

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 21

In the center seating area, Damian, dressed in a sleek black suit, was helping Rachel choose a necklace.

The sales associate stood beside them, presenting necklace after necklace as Rachel tried on "Damian, does this one look good?" He tilted her head, her face adorned with a sweet smile. The associate accused her of faking it.

Damian smiled and said, "looks good."

But like that one," Rachel said, pointing to another white crystal necklace displayed on a black velvet tray across the table.

Seeing Rachel hesitate, the sales associate smiled and suggested, "Mama, you look brand in both styles, but the white crystal would be perfect for wearing with a wedding. Upon hearing the words "wedding dress, Rachel's expression changed.

The sweet smile faded.

"Can't wear that wedding dress? Who made that mistake Rachel we're obviously unhappy. She quickly realized she had said something wrong, She immediately apologized to Rachel. Damian intervened, "just a suggestion. Why are you getting upset? You like them, you can have both." Whimper and the were standing near the entrance, so Dim and Rachel didn't realize then, Hearing Damian's words, Wette cursed in a low voice, "What a despicable pair, She'd taint a wedding dress"

"Don't let people tempt you, Whitney said, pulling Wette away. "Aren't we here to pick out a gift for Mrs. York

Just then, the associate who had gone to retrieve Whitney's necklace came out from the storeroom.

The black velvet tray she carried held a necklace encrusted with diamonds that sparkled brilliantly under the white light. They were perfectly complemented by a deep blue emerald pendent. The associate walked over to Whitney.

Rachel suddenly stood up and stopped her. "This necklace is fine, I don't want the other two-just want this

The associate explained, "I'm sorry, miss, but this necklace is not for sale"

"What? Do you think we can't afford it Rachel snapped, displeased

"This necklare belongs to that lady," the associate said, adding toward Whitney.

Following the associate's pane, bath Damian and Rachel turned around

Whitney had hoped to reold in encounter, but late had otherplas Sheet their gaze calmly.

"Whitney," fackel greeted with a smile. "You're a here to buy jewelry? What coincidence! We seem to have the same taste.

"Whatury, I really like the necklace. Can you give it to me? Rachel said sweetly, taking Whitney's hand as if acting coquentislily.

Yvette stepped forward and slapped Rachel's hand away. "Enough with thew We see right through you, so stop pretending to be innocent! Are you addicted to snatching things? Why should Whitney the it to you? It's already lets, yet you still want her to hand it over? How s Witte's sharp outburst left chel with tears in her redderd eyes.

"Ms. Jimningi, watch your words, Damian said as fir walked over. "Even someone has set you, it doesn't give you the right to take it out on others, would you like to call Mr. York over

to mediate in others' affairs. How are you

"Was what Yvette said wine Whiny couldn't stand by and let her debated. She said. "Mr. Howard, you see per to handling your ow

Demian's expression softened, and he good at her intently. "That's not what i eat, but asumerstand. I forget to get Rachel a gift for her birthday, so I'm making up for it today."

"Yes, Widney. I just wanted a gift from Danilan. Your end was rally harsh," Hachel chimed in.

Twente glared at her. "11 you don't want to bor harsh words, stop doing disgusting things!"

Bainian's erpes-arrowed, and for waned again, "The Howard tanyan't one to be trilled with. If you don't watch your wonds, the jennings family might find themselves being troublethayden'l want kulfending the Howard family over Rachel

The Jennings dantly was a middle-

class wedly family Sealant significant enough to th Whitney signaled Yvette to stop, apperating er defense but not waiting her to get anythilier lundvel Whitney looked at Darrian. "I spoke out of tur just now. Minwand, are you going to pinishi me tao? Tidury, can went makeai Rachel nagged at Dandal's sleve and sad ptially, "Forget it, thaman. It's

all my fault I shouldn't have liked the same thing as Whitney I'll give up on it. I don't want it anymore." Whitney insisted. "What about your man! And you upon him to

like she didn't want the necklace, what about Damian

Upon hearing her words, Damian, and his expression red hot. "Why, you make a scene for everyone to see?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

[Chapter 22](#)

Chapter He Doesn't Even Remember

Whitney was making a scene? She was just telling the truths, yet she was the one being blamed for making a scene?

"Damian, I really don't want anymore. Please don't argue with Whitney because of me," Rachel said, her eyes welling up as she turned to leave.

Damian quickly stopped her. "Since I promised to give you a boy what you like."

Then, he looked back at Whitney, his tone growing harsh. "I've always been generous, so let's not argue over this, the her this necklace, and you can pick out another, I'll pay

So, this was Damian's choice. He'd give Rachel anything she wanted. Whether it was a necklace, a job, or anything else. Just like the last time they both fell into the pool, Damian had chosen to save Rachel first.

A smoldering anger built up in Whitney's chest.

"Being generous doesn't mean I'm willing to be taken advantage of," she said expressionlessly. "I won't let you have this necklace."

Seeing that Whitney wouldn't give in at all, Damian's expression darkened. "Fine, don't regret it!"

Whitney ended but remained silent.

Damian left with Rachel, looking clearly displeased.

"Whitney, what did Damian mean by that? He won't stop Professor Morris from getting the medicine for your mother, right?" Wette asked.

Whitney's expression grew serious as well.

It was entirely possible. Damian was no longer the man she once knew-the one who used to protect her at all costs.

The sales associate handed Whitney the necklace. Then, the two of them left the store.

"he really does that, there's nothing I can do about it. Anyway, the medicine will be marketed eventually. At worst, we'll just have to wait a little longer to find a way to buy it." With that, Whimey tossed the necklace in her hand into a trash can, Yite gasped "Why did you throw it away?"

The necklace was worth well over seven figures, and Whitney had just thrown it away like it was nothing

Thinking Whitney was acting out of spite, Yvette reached to retrieve it

Bat Whimey stopped her "Damian has even forgotten the necklace he gave me. Why should I keep it?"

On Valentine's Day two years ago, Damian had personally chosen this necklace, telling her booked best on her. But just now, he didn't recognize it. If he didn't even remember, why should she keep it?

In the black Rolls-Royce, Rachel lowered her head, her eyes red. "I'm sorry, I've caused you trouble again. You had a fight with her, and now, you have to find a way to make up with her again."

Damian's anger hadn't subsided. Whitney hadn't hesitated to rebuke him in public because he had been too indulgent with her lately. To make amends, he kept apologizing and

en brought her breakfast himse

She needed to be taught a lesson to know her place.

Thinking of the medicine for Whitney's mother, Danian took out his phone and was about to message Willam to hold off for now

"Damian, Grandpa arranged a blind date for me. I think I should go. It'll be better for both of us this way."

Seeing that Damian didn't respond, Rachel thought he was thinking about how to make up with Whitney, she was jealous and angry, so she brought up the blind date on purpose. "You can't endure such small things? Damian asked, glancing at her. "Are you giving me

troub just feel bad for you. If it weren't for me, you wouldn't be stuck in the middle. You and Whitney could be happy together, Rachel replied.

Hearing this, Dandan's irritation faded. "If you want to go, then just go. You don't need to tell me!"

Rachel was stunned. Usually, he'd coax her and forbid her from seeing other men. Now, he was actually telling her to go on a date with someone else?

"Are you really okay with it?" her tears trembled in her eyes, disbelief written all over her face.

Damian's anger boded over "Yes, Jagree! Whoever you want to date is none of my concern. Are you happy now?"

Tears streamed down Rachel's face. She looked at Damian for a moment with a hurt expression.

She opened the door and got out of the car. "I knew you were sick of me."

Then, she ran off, sobbing

Damian felt torn, but seeing her run away crying, he couldn't help but get out and go after her.

Suddenly, his phone rang

Damian instinctively opened the message. His steps altered as he read it. This gave time for Rachel to run away.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

[Chapter 23](#)

Chapter 23 This is the Last Time

Damian frowned as he looked at his phone. The message from St.

"Damian, after thinking over feel there's something you should know There was a photo attached.

This photo made him stop chasing Rachel

The setting was dimly lit, but he could tell it was taken at a bar.

Under the dim light, Whitney was standing to the side, seemingly talking to a man sitting across from her. Though the angle was distasteful, he could still see the faint blush on her cheeks. The man was looking up at her. He was strikingly handsome, his expression unreadable. Damien felt that the man looked somewhat familiar.

Though the photo only showed his profile, Damien enlarged it as much as possible before finally recognizing him.

It was Noel.

After the unpleasant encounter at Duff's Jewelry Store with Danlan and Bachel, Wette decided to take Whitney to a different jewelry shop.

After holding her gift, Wette headed back to her studio to finish up some work. Whitney made a stop at the grocery store, picking up some ingredients before heading home.

As soon as she stepped through the door, she heard noises coming from the kitchen.

There was an umbrella on the shoe rack by the door. Whitney quietly set down her groceries, picked up the umbrella, and headed toward the kitchen.

All figures were reflected on the frosted glass.

Suddenly, the door swung open.

Damien came out with a plate of freshly made salad.

Whitney's hand posed in the

"How did you get in?" she asked in surprise.

"I'm not here to crack the code on your door."

Howard Group's department had some of the top talents. Any one of them could easily break the code of her door lock, especially since her lock system wasn't very advanced.

Whitney thought that she needed to get a more secure lock installed soon.

"What are you here for?" she asked coldly, setting the bag down.

Damien handed her a bowl of warm water and came to apologize.

Whitney didn't take the bait, so Damien put it back on the table. "Whitney, I went to die with my words today. I shouldn't have made you angry. Look, I thought all these groceries so that I could make you a meal to make it up to you." "Carp after the stick? Damien, what

do you take me for?" Whitney asked, pointing toward the doors. Please leave. Get out of my house!"

"Understand you're angry," Damian replied, grabbing her hand. "This time, I won't say anything. You can hit me until you're satisfied."

With that, he took her hand and directed her to hit him.

Whitney pulled away. "If you hit me, I'll only hurt my hand!"

Without a word, Damian picked up the umbrella from the table and placed it in her hand. "Use this. You won't get hurt."

Whitney's anger flared as she lifted the umbrella.

Damian stood straight, with no intention of dodging.

Just as the umbrella was about to land on him, Whitney stopped.

"Whitney, you can't bring yourself to do it, right?" Damian said joyfully.

Why couldn't she just hit him? She was so angry and resentful. Why did she have to go so far now?

Dani hugged her. "I know it, I feel it..."

"This is the last time," Whitney said, putting her hand down.

She reminded herself that she was only giving him one last chance because she still needed his help with her mother's mediation.

Damian nodded. "Trust me, I won't make you sad again."

He gestured toward the kitchen, where he had laid out the ingredients. "I bought all your favorite ingredients. I'll cook a nice meal for you today."

In the past, Damian had rarely stepped foot in a kitchen. Now, he was going to cook a table full of dishes for her.

"From now on, I'll only cook for you," Damian promised.

Whitney smiled, though she felt nothing at all.

"By the way, could you invite Noel over? It would be nice to

have a gathering," Damian said as he moved toward the kitchen.

cooking

The mention of Nomade Witney feel uncomfortable. His indifferent attitude the day before was already a clear sign that he didn't want to engage i

After that one reckless night, it was probably best for them to avoid each other.

with

her

"I don't think that necessary. He might not even be home," she said,

parian passed as he was about to put on the apron "You both the in the same building, and it just so happens that he's right across the hall it would be made not to invite him. Beds, I want to ak Noel to look out for you" Timan ahli don't need him to look at to me." Whitney responded

"Even if you don't need him to, it's the conteous thing to do, isn't it? Since Noel lives across from you, it's only right to invite him," Damian said, noticing the reluctance on her face. He paused before adding, "Whimey, is there something wrong between you and Noel?" Achilliantheragh Whitney. It she continued to refuse, Damian would grow suspicious and might even investigate.

"Of course not. I barely know him," shesaid.

"All the mean to get to know each other. Besides, be saved you before. Lose him a thank you," Damian said with a smile.

with that, he opened the dose and went to knock on Noel's door himself.

Whimey could only hope Noel wasn't home. Or, if he was, that he would decline

But just then, she heard the sound of the door across the hall opening.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 A Lifetime of Happiness

Whimrestrained her ears, laten the sounds outside.

**Noel, whimney and would like to invite you to dinner," Damian said.

Whitney prayed that Noel would be busy!

"Alright," Notreplied in a low vol

Whitney felt her bort sink.

Sering Whitney still standing there, Damian said softly, "Whitney, could you got Noel cup of water? get started on dinner." "Thelp you," she replied, following him into the kitchen. "Monred. Just keep Noel company. I won't belong."

Left with no choice, Whitney stood across from Noel, clutching her hands nervously like child caught doing something wrong

Noel at the coach, looking at her. "If you keep standing like that, you're bound to care suspicion."

Damianight sense something was off if she kept standing there morously instead of pouring Noel acpof water.

Noel's ice was soft, just loud enough for Whitney to hear.

Riding the craness of her behavior, whimay quickly fumbled to pour a drink. "Would you like coffee or tea?

"Drinking either at this hour will only run my sleep." Noel replied. "I'll just have water."

Whim nodded. "Sure"

But when she brought the cup over, Noel glanced at it and saw it was coffee. He looked up at her and saw her hurriedly go to get some fruits. Soon, a small mountain of fruits was Hup piled up in front of him.

here to traits, Noel said in a low voice.

With compares shy as hers, he wondered how she had the nerve to ask if he wanted her that night.

Dinner was ready before long, and Damian took a seat beside Whitney.

"Try my casking." he said, placing some food onto her plate. Then, he noticed a spot on her cheek and reached over to wipe it away. "Look at you, messy as a little kitten." He then peeled a shrimp and held it out to her.

Whimer reached to take it, but Damin signaled for her to open her mouth instead.

Damian had never acted this intimate before. His affectionate gestures, especially with Noel present, made her uncomfortable. But since he insisted, she was left with no choice.

She glanced at Noel and saw he wasn't looking their way. Only then did she reluctantly open her mouth and eat the shrimp directly from Damian's hand,

Damian smugly wiped his hands, then chatted

Afterward, Damian changed the subject about work

Whitney and are getting married soon. Don't you think it's time for you to settle down too? After all, as the eldest grandson of the Howard family, you should be the one to marry first. I feel a bit ahead of you

Noel replied casually, "The Howard family isn't a traditional household. There's no need to follow birth order for marriage, so no need to feel bad about it."

