

Until You're Mine /

The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 31:

Dylan pulled Christina into his arms, shielding her from the violent scene behind them. He turned slightly, making sure her eyes wouldn't catch the bloodshed.

Then, lifting his gaze to his men, his expression hardened—sharp, cold, and commanding. The air around him grew heavy, his presence alone sending a chill through the room.

“Clean it up. Not a single trace left behind,” Dylan ordered, his voice low but lethal.

“Yes!” His subordinates responded without hesitation, moving swiftly to carry out his command.

Still holding Christina close, Dylan walked away with the quiet authority of a man born to lead. His powerful presence radiated through the room, making everyone instinctively step back. His eyes, frigid and razor-sharp, could pierce straight through a person's soul.

Christina leaned against his chest, taking in the warmth of his embrace. Her gaze wandered up to his strong jawline and sculpted features. Everything about him was impossibly perfect—handsome, yes, but more than that, magnetic.

“We'll stop by the hospital later for a check-up,” he said.

Christina stirred. “It's just a small scratch. No need to worry.”

He looked down at her, and the chill in his eyes melted. “Better to check it anyway. Otherwise, I won't be at ease.”

That fleeting warmth in his gaze made her heart falter. It wasn't just his looks. It was the way he carried himself, how his quiet concern made her feel unexpectedly safe.

When she didn't respond right away, Dylan misread her silence. His voice dropped, coaxing, tender in a way only she ever got to hear.

“Please. Just do it for me. A scrape might be minor to you, but to me, it's a big deal. We're sort of business partners. That means your safety is my responsibility.”

Christina felt a gentle warmth bloom within her. Though they were merely partners, Dylan's concern was undeniably genuine.

“Alright,” she murmured, giving a small nod.

Brendon hadn't even acknowledged her bleeding wound, while Dylan, merely a business partner, couldn't bear to ignore even the smallest scrape on her skin. One didn't need to love someone to show basic care. But Brendon hadn't shown even that. People were so very different.

As they approached the car, Christina shifted, glancing up at him. "You can put me down now. I can get in on my own."

Dylan respected her words, gently lowering her to the ground. "Okay. Just take it slow," he said softly.

"I will," she assured him.

But as soon as her feet touched the pavement and she bent to enter the car, a sharp jolt of pain shot through her skull.

"Ah—" Christina gasped, her brows knitting in agony. She had brushed it off as minor, but her vision dimmed abruptly, and before she could react, her body gave out.

In one swift, fluid motion, Dylan caught her in his arms. He exhaled quietly, relieved she hadn't hit the ground—but the worry etched on his face only deepened.

"Christina?" he called out, his voice firm but laced with tension. No response. Panic flickered in his eyes as he quickly checked for signs of life—her breath, her pulse. Steady. Thank God.

Still, the knot in his chest wouldn't loosen. Something wasn't right, and that gnawing unease refused to let go.

Without a second thought, Dylan lifted her again and gently laid her in the back seat of the car. He shrugged off his tailored suit jacket and placed it over her, tucking it in with care. His brow was furrowed, his usual icy calm disrupted by the storm of worry behind his eyes.

The driver, having watched the scene unfold, sat frozen in disbelief. In all the years he had worked for Dylan, never—not once—had he seen Dylan break his rules, especially not for a woman. And yet, here he was, treating Christina like she was the only person in the world that mattered.

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Chapter 32:

"Just drive." Dylan's voice cut through the silence like a blade. The driver obeyed without pause, and the car tore away from the scene, swallowing distance in seconds.

Christina slumped against Dylan, her body limp. He shifted to brace her, showing no resistance or discomfort.

His mind, however, was racing—every turn of the wheels a countdown. He needed her safe. He needed her stable. The road was no ally. It was jagged and cruel, each pothole a fresh threat.

Dylan instinctively adjusted her in his arms, nestling her closer, forming a barrier.

But then, the vehicle lurched.

Caught off guard, Dylan had no time to react. Christina, still unconscious, had no control over her limp body. The jolt caused her to fall against him, her soft lips brushing against the side of his neck.

The contact was fleeting, barely there. But it scorched. Like static under his skin, it froze him for a breathless second. But he didn't shift; instead, he just pulled her in tighter.

Christina remained motionless, her body warm and pliant against him, utterly unaware of the moment that had just passed.

She didn't see the way Dylan's usually composed face flushed a deep, unmistakable red—or how the tips of his ears burned with heat.

Dylan's pulse thundered in his chest, a strange flutter of emotion rising like a wave he couldn't name. He inhaled slowly, deeply, willing his heart to steady.

But when he looked down at her, asleep and vulnerable in his arms, his heart raced again. She was breathtaking. Delicate yet defined, with a beauty that didn't beg for attention—it simply existed, undeniable and effortless. But beyond the surface, he sensed it: the grit beneath the grace, the quiet fire behind her gentle features. This wasn't a woman who broke easily.

Her elegant collarbones and the graceful curve of her neck only added to the quiet allure.

