

Until You're Mine /

The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 41:

Christina let out a dry, bitter laugh, barely holding back her fury. Brendon had paraded around with Yolanda without a care in the world, ignoring every judgmental glance thrown their way. But she, his ex-wife, was still expected to play the role of a dutiful Dawson and guard their reputation simply because their divorce hadn't been made public? What kind of nonsense was that?

"Then hold a press conference tomorrow to announce our divorce," Christina said, her voice sharp with mockery. "Better yet, call the reporters right now. Make it public today."

Brendon's jaw tightened, a vein throbbing at his temple. "Is that how desperate you are to sever all ties with me?"

Christina met his glare with one of her own. "Absolutely. Being connected to you is nothing but a disgrace."

"You—" Brendon was so enraged that he couldn't find the words to respond. How had he never noticed before just how sharp-tongued Christina could be? Her words hit like punches—hard, fast, and impossible to dodge.

"I owe your family nothing, Brendon," Christina said, her tone like ice. "The moment we signed those divorce papers, I was done with all of you."

Christina had refrained from retaliating against the Dawson family for only one reason: Bethel, the woman who had once saved her life. She wasn't the type to forget a debt. But if the Dawson family kept pushing her, she wouldn't hold back anymore.

"Christina, do you really have to act this way?" Brendon asked, frowning deeply.

Christina gave a cold laugh, eyes narrowing. "This way? Don't pretend to be the victim. You started this."

"You know things weren't that simple," Brendon insisted. "None of us chose this situation. Not me, not Yolanda, not even you. I never meant to hurt you. Can't we at least be civil? I've always tried to treat you fairly. Plus, didn't I compensate you enough for the divorce—"

"Enough!" Christina snapped, lifting a hand to silence him. "I don't want your justifications. I'm tired, Brendon. I want to go home."

He stepped in front of her, blocking her path. "You're not leaving until you answer me. Who were you with last night?"

He then pulled out his phone and showed her a photo—grainy, taken from a distance. It showed her stepping out of a sleek black car. The license plate was...

cropped out, and the driver's identity hidden, but it was enough to fuel his suspicions. He'd been restless ever since he saw it.

"Brendon, why are you wasting your energy on her?" Katie scoffed, striding forward with a sneer. "She's just starving for attention." Her tone grew nastier with every word. "She's throwing herself at any guy who'll look at her—"

Brendon shot Katie a glare so cold it made her flinch. Her crude words made his stomach turn. How could someone from such a respectable background talk like that? Who had she been hanging around?

Brendon turned back to Christina, his voice lower but firm. "Just tell me who you were with last night. If you explain, I'll believe you're innocent."

Christina let out a sharp laugh, tilting her head as though she'd just heard the most absurd thing imaginable. "I don't owe you any explanations, Brendon. We're divorced. You have no right to question how I live my life."

Brendon's face darkened. "So this is what you've become? You've lost all sense of dignity?"

Christina raised an eyebrow, a small, mocking smile curving her lips. "Dignity? If you're looking for shame, maybe try searching your own family first." Her eyes flicked to Katie—just for a second—but it was enough.

Katie flinched. Her spine went rigid, and her breath caught in her throat. "W-Why are you looking at me like that?" she asked, her voice trembling. "I haven't done anything wrong!"

Christina gave a soft chuckle. "Maybe you haven't. Or maybe you have. Only a proper investigation can say for sure."

Christina hadn't planned on involving Katie. But Katie had been asking for it—poking and insulting her. She had only responded in kind.

"Brendon, don't listen to her!" Katie cried, panic creeping into her voice. "She's just trying to cause drama. I've always followed our family's values—I swear!"

Brendon turned to her slowly, his gaze unreadable. "Are you absolutely certain about that?"

"Of course!" Katie replied too quickly. "I'm your sister, Brendon. Are you really going to take her word over mine?" She pointed at Christina accusingly. "She's just jealous. She can't stand seeing us happy. She mocks Yolanda every chance she gets..."

That struck a nerve. Brendon hesitated, thinking back to Christina's cold remarks about Yolanda. The suspicion in his eyes began to fade.

"That's enough, Christina," he said, his voice firm. "I don't believe a word you say. You're not going to drive a wedge between me and my family."

Christina gave him a cold look. "Believe whatever helps you sleep at night." Then, with a sudden shove, she pushed him aside. "You're in my way."

Brendon stumbled back, caught off guard by her strength. His foot slipped, and he nearly fell.

“Brendon!” Katie rushed to his side, grabbing his arm to steady him.

By the time he regained his balance, Christina was already walking away—her head held high, her steps light and sure, as if she didn’t have a care in the world.

“Christina! Stop right there!” Brendon shouted, frustration crackling in his voice.

But Christina didn’t stop. She didn’t even glance back. Divorce hadn’t dimmed her. If anything, it had unleashed something stronger, something untouchable.

Brendon’s heart ached with something he couldn’t name. A hollow feeling gnawed at him as he watched her disappear into the distance. His chest tightened, and without thinking, he took a step forward, striding after her.

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Chapter 42:

“Brendon!” Katie seized his arm, her voice tight with urgency. “What the hell are you doing?”

“Let go!” Brendon snapped, his eyes glinting with warning as he wrenched his arm free.

Katie’s jaw clenched. “No. I won’t let you run after that wretch like some lovesick fool!”

“I said let go!” With a flick of irritation, Brendon shoved her hand aside and stormed after Christina.

“Brendon!” Katie’s voice cracked behind him, raw with disbelief. “How can you do this to Yolanda?”

He halted mid-step, his shoulders tense. Slowly, he turned, his gaze frostbitten. “Say one word to Yolanda, and your credit card’s gone.” Then, with a sharp breath, he added, “There is nothing going on between me and Christina. I just need answers. That’s all.”

Before Katie could counter, Brendon turned on his heel and marched out, fury radiating from every step. But as he burst through the hospital doors, the cold air hit him—and so did reality. He caught only a glimpse of Christina sliding into the backseat of a sleek black luxury car. It wasn’t her car. And she didn’t look back.

Brendon's temple pounded as he unlocked his phone, his fingers moving with tense precision. He pulled up a photo—one he hadn't wanted to revisit. It showed a black luxury car, the exact make and model of the one Christina had just disappeared into.

"Damn it!" he hissed, jaw tight, voice barely above a growl.

He had tried—really tried—to give Christina the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he'd misread the signs. Maybe he had misunderstood her. But the evidence stared back at him, cold and damning. It appeared Christina had been lying to him the entire time. The irony stung. Christina had fallen so far from grace, yet had still found the nerve to accuse Katie.

"Fine," Brendon muttered bitterly, his teeth clenched so tightly that they ached. "I was a damn fool, Christina. Too stupid to see through your act."