"That's me," Damian said with a smile. "So, is there anyone you like?!"

Noel put down his fork and spoon, leaned on the back of the chair, and asked, "What is the Howard family branching into matchmaking?"

"Of course I just care about you. No one we're married, Whitney and I would love to see you find a girlfriend too. He turned to Whitney and asked, "Right, Whitney?" Dani seemed oddly distant tonight his words laden with hidden implications. Whitney glanced at Noel, who was looking at her with an unreadable expression. "Yes," she replied indifferently.

Was it her imagination, or had she caught a flicker of coldness in Noel's eyes? It was gone in an instant.

Nel smiled intently and said, "Then I thank you both wish you both a time of happiness."

Those words felt like a gentle jab to Whitney.

She placed a hand on Noel, only to see him playing with his lighter

After dinner, Damian was about to be.

Before rating out, he leaned in close and gave Whitney a kiss on her forehead, his behavior more possessive than ever. "You go ahead and chat with Noel a bit later" Whitney felt uncomfortable with the excessive intimacy and instinctively stepped back. Noel, pretending not to notice, stood up as well. "It's late, and have some designs to review.

"You should get some rest too, Whitney, Damian said as he and Noel together.

Whitney finally breathed a sigh of relief and closed the door.

Damian didn't press the elevator button right away. He said, "Noel, I'll be counting on you to keep an eye on Whitney for the time being." "She's not a child, and I don't have that kind of time. If you're so worried, maybe she should move back to your villa," Noel replied expressionlessly.

"She's been getting angry with me lately. She does."

Damian was still smiling, but the smile wasn't getting to

me and in went to a bar alone not too long ago."

"Oh?" "Noel raised an eyebrow, seemingly bearing something new. Then, he jokingly said, "She went to a bar alone? Sounds like you did something to upset her."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Make You Disappear

A hint of displeasure flashed across Damian's face, but he still maintained his smile. "Noel, you're making me feel guilty toward Whitney. Well, since you have work to do, I won't keep you any longer. Noel nodded and entered his apartment, and Damian stepped into the elevator.

As soon as the elevator doors closed, the smile vanished from his face.

After receiving the photo of Stella, he stared for a moment, then decided to have this dinner. If they had really known each other for a long time, Damian was sure he could

During dinner, Whitney acted distant and cold toward Noel, while Noel maintained his usual calmness. It all seemed normal yet felt slightly

Over the years, Damian had come to know Whitney well. Even with strangers, she would typically be warm and polite. But tonight, she was excessively detached.

As for Noel, Damian had deliberately brought up Whitney going to a bar alone, hoping to catch some subtle reaction. Yet he had seen nothing unusual and was, instead, questioned by Noel. Could Noel already know there were issues between him and Whitney?

Anyway, the photo was proof enough that they had met before.

Later that evening, he dialed a number. "Meet me at Blue Night Bar."

Whitney had been waiting for Damian's reply ever since she sent the message.

She had wanted to send it immediately after hearing Whitney say she had reconciled with Damian, but she had hesitated, fearing Damian might dismiss her or refuse to believe

However, jealousy clouded her mind. She couldn't stand idly by and watch Whitney marry Damian.

Then her message seemed to disappear into the void, she resigned herself to disappointment, assuming Damian won't respond

Then he ended his call

"Alright Damian I'll be there right away!"

Stella rummaged through her wardrobe, selecting a black bodycon dress. She then applied her makeup meticulously before heading out.

When she arrived at Blue Night bar, the attendant led her to a private room on the second floor.

She opened the door and saw Damian seated on the couch with his legs crossed. He was sipping on a glass of red wine.

The attendant closed the door for them and left

Stella tucked a strand of her hair back with a shy smile as she sat down beside Damian.

"Damian, why are you drinking alone? Let me drink with you."

Stella's perfume was a bit strong, and Damian frowned slightly

"I didn't call here to drink I have something to ask you," he said bluntly. "Where did you get the photo?"

Keeping his serious demeanor, Stella straightened up and said, "Two weeks ago, I was here with some friends and a Whitney drinking alone. She seemed upset. Not long after, she walked over to a man. They talked for quite a while." Thinking back to that night, Stella continued, "I was too far away to hear their conversation, but was curious. How could she betray you by flirting with another man? Damian, could hardly stand to watch. They then hugged and left together" Damian glanced at her, his grip tightening on the wine glass. "Hugging and loving together? Are you sure you saw it clearly?!"

In truth, she hadn't seen it. Her friends had called her away to dance, so she only managed to snap a quick photo

She had just made up the part about them hugging and leaving together. Anyway, Whitney was still wrong for meeting another man behind Damian's back.

"Y_luwitclvrly," she replied

Tanian took a sip of his wine.

Two weeks ago?

If the photo was taken beo weeks ago, it was about the same time as the family gathering

Remembered his grandfather asking Noel if he knew Whitney, and Noel had denied it.

Examian's hand grapped the thin stem of the wine glass unl, with a sudden smap, it broke. The red wine spilled over him, and ashard of glass cut in hand Si gasped and quickly asked someone to being a firstaid kit

"Dardan, Whitney in't worth hurting yourself over," the sad holding his injured hand as she tried to apply the medicine.

Demian pulled his hand away, his expression cold. "Delete the photo. Don't tell anyone about this "

Stella was sted, hace Lalinga reyes filled with frustration and recent "Damian, are you still insisting on marrying Whitney? She cheated on you!"

Damian look the cotton swab and wiped his wound himself. "That's none of your concem. Just de assay

Stella was utterly bewildered Whitney had betrayed har et Damian wanted to keep it a secret? she had gone to such lengths, hoping to win his favor, but he still didn't care. "Damian, do you love her that much Why won't you look at me? What does she have that I don't?"

Damian shot her a cold gline. "Watch your mouth. I hear even a whisper of this, I won't hesitate to make you disappear

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 26

Each in the morning, Whimey was waiting the the elevator when she heard the sound of a door opening behind her.

Out of the corners of her eyes, she saw Noel approaching but chose not to greet him. As soon as the elevator doors opened, she stepped inside without a glance back

The murred walls reflected the h's of them, one standing in front of the other. The silence was almost suffocating, broken only by the sound of the elevator descending. Feeling the tension, Whimey couldn't hold back any longer, "man arks you over again, could you please re She really didn't want to face the same we situation as hast time.

"Am I that en bewable Noel asked back.

"No, I just think or shouldn't get too close. You know what I m

Nel towed over her by almost a hood and a halt. He good down at her through the mirror. "There's only one way not to get close. Either you don't marry into the Howard

amily or 1culties with them."

In other words, she could only word him if she broke off her engagement or if Neleased to be part of the Howard family.

Whime bebeved there had to be other solutions. Noel was clearly making things difficult for her

She met his gaze in the mirror and said indignantly, "But you're already estranged from the Howard family, aren't you? That should make it easier. Just avoid me or stay away

whimey knew that ever since Noel and his parents had moved out of the Howard residence, they rarely went back. There was no need to go to such extremes.

Noel's sled into a mocking smile. "You're just unwilling to give up the title of Mrs. Howard."

His words cot deep, pleating her heart like a sharp blade.

we for the Spencer family and her mother, would she still be compromising for Damian? What did their eight years together mean he kept betraying her? She felt like a fool, knowing her Hance was unfaithful and still staying with him. But Noldn't know any of this all he did was judge and mock her..

Whimey felt wronged but didn't want to show her vulnerability to Noel Sheered, "Yes, you're right, I'm just too attached to the title of Mrs. Howard. Is that so wrong?" Just then the elevate reached the underground parking level, and Whitney stopped out quickly. Het frustration, anger, and sell-lothing all bolledower, tristing painfully inside her. The years of suppression seemed to reach a breaking point.

In her haste, she didn't see the car approaching behind her.

Suddenly, she was worked back by a strong force. Then, she fell into a warm, solid chest.

Are you trying to get yourself killed? Noel scolded above her head.

15

Perhaps due to his regular works, his arms were strong. He held her tightly with one hand while his other arm wrapped around her slender waist

The memory of that wild night flashed through Whitney's mind, and her face flushed bright red.

Seeing her rosy cheeks, Noel released her. After a brief pause, he said coldly, "I'll consider what you said "

He then turned and walked toward his black G-Wagon.

Whimney stood there in a daze, watching him drive off. She didn't move until his car had disappeared from sight and then finally made her way to her car.

After she left the parking lot, the Black Rolls-Royce hidden in the corner finally drove out

Sensing the tension, the driver asked cautiously, "Mr. Howard, where to now?"

Taman's expression was grim, his mind still replaying the scene of Noel holding Whimney.

Although he couldn't see Whimney's face, he had seen Noel's expression all too clearly—full of longing yet tempered by restraint. His dear com had been coveting his fiancée all along. Rage simmered inside Damian, but his expression grew eerily calm. "Go to the company."

At the Howard Group building. Whitney had just parked her car and was waiting for the elevator when Damian walked up, carrying a paper bag.

"I brought you baklava," he said with a grinning smile, handing it to her.

Whitney immediately looked around, then said in a low voice, "I don't want to expose our relationship in the company."

"I know. But they made your favorite sourdough bread and tomato soup at home this morning, so I thought you might like some," Damian replied, adopting a pleading tone just this once *

Afraid of being seen by colleagues, Whitney quickly took the paper bag. Then, they entered the elevator together.

Rachel, who had just entered the building, happened to the scene.

After quarreling with Damian yesterday, she thought he would come after her, but he hadn't chased after her and hadn't even called. She had cried all night and had to be careful not to let the Howards notice.

Now, seeing Damian bring whimney breakfast, her art burned with resentment,

She took out her phone and dialed a number. When the call was connected, she said, "If you don't want to get kicked out, we need to meet."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 27

Rachel took an hour off work and satincalt

Just as she took her first spot coffee, Rebecca sat down across from her.

"Ms. Yanes, what did you mean by what you said on the phone?" Rebecca asked.

One was the adopted granddaughter of the Howard Eamily, and the other was Whitney's stepmother. The two had practicallyno connection to each other. When Rachel called her, Rebecca was surprised, and Rachel's words left her even more bewildered. seems you're still in the dark. Mr. Spencer didn't tell you, did he? Rachel said with a smug look on her face

Rebecca couldn't stand Rachel. After all, she was just an orphan adopted by the Howard family. She was not truly one of them

The wore Rachelcarried herself rubbed Rebecca the wrong way, but her curiosity outweighed her irritation.

"Stop beating about the bush. What is it?" Rebecca asked.

Rachel put down her coffee cup, "Whimey's mother is about to wake up. Do you think you can hold onto your place as Mrs. Spencer?

"Wake up? Rebecca was shocked. "Margaret's been in a coma for 20 years. The experts can't do anything. How could she just wake up?"

"There's a new drug, specifically developed for patients who've been in comas for years. It's extremely rare and costs millions per dose. As far as I know, Whitney has already asked Mr. Spencer be cover the cost!!

Rebecca's expression immediately darkened.

A single pill that cost millions? How much was the Spencer family worth now? And that wealth was supposed to be left to her son, Matthew. How could she let millions slip away for nothing?

Rachel stood up, giving her last remark before leaving. "Mrs. Spencer, I'm not sure how much longer you can keep this title. I'm only telling you this out of sympathy for the 20 years you've devoted to the Spencer family. Don't let all your efforts go to waste for someone else. With that, Rachel quickly left the café, leaving Becca in a daze.

Ever since Noel had asked her if she was content with being a secretary, Whitney felt an urge to pursue her profession. But she knew that if she were to dive back into architecture, she'd need to brush up on her knowledge.

All her architecture books were still at the Spencer residence, so she drove home after work.

As soon as she entered the door, she heard a sorrowful cry.

In the living room, Rebecca was dragging a suitcase, crying like her heart was breaking.

rk, and his brows furrowed deeply,

"I never said she had to go. She's the one insisting on leaving!" Westley's expression was dark, a

"Westley, I've been

married to you for over 30 years. I raised your eldest daughter and gave you a son and a daughter, yet you still hid things from me. You must think I'm useless now and want to get rid of me. Why should I stay here?" Rebecca sobbed, her voice laced with bitterness: "If you want to spend money on treating your ex-wife, I won't stop you. But couldn't you at least have

told me? In the end, she's still more important to you than I am. Fine, let's divorce, then. Once she wakes up, you have room for her anyway. I don't want anything. I'll just take Stella and Matthew with me!!!

Westley slammed his hand on the table, his expression livid. "Dad say anything about divorce? And even if we did, you're not taking either of the kids!

Among the three children of the Spencer family, Matthew was the only son and was expected to inherit the family business,

After hearing the entire conversation, Whitney finally understood what had happened.

"Dad," she called out, stepping to the living room.

Westley, still fuming, softened his tone when he saw her. Whitney, you're back."

Suddenly, a figure rushed toward her, aiming to slap her.

But before the slap landed, Whitney grabbed the person's wrist. "What are you doing?"

Here for 20 years, and she's

Stella was furious and shouted, "This is all your fault! My mom and dad are fighting because of you and your wretched mother she's been lying there divorced from my dad. Why do we have to spend so much money on her? Why can't she just die?" Whitney raised her right hand and slapped Stella hard on the face

"How dare you -"

Stella hadn't even finished her sentence before Whitney slapped her on the other cheek.

Stella cried to retaliate, but one of her wrists was still trapped in Whitney's firm grip. When she raised her other hand, Whitney showed her back, causing her to stumble and fall to

the floor

Rebecca rushed over to help Stella up while angrily shouting, "Whitney What gives you the right to hit my daughter?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 28

"She became other than a mother!" Whitney retorted.

Whitney wasn't someone who got angry easily, let alone other people, but if anyone dared insult those closest to her, she had zero tolerance.

"If you won't teach her manners, I don't mind helping out. She should let her know what respect and decency mean."

Rebecca paused a trembling finger at Whitney, her fury blazing as if she wanted to devour her. "Not your place! Your father and I are still here. You don't have the right to act

Willey's eyes were cold as she stared back at Rebecca. "Aren't you going to honor my father and leave this family?"