But Dylan's admiration quickly curdled into something darker as his thoughts drifted to her ex-husband. That bastard. How could anyone look at her and treat her like nothing?

Dylan scoffed silently. Her ex-husband was either a fool or blind—or both. Yet, he found himself feeling thankful. Because if her ex had truly seen her worth and cherished her the way she deserved, Dylan might never have had the chance to know her like this. Perhaps the only good thing her ex ever did was let her go.

With that thought, Dylan's arms tightened around Christina. He held her as if she were something rare and irreplaceable—because to him, she was.

His gaze softened, the frost in his eyes melting into something far gentler. Her ex-husband failed to cherish her, but he wouldn't. Not now. Not ever.

The next morning, golden sunlight filtered through the curtains, bathing the room in a soft, honeyed glow.

Christina stirred beneath the sheets, sighing as she shifted and rolled over into the warmth.

Sleep still clung to her like a blanket—until something tugged at her instincts. Something was wrong. Different.

Her eyes flew open, sharp and alert. She scanned the unfamiliar space with practiced precision, every muscle on edge. This wasn't her room.

In an instant, her mind flipped through the chaos of the night before—the abduction. But after she was kidnapped, she recalled seeing Dylan. He was there to save her. Was this his place?

Her gaze dropped to her wrist. The raw skin had been cleaned and treated, a bandage neatly wrapped with care. A faint scent of herbs lingered—a cooling balm she vaguely recognized.

She sat up, gently tugging back the blanket to inspect her ankle. There it was again: a pristine white bandage wrapped around what had barely been more than a scrape.

A soft smile touched her lips before she could stop it. All this effort for something so small.

It was barely a scratch, yet Dylan had taken the time to clean it, medicate it, and wrap it with care—like it actually mattered.

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Chapter 33:

Christina slowly shook her head, a chuckle escaping her lips. A quiet warmth began to spread through her chest, softening the unease that lingered within her.

That was when she noticed the black silk nightgown she wore. She froze. When had she changed? Who had changed her? Her mind immediately went to Dylan. Could it have been him?

Uncertain and slightly embarrassed, Christina reached up and gently tugged at the neckline, holding it closer to her skin.

Before she could dwell on the thought any longer, a soft knock echoed at the door.

She stood and crossed the room, opening the door without thinking. She was about to ask who had helped her change—when the sight before her made the words vanish from her lips.

Instead of Dylan, a young girl stood outside, beaming with cheerful energy. Her presence felt like a ray of sunshine breaking through stormy skies.

Christina quickly sized her up. The girl was beautiful—striking, really—with a mixture of youthful innocence and a touch of boldness in her features. Something about her face felt familiar. She looked a little like Dylan. But her pallor gave her away. Though her smile was bright, her lips were pale, and there was a faint weariness around her eyes. Christina could tell right away—the girl wasn’t well. And whatever she was battling, it wasn’t something minor.

There was a spark in the girl’s eyes, a curious and joyful smile that tugged at Christina’s heart. It carried a quiet strength but also a hint of fragility.

It was easy to picture the girl as a bright, lively soul. Yet illness had dimmed some of that light, stealing pieces of her energy. Still, she glowed with quiet resilience. She faced her struggles head-on, refusing to let her spirit break and holding onto hope with courage.

“Good morning!” the girl said brightly. “Are you hungry? Breakfast is ready. Come down when you feel up to it.”

“You’re Dylan’s little sister?” Christina asked.

The girl grinned and nodded. “Yep! I’m Chloe. Dylan mentioned you fainted last night after being startled.”

Christina managed a small smile. “I guess I did.” But she didn’t explain. It wasn’t exactly fear that had caused her to pass out.

“How are you feeling now?” Chloe asked, her eyes wide and sincere.

“Better?”

“Much better, thank you,” Christina said, then hesitated. Her fingers brushed the fabric of her gown. “Um, this nightgown...”

“Oh!” Chloe let out a small laugh. “That was me. Well, my maid and I helped you change and cleaned you up a bit.” She leaned in slightly, grinning mischievously. “You didn’t really think my brother would do that, did you?”

Christina’s cheeks flushed a soft pink, and she let out an awkward laugh. “No, of course not. I should get freshened up.”

Chloe gave her a playful wink. “Good. We’re waiting for you downstairs. Don’t take forever!”

“I won’t,” Christina replied, smiling back. There was something undeniably charming about Dylan’s little sister.

Chloe dashed down the stairs, her steps light with excitement, making a beeline for the kitchen.

Inside, the comforting aroma of pork rib soup filled the air. Dylan stood at the stove, focused, carefully stirring the simmering pot.

“Dylan, is the onion soup ready yet?” Chloe asked eagerly, inhaling the savory scent. “Christina’s awake. She’ll be down in a minute after she freshens up.”

Her stomach growled in response to the smell, and she licked her lips. “It smells incredible!”

Dylan didn’t look up, but the faintest smile tugged at the corners of his lips. His voice was calm, but there was a softness in his tone reserved only for her. “Go sit in the dining room. It’s almost done.”