Rage swelled inside him, raw and untamed. He stormed toward a tree nearby, needing an outlet—something, anything—to release the fury building in his chest. He aimed a kick—but in his haste, his foot slipped on the damp ground. His leg shot out awkwardly, and the next thing he knew, the earth rose up and slammed into him. Pain exploded through his back. For a moment, he couldn't even breathe.

Katie had just stepped out of the hospital when she caught sight of him sprawled on the grass. "Brendon!" she cried out, racing to his side, panic rising in her voice. "Brendon, are you okay?"

"I'm... I am fine," he gasped, even as his face contorted in agony. He tried to sit up, but his vision spun and darkened at the edges.

Katie hovered beside him, furious and frightened. "Did that awful woman do something to you?"

"No," he muttered, eyes half-shut, voice faint. "I just slipped."

Then, Katie's breath caught in her throat. "Oh my God—Brendon!"

He looked at her, annoyed. "What now? Why are you freaking out?"

"Brendon—your hand!" Katie gasped, her voice trembling. "It's covered in blood!"

Startled, Brendon glanced down, his stomach twisting at the sight. A slow wave of panic rose in his chest. He reached behind his head and winced as his fingers met the sticky warmth of blood. "Get me inside—now!" he said sharply, fear lacing his voice for the first time.

Katie sprang into action, slipping her arm around him to keep him steady. Her thoughts raced—what if it was serious? What if he collapsed right here? What would that leave the Dawson family?

As they staggered back toward the hospital doors, Brendon pulled out his phone.

"Are you calling Yolanda?" Katie asked, breathless. "Let me do it."

"No," he said coldly, already tapping in a number. But it was Christina's number.

Katie's eyes narrowed as she caught the name on the screen. "Christina? You're calling that bitch now?"

"Watch your mouth," Brendon snapped, his tone icy as he cut her a glare.

Katie clamped her lips shut, but fury simmered behind her eyes. Still, some part of her wanted to see—would Christina even care? Would she bother picking up?

The call rang out. No answer. Brendon's frown deepened. He tried again. And again. Three times. Still nothing.

Was Christina too busy cozying up to the man in the black car to answer? His ex-wife, whom he had never so much as made out with, was now with another man. What right did anyone else have to claim her? It seemed Katie had been right all along. Christina was a chameleon, switching masks and lovers with every twist of fortune.

Rage surged through Brendon, blinding and consuming. Then—darkness. His knees buckled. The world spun. And he crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Blood still trickling down the back of his neck, "Brendon!" Katie cried out as his body slumped against hers, far too heavy for her to hold up.

Panicked but determined, she let herself fall with him, bracing the impact as best she could, desperate to shield him from further harm. They were lucky—already on hospital grounds. A few nurses spotted the commotion and sprang into action, shouting for assistance as a stretcher was rushed in.

In a blur of movement, Brendon was lifted onto it and wheeled through the ER doors, fading from view.

Katie, trembling and breathless, fumbled for her phone. Her fingers barely obeyed her as she dialed. The moment the line connected, she burst out, "Yolanda! Get to the hospital—Brendon collapsed!"

"What?" Yolanda's voice tightened, but only just. "What happened?"

"He hit his head and passed out. He's in the emergency room now," Katie explained, her voice cracking under the weight of the moment.

"Is it serious? How did it happen?" Yolanda asked, her words quick—but her expression remained calm.

At that exact moment, Yolanda lounged on a velvet sofa, her legs stretched elegantly across a silk throw, a half-empty glass of wine poised at her lips. Her brows furrowed just enough to show concern. On the surface, she sounded worried. But beneath that polished mask, there was only calculation. If Brendon's condition turned grim—if he lost his mobility or mind—she wouldn't grieve. She wouldn't even hesitate. She'd vanish without a second thought.

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Chapter 43:

“Yolanda, you need to get here now! Brendon is seriously wounded!” Katie’s voice crackled with panic on the phone.

“Alright. Which hospital?” Yolanda asked, cool and composed. “I’ll be there shortly.”

After jotting down the address, Yolanda ended the call. Her face remained expressionless as she crossed one leg over the other and took a slow sip of red wine. “What a nuisance,” she muttered, irritation creeping into her voice as she rose from the plush couch.

If Brendon weren’t her only lifeline right now, she wouldn’t have bothered to check on him. Still, she needed to see for herself how serious his condition was. If things had taken a turn for the worse, it could throw everything off track.

Meanwhile, Christina sat alone in the backseat of a sleek black car, the interior silent except for the hum of the engine.

“Did Mr. Scott say what this was about?” she asked the driver calmly.

“Mr. Scott didn’t mention anything,” the driver replied with practiced politeness. “He only instructed me to bring you over. He’ll join you once he’s done with work.”

“I see,” Christina said softly, closing her eyes and leaning back to rest. Her phone, set to silent, lay untouched beside her. She hadn’t noticed Brendon’s repeated calls.

The car eventually rolled to a stop in front of an elegant estate. Christina opened her eyes just as the driver stepped out and opened the door with courteous precision.

“Miss Jones, we’ve arrived,” the driver said with a respectful nod.

“Thank you,” she replied, stepping out into the warm evening air.

Christina was ushered into the mansion, where a servant immediately approached her.

“Would you care for some coffee or juice, Miss Jones?” the servant asked, her voice soft but formal.

“Coffee would be nice, I’m not picky—whatever’s available is fine,” Christina answered.

“Right away,” the servant said, bowing before walking off.

As Christina glanced around the elegant interior, she couldn't help but notice the staff's demeanor. Every movement was polished, every word measured. The Scott family clearly ran a well-disciplined household.

A few minutes later, the servant returned with a porcelain cup on a silver tray. "Please enjoy," she said, placing it gently on the table before stepping back.

Christina took a sip, savoring the warmth, then looked up. "This place. It belongs to Dylan, doesn't it?"

The servant nodded, gaze lowered. "Yes."

"Did he say when he'd be arriving?" Christina asked, her tone calm but curious.

"No," the servant replied, hands neatly folded in front of her. "Mr. Scott only instructed us to ensure you're well taken care of."

Christina gave a courteous nod. "Thank you. That'll be all for now. You may continue with your work."

"Of course. If you need anything at all, please don't hesitate to ask," the servant responded with quiet professionalism.

"I appreciate it," Christina said warmly.

"This is our responsibility. Please enjoy your coffee," the servant remarked, retreating with graceful steps before turning and leaving the room.

Christina leaned back in her seat, quietly impressed by how seamlessly the staff carried themselves. Their poise, precision, and training spoke volumes about the Scott family's standards. There was no doubt—the Scotts were powerful, wealthy, and deeply rooted in tradition.