Rebecca was rendered speechless, her heart shaking. She had hoped her plan would work in her favor, yet Whitney had seen right through it.

Whitney turned to Westley Tat, Lunderstand why you dived my mother back then. After all these years, I know that it's impossible for you to get back together. But I hope that, for the sake of what you once shared, you'll see her. Before Westley could respond, Rebecca cut in, "We're talking about millions here! You make it sound easy. Do you think the Spencer family's money just falls from the sky

"course. The Spencer Group's wealth was built by both my mother and my father!"

Fearing that Westley might waver, Whitney pressed on, "Dad, you know how much my mother sacrificed for Spencer Group. That accident happened on her way to the factory. She practically gave her life for this family."

Whitney had been young at the time. It was only later, with the help of a friend from Hel's firm, that she learned the full story of Margaret's accident. She had never asked Heather about herself, fearing it would bring back painful memories. Westley seemed to drift back to the past, remembering the snippets he and Margaret had faced together when building their legacy.

He patted Whitney's shoulder reassuringly. "Whitney, don't worry. I'll save your mother. Millions are not beyond the Spencer family's means."

"Whitney's eyes grew misty, and she nodded in gratitude. But then Westley added, "You need to reassure me. Please, no more talk of breaking up with Damian."

For a moment, Whitney felt a pang of suspicion. It sounded as if Westley was making a deal with her. But she quickly dismissed it.

Her father had always treasured her like a precious jewel. Even after crying Rebecca and having Stella and Marton, Whitney remained his favorite.

He would never use her marriage as a bargaining chip. It was impossible.

As the workday was winding down at Howard Group, Whitney carried some documents to the CEO's office.

"Mr. Howard, these two documents need your signature," Whitney said.

Damian flipped through them, briefly scanning them before signing.

"I'll take my leave, then," Whitney said without saying anything else as she turned to leave.

"Whitney," Damian called back. "You're not just my employee. Don't you have anything else you'd like today to me?" She turned around and asked, "It's work hour, Mr. Howard, what would you like to use?" or you think?"

"I'm manipulating making our relationship public. What do you

Dani looked at her as he waited for her answer.

"I don't think it's a good idea." Whitney lowered her head, missing the fleeting displeasure that crossed Damian's face.

"But you've been so distant and cold toward me. I really want everyone to know that you're my friend. Don't you want others to know?"

In the past, she would have definitely wanted that

"We've kept it a secret until now. There's no need to go out of our way to announce it. Besides, if everyone knows, how will that affect my work? Will he be able to interact with my

Whitney made excuses for herself. Although their wedding was set for next month, she preferred to wait until the day itself for everyone to learn about their relationship. Damian seemed to sigh in relief and smiled, "So, you're worried about that? I thought you'd fallen for someone else." Whitney looked up, sensing something hidden in his words.

"Come back to the will with me tonight, alright? In a couple of days, the York family is hosting a birthday banquet for Mrs. York, and they've invited us. I've had a gown made for

Whitney knew this was just another excuse to bring her luck to the villa.

"You can just have it delivered to my place, it doesn't fit, let you know."

Back when they had lived under the same roof, he had revolved around me had no space of her own. After moving out, she realized how comfortable and freeing it was to live alone. -

She didn't have to worry about preparing meals or his details. There was no need to think at which she would go with which suit and what kind of links he should wear

Now, she could use that time to relax, binge watch her favorite shows, or simply scroll through her phone. It was so much more relaxing.

With that in mind, she returned home with some snacks from the supermarket to enjoy while reading later.

As she opened her apartment door, she heard a door open behind her

Hearing the sound, Whitney turned around

Chapter 29 din Hera Gowm

Aman dressed informal attire emerged from Noel's apartment, polling sites behind him.

www No moving out? But why hadn't she seen him?

Whimer's mind flashed back to their last conversation in the parking lot. Noel said he'd consider her request to older.

Had he actually decided to move out because of her?

A of gak wished over her as she realand that she might have gone too far. Had she driven him ay?

"Hello, I'm Mr. Howard's neighbor. Is he moving out?" Whitney asked directly.

The man looked at her and replied politely, "I'm Dariel Carter, Mr. Howard's assistant. He's about to lose on a business trip, but he couldn't spare the time to pack, so he sent me ever to handle " So, that was it

Whitney felt an odd sense of relief at his explanation:

just as she was about to him back to her apartment, Dariel spoke up again, "You must be Ms. Spencer, right?

Whitney was surprised. "Do you know me

Mr. Howard mentioned you and asked me to pass along something as a ton of apology for any recent inconvenience he might have caused

With that, Dariel handed her a large, rectangular gift box

Atokes of apology'

Whitney took it haped look.

Then, Daniel entered the elevator with the sulte

Whitney understood what Noel meant by "elence": w'd been insistent on keeping their distance and avoiding each other, which had led to some unpleasant encounters

She placed the git box on the table, removed the ribbon, and lifted the lid. Inside lay a mealy folded white gown that was embroidered with silver

lilies. Each petal shimmered subtly against the curious fabric. The intricate collars adorned with tiny gems that sparkled delicate jewelry.

Why was taken aback she hadn't expected Noel to gift her gown. It perfectly matched her style

However, it looked quite expensive. She couldn't accept such a valuable gift from him.

she picked up phone, only to realize she didn't have his contact number, she'd just have to wait until he returned from his business trip to get back.

Later that evening her doorbell rang. She checked the monitor and saw it was Damian's assistant, Billy Lawson

"Billy" she greeted as she opened the door.

"Ms. Spencer, Mr. Howard couldn't make it himself, so he asked me to deliver this evening gown for you."

Whispering accepted the box

Just before leaving, Billy added, "Mr. Howard said he'll pick you up for Mrs. York's birthday banquet the day after tomorrow."

She set the boxes side by side on her table, suddenly amused by the thought that both Nael and Damian had sent her gowns on the same day.

Opening the box from Damian, she found a light blue evening gown.

Thinking it might need adjustments, she slipped it on to check the fit it was perfect, though not because Damian knew her size well it was probably because the designer already tailored it for Damian, "it fits, no alterations"

In his bedroom at the villa, Damian's phone buzzed. He reached for it with his free hand

"No," Rachel said softly, wrapping her arms around his neck, her eyes glinting seductively. "I promised to spend the night with me. Are you going back on your word? Haven't quite forgiven you yet." Comanchuckled, sliding his hand to her waist. "Who said I'd go back on my word? since you're still mad, maybe this will help? His voice held a playful tone

Rachel's eyes sparkled mischievously you scold me again, I'll really go on that date and find myself a man to marry"

"You wouldn't dare," Damian said, pulling her close "If you did, I'd make you mine right in front of him. Let's see who'd dare marryi "Damian, you're such argue Rachel baghed softly. Damian leaned in closer and whispered enticingly, "can be maçta toque."

you then

At 7.00pm, 1

Whitney was preparing to attend Elena Gubert's birthday banquet.

She slipped into the light blue gown. She had turned down Damian's offer to send a makeup art and stylist

After all, Elena was the star of the evening. There was need for her to dress too extregantly. She applied a subtle yet elegant maloup herself.

Just as she finished getting ready, Damian called "I'mbere. I'll come up and get you"

"po need. I'm realy I'll come down. Just wait for me in the parking lot."

Whitney hung up the phone, took a glance at the mirror, and hurried out of the bedroom. As she brushed past the comer of her table, a cup of juice tipped over, spilling all over her dess Whitney Trowned, scolding herself for being so clumsy. The gown was ruined. She coulda's go to the banquet like this

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 29

she rushed back to her bedroom, hoping to find another suitable gown in her closet. But all she had were work attire and casual wear.

All her formal evening gowns were either at Damian's villa or the Spencer residence, and it was far too late to retrieve them now. Feeling frustrated, her eyes drifted to the comer where she had left the rectangular gift box.

TT

Chapter 30 Does It Matter Mind

Damian stood by the car, occasionally placing at his watch he had been waiting for quite a while.

Just as he was about to call Whitey again, hestwher step out of the elevator

The white dress the perfectly, accentuating her graceful curves, slender waist, and long neck. Her delicate features with dark brows and limpid eyes stood out softly against her

She had swept her hair back into a simple

was secured with a white hairpin. A few loose strands framed her face.

that man sex,

For a moment, Damien was stunned by her beauty. He had seen her in her professional work attire, admired her poise in evening gowns, and was familiar with her casual look at home. This was the first time he'd seen her in a gown like this. She looked incredibly beautiful. Damien quickly regained his composure, smiling as he complimented her, "You look stunning in this gown. But why didn't you wear the gown I sent over?"

Whitney explained, "I accidentally spilled juice on it just before it, so I had to change."

There was no other suitable attire in her closet

Whitney figured she'd need to clean it thoroughly before returning to Nov.

"Damien nodded, his eyes lingering on her gown so well when did you get custom-made? Why didn't you ask me to go with you?"

Perhaps feeling a twinge of guilt, Whitney lied, "It wasn't custom-made. I just bought it while shopping at the mall with Yvette."

Damien's gaze moved over the delicate lace embroidered on the gown. "Well, let's get going. We're running late"

He opened the car door for her. As she leaned in, she passed upon seeing someone already inside.

"Whitney," Rachel, dressed in a pink gown, greeted her with a sweet smile. "I'm hitching a ride with you guys to the banquet. I hope you don't mind."

It was only then that Whitney realized it was an MPV if they weren't running late, she definitely wouldn't have shared a ride with Rachel

"Does it matter if I mind? You're already here, aren't you?" she replied coldly, climbing into the back seat.

"Oh, Whitney, you're already joking."

Seeing Damien also entering the car, Rachel quickly said cautiously, "But why really minds, can get off and take a cab."

None to take care We're running late, Whitney was just joking with you just sit tight."

With that, none took the seat next Whitney in the back

Rachel's expression turned sour, she had left an empty seat beside her, but Damian still chose to sit beside Whitney

Soon, they went to the hall hosting the birthday banquet The banquet hall died with luxurious decor. Guests were socializing while a live band played soft music in the background

When everyone saw Damian, they came forward to greet him. None had expected that the York family could invite the heir of Howard Group. The York family's influence seemed quite substantial

"Mr. Howard, welcome!" Adrian York and Dena Gilbert approached them warmly.

After exchanging pleasantries, Elena's gaze shifted to Whitney. "This must be your fiancée, Mr. Howard, and the eldest daughter of the Spencer family. I've heard so much about you. You're even more beautiful than I had heard." Whitney responded politely, "Mrs. York, it's a pleasure. Please, call me Whitney. Happy birthday, and may you stay young forever"

"Thank you, Ms. Spencer." Elena's face beamed with joy at receiving such a gracious compliment from Damian's fiancée Then, her gaze shifted to Rachel, who stood off to the side. "And this "

Rachel had married with the Howards for 20 years, but outsiders rarely remembered her, let alone treat her as part of the Howard family.

"This is my grandfather's adopted great-granddaughter, Ariel Yanes," Damian introduced.

Elena suddenly remembered the girl from the Yanes family adopted by the Howard family. "So, this is Ms. Yanes,"

Rachel was about to speak, but Elena quickly turned her attention back to Whitney. "If there's anything as tonight, Ms. Spencer, please let me know."

Rachel's face turned red, her fingers clutching her dress tightly,

Whitney smiled and replied graciously, "You're too kind, Mrs. York, good evening with you, so please treat me like one of her friends."

Whitney was the future daughter-in-law of the Yorks since she was engaged to Thomas

Elena and Rachel's mother were close friends. They had arranged to raise their children when they were still young. Elena treated Rachel like her own daughter.

"Oh, you're friends with her? How wonderful! Elena said, glancing over in Wette's direction. She's right to meet there."

Following Elena's gaze, Whitney's Yvette chatting with someone

Seemingly noticing someone watching her, she turned and when she saw her. She waved her over with a friendly smile.

Elena in, Dunbar whispered in her ear, "Go ahead and go look for her later."

"Go on, enjoy yourself. Don't mind me," Whitney replied nonchalantly

As Damien's fiancée, Whitney had to attend the Tock family's banquet but that didn't mean he could be affectionate with her.

Seeing her and her attitude, Damien was displeased but she still maintained a gentle smile.
"You're my fiancée I don't keep an eye on you, who will"

Just then, she hurried over to Adrian, whispering something in his ear

Adrian immediately said to Elena, "Mrs. Madelyn Clarke and her son have arrived. Let's go greet them right away."

Open 31 is He Asking That on Purpose

Chapter 3 He Asking That on Purpose

Adrian and Elena quickly made their way to the entrance of the banquet hall, their hurried steps drawing the attention of all present

At that moment, the doors opened to reveal an elegantly dressed woman in a lavender suit, radiating sophistication and grace. Beside her stood a young man in a well-tailored suit. Whitney's gaze landed on the man, recognizing him as Nor

Wearing silver-rimmed glasses, his cool demeanor and deep eyes accentuated his striking features, drawing stares from the crowd.

"That's Mrs. Howard and her son, someone who repaired them whispered "didn't expect not only the heir of Howard but also Mrs. Howard herself to attend the York

Lady's banquet "

"the deputy "there

"Don't be silly The deputy mayor wouldn't show up to an event like this. But having his wife and son here is already a great honor for the Yorks."

Steamshule, Adrian and Elena were personally escorting Madelyn and Borl to the banquet.

"Aur Madelyn," Damian respectfully greeted her.

"Damian, good to see you," Madelyn implied warmly, her lips carrying a pale smile. Though age had left its mark in faint lines, her beauty and elegance were undiminished

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 30

Standing beside Damian, Whitney gave a polite greeting "Mrs Howd"

Since they weren't married yet, Whitney couldn't address her intimately.

Staden shifted her gaze to Whitney, sizing her up politely. Her eyes lingered on the dress, and a flicker of amusement crossed her expression

Dan placed his hand on Whitney's waist. "Yes, Aunt Madelyn You and Uncle Beckham must attend our wedding next month.

"Of course, we're family. We wouldn't miss it," Madelyn replied, then looked at Whitney again. "Damn, you have good taste. The gown from Carlos Boutique is the best in Seabourke. It is your favorite the " Carlos Boutique?

