everyone lifted their glasses in unison, the soft chime of crystal echoing through the room before each took a slow, celebratory sip.

With wine flowing freely that evening, Dylan decided to stay the night, while Elliott had his driver take him home.

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Much later, under the cover of night, Katie stretched out, a satisfied smirk playing on her lips as she admired the mischief she had set in motion. She was certain Christina was doomed this time.

Smug and self-assured, she powered down her computer and headed off to wash up.

Exhaustion soon overtook her, and she slipped beneath the sheets, falling asleep instantly.

The first part of the night passed in deep, dreamless sleep—until a sudden, maddening itch struck her lips.

Katie stirred, furrowing her brow as she began to claw at her mouth in irritation. But no matter how much she scratched, the itch seemed just out of reach—buried beneath the skin. It was as if something was wriggling deeper, tunneling through her lips, sending waves of discomfort through her nerves.

With every desperate rub, the sensation only grew, turning into relentless agony—like some invisible worm gnawing at her very nerves and marrow.

She wanted to scream—her lips burned with the urge to scratch, the itching unbearable! The pain was overwhelming. It felt as though the searing itch and sharp stabs were conspiring to drive her insane.

Snapping awake from the torment, Katie stared in horror at her bloodied hands—she had clawed at her lips until they split open. Scratches crisscrossed her body, yet nothing dulled the twin assault of pain and itching that seemed to burrow even deeper. She couldn't take it anymore. Each new wave of agony was more than she could endure. She fought to keep her hands away from her mouth, but the urge to scratch was stronger than her willpower. What kind of curse made her lips throb and burn like this?

Sobbing uncontrollably, Katie rolled off the bed, dragging herself across the floor. "Somebody—please! Mom, help me! Brendon, where are you? It's—oh, it's too much! Please, make it stop..."

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Katie's anguished screams tore through the night, jolting the entire Dawson family out of bed. They stood frozen, paralyzed by the horrifying sight before them. Blood streaked across Katie's skin, her lips torn and still oozing, crimson staining her nails. She begged for help, her eyes wild with pain, her entire appearance both heartbreaking and terrifying.

"Mom... Brendon... Help me..." Katie whimpered, barely able to speak.

Joselyn rushed to her side, frantic, pulling her daughter close. "Sweetheart, what happened? What did you do to yourself?"

Brendon stepped forward, his face dark with concern. "We need to get her to the hospital—now!"

In record time, they rushed to the emergency room, but despite a battery of tests, the doctors found nothing.

Outrage surged within Joselyn. "What kind of doctors are you? Useless! Can't you see my child is suffering? There's clearly something wrong, and yet none of you can figure it out!"

The attending doctor, not one to tolerate insult, snapped back, "If you're so skilled, why don't you take her home and treat her yourself?"

Joselyn shot back, "If I could heal her, do you think I'd bring her to the hospital? You'd all be out of work!"

The doctor, unwilling to argue any longer, replied curtly, "You're free to take her to another hospital if you doubt our diagnosis," before turning and walking away with the nurses.

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Deep down, even the doctor was baffled. Everything pointed to a genuine issue, yet every test came back clean.

“You’re all useless! I’m filing a formal complaint!” Joselyn shouted after the medical staff, her voice echoing down the hallway. Brendon stepped in, gently pulling her away.

“We need to focus on Katie,” Brendon said, his brow furrowed with worry. “There’s no point wasting time arguing with them.”

“But what now?” Joselyn’s voice cracked, her nerves nearly giving way. “This is the top hospital in the city, and even they can’t find what’s wrong. How are we supposed to help her?”

Brendon’s silence only deepened her panic. “Maybe we should transfer Katie to the best hospital in Lorbridge,” she said, wringing her hands. “They have the best specialists and technology in the country—if they can’t help, we’ll look for treatment overseas.”

A faint voice broke through the tension. “Brendon...” Katie managed to speak up, her pain easing slightly. “Isn’t Dr. Emmett still in Dorfield?”