Instead of obeying, Chloe leaned against the counter and tilted her head at him, mischief dancing in her eyes. “Dylan, do you like Christina?”

His hand paused mid-stir. Just as quickly, his expression returned to its usual calm. “Who’s been putting that idea in your head?” he asked, assuming it was Ralphy—his gossip-loving friend who had been spreading rumors to Chloe. Whenever Ralphy and Chloe got together, it was like a nonstop gossip session.

Chloe grinned. “Nobody said anything. I figured it out on my own. I’ve got eyes, you know.” She pointed to her big, sparkling eyes for emphasis.

Dylan sighed and reached over to lightly flick her forehead. “No, I don’t like her. And stop playing matchmaker. This isn’t one of your dramas.”

He wasn’t sure if Christina might be nearby, and the last thing he wanted was to make her uncomfortable. More importantly, he wasn’t harboring any feelings. Or at least, that was what he kept telling himself.

Chloe gave him a skeptical look, not buying it for a second. “Really? You’re not interested?” she asked, her voice teasing. “Because if you’re not, someone else might be. Christina’s absolutely gorgeous—you’ll regret it if you don’t act fast and someone else wins her over.” Love wasn’t just about destiny—it was about timing. If a man waited too long, his chance could slip away forever. Tons of people had let their feelings go unspoken, losing the one they cared for simply because fear held them back.

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Chapter 34:

Chloe’s words made Dylan still, mid-motion, as Christina’s face flickered unbidden across his mind.

Christina truly was extraordinary. Only a blind fool like her ex-husband could’ve failed to see her worth.

“Dylan?” Chloe’s voice pulled at the edge of his awareness, but he didn’t respond right away.

“Dylan!” she called out louder.

Dylan snapped out of his thoughts and turned to her. “What?”

“The soup’s about to burn!” Chloe’s eyes widened as she pointed toward the stove.

Seeing the soup was about done, Dylan quickly switched off the burner.

Chloe gave him a teasing grin. “So, what kind of girl do you like? If Christina’s not your type, I can set you up with one of my classmates.”

Dylan’s expression darkened instantly. “Stop playing matchmaker for me.”

Chloe pouted, still playful. “I’m just trying to make sure you don’t grow old and grumpy alone.”

Her tone shifted, softening. “With my health being what it is... well, who knows how long I’ve got...” Her gaze dropped, lashes fanning over her cheeks.

For a heartbeat, a quiet shadow crossed her face. But just as quickly, she rallied, looking up with a bright, almost doll-like smile—big eyes, long lashes, and a sparkle that belied the heaviness she’d just let slip. “Dylan!” Chloe gave his shoulder a playful smack, her voice laced with forced cheer. “The continuation of our family line is in your hands now, okay?”

She masked it well, but deep down, she knew her time was slipping away. The doctors had said she might have at most a year ahead of her, but she could just as easily be gone tomorrow.

That was the thing about life: it never asked for permission before changing everything.

Chloe had made peace with the unknown. Every sunrise was a gift. Every breath, a blessing. She chose joy where she could, laughter when it came. But no amount of optimism could fully silence the quiet dread in her heart. Some nights, the thought of saying goodbye to the people who loved her—it hollowed her out. Their kindness, their unwavering support... it crushed her with love and sorrow in equal measure. She loved them too. Fiercely. The idea of leaving them was the one thing she wasn’t ready to face.

Dylan looked at her—the radiant smile she always wore, those signature crescent eyes—but he noticed how red-rimmed her eyes were.

“Chloe,” he said softly.

“Don’t think like that. You’re going to be fine, I swear. Didn’t I tell you? I got you that treatment slot with King.” He tried to keep his voice light, reassuring.

She murmured, blinking away the tears. “I know, and I know it was Christina who made it happen. But whether King agrees to treat me and the odds of healing me...” She trailed off, a brittle smile forming. “I’m not afraid of dying, Dylan. Not really. I’m just afraid of leaving you all behind. I love you too much. That’s the part I can’t handle.”

Her voice wavered, her lips smiling even as her eyes betrayed her.

“You’re not going anywhere,” Dylan said firmly, stepping closer. His voice had taken on steel now. “If I have to fight Death himself, I will. Just like you did for me all those years ago.”

And he meant it. If not for Chloe, he wouldn’t even be here. She had once pulled him out of death’s grip. She had saved him when no one else could. Now it was his turn to return the favor, even if it killed him. Some debts couldn’t be paid with words.

Dylan reached out, his thumb gently brushing away a tear clinging to the corner of Chloe’s eye. “Stop crying,” he said with mock severity. “You look ugly when you cry.”

“I am not ugly!” Chloe shot back with a laugh, her sorrow cracking apart like ice under sunlight. “But... am I being too greedy?”

“Of course not,” Dylan murmured. “Wanting more time with the people you love isn’t greed. It’s human.”

Chloe’s eyes shimmered, but this time, it was with warmth. “Having you all... that’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” She then paused before adding with a cheeky grin, “Though it’d be even better if I had a sister-in-law.”

“Quit fooling around and grab the bowls,” Dylan replied, his tone softening.