Whitney knew little about high-end gowns, but she had heard of Carlos Boutique. Its history could be traced back to crafting garments for royalty.

she could tell that this gown was expensive, but she hadn't realized it was from Carlos.

Why had she chosen Carlos from Carlos Boutique? If she had known, she would have chosen when it was on sale.

Just a moment ago, she had told Dan she bought it in a shopping mall.

Whitney's palm began to sweat. The more she tried to avoid awkward situations, the more she seemed to find herself in them.

"Carlos Boutique opened store in a shopping mall? Dan asked, looking at Whitney in surprise

"Whitney didn't know how to explain and was about to insist it was from shopping mall

No interjected, "Carlos Boutique did open a store in the mall recently. They are updating of the times, making it easier for customers to access their designs." "that so? I don't remember hearing about it," Madelyn said, a bit puzzled. "The owner mentioned at the time he brought over your own, but you might've forgotten, Noel explained.

Madelyn pondered for a moment but then shrugged it off, deciding not to ask further.

Just then, others approached to greet them, and Elesha induced each of them to Madelyn

Damian looked at Noel with a smile, holding Whitney's waist more tightly, "see if you hadn't explained, I might have thought Whitney had lied to me."

"Really? Why would she lie to you? Noel asked, placing a hand on his and

Whitney felt as if something had just exploded in her mind. She looked up at Noel, her eyes showing a hint of displeasure

Was she asking that on purpose!

Damian maintained his smile and

said, "It's just a joke Whitney and the complete trust in each other. She wouldn't lie to me unless someone is trying to sabotage our

relationship"

The words, though plain on the surface, carried an undercurrent that was palpable..

Feeling the tension, Adrian tried to ease the situation. "Mr. Damian and Ms. Spencer make the perfect couple. No one could sabotage your relationship."

Over

Everyone wanted to see the chance to connect with Melinda Dolan, so Adil accompanied them, joining in the conversations.

At a moment like this, Whitney didn't need to stay in Dante's side. Rachel had also walked away at some point.

Whitney looked around and finally spotted Wee. She was staring off in another direction, her expression tinged with anger

"Who upset you?" Whitney asked as she approached her

"He's incorrigible!" she said through gritted teeth.

Whitney to owed her por and saw Thomas standing at the refreshment table, chatting flirtatiously with a woman with wavy hair.

Whitney couldn't hear what Themas said, but the woman doubled over with laughter let's catch him in the act, it said, grabbing whiney's hand and heading in their direction.

Whitney wanted to calm down, as they got laser, Thomas and the woman's conversation reached their wars

*board you're already incaped I guess Jean't reach out to you anymore "the woman teased.

Swirling this wine glass, Thoman took a sip and sicked "Marriage is my cholen. The engagement doesn't mean a thing I don't agree to it"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 He Asking That on Purpose

Adilan and Elena quickly made their way to the entrance of the banquet hall, their hurried steps dearing the attention of all present

at that moment, the doors opened to reveal an elegantly dressed woman in a lavender sut, radiating sophistication and grace. Beside her stood a young man in a well-tailored suit Whime's garlanded on the min, recognizing him as Nor

Wearing silver-dimmed glasses, his cool demeanor and deep ryes accentuated his striking features, drauding stare from the crowd.

"That's Mrs. Howard and her son, samoone who repaired them whispered "didn't expect not only the heir of Howard but also Mrs. Howard herself to attend the York

Lady's banquet "

"the deputy 'there

"Don't be silly The deputy mayor wouldn't show up to an event like this. But having his wife and son here is already a great honor for the Yorks."

Steamshule, Adrian and Elena mere personally escorting Madelyn and Borl to the banquet.

"Aur Madelyn," Damian respectfully greeted her.

"Damian, good to see you," Madelyn implied warmly, her lips carrying a pale smile. Though age had left its mark in faint lines, her beauty and elegance were undiminished. Standing beside Damian, Whitney gave a polite greeting "Mrs Howd"

Since they weren't married yet, Whitney couldn't address her intimately.

Staden shifted her place to Whitney, sizing her up politely. Her eyes lingered on the dress, and a flicker of amusement crossed her expression.

Dan placed his hand on Whitney's waist. "Yes, Aunt Madelyn. You and Uncle Beckham must attend our wedding next month."

"Of course, we're family. We wouldn't miss it," Madelyn replied, then looked at Whitney again. "Damn, you have good taste. The gown from Carlos Boutique is the best in Seabourke. It is your favorite from the " Carlos Boutique?"

Whitney knew little about high-end gowns, but she had heard of Carlos Boutique. Its history could be traced back to crafting garments for royalty.

she could tell that this gown was expensive, but she hadn't realized it was from Carlos.

Why had she chosen from Carlos Boutique? If she had known, she would have when it was on display.

Whitney's palm began to sweat. The more she tried to avoid awkward situations, the more she seemed to find herself in them.

"Carlos Boutique opened a store in a shopping mall? Dan asked, looking at Whitney in surprise.

"Whitney didn't know how to explain and was about to insist on shopping there."

No interjected, "Carlos Boutique did open a store in the mall recently. They are updating the store, making it easier for customers to access their designs." "that so? I don't remember hearing about it,"

Madelyn said, a bit puzzled.

"The owner mentioned at the time he brought over your gown, but you might've forgotten, Dan explained.

Madelyn pondered for a moment but then shrugged it off, deciding not to ask further.

Just then, others approached to greet them, and Elena introduced each of them to Madelyn.

Damian looked at Noel with a

smile, holding Whitney's waist more tightly, see if you hadn't explained, I have thought Whitney had lied

me."

"Really? Why would she lie to you? Noel asked, placing a hand on her shoulder and

Whitney felt as if something had just exploded in her mind. She looked up at Noel, her eyes showing a hint of displeasure. Was he asking that on purpose!

Damian maintained his smile and

said, "It's just a joke Whitney and the complete trust in each other. She wouldn't lie to me unless someone is trying to sabotage our

relationship"

The words, though plain on the surface, carried an undercurrent that was palpable..

Feeling the tension, Adrian tried to ease it. "Mr. Damian and Ms. Spencer make the perfect couple. No one could sabotage your relationship." Everyone wanted to see the chance to connect with Melinda Dolan, so Adil accompanied them, joining in the conversations.

At a moment like this, Whitney didn't need to stay in Damian's side. Rachel had also walked away at some point.

Whitney looked around and finally spotted Wee. She was staring off in another direction, her expression tinged with anger

"Who's upset?" Whitney asked as she approached him

"He's incorrigible!" she said through gritted teeth.

Whitney turned her head and saw Thomas standing at the refreshment table, chatting flirtatiously with a woman with wavy hair.

Whitney couldn't hear what Thomas said, but the woman doubled over with laughter

„let's catch him in the act, it said, grabbing Whitney's hand and heading in their direction.

Whitney wanted to calm down, as they got closer, Thomas and the woman's conversation reached their ears

*board you're already incaped I guess Jean't reach out to you anymore "the woman teased.

Swirling this wine glass, Thoman took a sip and sicked "Marriage is my cholen. The engagement doesn't mean a thing I don't agree to it "

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 32

The wean noticed Yvette and Whitney approaching behind Thomas. Her expression changed slightly, but then she shook her head and said to Thomas, "Men's words are just sweet talk. You're fernt. Trom flance is beatifi. Idén't believeven wouldn't want to manyher".

Then charked, a vestik playing on his lips.

Wette's prie in Whitney chand tightened, and she fixed her par intently on Thomas

In a song tone, Thomas said, "If she's not my type, per a pokless wouldn't catch wintered"

The woman pressadan, "Sa,

Thomas looked at her and usd nonchalantly, "Men like women who are sensible and understanding"

He was impiling Tente beked sich quodfiles.

why glanced at Wette, noticing hei face had tumed pale. Vette persued her lips together, hereves glistening with unshed tears that vanished almost instantly. She let go of

kedalen stepschort in Thons, gleringcoldly atm

The woman radial an eyebrow and walked away Whitney didn't came forward eater. She knew they needed some privacy.

you've never liked me at all, June you?" Weite kept her voice strady, though every weed seemed to carry the weight of heartberik

This was the first time Thomas had seen this vulnerable side of her. He dropped his placal demeanor and looked her in the rye "Yvette, you're a smart woman. Haven't you sensed how Heel about you?

I want to hear you sarii," Yette replied, her gate locked his. Something was shattering bit by bit in her eyes

Thomas ka sudden tutter of unease, but it was pene as quickly as it came

"Idon't like you" he said plante

wette noddod and let out alrimer laugh. "As youwish I won't bother you anymore. Tomorrow, I'll have my parents callott the engagOMMIL"

with that, she walked past him without spring him a second glance

Whitney felt heartbroken for Yvette and Bona Thomes. She stepped forward and snapped, "Even if you don't care for Yvette, you shouldn't have said such things about her in from of others. Just because you don't like her doesn't mean she's not worthy!" After swing that, Whitey burned after te

Thomas watched the disappear into the distance, his brous furrowing slightly. A trace of confusion crossed his face.

"Reporting it?" Aliand soddently passed his shoulder,

Tanted to see Noel staring at the last trace of Whitney's silhouette,

"M-Regret Thomas scoffed. "Since when do I ever regret anything?

Nord's eyes shifted back to Thomas Keep telling yourself."

Thanks grew initated complaning "You don't understand! My dad replaced all the female employees around me with men. I'm practically going blind from it!"

The Worktanlly know allowabout

Thomas' playboy nature. He sill

flirted with other women even though he was already engaged when Adrian found out he replaced all the worn around Thomas in the company with male employees

Noel shoved his hands into his pockets, bolting at Thomas with a smirk. "Haven't you always been blind?!

"Whm have ever been band Thonis exclaimed

Meanwhile, Rachel sat in a quiet corner, seething with resentment. She was a member of the Howard family, yet everyone treated her as she didn't belong

In contrast, Whitney was treated with respect because she was Damian's face even though the Spencer family was no longer as influential as before.

Rachel was consumed with envy. When could she proudly stand by Damian's side as his wife?

As she turned, she caught sight of someone and immediately stood up to intercept her way over

"Mrs. Spencer, why are you here alone?"

Bulover was about to leave when she heard someone call her name. She turned around and saw Rachel

"Ms. Yates," she greeted reluctantly. A moment later, she explained, "My husband had some matters to attend to, and daughter couldn't make it."

"Stella couldn't make it though she loved attending events. This is the first time she's been able to."

Barknew that Stella hated Damian. Any time he attended a party, Stella tried to be there. She didn't know her place. She wasn't even on Whitney's level, yet she still dared to like. "Oh, she's not feeling well," Rebecca replied indifferently, though inwardly, she seethed. She was dusted thinking about how Whitney had slapped Stella, causing her to miss this business

Rachel didn't care for the reason the loser, as making small talk, and her voice. "Are you really willing to give up your place in the Spencer family to someone's Latin class a year??"

Not only was Whitney about to marry Alan, the apple on the verge of every Rachel couldn't let Whitney have everything

Rebecca's mind flashed back to the scene from that day, and her face flushed with embarrassment and helplessness. "What can I do?" she asked. Rebecca had failed.

A flash of disdain flashed through Rachel's eyes. But if anyone could stop Whitney, it was Rebecca

Rachel pressed, "Are you going

up, Mrs. Spencer? Once Whitney's mother wakes up, your position could be at risk, not to mention your son and daughter. Whether day even inherit the Spencer family's wealth or not

Of course, Rebecca didn't want that. Just as she was about to speak, she suddenly realized something. "Ms. Yates, why are you so concerned about me? Could it be you have feelings for Damian?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 33

Chapter 33's Their Loss

Rachel's expression immediately became uneasy, but she responded firmly, "Mrs. Spencer, be careful with your words. If the medical family hears that, can you handle the trouble it might bring to the Spencer family? Thinking of the Howan family's stance in Seabourke, Rebecca's expression changed. "I was just making wild passes. Ms. Yanes, don't be angry."

"I'm just giving you a friendly reminder," Rachel said, crossing her arms. "Whether you accept it or not is up to you, but I'll leave it at that."

With that, she turned and walked away, her expression darkening as she moved out of sight. She had hoped Rebecca would make a scene and stop Westley from paying for the medication, but it turned out Rebecca was useless. "Rachel" & familiar voice called out

Hearing someone call her name, Rachel looked up and saw Jenny waving as she walked toward her.

Noticing her distressed expression, Jenny asked, "What's wrong?"

"I'm not feeling well, Jenny wants to go back home," Rachel replied with a hint of sadness.

"Not feeling well?" Jenny asked, seemingly realizing something "Did Whitney give you a hard time again?"

Jenny hadn't forgotten about the incident at the pool. She didn't believe that Whitney hadn't pushed Rachel, given her scared Rachel had looked

Rachel shook her head "Grandpa wanted me to come to Mr. York's birthday banquet. I don't want to be a nuisance, Jenny I don't want to cause any trouble here"

Jenny had a fiery temper and flared up immediately. "You're part of the Howard family! What does it have to do with her? Who does she think she is?"

"But she's Dani's fiancée" Rachel lowered her head, looking down

"So what if she's Damian's fiancée? Showing up here all dolled up and attracting other men-what a shameless woman!"

Jenny was furious, especially when she recalled how her boyfriend had taken a liking to Whitney back then.

"Keep your voice down. It won't be good if others hear us. If Whitney finds out... Rachel hesitated, looking frightened.

Jenms, exasperated, said, "Why are you so afraid of her? Have you forgotten what she did to you by the pool? you're too scared to retaliate, I'll do it for you," Rachel immediately understood what Jenny wanted to do and quickly shook her head. "No, please don't antagonized to offend her, especially with Ms. Jennings by her side. I don't want to be scolded by her again."

When Whiny stepped into the garden outside the banquet hall, she finally saw Yvette standing with her back turned. She was wiping away her tears.

Slowing her steps, Whitney moved to stand beside Yette

"Whamey, do you think it's pathetic

that I've spent so many years trying to get someone to be that and she muttered without turning around. She knew it was Whitney just by the sound of her footsteps.

Whitney remained silent Hadn't she been through the same thing? The man she had loved for eight years had also betrayed her.

freddy were both in the same boat.

After a moment of silence, Yvette turned around and saw the sadness on Whitney's face. She realized that her words had reminded Whitney of Damian as well. Yvette took a deep breath and gripped Whitney's shoulders.