“But Emmett’s a surgeon,” Joselyn blurted. “Would he even know how to treat something like this?”

“Most doctors know the basics,” Brendon replied. “Someone like Dr. Emmett probably knows more than most. We’ve got to give it a shot.” He had planned to wait a couple more days before heading to Lorbridge, but Katie’s mention of Calvin brought Dorfield back to his mind.

“I’ll track down where Dr. Emmett is staying and see if I can get him to come by,” Brendon said.

Katie briefly considered asking Christina to contact Calvin, but the thought of Christina exploiting her misery or setting impossible terms stopped her cold. She refused to let Christina find any satisfaction in her suffering, so she swallowed the idea.

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Elsewhere, Thea, lost in sleep, was suddenly overtaken by the same maddening itch. At first, she managed to resist, but soon the crawling sensation gnawed at her nerves, and she couldn't stop herself from scratching. Each scratch only made things worse, the torment intensifying in a relentless cycle.

The other two who had been poisoned were in no better shape, each struggling with agony that refused to relent.

Worried about Leona coming after her, the senior sales assistant had quickly packed up and moved to a nearby city.

Claude, having lost all hope for his career in Dorfield, had also relocated.

Both of them ended up in hospitals, with doctors baffled, unable to find any trace of what was causing their suffering.

The next morning, Christina was still deeply asleep when her phone began ringing nonstop.

Groaning softly, she reached out with her eyes still closed, blindly searching for her phone until her hand finally wrapped around it. "Mm... Hello?" she murmured, her voice thick with sleep.

"Seriously, Christina? The internet is blowing up, and you're still sleeping like a baby?" Davina's playful voice came through the speaker, clearly amused.

Hearing that tone, Christina immediately knew it wasn't a real emergency. If Davina was joking, it couldn't be that serious. With her eyes still closed, she asked lazily, "What happened?"

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Davina explained, “Someone posted that you cheated during your marriage, and now you’re living off some rich, older guy. It’s all over the internet. People are tearing you apart. I sent you the link.”

“I’ll look at it later,” Christina said calmly, unfazed.

They chatted for a minute or two before ending the call.

Still wrapped in her sheets, Christina lay there for a moment before finally sitting up. Her hair was a mess, her eyes barely open, and she looked like someone who hadn’t fully returned to the real world yet. She stretched her arms above her head, yawned quietly, and finally stood up.

As she walked toward the bathroom, she opened the message from Davina and tapped the link.

One look at the article was enough. The headline accused her of infidelity during her marriage and claimed that she became involved with a married man after her divorce. According to the post, she was being “kept” by an older man who spoiled her with luxury.

Several photos were attached—one of her stepping out of a sleek black car and another of her walking into a high-end boutique, dressed casually. Below the article, the comments were already piling up.

“She looks beautiful but has no shame! The man’s wife stood by him for years, and this woman just shows up to enjoy the riches. Disgusting!”

“She cheated during her marriage, and now she’s a homewrecker? She’s always been like this. Any man who ends up with her is asking for trouble.”

“Women like her ruin families. A man should marry someone decent, not someone like that.”

“And where’s the man in all of this? The entire post is just speculation. People should stop judging without facts.”

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“Oh, please. If someone spoke up like this, they must have proof. If she tries to deny it, trust me—someone will present the evidence!”

As Christina scrolled through the comments, she noticed something. The few people who dared to defend her were immediately attacked, mocked, dismissed, and even insulted by those who didn’t care about the truth.

Some commenters shrugged off the entire situation, saying things like, “Men cheat. It’s normal. Boys will be boys.”

According to them, men worked hard to provide, so a “moment of unfaithfulness” didn’t really matter. As long as they came back home in the end, everything was supposedly fine. Better late than never, they said.

Christina let out a small, humorless smile. The absurdity was almost comical. When men messed up, it was dismissed as natural, even forgivable. But when women did the same, the world turned savage. The backlash was brutal, filled with venom, as if people wanted to tear her apart for daring to be flawed. The hypocrisy was blinding.