“Fine! Have it your way then!” Her laughter rang out like music, light and unrestrained, filling the kitchen with life.

It was hard to believe a laugh that vibrant came from someone living on borrowed time.

Still chuckling, Chloe grabbed the bowls and stepped out of the kitchen—only to halt abruptly. Standing at the corner was Christina.

Chloe blinked, caught off guard. She had no idea how long Christina had been there or how much she’d heard. “Christina!” she called out, her voice lifting slightly in surprise.

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Chapter 35:

“I’ll take those,” Christina said with a gentle smile as she stepped forward and took the bowls from Chloe’s hands.

Chloe blinked in surprise. “Wait, did you just come downstairs?”

Christina offered a light shrug, her voice teasing. “Yeah, just now. Ran right into you.”

In truth, Christina had been lingering just outside the kitchen, quietly listening to the warm laughter and the conversation between Dylan and Chloe. It stirred something in her. She had never known what that kind of sibling bond felt like. She had no family that cared for her. And sometimes, in moments like this, she found herself quietly longing for it.

There was a reason Christina had agreed so easily to Dylan’s request. It wasn’t just his willingness to risk his life for others without hesitation—it was the sincerity that radiated from him, a sincerity she couldn’t ignore. And just moments ago, hearing Chloe laugh—that carefree, heartfelt sound—another thought had quietly bloomed inside her. She didn’t want that laughter to fade. Not yet. Maybe not ever.

Footsteps echoed softly as Dylan walked over, ladle in hand. His gaze naturally found Christina.

“Dylan made some onion soup and a few dishes,” Chloe chimed in brightly. “But if you don’t like them, we can make something else.”

Christina shook her head gently. “No, this is perfect. I’m not picky.”

Her eyes flicked over to Dylan, pausing as she took in his appearance. He was wearing a sharply tailored suit, crisp and clean—but over it hung a soft pink apron tied snugly around his waist, and a dark scarf circled his neck. The contrast was almost comical. The mix of his formal outfit, the silent way he stood, and the large ladle in his hand made him seem both distant and awkward—a side of Dylan hardly anyone had ever seen.

She didn’t mind the pink apron, but the scarf had her puzzled. Why on earth was he wearing that indoors?

Before Christina could ask, Chloe followed her gaze to the apron and spoke up with a grin. “Oh, that apron? My mom picked it out. It’s not his style at all.”

Christina chuckled softly. “Your mom has good taste. It’s really cute.”

She meant it. The apron was adorable. Dylan’s tall, commanding figure and cold, sharp features stood in stark contrast to the soft pink apron. The unexpected mix was a sight that almost felt too stimulating. If it weren’t for the black scarf around his neck, she might have flushed at the sight of him.

Catching Christina’s compliment, Dylan instinctively straightened his posture, a quiet pride blooming inside him. In that moment, an unexpected lightness lifted his mood, making him feel strangely tempted to turn on his charm.

Unable to hold back any longer, Christina asked, “Hey... Is your neck okay? Why the scarf?”

Dylan instinctively reached up and tugged the scarf higher around his neck. The spot where Christina’s lips had brushed his skin the night before still carried a faint mark—a subtle imprint that hadn’t completely faded. It wasn’t obvious, but it was intimate and strangely persistent.

He didn't understand why he hadn't simply washed it off. Instead, he covered it up as if preserving it meant something.

"I've got a bit of a cold," he lied casually, his expression unreadable. "Mild allergic reaction, too."

It was a convenient excuse—unquestionable and safe. Neither Christina nor Chloe dwelled on it.

Chloe just rolled her eyes playfully. "Don't mind Dylan," she said, looping her arm around Christina's with ease. "You must be starving. Come on, let's dig in!"

"Alright," Christina said with a soft nod, though her eyes lingered on Chloe for a moment longer. From what she'd seen so far, Chloe's health wasn't just fragile—it was concerning.

As the meal began and casual conversation flowed, Christina waited for the right moment. Then, gently setting her fork down, she reached across the table and lightly took Chloe's hand. "Your hand's a little cold," she said casually, as if merely commenting on the temperature. But in truth, she was carefully assessing Chloe's condition.

Chloe laughed softly. "My health's always been a little off," she said with a dismissive wave. "Cold hands are pretty normal for me. Nothing to worry about."

Christina's heart ached at Chloe's lightness and unshakable spirit. Her brows furrowed slightly. It was clear—Chloe's condition wasn't just "not the best." It was serious. Such a vibrant, lovable girl... it would be a terrible loss to lose her.

Christina looked from Chloe to Dylan, her expression growing serious.

"There's something important I need to discuss."

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Chapter 36:

Both Dylan and Chloe focused their attention on Christina, curiosity and concern mingling in their eyes.

"If something's wrong, you can be honest with us. My brother won't let you down—he'll take care of everything," Chloe said, her voice full of support, assuming Christina was facing difficulties.

Dylan gave a quiet nod of agreement. "Just let me know what you need. I'll make sure it's handled."