She couldn't help but wonder—if the Scott family's operations were this tightly controlled, what must their traditions and expectations be like behind closed doors? Anyone marrying into a family like the Scotts would likely have to abide by strict etiquette, hidden rules, and unspoken obligations.

To outsiders, marrying into the Scott family might look like a fairy tale—luxury, power, prestige. But beneath the surface? Sacrifices. Silence. And a life that might never feel like her own.

Taking another slow sip of her coffee, Christina let the warmth settle. It was rich and smooth, the flavor lingering delicately on her tongue. Undoubtedly, it was one of the best cups she'd had in a while.

She beamed. Divorce had given her more than freedom—it had given her clarity. She had no regrets about walking away from marriage and no desire to walk back into one, especially not into a gilded cage like the Scott family.

Anyway, she had carved her own path. She had wealth, reputation, and independence. She didn't need anyone's name or status to validate her place in the world.

Yet, there were still those who whispered behind her back, thinking she was just another woman trying to marry rich, clawing her way up from the bottom. The thought made her lips curl into a faint, amused smile. If only they knew.

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Chapter 44:

Christina took a sip of her coffee, the warmth grounding her as she waited in silence. But as the minutes ticked by, boredom slowly crept in. She reached for her phone to distract herself.

That was when she finally noticed the three missed calls from Brendon. At first, she didn't feel like calling back. The thought of hearing his voice again brought more irritation than concern. But then, a flicker of worry surfaced. What if he had called because something had happened to Bethel?

With a reluctant sigh, she hesitated, thumb hovering over the screen. After a moment of indecision, she tapped the call button.

The line connected—then immediately dropped.

Christina frowned and tried again. It was immediately hung up.

A third attempt. Still the same.

Annoyance mixed with unease. Clearly, something wasn't right.

Instead of calling again, she opened her messages and typed quickly, "Why aren't you answering? You called me earlier—was it urgent? Is Bethel alright?"

A few moments later, a reply came through. "Nothing's wrong. Stop pestering me. I'm busy and don't have time for you."

Christina stared at the screen, incredulous. Then, she laughed—sharp, exasperated, almost amused. Unbelievable. She quickly typed back, "Have you lost it? You're the one who called me first. If anyone's being a nuisance, it's definitely not me."

No reply followed.

Christina smirked, assuming Brendon had no comeback.

But the truth was far different. Brendon was still in the emergency room, unconscious, and his phone was now in Yolanda's possession.

A sudden commotion broke the silence, making Yolanda flinch. Relief flooded her when she saw it wasn't Katie returning. She quickly deleted Christina's message and wiped the call log, erasing any trace of the exchange.

Yolanda stared at the screen, jaw clenched, teeth grinding. Three calls. Brendon had called Christina three times before he passed out. Even in a moment of crisis, the first person he had thought of was Christina. If Katie hadn't phoned, she might've stayed in the dark until morning. That thought stung deeper than she expected.

Panic seized Yolanda. Brendon had changed. He wasn't the same man who used to think of her first. And Christina had clearly left her mark on Brendon's heart. Her three years of quiet devotion had etched something permanent into his soul.

Yolanda's hands curled into tight fists. No. She wouldn't allow this to happen. She wouldn't let Brendon slip away—not to Christina, not to anyone. Until the day she chose to discard him, Brendon would remain hers. His body, his heart—both belonged to her. And she wasn't about to give them up.

Christina clearly hadn't backed off. She must still be plotting something—trying to worm her way back into Brendon's life. That woman had no shame. How dare Christina try to seduce Brendon right under her nose? It was downright delusional.

Yolanda's grip tightened around the phone, knuckles pale, her jaw clenching so hard it sent a jolt of pain through her temples. Even if she no longer wanted Brendon, she would never let Christina have him. She would rather destroy him than let him end up in Christina's arms.

Meanwhile, at the mansion, the quiet of the hallway was broken by the sound of approaching footsteps, which caught Christina's attention.

She turned just as Dylan stepped into view—tall, composed, radiating a cold and commanding presence. Beside him walked a young man in gold-rimmed glasses, exuding quiet sophistication.

The young man was undeniably attractive in his own right—refined, poised, almost scholarly in demeanor. But next to Dylan, the contrast was striking.

Where Dylan carried the weight of silent authority, with eyes sharp as steel and a presence that demanded attention, the young man was calm and gracious—more gentleman than force.

"Apologies for the delay," Dylan said as he approached.

Christina rose from her seat with a smile. "Not at all. I just arrived myself." Her eyes flicked toward the young man. "And this is..." There was a curious warmth in her tone as she regarded him, her expression open, friendly—perhaps even a little intrigued.

Dylan noticed her reaction and felt a flicker of annoyance. He hadn't expected her to pay so much attention to Morse Hampton, a psychiatrist he invited over for her. Suddenly, bringing Morse along seemed like a terrible idea. His expression darkened, a cold edge creeping into his demeanor, sharp enough to chill the air around him.

“I’m Morse Hampton,” the young man said with a confident smile, stepping forward and offering his hand.

Dylan watched the exchange, an unexpected wave of irritation and jealousy tightening in his chest.

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Chapter 45:

Dylan moved instantly, seizing Morse’s hand in a firm, commanding grip before Morse could shake hands with Christina—just enough to make his authority crystal clear.

“Take a seat. We’ll discuss this calmly,” he said.

Morse registered the force in Dylan’s handshake, his curiosity deepening at Dylan’s unusually tense manner. Something about the woman at the center of all this had clearly rattled Dylan.

Morse was mildly intrigued. Having been friends with Dylan for years, this marked the first time Dylan had personally requested his services as a psychiatrist. For a woman, no less. It signaled something out of the ordinary. This wasn’t just another patient. There was a hidden story here.

Unaware of the charged silence between the two men, Christina stepped forward with an easy confidence. “I am Christina Jones. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Dylan’s features stayed carved in stone. Gesturing toward Morse, he offered a brief, cold explanation. “He’s a psychiatrist. One of the best around. I brought him here for you.”

Her surprise was evident. “A psychiatrist? For me? That’s... I don’t really think it’s necessary.”

Most people might have welcomed the suggestion, but Christina saw no need. After all, in the secretive underworld, she had earned her reputation as the most formidable assassin alive—her name whispered with fear and awe among mercenaries everywhere. Despite her legend, no one had ever discovered who she really was. All anyone could say was that she never failed—a perfect record with every assignment completed, no exceptions. Her missions bordered on the impossible, yet she tackled each one with unmatched precision and calm.

From continent to continent, her legend had grown, and she had become the subject of awe among a hidden legion of admirers. Should her true identity ever come to light, the resulting frenzy wouldn’t just electrify her followers—it would ripple through the world itself.