"They don't love us, but it's not

because we're not good enough. It's their loss. They're the blind ones!

Whitney, there are plenty of good

men out there. Even without a man,

we

can make our own careers Don't waste your time being sad over

then!"

Her words were powerful and motivated, but Whitney could still see the pain Yvette was hiding beneath her defiance

Yvette, if you want to cry, I'll be here with you."

Yvette's lips quivered, but she

quickly composed herself "Cry? I won't cry. I'm going to the restroom to touch up my makeup. Who knows, I might meet someone better tonight?"

Always one for action, Yvette rushed toward the restroom Whitney hurried after her.

At the restroom door, Whitney said, "I'll wait here."

"I'm fine grab me some cake. I'm a bit hungry." Yvette replied as she entered the restroom.

Hearing this, Whitney beamed toward the dessert table

In front of the mirror above the sink, Yvette gazed at her reflection. Then, she lowered her head, her shoulders shaking as tears fell onto the countertop Just then, someone came out of a stall the restroom.

Not wanting others to see her in such a state, Yvette turned to the side and wiped her tears with a tissue.

Meanwhile, Whitney picked up a slice of red velvet cake it was Yvette's favorite

When she turned around, she bumped into a server carrying a tray of champagne.

Just in time, a hand reached out to steady her

"Thank you," Whitney said, looking up to meet Noel's deep gaze.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 34

Chapter 34 Hum?

White, then asked, "Why aren't you with Mrs Howard?"

"She already left," Noel replied.

It wasn't appropriate for Beckham to come in this setting, and Mary was never going to stay long either. Noel stayed behind since it wouldn't be polite for both him and his clearing her throat, Whitney tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "Why did you get me—"

"Heck, Whitney, you're here?" Damian's voice interrupted from behind them, cutting her off mid-sentence.

tested me to help her get the cake," whitmer blurted, feeling an odd pang of all as if she needed to prevent any misunderstanding

Noel's expression tightened in a flash. "Thamas had a little too much to drink. I'll go check on him,"

Just as he turned to leave, Damian called out again, "Noel,

renee's Cortos Boutique has the best tailoring. What do you think of Whitney in that sheath gown

Whitney's back stiffened Was Domin really asking Noel to comment on her looks? What was he playing at?

Noel stopped and looked at her, his gaze lingering in a way that made her pulse quicken in a low, restrained voice, he replied, "She looks beautiful."

"Noel is not one to hand out compliments lightly. There aren't many women who catch his eye," Damian said, looking at Whitney.

"So, that means you're genuinely impressed, Whitney. That dress suits you perfectly."

A chill ran down her spine. She felt her way out could trap her and leave her with no way out.

Damian was the one who had chosen first She was the centerpiece party here.

But because of that one reckless night-something that should never have happened she was somehow the one who felt awkward as if she had wronged

So you should appreciate her more. Don't let her slip away." Noel said lightly.

Dani's mouthed into a smirk "Don't worry, Noel I won't let anyone take the chance No one no matter who they are-is going to take my what I want."

With that confident declaration, he turned to Whitney. "You should forget Noel He rarely compliments anyone!

Whitney hesitated. She didn't want to go along with this little game, but if she refused, Damian would become suspicious. Reluctantly, she reached for a glass of champagne from the long table. She looked up, meeting Noel's gaze briefly. Behind his rimmed glasses, his eyes were as deep and unreadable as the ocean

Her gaze dropped from his intense stare to the strong line of his jaw. "Ned, I...

Before she could finish, Elena's voice came out across the room "Excuse me, everyone. I'm sorry to interrupt, but Ms. Yanes' care is missing. Has anyone seen it?"

Whame's attention snapped forward. She spotted Rachel beside Elena, looking atlydiased. I'm so sorry to take up everyone's time. This necklace is very important to me in it's alpaque from my mother. If anyone has found it, could you please return it to me Deleased Whimey's hand, murmuring, I'll go see what's going on.

Before she could respond, he was already straling say

So much for his promise never to let go

Whoever Rachel needed something-no matter how the-be would thways be thereby her side.

Whitney turned her head, letting out a better laugh.

"t you stop him?" Noel's woke broke through her thoughts. "If you're staying together, you shouldn'tdet him keep running to anothero woman."

"you think I can stop him?"

Maybe she could stop him this one, but there would always be a nest me-and times she wouldn'tween know about.

"So, you're just going to tuna binder boots voice held a cold edge

"After all, Tim not blameless either, am 17

Soolond op and met Noel's Theating behind her words could have been clover

For a moment, she thought she saw southing licker in Noel's eye-omething she couldn't quite decipher.

Was it hurt?

By now, Demian had reached haul and was grating ma

Rachel looked relieved as she had

finally found someone to lean on

She gently clothed man's sleeve, her eyes shining with unshed tears.

BUMS

"If anyone's found my niece's necklace, I'll make sure you're well traded," addressed the crowd with a cool, commanding gabe.

The room lindh whispers as people planesalat each ollur unteasily.

Elena's expression tightened. Alter all, this was her birthday party, and now, he'd been

"Perhaps someone picked it up and just feels awoward about ring it to Ms. Yanes in front of everyone That's time. You can give it to one of the walters, and they'll return it to

They mated, but no water stepped forward with the necklace.

case of thei

The atmosphere grew increasingly use, and Elena linally tuned to Rachel "Ms. Yanes, where did you last see your necklace?"

"I was still wear when I went to the restroom When I came out, realized it was gone."

"Then maybe it's stil there," Dena suprated, metioning as it to send someone to check

But Rachel interrupted, "I've already looked. It's not there."

Chapter 34 Ham?

Damian's expression hardened. "Mrs. York, I think we need to call the police." Whitney, weary of the escalating scene, was about to go look for Yvette.

Just then, a voice called out from the crowd, "I know who took the necklace."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 35

Chapter 35 Noel Stands Up for Rachel

Alle med toward the voice that had just spoken

Jennywa pointing directly at Yet, who had just entered from the diction of the restroom. "I saw it with my own eyes. Rachel's necklace is in her bag!" Yvette paied in the doorway, looking completely bewildered. Seeing pony pointing at her, she frowned. "What nonsense are you talking about?"

was in the pesterom earlier in, and saw Yvette touching up hot makeup. Her bag was open, and I noticed an emerald necklace inside"

Jenny glanced around at the audience before continuing "Rachelierely wears that necklace at the Howard residence: She only brings it out for special occasions, out of respect for the bout So, I didn't recaprine li right away. But the moment I came out and heard Rachel sap Jenny's story was convincing and detailed enough to sound undeniable.

As she finished, mummans swept through the room.

"nho would've thought Ms. Jezings would steal a necklace?Hein could someone from the Jennings family be so dishonesth

Same people are twisted Thewlthier they are, the more they come these kinds of thills-testing"

"But she doesn't look like someone who world do that."

shh, keep it down Ms. jongste going to be the York family's her daughter-kw.Den't speak so loudly If you don't want to offend the Yorks!"

Dach whispered market like a life led at Wette

"d'achel's necklace Mr. Jenny, stop spreading

the shouted, furious. She pointed back at Jenny, her face flushed

Telooked completely isolated, and Whitney quickly stepped up beside her.

"Whinney, Idn't take Rachel's necklace I've never even seen it!"

"I believe you"Whiney replied firmly

kim smirked. "What goed is your belled? The fact is that she's a thi

**And just because you say so, that makes it true? Whitney shot back, her peering. "If you're so certain, why don't we call the police and let them all?

"ri! Then open her bag and let you see for themselves whether the necklace is in there!" Jenny insisted, smeg and Insistent

Whitey's instinct told her something was off about this whole setup, but before she could react, Yvette-tro outraged to stay silent-was already unzipping her bag "Alright the Take a look" Yette decked. But the speed by her expression shifted from anger to shack Inside,hing quietly at the bottom, was the emerald necklar,

"Well?'t you? Jenny sald smugly. "You're the hook!

"No! That's impoule Wette shook her head, disbelief written all over her face. "How could this necklace be in my bag? I've never even met ac, let alone seen her necklace

wasn't you, then how did it end up in your bag? mitjast appear out of thin air? jenny shot back

She turned to the crowd, raising here."ou're all seeing dis, right? Ma, Jennings is a thi
et n

The room buned with mums hel stepped forward, speaking in a bone that was amb of disbelief and accusation, "Ms. Jennings, I never expected you to be the one who took my necklace, Is it because of what happened last time at the jewelry store? Did you want penge berase you blamed me and resented Uncle Dan for defending me?"

"Bachel! You know exactly what you've done am wrong? Or should I spell it out for everyone here? Wette's, trembled with bury. She could barely restrain herself as the strodan the verge of exposing the inappropriate relationship between Bachelied Deman.

But cold voice cutthrough the "Ms. Jennings, you free to say whatever you like, but be careful not to drag in people who don't deserve it" Noel's ky gate shifted from Whitney to wette, his expression hand and unyielding

Yvette Imar, instantly denced

Whimney looked at Noel in shock. He knew all about fare and Dandan's affair, yet here he was, defending Bachel

Itele a sharp them had lodged itself in her havet.

With No backing kachel, the crowd's stance solidified

No mattered, two oldn't matter now. She had already allended the Howard, alienated Damian, and-mostdanning of all-crossed Korl

Everyone knew that deling Noelmat one thing would be no place for her in Seabourke

The looks

pressions stated. They send to play Yette as they watched her plight unfeld.

Elena and Adrian changed a glance before stepping forward, attempting to smooth things over with Bachel "Ms. Yes, perhaps this is just a misunderstanding. Could we lett go, just for tonight, in honor of my

birthday

The York and Jernings families were about to be joined by marriage. What happened to one world affected the other.

And besides, Elena was close friends with her, Patricia Frost. She couldn't simply stand by and let Wette be disgraced.

"Elena, there's no misunderstanding. I really didn't take her necklace." Yvette gasped, her voice breaking.

She hated seeing someone she respected, someone as good as a mother, lowering herself to plead with Rachel.

"The bow did the necklace up in your bag, Jenny pressed, relentlessly,

Yvette bit her lip, unable to explain. She couldn't understand it best. How had the necklace gotten in her bag? Her bag hadn't left her side the entire evening.

Denian's voice rang out, cold and sharp. "Our of respect Mr. York, we can let this go. Apennings has to do what she did and apologize to Rachel."

Chapter 36

Chapter Rachel Plans to Sue You

The authority of the Howards was something no one dared to challenge, let alone fend. To everyone watching, Yvette had already gone too far by antagonizing them. Getting out of this unscathed seemed nearly impossible. With Damian now offering her away out, it appeared as if it was being given a generous deal. The awards were being given by not pressing charges—rather a show of leniency.

Someone muttered quietly, "she should just apologize. Mr. Damian's already giving her an easy way."

"Earth. No point in offending the Howards. Just apologize, and it'll all be over."

"Mr. Damian's really being big-hearted. If he wanted to make things difficult, the odds would be in serious trouble."

The crowd's sympathy seemed firmly on Damian's side.

But Yvette's gaze remained steady as she stood still, so I'm not apologizing. I'm fine with calling the police."

Damian didn't respond, but his eyes narrowed slightly as it he ww.serialy considering it.

"wette, it's my mom's birthday. Do you have to bring the police into this?

voice out through the crowd it was Thoms, who strode over with urgency.

"-"Welle started, but Thema internipted her with a man. "Jousty quiet" Then, be turned to naman.

"Mr. Damian, could you consider the relationship between the York and the jennings families and not blow this out of proportion and be a shame to let things get out of hand, especially with Mr. No the police get invoheed, Mr. Howard is bound to hear about it too Putting aside the connections between the York and jarings families, calling the police would draw in Beckham-and possibly others with agendas of their This wouldn't be good for Beckham or the Howards

Demian looked at Thoms alat mocking smalle tugging at his lips. "Mr. York, you certainly know how to negotiate."""

Thomas quickly offered a police smile, shaking his head. "Mr. Damian, please it's just a saying that enemies are best reconciled cather than kept. This ka small matter. Yet can apologia, Ms. Tanes can forgive her, and we can all moveen." Hearing this, Yelle glanced at Thomas with a pained expression, her lips trembling in disappointment.

"I'm this is up to you to decide, Mr. York Daman said, costing all glance at Wette

mstakable she would never apologize

www's hunds clenched into fists et her sides, her anger and disappointment

Whimney quietly took Wette's hand, signaling her to stay calm. Then, she looked dime the namin. "I'D say it again-you can't just take Jenny's word for it and assume lleis pully. We still need to property investigate what happened." Suddenly, Yvette pulled her hand away from Whiteney's.

Sheched out and grabbed Rachel's arm "Let's go check the surveillance footage. That show exactly who planted the necklace!"

Bach had expected Wettin grab her so suddenly, and she stumbled forward.

Yvette, down of balance by Rachel's fall, staggered backward.

Hero missed the edge of the step, and the two of them tumbled down the staircase.

Whitney cried out in alarm as a figure darted past her, rushing toward Rachel

Meanwhile, Thama had already helped to her

"It sets this won't be settled only" Damian said his tone key as he called Machel and hurned out as if he had forgotten his nanchas even standing there. Whitty had never fully believed that things were over between Damian and Rachel, but watching this unfold still felt like a life twisting in her heart

Seeing Thomas carry Yelle out of the banquet hall as well, Whitney quickly pushed down her feelings and followed the

At the hospital, Wette was put through a series of examinations. She had a scraped scalp and twisted ankle

It was nothing too serious, but given the fall, the doctors were concerned about a possible concussion and recommended she stay for observation.

While on the hospital bed, her head wrapped in bandages and her face in a light cast looked utterly detested.

Knowing Yelle wasn't in the best

mood, Whitney poured her glass of water and handed it to her. "Your parents are out of the country. Thomas has already arranged to keep this quiet so that they won't find out!!

"This whole thing has Rachel's fingerprints all over

Whitney yelled bitterly after taking a sip of water.

She hadn't taken the necklace, yet somehow, it ended up in her bag this wasn't up by Rachel, so what was?