Christina shook her head, offering Chloe a reassuring smile and giving her hand a gentle squeeze. “Nothing’s wrong. Actually, King just reached out to me, and I haven’t had a chance to share the news.”

“What?” The siblings’ reactions were immediate—a chorus of overlapping exclamations, excitement barely contained in their voices.

Dylan was quite stunned. A swift response from King had been the last thing he’d expected. It seemed King’s reputation for being elusive was well-deserved. Not a single trace of the message remained—King’s reply had just reached Christina, unnoticed.

“What did King say?” Dylan asked, urgency tightening his tone. Their eyes met, and Christina didn’t hesitate. “The patient you’re desperate to save—it’s your sister, isn’t it?”

A somber nod from Dylan confirmed it, worry darkening his expression. “Yes. Her illness... time isn’t on her side.”

At best, Chloe might have a year left—a truth that weighed heavily in Dylan’s voice. He refused to let fate steal his sister without a fight. Turning her attention to Chloe, Christina asked, “Do you ever get chills so deep that it feels like you’re trapped in a freezer? And when that happens, do you also get splitting headaches?”

Chloe’s eyes widened in shock. “Spot on! How did you know that?” Dylan was equally taken aback, but in an instant, he understood—this must be King’s diagnosis. A glimmer of hope sparked within him. If King, the miracle worker, could identify Chloe’s symptoms from afar, maybe the odds of a cure weren’t just a fantasy after all.

“That’s what King told me,” Christina said smoothly, her gaze returning to Dylan. “And as for our agreement, King accepts.”

Dylan’s chest tightened in disbelief. “You mean... King really agrees to help?”

With a steady nod, Christina confirmed, “Yes. King has promised to cure your sister.”

Relief and astonishment washed over the siblings, transforming their faces with sudden joy.

Chloe’s voice trembled with overwhelming emotion. “Is that true? Really?”

She had already resigned herself to the idea that she had at most a year left, making the best of borrowed time and living each day as if it were her last.

Still, no matter how much optimism or strength a person possessed, the reality of mortality could drag anyone into despair at times.

Survival wasn’t enough—Chloe craved life in all its fullness. She wanted to feel every heartbeat, to savor both the ordinary moments and the extraordinary ones alike. So many faces came to mind—loved ones she couldn’t bear to part with, people whose lives were tightly woven with hers. The fear of saying goodbye to them was paralyzing. Even clinging to existence by a thread seemed preferable to letting go. The prospect of death was far more terrifying than merely scraping by.

A gentle but serious note entered Christina's voice, breaking through the wave of relief in the room. "But..."

Dylan's grin faded, and hope drained from Chloe's eyes.

"But what is it?" Dylan asked, his tone shaded with new anxiety.

Christina explained, "King wants to get the cold spells under control before thinking about the surgery. Your sister's condition has to be stabilized first."

Whatever King advised, Dylan was quick to agree. "Anything King recommends, we'll do it. But can King really save Chloe?"

"If King says there's a cure, then there is one," Christina answered with certainty.

The assertive tone struck Dylan as odd, though he couldn't say exactly why. Only later, when the truth about Christina's discreet identity as King came to light, did everything fall into place for him. That absolute confidence in her voice finally made sense. She had spoken not as a messenger, but as King, the miracle worker herself. Such conviction could only belong to King in the flesh.

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Chapter 37:

"No matter how things turn out, it's always worth trying," Chloe said with a gentle smile. Her face was glowing, but the weakness in her body was still evident.

"If even King can't heal me, then I doubt anyone else can," Chloe added quietly. King was her last thread of hope. She knew clinging to expectations could be dangerous, but letting go felt even worse.

"You'll be fine. King is one of the best," Dylan said firmly, as if trying to convince both her and himself. King was their last hope. He couldn't imagine what would happen if that hope disappeared.

Chloe leaned forward, resting her chin in her hands. Her eyes sparkled brightly, full of curiosity. Even though she looked tired and pale, her charm and youthful spirit still shone through. "I wonder what King is like. A man or a woman? Old or young? I'd love to meet King someday," she said with hope in her eyes. "It's such a pity I don't have any talent for medicine. Otherwise, if I ever got the chance to meet King, I'd beg to become their apprentice."

Dylan arched an eyebrow and slid a bowl of soup in front of her. "You'd be wasting your breath," he said with a smile. "King doesn't take on apprentices. Now eat before it gets cold."

Chloe wrinkled her nose, stuck her tongue out at him, and then turned excitedly toward Christina. “Christina! You have to try this!” she said, her tone bubbling with enthusiasm. “Dylan made it, and it’s honestly amazing!”

Christina smiled and picked up her spoon, giving in to Chloe’s cheerful persistence. The aroma alone was rich and comforting, and the first sip stunned her. The broth was deep and flavorful—savory, slow-cooked, and full of warmth. It tasted like something that had simmered for hours, layered with care.

She blinked, caught off guard. It had been years since she’d tasted soup this top-notch. If she hadn’t seen Dylan in the kitchen herself, she would never have believed he could cook this remarkably.