Inevitably, envy followed fame. An exposure of her identity would undoubtedly draw every rival assassin, each one hungry to take her down for the title of the world’s best. After all, toppling a legend is the quickest way to become one.

The way Christina deflected the idea of therapy only reinforced what Dylan and Morse suspected: her mind had likely built walls to keep her from reliving the blood-soaked memories of her past.

A silent exchange passed between the two men, their brows furrowing slightly. In their minds, whatever facade Christina presented, her emotional state must be anything but ordinary. It seemed as though she'd locked away all her pain and fear, unable—or unwilling—to let herself feel.

“He’s here now. Humor him, will you?” Dylan’s tone gentled, a rare hint of persuasion coloring his words. “You two just chat for a bit. If it gets to be too much, we’ll stop right away.”

“Yeah, I made the trip. You wouldn’t want to break my heart by rejecting me, would you?” Morse chimed in, hoping to lift the tension a little.

That finally drew a laugh from Christina. She decided there was no harm in humoring them—she’d sit through the session, at least for now. Otherwise, it wouldn’t take long before these two sharp-eyed men started unraveling the discreet identities she’d worked so hard to bury. Her acting talents kicked in as she let out a small, hesitant sigh.

“Honestly, I just feel bad that Dylan has rescued me, and now here I am, troubling you both with my problems.”

“It’s no trouble at all. You’ve helped me so much. It’s only right that I take good care of you.” Dylan met her gaze, his voice steady, his face unreadable.

Morse chimed in with easy warmth, “What matters is that you’re okay. You were a huge part of Chloe’s recovery—helping you now is the least I can do.”

Christina glanced down, her lashes fluttering as tears gathered in her eyes, her acting purposely exaggerated. “Thank you, truly. You’ve both shown me more kindness than I deserve.”

Seeing the sudden shimmer in her eyes, Dylan felt a strange, tight ache in his chest—something he couldn’t quite explain.

To change the mood, Morse leaned in with a grin. “Miss Jones, I’ve heard you’re a crack shot. How about a friendly shooting match someday?”

That did the trick—Christina’s spirits perked up. “Deal! But if I miss, you’re not allowed to tease me.”

“Why would I tease you?” Morse replied, chuckling. “Since you can outshoot Dylan, you’ve already got more skill than I’ll ever have.” He threw in a wink. “Besides, even if you miss, I bet you’d still win against me.”

“Well, I’ve seen some surprises on the range before.” A wide grin split Christina’s face.

Their conversation drifted on for a while, laughter cutting through the earlier tension, until Christina rose and followed Morse into the study to begin her session.

Restlessly, Dylan paced the hallway outside the study, feeling as if every minute stretched into an eternity. Had it not been for the rule that therapy should be private, he would have charged in long before.

Images of Christina, pale and petrified in the aftermath of that grisly scene, haunted Dylan with every step. The memory left his chest aching for reasons he couldn't quite name. He had no doubt that the horror she'd witnessed had rattled her to the core.

The ticking clock only made Dylan's nerves worse, and impatience gnawed at him as he waited. Just as he considered knocking, the study door swung open unexpectedly. He found himself face-to-face with Christina. Red-rimmed eyes and puffy lids told the whole story—she'd been crying.

A sharp ache sliced through Dylan's heart, his frown deepening with worry. Tears from a single session? That didn't sit right with him. His voice dropped to a wintry chill as he pinned Morse with a glare. "What happened in there?"

Morse, unruffled but keenly aware of Dylan's hostility, answered evenly, "Sometimes, feelings have to come out. With regular sessions, she'll be back to herself in a few months."

A storm brewed behind Dylan's eyes. Morse could practically feel the fury simmering beneath the surface. Never had he seen anyone so emotionally rattled—Dylan looked ready to tear the world apart for her.

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Chapter 46:

"Thank you, Dr. Hampton..." Christina nodded with red eyes, but her heart remained completely calm. She even felt like laughing at the absurdity of the situation. Still, she forced herself to put on an act. If she slipped, these two sharp-eyed men would catch on instantly.

Dylan's voice grew gentler, his frosty demeanor melting just a touch. "Make sure you don't skip your regular therapy sessions. I can drive you when the time comes."

Christina's voice rasped as she replied, "That's really not necessary. I wouldn't want to trouble you. Just give me the address and I'll manage to get to Dr. Hampton on my own."

Dylan's expression cooled, the softness vanishing. Before he could say something, Morse jumped ahead, wearing a broad, easy grin. "No trouble at all! How could it possibly be trouble? If you were coming to see me, you'd need to make an appointment in advance. But if I come to you, it's much more convenient for everyone, isn't it?"

Morse knew better than to agree to the idea that Christina came to him for therapy sessions. With Dylan's budding feelings toward her, he knew if he slipped his work address, he'd probably pay dearly for it.

Christina offered a faint smile. "Alright then, I'll leave it to you. Sorry for putting you out."

Since Morse had put it that way, she figured arguing further was pointless.

"No trouble at all," Dylan stated curtly.

Morse's gaze bounced between Dylan and Christina, a knowing smirk tugging at his lips. "So, what's the plan? Miss Jones, do you need a ride home to get some rest, or..."

Christina shifted awkwardly, a faint flush rising to her cheeks. "I'll just grab a cab. I can't keep imposing on you."

"It's really no trouble. I was leaving anyway—it's right on my way," Dylan said, his face expressionless, though the words were a blatant offer.

She hesitated, clearly unconvinced, but after a moment, she relented with a soft nod.

Just as the three turned to go, an embarrassingly loud rumble erupted from Christina's stomach.

Morse grinned, his eyes lighting up with mischief. "Hungry, Miss Jones? How about we make Dylan treat us to a meal?"

Christina's smile was warm, her embarrassment fading. "Let me treat you both instead. What do you feel like eating?"

Morse threw his hands up in mock protest, laughter bubbling in his chest. "Absolutely not! You don't need to worry about Dylan's wallet—he could never spend it all! But if you're really reluctant to spend his money, you can spend mine instead."

Christina let out a bright, musical laugh, her eyes narrowing into delighted crescents that shimmered with genuine happiness. Her laughter was infectious, and her effortless beauty seemed to radiate from every gesture, making it impossible to look away. Morse stood there, mesmerized for a few seconds, before Dylan's icy gaze snapped him out of his daze.

Trying to cut through the tension with a bit of bravado, Morse adjusted his gold-rimmed glasses and shot Dylan a lopsided, mischievous grin. "So, what's the plan? Are you treating us or what?"

Ignoring Morse's antics, Dylan turned his attention to Christina. The sharpness in his eyes faded, replaced by a rare gentleness. "Let's just stay in. I'll cook. Is there anything you can't eat, or anything you're craving?" His voice was unusually soft.