Now that she had calmed down, she could see that she had walked right into Rachel's trap

"It was probably into

Whitney stood by her bedside. "It was suspicious from the start, Jenny was so clueless when she accused you, and she insisted you open your bag, almost as if she knew the

necklace would be there. I realized something was off and tried to stop you, but it was already too late by then"

Yvette had been too angry and desperate to clear her name to do anything odd at the time. Unfortunately, realizing it now was no help.

Just then, Thomas entered the hospital ward as soon as Yvette saw him, she turned her head away, refusing to look at him.

"Now isn't the time to be angry." Thomas said, stepping to the foot of her bed with a serious expression. "Rachel is planning to sue you for assault and theft"

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 Why Are You Still Defending Him

"What? Assault?" Whitney's eyes widened "When did he ever try to hit her on purpose?"

Whitney frowned. "She's probably blaming you for the fall down the stairs."

"But get hurt too!" Wette pointed to her bandaged head, then to her ankle.

Whitney reminded her, "You did grab her arm."

Wette protested. "I barely touched her she's the one who lunged at me with all her weight"

Thomas spoke up. "That's the problem-It's impossible to prove."

Only Wette and Rachel knew the exact force of that moment. And everyone who saw them fall down the stairs had seen Wette reach for Rachel first

Wette claimed that Yvette had acted out of anger and misjudged her strength, it would seem plausible to everyone else

Rachel seriously hurt?" Whitney asked Thomas

checked on. She has a scrape on her forehead, but Damian brought in an antologist."

That was when Rachel decided to press charges.

Wette let out a mocking laugh. "A scrape on her forehead, and she needs a neurologist? She's not even as injured as Fan"

was arguing about that really matter right now? Thomas snapped, his patience fraying

Thomas's temper flared "Wette, have you lost your mind? Or do you just not have a conscience?"

Sensing that they were on the brink of an all-blown argument, Whitney stepped forward, trying to calm them down

But before she could say anything, a pillow flew across the ward.

Hour of here, York wette shouted while pointing at him, her eyes red and bling with anger.

Thomas snotted, picked up the pillow, and placed it back on the bed before tuming to ko. Hath out a final, cutting remark as he went, "Fine! Let's so if earl

The door slammed shat with a loud bang.

Tw's chesthered as she tumed.

Whitney picked up the pillow and gently placed behind her, sighing. "He's not just word about offending the Howards, Yvette You're misunderstanding him."

Yen locked away, "why are you soll defending him?

"Your career is just starting to take off. If you bring in the police, It'll blow up. Word will get out, and everyone will know you crossed the Howards. The Howards aren't just Damian When potential partners hear about it, do you think they'll want mark with you?" Whimey looked at her seriously.

"Thomas may be friends with Noel,

but even he can't protect you when it is the Howards. In his mind, it's better for you to take a temporary hit and investigate quietly later." Witte stayed stent, but Whitney could tell her words had struckachord.

Aspected, Wettelooked at whitney with a trochled expression. "Tachling me is going to be even worse than calling the police."

A lawsuit meant they'd have to go to court unless Rachel agreed to drop the charges.

"antis point, the best thing we can do is be prepared. We should get a lawyer to help us navigate this, Let's reach out to Helma," Whimey said after a moment of thought. Helena was Damian's younger sister and a top notch attorney. She'd be the ideal person to represente

modded in agreement.

over the phone.

Whitney indly called Helena and explained the basics of the situation over

"We'll go the details in person at the hospital," Helena replied briskly, not asking anyunnecessary questions before hanging up.

Ader the call, Whitney encouraged to get some rest.

But deep down, Whitney felt a heavy weight of guilt. This whole mess had started because of her ongoing conflict with Rachel. If it hadn't been for that, Whitney wouldn't have dragged in the initial.

For yes, this was nothing more than collateral damage, and Whitney couldn't shake the weight that she owed her friend.

She slipped quietly out of the ward.

Whitney headed down the hall to Rachel's hospital ward.

The guard at the door recognized her and let her in without question.

When she opened the door, she saw a man sitting beside Rachel's bed, carefully eating a perfectly peeled apple. The scene brought back memories.

Whitney remembered how she had

once playfully asked Damian to peel an apple for her. He tried to do it, but the peel had come out thick and uneven, and hurt his hand. She got so worried that she never asked him to peel anything for her again.

Now, seeing the thin, continuous peel on the table—a skill that only came with practice—she realized she had never once in her life had peeled herself.

Not wanting to linger on the past, she walked straight in.

Damian's hand paused mid-air when he noticed her.

"Are you...okay?" Whitney asked, moving closer to the bed. She held her gaze, keeping her focus on Rachel.

Just as Whitney had said, Rachel had only a bandage wrapped around her head. There were no other visible injuries. Chapter 57 Why Are You Still Defending Him

There was no need to ask as it was clear enough.

But Whitney had come with a purpose. She needed something from Rachel, so she forced herself to soften her tone.

"Whitney, thank you for coming to see me," Rachel said, her expression warm and grateful. "I thought you might be angry with me."

Her voice was soft, almost hesitant. "I didn't want things to go this far. Ms. Jennings is your friend, and I don't want to hold a grudge. I just... I just want my necklace back." Hearing this, Whitney seized the moment. "So, could you consider dropping the charges?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 38

Chapter 38 You Should Understand Why I Don't Want to See You

Chapter 38 You Should Understand Why I Don't Want to See You

Rachel didn't look the least bit surprised by Whitney's request. I was as if she had

TL"Nalglanced uneasily at Damian.

making why Whitney had come

Tarian spoke and he took the necklace it, then pushed Rachel down the stairs. If the roles were reversed, would you expect Verine to drop the charges?" Only now did Whitney realize that it was Damian's idea to press charges. He wanted to stand up for Rachel that badly? Whitney suppressed the cold foot forming inside her and gave Rachel a small but apologetic nod on 'Yvette's

The sound of the necklace still needed investigating, and the fall had happened in the heat of the moment.

half for making you fall down the stairs. But he didn't do it in preparation; she was

If she wanted Rachel to consider dropping the charges, Whitney had no choice but to humble herself for Veretta's sake. Rachel accepted the bow without a flicker of hesitation.

She then said gently, "Whitney, it's not that I want to make things d

(as you can see, Eddie got hurt, and besides, Ms. Jennings has quite a temper-she's too impulsive.

Maybe this will be a lesson for her that she doesn't make bigger mistakes in the future."

Rachel's one was pendle, almost sympathetic as if she were doing this for Wette's good as if Ye should be grateful

Whitney heard it clearly Rachel had intention of dropping the charges

Her only hope now was to appeal directly to Damian

Turning to him, he faced him directly, "Damian, Tete didn't mean to hurt her. Can't you let this go for my sake? Don't pursue the assault charge, and let's focus on investigating the necklace situation first." Rushing to without

toe could damage the Howards' reputation if it all went wrong, I think you should consider this carefully,"

Damian was silent as if he were actually weighing her words.

Rachel suddenly raised a hand to her forehead, looking pained. "Uncle Damian, my head hurts. And I'm feeling a bit dizzy."

- Damian's attention snapped back to her, and he leaned forward anxiously. "Is it really bad? I'll get the doctor."

Bachel kept her eyes closed, giving a slight nod in response.

bagged and looked back at Whitney. "As you can see, Rachel's head injury isn't mine. We're definitely pursuing this. Whitney, I hope you don't get involved. This has nothing to do with you. Whitney, let our cold nudge. "You can stand up for Bachel, but I'm not allowed to land

cup for tea?"

She met Damian's gaze, her voice steady and unflinching. "We find the evidence."

By the time she left Rachel's hospital ward, it was already late.

Not wanting to disturb her's rest, Whitney sent her a quick message and then headed straight back to Cowska Heights.

Just as Whitney entered the building, she spotted Noel waiting by the elevator

Remembering how he had stopped Yvette

before then there.

exposing Damian and Rachel's relationship, a chill settled over her expression. She walked over, going straight to him completely and treating him as

The elevator arrived, and Noel stepped inside. Seeing that she hadn't moved, he held the doors

"Aren't you coming in?"

Whitney said nothing

Noel released the button, and the elevator doors slowly closed between them

She took the elevator up. When she reached the 16th floor, she wasted time waiting for Noel still there, waiting for her.

"If you're here to explain, save it. I don't want to hear it." The cut him off unwilling to give him a chance to speak

"Do you think Yvette's accusation

would we changed anything? Prove

her in? Noel's face was stony, affected by the look on his face

If he hadn't stopped Yvette, her outburst would have made her a laughingstock

Besides, Burnin's influence wasn't something people would question lightly. No one would have believed Yvette without concrete proof.

In the end, it wouldn't have helped-it would've only ensured that the Jennings family thoroughly offended the Haidu. And Damian would never have let Yvette go after that

Whitney had come to realize all of this afterward

But there were other ways it would have intervened he didn't have to choose the one that hurt her the most.

"You stood up for Rachel. I can understand that. After all, she's family" Whitney lifted her head, meeting his gaze directly

"So, if I'm angry and don't want to see you, you should understand that too

With that, she brushed past him, unlocked the door, and went inside without looking back at

The next day, when Whitney was at the hospital, Helwan lady in Tee's ward Helena had been briefed on everything that had happened at the banquet.

"Determining whether or not the injury was intentional is impossible. We can't see what happened using video footage from different angles and by interviewing guests who were closest to you at the time. It's just complicated" she explained

She dressed in a sleek black suit with her hair pulled back in a low ponytail. Helena typed rapidly on her laptop as she spoke

Yvonne sighed and called "Helena, you're amazing "

But Helena's expression was serious

"I stopped by the hotel on my way here, and unfortunately, there's no surveillance in the rest of the banquet hall."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 39

"New cameras?"

Helena nodded. "And I make

While the camera couldn't have shown what happened in the restroom, it would at least have indicated who went in. If I had never gone into that room, it would have proven she was washing. But somehow, conveniently, the camera malfunction wasn't working that night.

Whitney thought in a moment, then looked at Yvonne "That's why Jenny was so confident. Even when you spend checking the footage, she stayed completely calm

At the time, Jenny had been standing right beside Rachel. When Yvonne mentioned reviewing the surveillance footage, Whitney had caught a glimpse of Jenny's face. There hadn't been even what I even do to realize that she'd gotten all this trouble to frame me? Are all the Howard this fond of bullying people?

Helena shrugged, unfazed. "No offense taken. And you're not entirely wrong. Jenny went through a heartbreak and hasn't been the same since. She's alone, spoiled all her life"

"I'm a victim of that too." Whitney added with a sigh,

she had only met Damon's boyfriend twice, both times at the Howard's birthday. Inexplicably, he decided to confess his feelings for her

Since then, Jenny became convinced that Damon had tried to steal her boyfriend and had been holding a grudge ever since.

Damon's eyes lit up with understanding "So, this is Jenny's way of making an example. She thinks framing me will somehow punish Whitney" Whitney sighed. "Time so soon after Treme. You or I died in this because of the."

"What's there to be so sure for? it's just a lawsuit. As long as I didn't do it, they can't pin it on me, right?"

Helena suggested they go back to the banquet hall near the scene and see if they saw anything they had missed.

"I'll go with you." Whitney said.

"Are you sure it's all right for you to go? Whitney gave a hint of worry in her voice.

Helena turned the wheel, guiding the car onto the main road. "I'll be lower. Taking on

1. to. I'll never get any work."

Whitney thought about this one, you'd be going up against your brother."

Helena might be the one pressing charges, but everyone knew Data was the driving force behind her. If this went to court, Helena was facing Damian head-on. "Perfect. Well see if his legal team is better than me," Helena said.

have to drop off some documents." II

As soon as Whitney stepped inside, she spotted Noel seated by the floor-to-ceiling windows. He was deep in conversation with someone across from him. Helena sat down, her gaze drifting occasionally toward Noel.

, the documents you're dropping off. Are they for Karl? Whitney asked, beginning to put the pieces together.

"Our firm is negotiating a contract with Sabouke Architectural Institute, and promised to bring the material today. Noel mentioned he'd be nearby.

Whitney stood up abruptly. "If this is a work meeting, I'll just man in the car."

Helena waved her hand back down. "It's not confidential, and besides, you're hardly a competitor,"

By the time, Noel had wrapped up his conversation. As his companion left, he made his way over to their table.

"No!" Helena glared at him..

Whitney suddenly felt like the ground should just swallow her up. Tuesday, she is his didn't want to see him. Now, here he was sitting right in front of her. Talk about awkward.

But she couldn't make a scene in front of Helena, so she managed a polite. "NL"

nashee koked up, bei eyes meet his dark gane for juna second before she quickly looked away.

Noel sind in ferade her.

Noel glanced over the papers, his expression serious Heplied in deep and advice, "ying to get a hint from me?"

1 wouldn't dare, I'm jmaking canally," Helenus replied.

Noel looled up, his gaze thoughtful.

"All I can say is, you have competition. If you want Seabourke Architectural Institute to choose your firm, show them your capability and commitment." FindNovel

Helena's eyes sparkled with amusement. "So, are you planning to delve the price down, Noel?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 40 Why Didn't You Leave

Noel's lips curved into a slight smile. "Did you think you'd get through this without shedding a drop? Your firm's bid is the highest, but we haven't reached the pricing discussion yet." It was the first time Whitney had seen him smile. Even though she only caught it out of the corners of her eyes, her heart gave a small jolt.

Helena looked slightly distressed and was just about to say something else when she suddenly received a work call.

"Something urgent came up. I need to go handle it."

As Helena got up to leave, Whitney started to rise as well.

"Sorry, Whitney. We'll have to check out the banquet hall tomorrow. And I can't take you home." Helena glanced at Noel. "Noel, could I trouble you by giving Whitney a ride?"

And with that, Helena gathered her things and hurried out of the café like a whirlwind.

Whitney sighed, frustrated. She wanted to call after Helena, but she was already gone. Turning to Noel, she said, "Um, you don't need to drive me. I know you're busy. You don't have to worry about me." She moved to stand, indicating that she needed him to slide out of the booth.

Since she was seated on the inside, she couldn't leave unless Noel stood up or she awkwardly climbed over him.

But Noel didn't move.

As for climbing over him? Absolutely not.

"Noel, could you please let me out?" she asked, trying to keep her voice steady.

Still, Noel didn't budge.