The memory surfaced vividly—it was during a prestigious cooking competition where she’d served as one of the anonymous judges. The winning dish? A bowl of onion soup that had left a lasting impression on her palate. And this one tasted exactly the same. Not just similar—identical, down to the subtle depth of flavor and the delicate balance of spices.

Back then, the competition had been shrouded in secrecy. Contestants competed under codenames, their identities hidden. No one revealed their faces—not even the judges. Everyone remained a mystery, known only by their assigned numbers.

That had been the rule of the competition—strict anonymity. To this day, no one knew the true identities of the champion chef or the judges. All that was certain was that the judges had been carefully selected by the organizers—big names in the culinary world, each carrying serious weight in the industry.

If she remembered correctly, the winner had competed under the codename Blaine. When Blaine first entered the contest, few had paid attention. The name didn’t carry weight, and the presentation had been modest. Almost no one placed bets on Blaine, assuming Blaine would be eliminated early, certainly not someone to make it to the top three.

But Christina had gone against popular opinion. Something about Blaine’s first dish had caught her attention, and she quietly placed her bet on them.

To everyone’s surprise, Blaine swept the competition and claimed the championship.

Back then, Christina had been Judge Number 6.

For a fleeting moment, as Christina tasted the soup Dylan had made, a wild thought passed through her mind—could he be Blaine? But then she shook it off. Dylan was the head of the powerful Scott Group. He was a business mogul, constantly in the spotlight. There was no way he would have had the time—or interest—to enter a secret cooking competition.

“Is it good?” Chloe asked eagerly, watching Christina’s reaction.

Christina nodded, still savoring the flavor. “It’s more than good. It’s incredible.”

Chloe beamed. “Dylan seldom cooks. Even our family rarely gets to taste his food. His cooking skills are reserved for his future wife,” she teased, shooting Christina a playful look. “I only get to enjoy it today because you’re here!”

Then, Chloe leaned in closer, eyes sparkling with mischief. “Christina, have you ever considered becoming my sister-in-law?” she said with a grin. “Just imagine it! Dylan cooking for you every day, new recipes, and making all your favorite dishes. He’s really amazing in the kitchen. Honestly, I wouldn’t mind being the third wheel if it means I get to eat, too. Think about it. He’s tall and handsome, cooks like a pro, and absolutely spoils the people he loves. In our family, the men are loyal to the core and treat their wives like queens.”

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Chapter 38:

A soft flush crept up Christina’s cheeks under the gentle attention and eager smiles directed at her. Her gaze flicked to Dylan, who watched quietly, his expression unreadable, before she shifted her focus back to Chloe. A bright grin chased the pallor from Chloe’s face, her sparkling eyes shining with hope.

Compared to Katie, Chloe radiated warmth and genuine charm.

“All right, you win!” Christina said, flashing a playful smile at Chloe. “But tell me, do you think your brother would mind a divorced woman?”

The question seemed to throw Chloe off balance, her smile faltering. Clearly, Dylan had kept that detail close to the vest. Even Ralphy—never one to let a secret slip—hadn’t breathed a word.

Christina let out a light laugh, unconcerned. “I’m newly divorced.”

“Any children?” Chloe asked, curiosity sparkling in her eyes.

A short pause passed before Christina shook her head, her smile still in place. “No, there aren’t any kids.”

Her marriage to Brendon had always been in name only. Children were never part of the equation.

Chloe’s disappointment was impossible to miss. “That’s too bad! I was looking forward to having a niece or nephew right away.”

Caught off guard, Christina blinked in surprise, not expecting such a reaction. All this time, she had thought Chloe’s question was about a divorcee joining their family, but clearly that wasn’t her worry at all.

“Don’t fret,” Christina replied, laughter dancing in her voice. “You’ll get your wish for a niece or nephew soon enough.”

Chloe cocked her head to the side, a mischievous grin brightening her features. “Are you talking about babies with Dylan?”

A harmless joke had unexpectedly left Christina’s cheeks even more flushed.

With a soft chuckle, Christina leaned in, voice lowered in mock secrecy. “That all depends on whether your brother’s up for it.”

“Of course he is! He’d be crazy not to!” Chloe shot her hand up, answering for Dylan without hesitation. “Honestly, I’d be thrilled! Christina, you’re gorgeous. If you married Dylan, your babies would be adorable! I could parade them everywhere and finally have little ones to spoil!”

Chloe’s infectious excitement made Christina burst out laughing, her eyes sparkling with genuine delight.

“Then I guess your brother and I had better do our best,” Christina joked, playing along.

Chloe nodded vigorously. “That’s the spirit!”

Turning to Dylan, Chloe grinned slyly. “Dylan, you need to get your act together. The sooner you win Christina over, the sooner I get to play with cute nieces and nephews!”

Though Dylan stayed stoic, a faint blush crept up his ears. His face remained stern, features unreadable and serious. “You should focus on eating. Not even a home-cooked meal can keep your mouth shut,” he said, his voice cold yet gentle as he shot Chloe a look tinged with affection.