While Christina took his offer in stride, Morse could hardly believe his ears. What on earth was going on today? Was he dreaming? Dylan was actually volunteering to cook? In all the years they'd known each other, he could count on one hand the number of times Dylan had personally made a meal for someone. And now, here Dylan was, offering to whip something up for Christina. The implication was glaringly obvious—she was someone special.

With that realization, Morse's gaze flicked to Christina, his eyes filling with fresh curiosity and genuine admiration. How had she managed to thaw even a corner of Dylan's permafrost heart?

Right now, though, Morse mostly felt like celebrating his own good fortune. Coming over for Christina's therapy had landed him the golden ticket: a chance to savor Dylan's cooking skills.

A fizz of anticipation shot through Morse—only for Christina to cut in. "That's too much trouble. Let's just eat out. My treat. Order anything you like."

Morse's excitement fizzled in an instant. What was the point of a restaurant meal when Dylan's home cooking was on the table? Still, Morse kept his disappointment to himself, knowing that if he complained, Dylan might shut down the offer entirely.

Dylan replied, "Seriously, it's no trouble. I'll whip up a few quick dishes. It won't take long."

In truth, Christina was tempted. She was already starving, and her stomach rumbled at the mere thought of Dylan's cooking. But she hated to impose, which was why she'd suggested a restaurant in the first place. Now, seeing Dylan's insistence, she realized he might be eager to impress—how could she refuse him that?

"Okay then. Let me help out in the kitchen," she replied with an easy smile.

"I'll help too!" Morse blurted out, thrusting his hand in the air. Before anyone could protest, Morse bolted for the kitchen, practically tripping over himself in his eagerness. Panic flickered across his face—if Dylan changed his mind, this rare treat would vanish in a heartbeat.

The more Morse thought about tasting Dylan's dishes, the brighter his mood became. He couldn't help but beam, a goofy grin plastered across his face as he started humming an off-key, happy tune.

Christina blinked, momentarily stunned by Morse's sudden burst of enthusiasm. She watched him disappear at breakneck speed, barely processing what had just happened.

"Sometimes, he can be a bit much," Dylan trailed off.

Christina let out a soft laugh. "He seems like a blast."

Dylan's expression cooled once more, a shadow of irritation passing over his face. "Yeah. You could say that," he replied tersely. He then asked, "So, what do you want to eat? Any cravings?"

Christina's lips curved in a gentle smile. "Easy to please—anything's fine, really."

Dylan wasted no time, launching into a rapid-fire list of dish options as if reciting a restaurant menu, gesturing for her to choose whichever ones appealed to her.

Christina hesitated, the sheer number of choices making her mouth water. "Are you sure this isn't too much work? And, um, do you two even like spicy food?"

"We can handle it," Dylan replied without hesitation.

As they started prepping ingredients, Morse peered over Christina's shoulder. "All those chilies?"

Morse eyed the pile with clear suspicion. When did Dylan ever go for spicy dishes?

Before he could press Dylan for answers, Christina chimed in with a grin, "How about you? Are you good with spicy food?"

"Of course I am! It's just..." Morse's voice faltered as Dylan shot him a warning glare. He clamped his mouth shut, thinking better of finishing his sentence.

Christina arched an eyebrow, genuinely curious. "Just what?"

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 47:

A relaxed grin spread across Morse's face. "Dylan and I just can't handle food that's too spicy."

Christina turned to Dylan, her tone light and easy. "Let's cut back on the chilies, then. I've been a little under the weather lately—can't handle anything too fiery."

She tossed out the excuse with a small smile, smoothing things over without making a fuss.

Dylan simply nodded in agreement. "Alright."

A short while later, platters of steaming dishes filled the table, the air fragrant with spices and simmered broth.

Morse, who'd been eyeing the spicy beef stew for ages, finally gave in to temptation. The aroma had been torturing him for minutes, each inhale making his stomach rumble louder. At last, he loaded his plate, unable to hide his eagerness. The first bite of beef practically melted in his mouth, tender and bursting with rich, balanced flavor. Every mouthful confirmed it—Dylan's cooking belonged in a league of its own.

Just as Morse reached for a second helping, he slapped his forehead. "Oh, wait! I forgot to take any pictures!"

He scrambled for his phone, snapping photos from every angle with the enthusiasm of a food blogger on deadline. But the lure of the food was too much. Instead of uploading the photos right away, he put the phone aside and dove right back in.

Christina glanced up, a gentle curiosity in her eyes. "How's the spice level? Is it alright for you?"

“It’s amazing,” Morse muttered, barely pausing between bites as he shoveled more food onto his plate.

His gold-rimmed glasses slid dangerously close to the tip of his nose, but he ignored them, laser-focused on devouring every flavorful bite.

Dylan sat across from him, posture straight and face unreadable. The heat from the chilies clearly hit him harder than he let on, but he didn’t flinch. Maintaining a steady tone, he simply said, “It’s fine.”

Morse was on the verge of losing it—he had to bite back a laugh at the sight of Dylan toughing it out for Christina’s sake. Honestly, watching Dylan power through the spice just to impress her was something else.

One thing was for sure. Christina wasn’t just anyone to Dylan.

Morse could see it clear as day—Dylan was already falling for Christina. But whether that would lead to anything real... well, that was anyone’s guess. It all came down to whether Dylan could step up.

For a moment, the table quieted, filled only with the gentle clinking of cutlery and the warm, savory scents wafting between them. Suddenly, Morse couldn’t help himself.

“So, Miss Jones, what do you think of Dylan? Ever thought about being with him?” he blurted, a teasing spark lighting his eyes.

The question hit Christina mid-bite. She coughed violently, scrambling for a napkin as she tried to recover her composure.

Dylan’s eyes sharpened, and he quickly passed her a napkin, his glare pinning Morse with a silent warning.

Morse sprang from his seat, hands raised in apology. “Sorry! I’m so sorry, Miss Jones. Are you alright?”

Christina waved him off between coughs, her face flushing. “I’m fine,” she replied, forcing a quick smile. “I just ate too fast. And the chili caught me off guard.”

There was no way she’d admit that Morse’s ambush of a question had been the real culprit.

“My bad, just kidding around,” Morse stated, flashing a sheepish grin as he scratched the back of his neck.

Christina returned a polite smile. “Don’t worry, I understand.”

“But honestly, Dylan’s the real deal,” Morse added, eyes twinkling with mischief.

“Mr. Scott is quite remarkable,” Christina replied with a lilting laugh. “I can see why he’d attract plenty of admirers.”

Morse leaned closer, his gaze suddenly shrewd. “What about you, though?”