Whitney's irritation flared, and she used his full name. "Noel Howard, let me out. I want to go home."

At last, he looked up, his gaze cool and intense. His well-shaped but not overly thin lips parted slightly as he asked, "Didn't you say you didn't want to see me?"

"You misunderstood. I didn't know Helena was meeting you to drop off documents," Whitney replied, her tone clipped. She was clearly irritated.

"But you saw me as soon as you walked in, so why didn't you leave?"

Whitney had no answer for that.

He was right. If she truly hadn't wanted to see him, she could have turned around and walked out when she spotted him.

"That would've made Helena suspicious," she said finally.

"Suspicious of what?" Noel's gaze held steady as if he were trying to read every flicker of emotion on her face.

Whitney looked away for a moment, then met his eyes again. A trace of frustration was visible in her expression.

Was he really going to pretend he didn't know?

In the eyes of the Howards, her relationship with Noel was supposed to be distant and formal, strictly respectful. Any hint of unusual behavior would only invite unwanted attention.

"If I don't let you leave, are you planning to just stand here and let everyone inside watch?" Noel took a sip of water, his gaze steady. "Sit down."

The café was busy, and there was a good chance someone here knew Noel.

Reluctantly, Whitney sat back down.

"You're planning to go check the banquet hall?" he asked.

He must have overheard Helena mention it before she left.

"Yes," Whitney replied, avoiding his eyes.

"There's probably nothing left to find there. There are no cameras in the restroom, and the only one outside that could've helped was broken that night. None of the other angles are useful. Even if there's footage of Rachel or Jenny, it wouldn't prove anything."

Whitney looked at him in surprise. He had already checked the scene?

"Even if the chances are slim, I can't give up. I can't let Yvette take the fall because of me," she said.

Whitney knew how much Yvette cared about her career, and she knew the sacrifices Yvette had made to build her business. The success of her studio hadn't come easy-it had cost her a lot.

Noel tapped his fingers lightly on the table. "You could try to find witnesses from that night-the waiters or guests."

Right. Why hadn't she thought of that?

Whitney's mind raced with possibilities, and she shifted restlessly, eager to get started.

"I wasn't done," Noel added, noticing her readiness to bolt. "The odds of a guest seeing anything are low. If Jenny planned to set you up, she would've waited until no one was around. And with so many people, how are you planning to find someone?" Moreover, the waiters were fewer in number, and each one had a designated area.

"Got it," Whitney said, standing up again.

This time, Noel rose with her, following her outside.

"I told you, I don't need a ride," Whitney reminded him.

"I'm going home too. Is that a problem?" Noel replied, his tone unreadable.

Whitney had no comeback for that.

Noel's black G-Wagon was parked by the curb, and with rush hour in full swing, the streets were packed with traffic.

"At this hour, you're not going to get a cab. Just come with me."

He took a few steps toward the car but paused when he noticed she hadn't followed. He turned back to look at her.

Seeing his expectant look, Whitney said, "Just because you gave me a new lead doesn't mean I'm not mad anymore. I'm not getting in your car."

Offering a new direction for the investigation didn't erase the fact that he had sided with Rachel. Those were two separate things. The frustration she felt toward him hadn't faded.

Noel held her gaze for a long moment, his expression cool and detached. "Suit yourself," he finally said.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 41 Riding on Coattails

Whitney watched as Noel's car merged into traffic, slowly fading from view.

Only then did she recognize a strange feeling stirring within her. Why had she been so angry when Noel defended Rachel? Her anger was even stronger than it had been when she first discovered Damian's betrayal. And beneath that anger lay a confusing sense of disappointment as if an answer lingered just beyond her grasp. She forced herself to stop overthinking it.

...

The next day, Helena called, and they agreed to meet directly at the hotel entrance.

Whitney had taken a few days off work, with Damian's approval. He knew her reasons, and even if he hadn't agreed, she wouldn't have gone to the office anyway. When she met Helena at the hotel, Whitney relayed Noel's suggestions exactly as he had described them.

"Noel's lucky he didn't become a lawyer. Otherwise, there'd be no work left for me," Helena quipped.

They approached the lobby manager, and Helena introduced herself as a lawyer, explaining the purpose of their visit. The manager led them to the general manager's office.

Eugene Hill, the hotel's general manager, was a man in his early 40s with a receding hairline.

After listening to the lobby manager's summary, Eugene looked troubled. "It's not that we don't want to cooperate, but questioning each of our staff would take a lot of time. We're extremely busy right now, and even a brief interruption could lead to guest complaints."

Helena smiled. "It's just a few quick questions. It won't take long, Mr. Hill. If you could do us this favor..."

But despite her gentle persistence, Helena lacked the authority to compel questioning without a warrant.

Eugene chuckled politely, his refusal firm. "I'm sorry. If you come back with a warrant or bring the police along, we'll be happy to cooperate."

With that, they were escorted out of the hotel.

"That Mr. Hill is a slippery one," Helena muttered in frustration.

Without surveillance footage or witnesses, their investigation was looking increasingly difficult.

"Noel!"

Just as their spirits were sinking, Whitney heard Helena call out into the lobby. She looked up and saw Noel emerging from the hotel elevator.

Noel was dressed in a dark suit and silver-framed glasses. His sharp jaw turned slightly as he spoke with someone by his side.

Hearing someone call his name, Noel looked over, exchanged a few more words with his companion, and then headed toward them. "Noel, what are you doing here?" Helena asked.

"There's a design seminar being held here today," he replied.

As he spoke, Noel's gaze drifted to Whitney. He noticed her tense expression and Helena's frustrated look. "Ran into trouble?" he asked.

"Mr. Hill keeps dodging our questions. Bottom line, he just doesn't want to get involved," Helena replied with a sigh.

The situation was delicate as it involved the Howard, Jennings, and York families. Eugene didn't want to risk offending anyone, though he was unaware that Helena herself was part of the Howards.

Just then, Eugene came hurrying over, practically jogging.

"Ah, Mr. Howard! I didn't realize you were here. Apologies for not greeting you properly."

Noel extended his hand. "The city's new museum is about to break ground, and today's the final design seminar. It's hosted here. You seem well-informed, Mr. Hill."

Relieved and flattered by Noel's initiative to shake his hand, Eugene clasped it with both of his. "Someone saw you here and informed me right away. If you don't mind, would you like to come to my office? I'll make you a cup of coffee." Noel added, "I am feeling a bit thirsty. I'll take you up on that."

Then, he turned to Helena. "I still need to discuss Ms. Jennings and Rachel's matter with you. Can you wait for me for a moment?"

Helena understood immediately. "Whitney and I will wait here for you."

"Oh, no, no-there's no need for you ladies to wait out here. Please, come to my office as well," Eugene insisted, gesturing for them to follow.

Whitney tugged on Helena's arm. "We're here on official business. Mr. Hill said we'd need a warrant to question the staff about that night."

Hearing this especially in front of Noel-Eugene nearly broke into a sweat. "A warrant? That was just a little joke, ladies. No need for anything like that."

"A joke?" Helena raised her eyebrows in exaggerated surprise. "So, we're allowed to ask our questions?"

"Of course, of course! If you have business here, I'm more than happy to help." Eugene quickly called over the lobby manager and instructed him to gather all the staff who had worked in the banquet hall that night. It was true what they said it was good to have a powerful ally.

With Noel's presence, no one dared to refuse.

The waitstaff from that night were soon assembled in a meeting room, and Whitney and Helena split up to interview them individually.

An hour later, they finally emerged from the meeting room.

Noel was waiting for them in the lounge area of the lobby.

"How did it go?" he asked.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Whitney's expression was grim, she didn't say a word.

Noel glanced at her, but it was Helena who answered with a sigh, "We got nothing."

They had questioned everyone, but no one had been near that part of the hall or seen anything by the restroom. In short, there were no witnesses.

With the case at a standstill, Whitney felt awful. If Yvette ended up facing a lawsuit because of her, Whitney would carry that guilt for the rest of her life.

Noel didn't comment further. He mentioned he had some work to finish up for Seabourke Architectural Institute and left.

Helena also had to return to her office to go over the case from start to finish, hoping to find something they might have missed.

Meanwhile, Whitney headed to the hospital. As she walked, she rehearsed what she would say if Yvette asked for an update. Just as she reached the hospital ward door, she heard raised voices coming from inside. "Can you stop being so stubborn?" Thomas said.

"Didn't you say you don't care about me? Then why are you here?" Yvette shot back just before a loud thud sounded.

Whitney quickly pushed the door open.

Inside, she saw Thomas holding Yvette tightly in his arms. It looked like she had almost fallen, and he had caught her just in time.

Yvette's face was flushed as she pushed Thomas away. "I don't need you to meddle in my affairs."

"The summons has arrived, and you're still acting tough? Yvette, sometimes brute force isn't the answer. Do you understand the concept of taking a more strategic approach?" Thomas sounded genuinely frustrated. Whitney stepped closer to Yvette. "The summons came?"

Yvette pointed to the couch. "It's over there. It just arrived this morning."

Whitney turned and saw an envelope lying on the couch, the summons neatly placed on top.

She picked it up and scanned the details, noting that the court date was set for just a week from now.

"Whitney, did you and Helena find anything at the hotel?" Yvette asked, her eyes full of hope.

Whitney's heart sank. She shook her head. "Helena and I spoke to every waiter who worked in the banquet hall that night. None of them saw anything."

Disappointment flashed across Yvette's face, but she quickly forced a brave smile. "It's fine. I didn't do it, so I have nothing to be afraid of. If it comes down to a court case, so be it!"

"Yvette!" Thomas snapped. "Did you even hear a word I said earlier?"

"Don't worry. I'll take responsibility for my own actions. Even if I lose the case, I won't drag you down with me!" Yvette declared, her voice firm.

"You stubborn woman! Do you really think I'm worried about myself?" Thomas' frustration boiled over as he stepped closer, stopping just a few feet away.

Yvette froze, gripping the edge of the bed tightly as she leaned back against it.

Whitney's gaze shifted between the two of them, and without a word, she quietly slipped out of the ward.

She hadn't expected Damian to move so quickly. The summons had arrived, and the court date was only a week away.

And they had no evidence.

Yvette might say she wasn't afraid of going to court, but Whitney knew she was just putting on a brave face. Deep down, who wouldn't be scared?

At the end of the hallway, Whitney pulled out her phone and dialed Damian's number. After two rings, he picked up.

"Whitney, I was just about to call you." Damian's voice held a casual warmth as if nothing had ever happened between them.

Whitney bit her lip. "Please let Yvette go. I'm imploring you. If Rachel needs an apology, I'll give it."

She knew that her apology would likely satisfy Rachel far more than anything Yvette could offer.

"I told you, Whitney, stay out of this. Why won't you listen?" Damian's tone turned cold, the warmth gone in an instant.

"Why are you so determined to stand up for Rachel?" Whitney's grip on her phone tightened, her knuckles turning white. "Can't you see she's just using Yvette to get back at me, Damian? Don't you see through this?"

"You're being overly sensitive," Damian replied, irritation clear in his voice. "Yvette's an adult. If she made a mistake, she should face the consequences."

"Did she really make a mistake, or is she being framed? You know the truth as well as I do."

Damian wasn't the heir to the Howard Group by accident. With his shrewdness and cunningness, there was no way he hadn't seen through this charade.

The real question was what was his motive?

Damian's voice softened, becoming almost coaxing. "I understand you're worried about Yvette and don't want her to suffer through a lawsuit."

It sounded like he had moved somewhere quieter as the faint background noise from his office disappeared.

Then, he continued, "Whitney, you know I've always wanted you to move back in to go back to the way things were. Without you, that house feels empty, and coming home after work is unbearable. Whitney, come back. If you do, I'll drop the charges immediately. "You'll be happy, I'll be happy-everyone wins. What do you think?"

Whitney's free hand clenched into a fist.

So, this was his plan all along.

He was using Yvette's predicament to pressure her into moving back. He'd stoop to anything to get what he wanted.

She hung up without a word, letting her arm drop to her side as she stood there in silence.

After a few moments, she raised the phone again and dialed another number.

"Helena, I have something I need to ask you."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 43 Just Throw It Away

"What's up? Go ahead," Helena said, looking up from her paperwork.

"Given the current situation, what are Yvette's chances of winning this case?" Whitney asked.

Helena paused, considering carefully. "With no physical evidence and no witnesses, things don't look good for Yvette. That said, it's not a guaranteed loss. If we lose the first trial, we can appeal and keep searching for new evidence. But that would take a lot of time." Whitney felt a sinking feeling in her chest.

If the case dragged on for a year or more, Yvette's studio might not survive.

After a moment of silence, Helena asked, "Is something going on?"

Whitney snapped out of her thoughts. "The court summons arrived."

"Already?" Helena sounded surprised. It had only been a few days. Something felt off. "Rachel seems to be in an awful hurry like she really has it out for Yvette. Do they have some kind of deep-seated grudge?"

Whitney hadn't told Helena about the affair between Damian and Rachel, so Helena had no idea that Rachel's real target was Whitney, not Yvette.

If she told Helena, she was worried about how disappointed she might be in her own brother.

Whitney decided to keep it to herself. It was not to protect Damian's image but because she didn't want Helena to feel torn between her and her brother.

For the same reason, she had also asked Yvette not to tell Helena about it.

Before they ended the call, Helena encouraged her not to lose hope, promising to do everything she could. "You never know-there might still be a breakthrough," she said.

When Whitney returned to the hospital ward, Thomas had already left.

"What took you so long?" Yvette asked casually.

"I didn't want to walk in on something I shouldn't see," Whitney joked.

Yvette pretended to be annoyed. "Look at you, getting cheeky!"

Whitney peeled a banana and handed it to her. "I think we misjudged Thomas. He seems to care about you quite a lot."

"Caring about me and liking me are two different things." Yvette took a bite. "He told me himself he doesn't like me. Should I still be holding out hope?"

"Maybe he loves you but just doesn't realize it yet?"

"Hah. That's not something that would happen with him."

Yvette took a deep breath, forcing herself to sound cheerful. "It's fine. Once this is all over, I'll throw myself into my career. They say if you're unlucky in love, you'll be lucky in other things, right? So I'll forget about love and focus on being successful in my career!"