She exited the app, set her phone aside, and walked into the bathroom. Calmly, she began brushing her teeth and washing her face.

Later, in the dining room, Chloe gazed at Christina, opened her mouth several times, but eventually clamped it shut.

After a pause, Chloe finally spoke up, her voice hesitant as she was unsure whether she should bring this up. “Christina...”

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Christina glanced up with a faint smile. “You mean about me trending online?” She arched a brow, her tone light, almost amused. She was now among the top trends—for all the wrong reasons.

“Christina, don’t take it to heart,” Chloe said quickly, her face flushed with frustration. “Dylan and I are here for you. It’s all lies, and people are being cruel. You didn’t do anything wrong.”

She looked at Christina closely, thinking the smile Christina wore was just a mask, hiding how much it hurt inside.

“I didn’t expect to go viral so fast,” Christina replied with a chuckle. “I guess I’m officially an internet celebrity now.”

Dylan also thought that Christina was merely putting on a brave face, and he felt a pang of sympathy for her. The thought of all those strangers hurling cruel insults at her made his jaw tighten. A flash of anger flickered in his eyes.

Dylan gazed at Christina. “Let me take care of it. I’ll make sure the trending topics and the news get removed.”

Christina shook her head, steady and unruffled. “That’s not necessary,” she replied, declining his help. “If we take down the news or the trending posts now, it’ll only make people suspect I have something to hide.” Removing those topics would only fuel the fire, turning public opinion even more vicious. That was exactly what the real culprit wanted. She wouldn’t let them get what they wanted. Anyone bold enough to spread rumors and drag her name through the mud should be ready for the backlash.

Dylan’s brow furrowed. “Then we’ll track down whoever started this and set the record straight,” he said.

“You don’t need to get involved for now. I’ll take care of it myself,” Christina replied.

He exhaled and gave a small nod. “Alright. But if things get out of hand, promise me you’ll reach out. Don’t carry this all by yourself.”

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“I promise.” A gentle smile touched Christina’s lips. Gratitude and warmth welled up inside her.

Chloe chimed in, her eyes shining with pride as she spoke of her brother. “If tracking down the mastermind proves too tough, Dylan’s the one you should ask. He’s incredible—no way he’d let you down.”

Christina let out a light laugh. “That sounds good. Should I hit a wall, I’ll turn to him for sure.”

Grinning, Chloe nudged a bowl closer to Christina. “Have another helping of porridge. Dylan was up before dawn just to make it for you, you know,” she added, ever eager to nudge her brother and Christina together.

A brief pause passed before Christina smiled and picked up her spoon. “Having Dylan stay over does have its perks. Waking up to breakfast like this is a real treat.”

Not missing the chance to give credit where it's due, Christina turned to Dylan. "Honestly, your food is incredible. If you ever wanted to switch careers, you'd make an outstanding chef."

Puffing up with pride, Chloe jumped in. "You bet it is! Dylan's cooking is so impressive that top chefs want his secrets. Imagine it, Christina. If you and Dylan get married, you'll never miss out on meals like this. Even if everything else fails, his food will keep everyone happy—and well-fed."

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Excitement radiated from Chloe, her words tumbling out in a stream.

Had Dylan not noticed the genuine delight on Christina's face, he probably would have stepped in and told his sister to dial back her matchmaking efforts. It was good to see Christina momentarily forget about the online drama, even if just for a brief moment.

Meanwhile, Brendon stepped into the hospital room with a heavy burden on his face, Yolanda trailing behind him.

Yolanda tried to ease his anxiety. "Brendon, don't worry. I'm sure we'll eventually meet Dr. Emmett," she said gently.

Watching Christina get dragged through the mud online had lifted Yolanda's spirits today.

Patience was wearing thin for Brendon. "Eventually could mean forever. We can't let Katie suffer like this indefinitely," he said, his brow creased. One glance at his sister's condition left him with a sharp ache in his chest.