“Me?” Christina turned to glance at Dylan, her lips curving into a teasing smile. “If Mr. Scott dropped to one knee and proposed right now, I’d have to say yes on the spot.”

Morse seized the moment with dramatic flair. “Hear that, Dylan? Now’s your chance! No ring? Use your property deed! The Scott family estate will work just fine—”

Dylan cut him off, his tone like ice. “Enough. Stop dragging everyone into your jokes. It’s getting awkward.”

Dylan saw right through Christina’s breezy answer. The more casually she brushed it off, the clearer it was that she had no real interest.

Morse snorted, eyebrows raised. “Awkward? Who’s awkward?” He glanced at Christina, searching her face. “Are you?”

Christina just smiled, a relaxed warmth in her eyes. “Not at all. We’re just goofing around.”

“See? Exactly!” Morse grinned, undeterred. “I’m just keeping the mood light.”

Morse inwardly exhaled. Despite his best efforts to spice things up, Dylan didn’t seize the moment.

The meal soon wrapped up, and Morse pushed his empty plate away, sinking back in his chair with a contented sigh, stuffed to the brim.

Only after scraping his plate clean did he finally upload the photos he’d taken earlier, proudly captioning them, “This is what top-tier indulgence looks like. Luckiest day ever!”

Within moments, his post exploded with likes and comments.

Ralph was the fastest to comment. “It’s just a few homemade dishes. What’s so special about that? I’m at Morfort Restaurant right now! Just wait. I’ll post my photos and show you what real fine dining is!”

Morse fired back, oozing smug satisfaction. “Morfort Restaurant? Please. I just had a private meal cooked by Dylan himself. Beat that.”

Meanwhile, over at Morfort Restaurant, Ralph was still waiting on his order when Morse’s reply popped up on his screen. He nearly dropped his phone in shock. What the hell? Dylan actually cooked?

Without hesitation, Ralph launched a video call, urgency lacing his tone. “Wait—are you actually at Dylan’s place right now?”

“Of course,” Morse replied, sinking back into his chair with a smug grin.

He slid his gold-rimmed glasses up the bridge of his nose, the picture of self-satisfaction.

“I’m coming over right now!” Ralphy exclaimed, barely pausing to snatch up his suit jacket as he bolted from his seat.

In that moment, the extravagant meal he’d ordered at Morfort Restaurant was completely forgotten. All he could think about was the chance to taste Dylan’s legendary home cooking. Chloe’s mention of the onion soup still echoed in his mind—he’d missed out, and the regret stung. This time, he refused to let the opportunity slip away.

“There’s really no need. We finished everything already,” Morse declared, his grin stretching even wider.

Ralphy paused dead, shooting daggers at Morse via the video call.

Unable to help himself, Morse burst out laughing. “You’re supposed to be the heir to the Graham family. Try showcasing more poise like most expected from a future family lead.”

Ralphy bristled. “You’ve got a lot of nerve! Why didn’t you say anything sooner?”

Morse’s laughter only grew, while Ralphy clenched his jaw in frustration.

“Morse, I swear, I’ll get you back for this!” Ralphy growled, his voice trembling with barely controlled fury.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 48:

Morse dropped his voice, speaking in a hushed whisper into the phone, “I’ve figured out a trick to get Dylan to cook.”

Ralphy shot to his feet, his emotions flaring again. “Really? What trick? Tell me right now!”

“Oh? Didn’t you say you would get back at me for not messaging you about Dylan’s cooking just a minute ago?” Morse’s lips curled in a sly, triumphant grin.

Immediately, Ralphy’s whole demeanor shifted—he flashed a wide, obsequious smile. “I was just kidding! I swear, I didn’t mean any of that...”

Morse arched an eyebrow and flashed a teasing smile. “So what does that make me, then?”

Ralphy’s eyes darted before he plastered on an eager grin. “You’re my boss. Whatever you say goes, all right? I’ll do anything—just tell me the trick!”

To Ralphy, losing a touch of pride was a small sacrifice for the meal made by Dylan with his own hands. Learning what it took to get Dylan to cook was priceless.

“Boss, please, what’s the secret?” Ralphy pleaded, grinning shamelessly.

Morse burst out laughing at Ralphy’s pathetic display. “Are you really willing to do anything I ask just for a shot at Dylan’s cooking?”

“Absolutely! Name it, I’ll do it! Now quit stalling and tell me already!” Ralphy bounced on his heels, nearly bursting with anticipation.

Morse leaned in, smirking. “Well, since you’re so eager... Let’s talk about your family’s assets for a second...”

Before he could finish, Ralphy jumped in with an eager shout. “Boss! Everything I have is yours—take it all!”

But Ralphy barely got the words out before a cane came crashing down across his back.

“Ah! Ow—hey!” A sharp yelp escaped Ralphy as pain shot up his back. He whipped around, face blazing with anger. “Who the hell just hit me? Are you looking to die?”

But as soon as Ralphy caught sight of the culprit, his bravado collapsed.

The words tangled in his throat. His voice went small and uncertain. “Grandpa...” He summoned up a nervous grin, trying to play it cool. “Uh, what brings you here all of a sudden?”

Samuel Graham, Ralphy’s grandfather, scowled, digging his cane into the floor. “If I hadn’t shown up, you’d have handed over the entire family to someone else!”

Ralphy let out a weak, awkward chuckle, desperate to defuse the situation. “Come on, I was just kidding...”

Samuel’s scowl only deepened. He raised his cane again, threatening another whack.

Panicking, Ralphy blurted out, “Dylan’s cooked today!”

The words stopped Samuel mid-swing. “What the hell did you just say? Dylan’s cooked today?” he echoed, his irritation momentarily forgotten.

Ralphy bobbed his head up and down, scrambling to keep the peace. “Yeah! I—”

Samuel didn’t let Ralphy finish. In a flash, he snatched Ralphy’s phone and shoved Ralphy out of the way. “Out of my way!”

Ralphy stumbled back, barely catching himself as Samuel claimed his phone.

Samuel’s tone flipped to warmth as he addressed the screen. “Morse, have you guys finished washing the dishes over there?”

Momentarily startled, Morse responded, “Mr. Graham, all the dishes are washed and put away.”

Samuel’s expression shifted, smoothing into an ingratiating smile. “Morse, you know I’ve always treated you well, haven’t I?”

“Of course, Mr. Graham. You’ve always been very generous,” Morse replied, his fingers pushing up his gold-rimmed glasses. He could already tell where this conversation was headed.

Right on cue, Samuel leaned in closer to the screen.

“About that trick you mentioned earlier... Would you mind sharing it with me?” His smile stretched even wider, thick with expectation.