With a cheeky gesture, Chloe stuck out her tongue before beaming at Christina. “Don’t forget to eat, Christina! There’s still more soup left.”

“All right.” A gentle smile touched Christina’s lips as she picked up her spoon and returned to her bowl of soup.

Christina had to admit, Dylan’s skills in the kitchen were nothing short of astonishing. Each bite was so flavorful and rich that even she, no stranger to gourmet meals, found herself momentarily stunned. All this time, she’d pegged Dylan as the pampered type—his daily needs taken care of by staff. Growing up with every luxury at his fingertips, it seemed natural to assume he left domestic chores to others.

Yet here he was, the Scott family patriarch, serving up a breakfast worthy of a five-star chef. If he weren’t so far out of reach, Christina might have seriously considered pursuing him. Failing that, she would have at least tried to poach him as her own private cook.

After breakfast, Christina gathered her things to head off to the hospital.

But as she reached for her bag, Chloe latched onto her arm, clearly unwilling to say goodbye. “Do you really have to leave, Christina? Why not stay a little longer? There’s plenty of space here—we could hang out, gossip, and convince my brother to keep spoiling us with his amazing food...”

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 39:

Christina smoothed a gentle hand over Chloe's hair and offered a reassuring smile. "I can't stay, sweetheart. There are a few things I still need to take care of, and it's just not convenient."

Chloe's eyes sparkled with hope. "Why don't you let Dylan drive you around every day?" she asked softly, eager.

Despite only knowing each other briefly, Chloe already felt a natural warmth toward Christina. She saw Christina and Dylan as the perfect pair and quietly rooted for them to become something more.

Christina laughed lightly, her eyes crinkling kindly. "Dylan's got his hands full these days. I'd feel terrible taking up his time," she said, squeezing Chloe's hand gently.

Noticing how Chloe clung to Christina's side, Dylan finally stepped forward, shaking his head with a rueful smile as he gently pried Chloe away. "Easy there. Don't hang on her like that—she had a rough night, remember?"

At his reminder, Chloe's expression shifted instantly. She backed away, guilt written across her face. "Sorry, Christina," she mumbled, sounding like a child gently scolded.

Christina waved it off with a smile. "It's nothing—just a tiny scratch, honestly," she said warmly and steadily.

Seeing Chloe's disappointed look, Christina added, "Tell you what. I'll come visit whenever I can, okay?"

Christina planned to check on Chloe's recovery during every visit after bringing the medicine to help speed her healing. Once Chloe grew stronger and her immune system bounced back, she'd finally be ready for surgery.

Chloe's face lit up, eyes shining with delight. "Really? You have to promise you won't lie to me, okay?"

Christina smiled with resignation. "I swear. I won't lie to you."

At that, Chloe relaxed and personally walked Christina and Dylan to the door.

During the ride, Dylan was thoughtful for a moment before breaking the silence. "Chloe can be a little blunt. Don't take her words too seriously—she just likes you a lot. Sometimes she gets ahead of herself because she cares."

Worried Christina might be offended, he offered the gentle apology on Chloe's behalf.

Christina gave a soft laugh, her tone warm and easy. "Don't sweat it. I think she's sweet—and honestly, I was just joking with her so she wouldn't get down about being sick."

Her lighthearted tone caught Dylan off guard. For a moment, a subtle disappointment flickered in his chest. She really didn't seem bothered by Chloe's teasing about them together at all.

"If King reaches out, I'll let you know right away," Christina offered.

Dylan nodded subtly. "Thanks, I appreciate it."

She shrugged, radiating unshakeable calm. "It's nothing. It's what we agreed on, after all."

An uneasy flicker of irritation stirred beneath Dylan's composed exterior, though he struggled to pinpoint its source. Was it her effortless detachment that unsettled him?

He glanced over, the usual chill in his gaze giving way to a flash of something softer—something he couldn't quite name.

At that moment, Christina sat in silence, eyes fixed on the scenery slipping past the window—each tree and building blurring into a gentle watercolor of light and motion.

Dylan, however, couldn't look away from her. Sunlight drifted in, catching the fine strands of her hair and setting them aglow. For a moment, she looked ethereal, as if the daylight itself had chosen her as its muse.

He lingered on the shape of her profile, dazzled, until she turned suddenly.

Their gazes collided, a quiet electricity pulsing in the air between them. In the glow of her clear, vibrant eyes, Dylan felt like he was staring into a mirror. Flustered, he cleared his throat, regaining his composure, and his tone was guarded as he asked, "Are we going to your place, or..."

Christina snapped out of her thoughts and smiled to ease the awkwardness. "Just drop me at the hospital. I need to see someone."

"Sure." Dylan's attention shifted back to the road ahead, but his heart thudded unevenly in his chest.

Christina faced the window once more, outwardly composed though her emotions were far from settled. A strange feeling spread through her chest. Was she actually developing feelings for Dylan? That was utterly ridiculous. She banished the thought as soon as it arose.

When they finally reached the hospital, Christina quietly thanked him, unfastened her seatbelt, and slipped out of the car.