Annoyance flickered in Yolanda's eyes at his impatience, though she masked it and replied, "Katie mentioned that Christina might be able to contact Dr. Emmett and secure his treatment. Why not ask Christina for help?"

Katie frowned, displeasure clear on her face. “Do you really believe that? Christina just got lucky in getting Dr. Emmett’s help. What makes you think she has enough pull to ask a favor and actually get it?”

Yolanda said, “Even so, isn’t it worth a shot? What if she pulls it off?”

Deep down, Yolanda secretly wished Christina would buckle under the online pressure and then take the fall if she failed to get Calvin involved.

Dealing Christina a setback on two fronts, Yolanda doubted Christina would hold up for long. A part of her even wondered just how far Christina’s pride could carry her.

Joselyn’s heart tightened as she watched Katie shrink into herself in just a few days. A heavy sigh escaped her lips. “Actually, Yolanda has a point. Why not let Christina give it a shot? Otherwise, when will Katie finally heal? Besides, Katie can’t skip the Hubbard family’s reunion banquet.”

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Initially tempted to reject the idea of seeking Christina’s help, Katie changed her mind at the reminder of the approaching banquet. “Fine. I guess I’ll let Christina help, but don’t expect me to repay her any favors.”

Joselyn replied immediately, “You will owe her nothing even if she helps you this time. Honestly, after all the assets and money we’ve given her, it’s the least she can do to repay us.”

Katie scoffed. “She definitely owes our family plenty. If it weren’t for the generous settlement we gave her for the divorce, she’d still be scrambling to survive after all those years as a housewife.”

A cold glare hardened Joselyn’s features. “Yet, even after all that, she refuses to show an ounce of gratitude. Ever since the divorce, she’s done nothing but push back against us.”

Measured hesitation flickered in Yolanda’s eyes. “Maybe... Maybe Christina had her reasons. Otherwise, why would she end up as someone’s mistress after everything? Oh—I didn’t mean—” Her voice trailed off as she pressed a hand to her mouth, pretending to regret the slip.

Curiosity flashed across Joselyn’s face. “What do you mean by that?”

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Katie abruptly remembered the article she had posted online. With all the chaos surrounding her illness, she had nearly forgotten about her plot. She hadn't even checked the public reactions.

"It's nothing, really," Yolanda shook her head, but her reaction only drew more attention.

Brendon narrowed his eyes. "Yolanda, are you onto something?"

A calculated tremor ran through Yolanda's voice. "I have no idea..." She bit her lip and avoided everyone's gaze.

Brendon didn't back down. "You know I'll dig up the truth, whether you tell me or not," he said, his tone icy.

Finally, Yolanda revealed, her voice softening as if she were defending Christina. "It's not that I don't want to say, but I think the online accusations against Christina's slander. Claims of her cheating during the marriage and being kept by an older man after the divorce should all be false..."

With a perfectly timed sigh, Yolanda managed to drop every detail right into their laps, feigning innocence even as she spilled the whole story.

Rage flared in Joselyn's eyes as she slammed her hand on the table. "That woman has no shame whatsoever! After everything my son did for her, she turned around and betrayed him. Marrying into our family was the best thing that ever happened to her. Even when they divorced, she walked away with a small fortune—and still, she refuses to show any gratitude!"

Disgust crept across Brendon's face, the memory of Elliott defending Christina stinging far more than he'd admit. That wound felt raw again. Never had it crossed his mind that Christina could have been so skilled at wrapping men around her finger.

His lips pressed into a thin line. He snatched up his phone and started scrolling through headlines, searching for anything about Christina. Every article and spiteful comment only fanned the flames of his anger.

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“Christina doesn’t strike me as the frivolous type. Brendon, you can’t believe those rumors.” Yolanda made one more subtle attempt to smear Christina.

“That’s enough. I have my own judgment,” Brendon replied, his tone colder than ice.

Yolanda couldn’t hide her delight as she watched Brendon’s expression darken. She secretly hoped resentment would take root in his heart.