By this time, Ralphy had recovered from his shock and was hovering nearby, craning his neck to catch every word.

With a sly grin, Morse quietly toggled his phone camera from the front to the rear lens, panning around the room before letting the frame settle on the living room.

In the shot, two people sat comfortably, sipping coffee. Dylan lounged in an armchair, his features locked in a cold, unreadable mask. Beside him sat a young woman, poised and composed, her face entirely unfamiliar to Samuel.

Samuel’s eyes narrowed with intrigue. “Who’s that woman over there? She’s just sitting there having coffee with Dylan?”

For a moment, genuine surprise flickered across Samuel’s normally unflappable face. He leaned in, peering at the screen, silently sizing up the woman with growing interest. Someone who could sit so naturally across from Dylan—unfazed, perfectly at ease—had to be remarkable.

“I know!” Ralphy couldn’t contain himself. He shot his hand into the air, practically bouncing in his seat. “Grandpa, that’s Christina! I’ve told you about her—she’s the one who beat Dylan and won the prize of King’s treatment. She struck a deal with Dylan, and now, thanks to her, Chloe actually has a shot at being healed.”

Samuel’s keen eyes stayed locked on Christina, sizing her up with the practiced scrutiny of a man who missed nothing. He took note of the way she sat—poised, unafraid, utterly unfazed by Dylan’s presence. Clearly, she wasn’t someone ordinary.

A slow realization dawned on Samuel. Any woman who could best Dylan in a shooting competition wasn’t just impressive—she was exceptional.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 49:

Samuel regarded Christina with a gleam of admiration in his eyes, the corners of his mouth lifting into a rare, gentle smile. In that moment, he couldn't help but think—the Scott bloodline outshined the Grahams by miles. Such clarity. Such instinct.

The contrast between Ralphie and Dylan made Samuel's blood boil. The comparison wasn't even close. With a grunt of frustration, he shoved the phone back into Ralphie's hand. Ralphie's career was already inferior to Dylan's, and now, Dylan showcased better taste in choosing partners. "You useless rascal!" Samuel thundered at Ralphie, pacing with agitation.

"Grandpa, please!" Ralphie said quickly, trying to pacify him. "Let's not lose sight of the goal—the secret trick. That's what matters."

But Samuel wasn't listening. His expression hardened as he turned on his heel and strode away, seething.

Then, from the phone's speaker, Morse's laughter echoed mockingly. "How dare you laugh at a time like this!" Ralphie snapped, his eyes flashing with irritation.

"Your grandfather's something else," Morse said, amusement lacing every word.

Ralphie frowned. He still didn't get it that Christina wasn't just a name in passing—she was the axis on which everything turned. But to him, the conversation between his grandpa and Morse was a cipher, each word more perplexing than the last.

"I'm ending the call," Morse said, smirking faintly. "I have to take Miss Jones home."

Ralphie blurted out, "Wait—what about the secret trick? At least give me a hint!"

"Miss Jones needs to be taken home," Morse said coolly. "We'll talk later."

And with that, the screen went dark.

Ralphie stared at the phone for a beat, stunned. Then, slowly, realization dawned—and hit him like a lightning bolt. Christina wasn't just important—she was the key.

His expression shifted from bafflement to glee. From this moment forward, he vowed to treat Christina like royalty—ride her coattails, sing her praises, and sponge off Dylan's hospitality.

With a self-satisfied smirk, Ralphie whispered to himself, "Miss Jones, looks like I'll be relying on you from now on."

The next morning, Christina shuffled out of bed, bleary-eyed and sluggish. Still half-asleep, she fumbled through her morning routine, brushing her teeth with her eyes closed, swaying slightly like a drunk sailor adrift.

The hangover hadn't worn off yet. Davina had shown up last night with a bottle of something strong, and the two of them had gone a few rounds deeper than planned.

Even now, Christina felt like her head was wrapped in cotton.

Suddenly, there was a ruckus outside.

Her senses sharpened in an instant. Could it be Davina coming over again? Clutching her toothbrush, still clad in her cozy bear-print pajamas, she padded toward the front door.

"Oh! This one's just perfect! A full sea-view estate! Absolutely ideal for this season—so cozy and tranquil!"

Christina froze mid-step. That voice. Definitely not Davina. Her brow furrowed sharply. She knew that chirpy, fake-sweet tone anywhere—Joselyn. What the hell was Joselyn doing here? And Joselyn wasn't alone. Judging by the background chatter, she had company. Was Joselyn talking about renting this place?

Christina's eyes narrowed. This estate was part of the divorce settlement with Brendon!

"Oh, any place will do, as long as Brendon and Yolanda are happy," said Sheila Mitchell, Yolanda's mother, her tone warm and polite.

"I promise you, once Yolanda marries into our family, we'll treat her just like our own daughter. No different at all," Joselyn remarked, puffing up proudly.

"With your assurance, we can finally breathe easy," said Finnegan Mitchell, Yolanda's father, his tone satisfied. "Now that my father's on board, Yolanda and Brendon can finally be together. It's a happy ending."

Sheila hesitated, her brow creasing slightly. "But... are Brendon and that woman truly over? There's been no public word about their divorce. I'm still uneasy."

"Mrs. Mitchell, there's no need to worry," Katie interjected smoothly. "The divorce papers are signed and sealed. I've seen them with my own eyes."

Sheila exhaled, visibly relieved. "Thank goodness. I've heard rumors about that woman's private affairs... Not exactly the sort of thing one wants linked to the family."

Finnegan's face darkened. "A woman like that—fickle and disloyal—will never be allowed near the Mitchell name. She's such a stain."

Katie scoffed, her nose wrinkling with disgust. "It's all my grandmother's fault. She went soft and let Christina into our family. Christina brought us nothing but embarrassment! Thank God Brendon came to his senses and divorced her. She's revolting."

"Katie, maybe Christina had her reasons," Yolanda said gently, feigning sympathy while expertly twisting the blade. "We don't know the whole story."

Joselyn patted Yolanda's hand. "You're too kind for your own good, dear. A woman like Christina doesn't deserve your compassion. Kindness like yours can be a liability if someone like her decides to take advantage."

In Joselyn's eyes, Yolanda was the perfect match for her son—elegant, well-bred, poised. Everything Christina was not. Brendon deserved someone like Yolanda.

"She's the reason I don't have a grandchild yet," Joselyn added bitterly. "She latched onto Brendon like a leech for years and still couldn't bear him a child."

"I see you're having a good time spewing shit out of that vile mouth of yours!" Christina's voice cut through the room like a blade. All heads turned in shock.

Then, Christina looked Joselyn dead in the eye. "No matter how capable a woman is, there's only so much she can do if the real problem lies with her husband in terms of having babies."