Unbeknownst to either of them, in a darkened corner of the lot, a figure lingered—quietly raising a phone to capture the parting moment, hidden from view.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 40:

Christina spent the entire day in Bethel's hospital room, keeping her company, talking with her, and watching over her as she rested. Not a single member of the Dawson family had shown their face.

Only after Bethel had finally fallen asleep did Christina quietly step out.

As she exited the inpatient building, she came face-to-face with the Dawson siblings. Her steps slowed, and her expression hardened into a mask of ice.

"Bethel's asleep," she said flatly, her voice cool and clipped. "If you want to visit, come back tomorrow."

Katie immediately bristled, her tone sharp. "Since when do you get to decide when we see our own grandmother?"

Christina tilted her head, lips curling into a cold smile. "Your grandmother? You mean the one you didn't bother to visit once all day? What a privilege it must be to carry that title without the burden of responsibility. Oh, should I praise you for showing up now that she's asleep?"

Her words struck like a whip—precise and merciless. The Dawson family's indifference toward Bethel had long been a source of quiet anger for Christina, and seeing their smug, self-entitled faces now only poured fuel on the fire.

Their callousness wasn't just disappointing anymore—it was infuriating. The Dawson family had no true successor—no one with the grit or vision to carry the business forward. And yet, they showed not an ounce of concern for Bethel, the very woman who had poured her life into keeping everything from falling apart.

"What's your problem? You think you can talk to us like that?" Katie, furious and humiliated, raised a hand to strike Christina, but Christina moved first—catching Katie's wrist mid-air.

"You really don't learn, do you?" Christina's voice was low, dangerous. Her eyes bore into Katie's with cutting clarity. "Tell me—if Bethel weren't around, how long do you think the Dawson family would last?"

Christina's words dropped like a hammer. Katie paled, trembling. The fire in her eyes flickered out, replaced by fear.

Christina released Katie's wrist with a sharp flick. "Leave—before I lose what little patience I have left."

Katie's eyes welled with tears as she instinctively retreated, seeking refuge beside Brendon.

"Our family matters are none of your concern," Brendon said coldly. He seized Christina's wrist in a punishing grip, a silent demand for submission.

But Christina didn't flinch. She met his glare with a chilling smile, refusing to show the pain lancing through her wrist. Her heart, already calloused from years of indifference, only grew colder. Did the Dawson family truly believe their empire had flourished these past three years without her own quiet efforts behind the scenes or without Bethel's sacrifice?

"Let go, Brendon," Christina snapped.

"Not until you apologize to Katie," he retorted, his grip tightening—cruel and deliberate.

"In your dreams. Why the hell would I apologize to her?"

Brendon's fury simmered just beneath the surface. But as he stared into Christina's reddened eyes—eyes that never shed tears in his presence, even when wounded—something shifted. Sympathy crept in, softening his anger. For a fleeting moment, he feared he might actually make her cry.

That hesitation was all Christina needed. She wrenched her wrist free and stepped back, her voice like frost. "I don't care about your family's affairs. But Bethel... she showed me kindness. That makes her my business."

Christina stared Brendon down, chin lifted high, the light catching the curve of her neck—a picture of poised defiance.

Katie, emboldened by Brendon's defense, snapped, "You say she's your business—then where's the surgeon you promised to bring? Still not here, right?"

"When Bethel's strong enough, I will bring Dr. Emmett over," Christina replied, her tone like stone. "Right now, what she needs most is peace."

"Oh, please!" Katie scoffed, her voice laced with contempt. "You're clearly stalling. Admit it—you can't even get in touch with this so-called Dr. Emmett." Her eyes narrowed with disdain. "Do you even realize who he is? You think someone like you could invite him? Please. Get real."

Christina was done wasting her breath. With an icy stare, she brushed past Katie. "You're in my way."

But just as Christina moved forward, Brendon stepped in, blocking her path once again.

"Move," Christina said flatly, her tone as sharp as a blade.

At this proximity, Brendon's gaze involuntarily dropped to Christina's neck. A faint blush colored her usually porcelain skin—soft, delicate, and unmistakably...

Suggestive. In a flash, an image invaded his mind—another man, far too close, his lips grazing that vulnerable spot.

A visceral surge of jealousy and fury twisted inside Brendon. His fists curled into tight knots at his sides. This shameless woman. A minute ago, he'd felt a strange flicker of sympathy. But now, with that single glimpse, it was gone—swallowed whole by suspicion and possessiveness.

“Who is he?” Brendon demanded, his voice low but burning with fury. “Who were you with?”

Christina laughed—an elegant, derisive sound that only stoked the fire in him.

“What the hell's so funny?” he barked, his pride bruised.

“I'm laughing at you,” she said, eyes gleaming with scorn. “The way you act... it's pathetic.” Her voice dipped into a mockingly sweet tone. “Brendon, in case it's slipped your mind, you're my ex-husband. You have no right to question me.”

“What of it!” he snapped. “And don't forget—our divorce hasn't been made public. Everyone still thinks you're my wife. That means something.”

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