Sprawled out on her hospital bed, Katie found it nearly impossible to suppress her joy. Watching the scandal she had set in motion gain momentum and seeing Christina dragged through the mud almost made her laugh out loud.

Brendon reached for his phone and dialed Christina’s number. But the phone rang several times before being hung up. Unwilling to give up, he dialed again. Call after call ended with her hanging up, and eventually, she switched off her phone.

Frustration threatened to boil over. Brendon gripped his phone so hard that his knuckles turned white, and the urge to hurl it across the room gnawed at him.

“Still couldn’t get through? How will we get Dr. Emmett to treat Katie then? Maybe Christina’s avoiding us because of all the chaos online?” Yolanda said, her brow furrowed as she stressed once more Christina’s supposed scandal.

A deadly calm settled over Brendon as he ground out his response.

“Even if she won’t take my call, I’ll find a way to make it happen.”

As the sun dipped lower, Christina prepared to leave, planning to meet Laretta at the designated spot to collect the Woodfort. Ignoring Brendon’s attempt to reach her, she switched off her phone and left it that way, determined not to be interrupted.

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A set of car keys dangled from Chloe’s hand as she offered them up. “Why don’t you take my car, Christina?”

One glance at the plush keychain made Christina smile as she accepted the keys, expecting an ordinary sedan. Instead, she stepped outside and found a pastel pink subcompact parked in the driveway—almost a twin to her own, just in a brighter shade.

A soft laugh escaped Christina. “I have to say, this is the cutest car I’ve ever seen.”

Joy sparkled in Chloe’s eyes. “My parents gave me this car for my eighteenth birthday—a custom job, just for me.”

Anyone could tell Chloe had grown up surrounded by warmth and care. For a brief moment, Christina felt a pang of envy.

Adopted by the Jones family, Christina had never truly known that kind of comfort or belonging. Small gestures, like Bethel’s kindness, had come to mean the world to her. To Christina, Bethel was like a grandmother.

Pushing aside the ache in her heart, Christina managed to keep her tone light. “A custom model must have cost a fortune.”

A proud smile tugged at Chloe’s lips. “It wasn’t outrageous at all—just \$9.99 million. To my parents, it was a small price for something special.”

Nothing brought Chloe more joy than talking about her family. Love flowed between them, and it showed in every word.

A gentle laugh rose from Christina. In Chloe’s world, that kind of money barely put a dent in the family fortune, though for most people, it would be unimaginable. Her thoughts drifted to the car Dylan had gifted her, and curiosity bubbled up. “Do you think my car cost that much too?”

“Yours? Not quite—there wasn’t enough time to get a custom one ready.” Chloe gave her a playful grin. “But if you want, I’ll ask Dylan to have a special one made just for you.”

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Waving the suggestion away, Christina shook her head. “That’s sweet of you, but I’m happy as long as my car gets fixed and runs. I really don’t need anything more than that.”

Christina had plenty of luxury cars in her own garage, and she could easily order another custom ride if she wanted. Yet, nothing on four wheels could compare to the sentimental value of the car Dylan had gifted her. That one was in a league of its own. Just thinking about it made her pause for a moment.

A cold determination shone in Christina’s eyes, sharp and unwavering, as if nothing could break her focus. The person behind the damage to her car would not walk away unpunished. She would make sure of it.

“Maybe I should use a different car,” Christina suggested, glancing at Chloe. “This one means a lot to you, after all.”

A cheerful grin spread across Chloe’s face. “Don’t worry about it. My parents spoiled me with more cars than I can possibly drive. Honestly, sharing this one with you is the best part of having it.”

Hearing this, Christina felt a rush of affection. She reached out and gently patted Chloe on the head, unable to resist. Such a lovely and wonderful girl—how could she bear to see Chloe pass away too soon?

She felt a fierce determination to heal Chloe, no matter the odds.

“Fair warning, I can’t guarantee it’ll come back without a scratch,” Christina teased, hoping to lighten the mood.

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