A smirk danced on Christina's lips as her eyes flicked—mockingly—from Joselyn to Katie.

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The Humble Ex-wife is Now A Brilliant Tycoon

Chapter 50:

Finnegan spun to face Joselyn, his voice sharp with disbelief. "Mrs. Dawson, this woman just insulted your son—and you're honestly going to let that go?"

"Christina Jones!" Joselyn hissed, her words trembling with a volatile mix of shame and anger. She jabbed an unsteady finger at Christina, her eyes wild. "You fucking bitch! One more word out of you, and I'll snuff that mouth of yours permanently."

Christina exhaled, the sound thick with mocking exhaustion. "Alas! Guess I really am a hopeless case, huh?"

Katie's lips twisted into a venomous smirk. "What's this? Finally smartened up and realized you're just a loser?"

Christina's smile turned languid, almost lazy, her eyes radiating an icy indifference. "I just realized that no matter how hard I fall, I can't even get close to the bottomless pit of shamelessness of you guys. Honestly, I'm impressed. I could never compete."

Outrage swept through the group, every face twisted with indignation, each of them looking ready to throttle Christina right then and there.

Yolanda pushed forward, her eyes glistening with theatrical misery. “Christina, if you’re angry—if you have some grudge—then take it out on me. Please, just leave the Dawson family out of it. I can shoulder it all,” she pleaded, her voice trembling as if she might break.

Christina’s gaze flicked to Yolanda, cold and contemptuous. She didn’t bother with words—a single withering look was enough to send Yolanda reeling back, panic flashing across her face as she nearly toppled over.

Joselyn and Katie hurried to Yolanda’s side, their faces knotted with worry as they hovered over her, fussing and whispering anxious questions.

The whole performance was so absurd that Christina nearly let out a laugh. All she’d done was look at Yolanda, yet these women acted as if she’d pulled a knife.

Sheila’s voice rang out, cold and shrill. “How could you be so vicious? The Dawson family once welcomed you as one of their own. Is this what you do—get divorced and start flinging insults? You even insulted your ex-husband! Don’t you have a shred of decency left? The Dawsons treated you well, but now you’re out here smearing their name just for spite, showing no respect to your elders—aren’t you afraid of what that might bring?”

Christina’s gaze, languid and unbothered, slid over to Sheila as she took an unhurried step forward. Sheila immediately shrank back, fear flashing in her eyes for a split second.

For a heartbeat, Sheila felt as if Christina’s cool, razor-sharp stare had sliced straight through her, laying bare every secret she’d ever tried to hide. She couldn’t breathe—her throat seemed to tighten under that icy scrutiny.

With a slow, crooked smile, Christina spoke, her voice laced with mockery. “Interesting. No wonder you all get along so well—your private lives are just as messy as your gossip.”

Sheila’s complexion went ghostly pale, but she quickly composed herself, forcing a sneer. “Ha! Stop slandering me. Word is, you’re just the Jones family’s charity case—some adopted nobody, parents unknown. If anyone here is illegitimate, Christina, it’s you.”

Finnegan’s face turned an ominous shade as he jabbed a finger in Christina’s direction, his voice thundering. “What bullshit are you spewing? Every Mitchell child has a paternity report—they’re all mine! Keep talking and I’ll drag you to court for slander!”

Christina didn’t even flinch. “By all means, try it,” she replied aloofly, a sly, mocking smile tugging at her lips. Her gaze cut straight through Finnegan and Sheila, ice-cold and unyielding. “But let’s not kid ourselves—at least one of you isn’t related to your kids by blood.”

Panic flashed across both Finnegan’s and Sheila’s faces, though Finnegan’s temper snapped first.

“You goddamn piece of scum! I’ll shut that mouth of yours for good!”

Finnegan snapped, storming toward Christina with murder in his eyes.

Yolanda’s voice trembled as she called out, “Dad, please—don’t get upset!”

But she made no effort to intervene, secretly wishing he'd hurt Christina. If he landed a blow, the most they'd have to do was pay some hush money—nothing truly damaging.

Yolanda had always dealt with her victims the same way—crush them and then toss them scraps. To her, the poor were pitiful creatures, too desperate to chase justice once money entered the picture. In her eyes, poverty itself was a crime—one she had no intention of forgiving.

The onlookers gathered, anticipation flickering in their eyes, waiting for Christina to be humiliated.

But in the split second before Finnegan's foot could land, Christina slipped nimbly aside.

Finnegan's leg whipped through empty air, his own momentum pitching him forward. With a sickening thud, he crashed onto the floor, the room reverberating with the impact. A pained groan slipped from his lips as he lay sprawled and unmoving.

The group, who moments before looked eager for violence, blanched at the sudden turn.

"Dad!" Yolanda shrieked, bolting to his side, her face drained of color.

Finnegan shifted ever so slightly, and the collective tension in the room broke—their relief as palpable as their shock. He hadn't died from the fall, but the spectacle they'd expected had shattered in the blink of an eye.

Yolanda immediately burst into tears, her sobs echoing through the room. "Dad! Dad, say something—please, don't scare me like this!"

Finnegan tried to speak, but Yolanda threw him a sharp, warning look—an unspoken cue.

Catching on, Finnegan obediently let his hand flop to the floor, squeezing his eyes shut.

"Dad, answer me! What's wrong with you?" Yolanda wailed, wringing her hands in theatrical distress.

Sheila's voice rang out, shrill and panicked. "Darling! Please, don't do this—don't leave me!"

Joselyn rushed over, her tone pitched high with alarm. "Mr. Mitchell! Wake up—please!"

The room erupted into overlapping cries, the chaos sharp enough to rattle the windows.

Katie whipped around, her wrath fixed on Christina. "This is all your fault, Christina! Look what you've done!"

Christina lounged against the wall, arms raised in a lazy stretch. "And what exactly does this have to do with me?" she drawled, unfazed by the hysteria.

"If anything happens to Mr. Mitchell, we'll make you pay!" Katie spat, her glare seething with accusation.

Christina met her glare with a faint, dismissive smile. “You’re really blaming me? He fell over his own feet—how’s that my fault?”

“It’s all on you!” Katie bellowed, her voice sharp as a slap. “You have to take full responsibility!”

A quiet chuckle slipped from Christina’s lips. “Let me get this straight: you think I should’ve just stood there and let him try to kick me?”

Christina shot Katie a look, her eyes cool and fearless. That kick had been meant to put her in the hospital, maybe worse.

Katie crossed her arms, refusing to back down. “If you hadn’t dodged, would he even have fallen? You’re young. It’s not like you would die from a kick!”

Christina arched a brow and gave a sly, taunting grin. “If you’re so sure, why don’t you stand right there and let me kick you to test that theory?”

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