Seeing the determined look on Yvette's face, Whitney smiled and said, "Then, I'd better hold tight to your coattails."

Yvette still needed plenty of rest, so after chatting a bit longer, Whitney left the hospital.

Once she got home, she began packing. Helena had been realistic-this case could drag on for a long time.

Whitney dreaded to think of what this might do to Yvette if it stretched on for a year or more. The strong, confident Yvette could end up worn down and defeated.

This wasn't just an ordinary case with a quiet resolution.

When powerful families went to court, even the smallest scandal could stir up the media. And this was a full-blown lawsuit.

The public didn't care about the truth; they only wanted to watch the drama unfold.

Yvette would be under constant scrutiny. And when that happened, how would she cope? If that was the reality, Whitney would rather move back into Damian's house. He said he'd drop the charges as soon as she moved back in, so the sooner, the better. If she packed tonight, she could move back in tomorrow.

Whitney took all her clothes out of the closet and began folding them into boxes. As she turned, her gaze fell on the neatly folded gown in the corner. It was already cleaned and ready to return.

Noel was reviewing architectural plans in his study when he heard a knock on the door. He stood up and went to answer it.

When he opened the door, Whitney was standing there, holding a rectangular gift box.

"I've gotten the gown cleaned. I should've returned it sooner, but with everything that's happened, it got delayed."

Noel kept his hands in his pockets, making no move to take the box. His voice was cool and distant. "Why?"

Whitney understood he was asking why she was returning it.

"I don't need anything from you. I'd prefer it if we didn't see each other anymore. And the gown is too expensive-I can't accept it.

"I meant to return it right away, but my own gown got stained that night, and there wasn't time. I had no choice but to wear it. If you're hesitant to take it back since I've already worn it, just tell me how much it costs, and I'll buy it from you." From beginning

to end, Whitney's expression remained calm. Her face, bare of makeup but strikingly beautiful, held a hint of stubborn resolve.

Noel looked at her, paying no attention to the box in her hands.

His dark, midnight eyes held no warmth. His voice was low and cool as it drifted over her head. "If you don't want it, then throw it away."

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 44 The Closed-Off Male Lead

Throw it away?

This was a gown from Corlons Boutique. As far as she knew, even the cheapest gown there cost five figures.

And the one she held in her hands-judging by the craftsmanship and quality was likely custom-made, possibly even one of their signature pieces.

Whitney looked up in surprise.

Noel's expression remained impassive, his entire demeanor radiating cold indifference. "Anything I give away, I don't take back. If it's not to your taste, then throw it out." Not to her taste? That wasn't it at all.

Whitney tried again. "I'm saying it's too expensive, not that I don't-"

"It's all the same," Noel interrupted.

Whitney was speechless.

How could that be the same thing?

Before she could respond, he asked again, "You're moving out?"

She followed his gaze and noticed he was looking at something behind her.

Turning, she saw her packed suitcase by the half-open door, where she had left it for convenience when she left in the morning. She hadn't expected Noel to notice it.

"Yes," she replied. "I'm moving back to his place tomorrow morning."

"It's about time, after all this back-and-forth."

The sarcasm in his voice was unmistakable, and it made her uncomfortable.

She lifted her chin slightly. "Yes. That way, we won't have to see each other every day and keep getting on each other's nerves."

With that, she turned and stepped back inside.

Only after closing the door did she realize she was still holding the gift box.

She glanced at the trash can nearby and, without a second thought, tossed it in.

She started to walk back to her bedroom, but after a few steps, she stopped. Turning back, she retrieved the box from the trash can. "I'm not about to waste something so valuable," she muttered.

...

The next morning, Whitney dragged her suitcase out the door.

She glanced briefly at the closed door across the hall, then headed for the elevator. After loading her luggage into the trunk, she pulled out her phone to call Damian. She needed to confirm that he would drop the lawsuit as soon as she moved back in. Just as she was about to dial, her screen lit up. An unfamiliar number was calling.

She hesitantly swiped to answer the call. "Hello?"

"Ms. Spencer, this is Eugene Hill from Regal Cold Hotel. Do you remember me?" The voice on the other end sounded vaguely familiar. Whitney paused, and then recognition clicked. "Mr. Hill?"

"Yes, it's me. I'm calling to let you know that someone saw what happened in the restroom that night. Would you like to come by?"

Whitney froze, hardly able to believe her ears. "Are you saying someone actually witnessed what happened in the restroom that night?"

"Yes, one of our cleaning staff. She resigned shortly afterward, so she wasn't here when you were questioning the employees. I only just found out and thought I should inform you right away."

"Thank you. I'll be there right away," Whitney replied, her voice trembling with excitement as she gripped her phone tightly.

This was the breakthrough they'd been hoping for.

After quickly calling Helena to share the news, Whitney drove out of the parking lot, barely able to contain her excitement.

A little way down the street, a black sedan was parked. It was one of the official cars from Seabourke Architectural Institute, reserved for Noel.

Inside the car, Dariel glanced at Noel in the rearview mirror.

"Mr. Howard, why didn't you just tell Ms. Spencer yourself? Instead, you had Mr. Hill make the call and let him take the credit."

After discovering that none of the banquet staff had witnessed the full incident, Noel instructed Dariel to investigate if anyone might have been overlooked. Sure enough, Dariel uncovered that a cleaning staff member had resigned the day after the incident. When Eugene realized he couldn't hide this, he finally admitted the truth.

Noel then had him provide the cleaner's last known address. But when they arrived, she was already gone.

Neighbors informed them that she had returned to her hometown. After a series of inquiries, they finally tracked down her address in her hometown.

Originally, Noel had planned to send Dariel there to speak with her as soon as possible. But last night, Dariel received a call from Noel, and the two of them drove through the night to locate her.

After finally persuading her, they brought her back to Seabourke and handed her over to Eugene, instructing him to relay the news to Whitney.

Noel leaned back in his seat, closing his eyes. "Take the day off, Dariel."

Dariel knew Noel would never take credit for what he had done. He was the typical strong, silent type-the "closed-off male lead" straight out of a novel.

...

Two hours later, Whitney arrived at the hospital.

Yvette was sitting on the bed, staring blankly. She hadn't been sleeping well and had visibly lost weight over the past few days.

The moment she saw Whitney walk in, she quickly erased the worry from her face and forced a cheerful smile. "Hey, honey. You're here."

Whitney couldn't contain her excitement. She rushed to Yvette's side, grabbing her hands. "Yvette, the truth is finally coming out!"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

On the night of the birthday banquet, the fragrance diffuser in the restroom was nearly empty and needed replacing.

The cleaning lady had brought a new one, and as she stepped into the restroom, she saw Yvette standing with her back to the door, seemingly wiping away tears. Respecting the privacy of such high-status guests, the cleaner decided to step out and return later.

But just as she was turning to leave, she saw another woman emerge from one of the stalls and discreetly slip an emerald necklace into Yvette's bag, which was sitting on the sink. That woman was Jenny.

Stunned, the cleaner locked eyes with Jenny, who noticed her as well. Afterward, Jenny warned her not to meddle and offered her a sum of money to resign the next day.

A few days later, someone else called the cleaner, instructing her to leave Seabourke entirely or face serious trouble. So, on the same day she received that call, the cleaner packed her things and returned to her hometown. When Whitney finished recounting the story, Yvette's face lit up. "Thank goodness! Now, let's see what they have to say!"

"Helena has already recorded the cleaner's testimony and is preparing the case materials back in her office. The cleaner has also agreed to testify in court," Whitney said, feeling a huge weight lift from her shoulders. "However, as for the assault charge, there's still no one who can prove you didn't intentionally."

Whitney was still a bit frustrated. That kind of dispute would be hard to settle.

"I don't care about that as long as the theft charge is cleared," Yvette said, hopping off the bed to stretch. "Honestly, I can't stand Rachel anyway. If people want to say I hurt her on purpose, fine, let them."

For now, they had what they needed. Just when everything had seemed hopeless, a breakthrough had appeared.

Yvette wouldn't have to face an endless legal battle.

And Whitney wouldn't be forced into returning to Damian's place under the weight of his threats. She could keep living in her own cozy space, right where she belonged. Thinking of this, Whitney couldn't help but smile.

...

Meanwhile, in the CEO's office at Howard Group, Damian was busy signing a stack of documents that Sophie had just brought in.

Billy entered hurriedly, waiting until Sophie left with her files before speaking in a low voice, "Mr. Howard, the cleaning lady has returned to Seabourke, and Ms. Spencer now

knows the full story." Damian looked up, his expression unchanged. However, the cold air around him was almost suffocating.

Billy quickly lowered his gaze, avoiding Damian's eyes.

"Continue," Damian said, setting his pen down on the desk.

"Our people observed that it was Noel's assistant, Dariel, who brought the cleaning lady to Regal Gold Hotel. About an hour later, Ms. Spencer and Ms. Helena arrived."

Billy didn't dare hold anything back, relaying every detail his subordinates had reported.

Damian narrowed his eyes slightly.

"So, it was Noel..."

It seemed Noel's interest in Whitney was deeper than he had thought.

Damian knew exactly what had happened that night at the banquet. He was fully aware of what Rachel and Jenny had done. Since it didn't involve Whitney directly, he had no intention of intervening. In fact, he had let Rachel and Jenny play out their little scheme. He welcomed it. After all, it gave him leverage to pressure Whitney into moving back into

the mansion. Why not take advantage of it? He'd been confident that, with only Whitney and Helena on the case, they'd never find the crucial evidence. That way, if Whitney wanted to help Yvette, she'd have no choice but to agree to his demands. But just as success seemed within reach, Noel stepped in and disrupted everything.

"Why would Mr. Noel help an outsider? He's a Howard too," Billy said, puzzled.

Damian's lips curled into a smirk. "Being a Howard doesn't mean loyalty. Everyone has their own agenda."

Except for Derek, who was content to idle his life away, each family member had their own schemes and ambitions.

As the heir to the Howard Group, Damian was well aware that both the main family and distant relatives were watching him, waiting for him to slip up.

"So, what should we do now, Mr. Howard?" Billy asked.

"Jenny's reckless and always causing trouble. Consider this her lesson," Damian replied curtly before turning his attention back to the quarterly financial reports.

In her VIP hospital ward, Rachel was leisurely enjoying a fruit salad. She was due to be discharged in two days. She hadn't expected Damian to spend so much time by her side during her stay. Every evening after work, he'd come and sit with her for a while. To

Rachel, this confirmed that she truly meant more to him than Whitney ever did. A sweet satisfaction bloomed in her chest, and it felt sweeter than the fruits she was eating.

Suddenly, the door flew open.

Jenny rushed in, visibly distressed. "They found a witness! It's the cleaner who saw me put your necklace in Yvette's bag!"

Rachel's smile vanished, her face tightening into a frown. "I thought this was all taken care of?"

"It was. I didn't think they'd actually find her," Jenny said, moving closer and grabbing Rachel's hand. "Rachel, you have to help me!"

A flash of irritation crossed Rachel's face. She had hoped to use Jenny to teach Whitney and Yvette a harsh lesson. Now, it seemed Jenny was becoming more of a liability than an ally.

"They have a witness now, so it's as good as confirmed. I'm not sure how I can help you," Rachel replied, looking troubled.

Jenny yanked her hand away. "I did this for you! You're not thinking of leaving me to take all the blame, are you?"

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 46 Not Exactly Convenient

"How could I?"

Rachel quickly took Jenny's arm. "You're my best friend. In the Howard residence, you're the only one who's kind to me and would help me."

Seeing Rachel's helpless expression, Jenny's anger softened a bit. But then she remembered the mess they were in and grew anxious again. "So what are we supposed to do now? We can't let everyone find out that I was the one who did this!" Rachel hesitated, then said thoughtfully, "If we want them to fail, the key is the witness. Unless we can stop that cleaning lady from testifying..."

Jenny's eyes widened in horror. "You don't mean... You don't want me to kill her, do you?"

Rachel thought, "Even if I do, would you actually have the guts to do it?"

She quickly put on a shocked expression. "Jenny, I wouldn't even kill an ant! How could I ever ask you to do something like that?"

"Then what are you suggesting?" Jenny asked, still panicked.

"Actually, it's not such a big deal. I could try asking Uncle Damian for help. Howard Group's legal team is top-notch. Maybe they could..."

"You want me to confess?" Jenny cut her off, panicking. "No way! If I end up in court, it'll affect the Howards, and Uncle Beckham will be furious! Grandpa would have my head if he found out. I'd probably get kicked out of the family!" Elijah had warned her never to bring trouble to Beckham's family and to be cautious in her actions. If she got dragged into a lawsuit, she'd almost certainly be thrown out of the family.

"In that case, there's only one solution left," Rachel said reluctantly. "Convince Yvette to drop the charges."

Yvette had almost fully recovered and was scheduled to be discharged in a few days.

"Just thinking about Jenny getting what she deserves makes me so happy," Yvette said, grinning from ear to ear.

Jenny had falsely accused her of theft, so now, Yvette planned to press charges against her.

As they said, one didn't know pain until it was one's skin that got cut.

Yvette wanted Jenny to experience what it felt like to be the one facing a court summons, to feel the same worry and dread.

Whitney checked her calendar. "Next week is the court date for Rachel's lawsuit against you for assault. Are you planning to attend?"

"Of course, I am. Not showing up would only hurt my case. Besides, I need to defend myself. I'm not going to let her say whatever she wants."

Whitney nodded. "Alright, I'll be there with you."

Just then, Helena entered, her heels clicking against the floor as she walked in.

"Ms. Howard, thank you for all your hard work!" Yvette said, bouncing over to give Helena a shoulder massage.

"Easy there. Your ankle just healed. I don't want you to injure it again. I don't want to spend every day at the hospital discussing case details with you," Helena said, gently guiding her back to the bed.

Whitney sensed something in Helena's tone. "We've already decided to go forward with the charges. What else needs to be discussed?"

Helena took a seat on the couch. "Jenny came to see me this morning. She wanted me to pass along a message. She knows she was wrong and hopes Yvette will drop the charges."

Early in the morning, as soon as Helena stepped out of her bedroom, Jenny pushed her back inside.

Jenny insisted that she regretted her actions and that she never should have framed Yvette. She begged Helena to help smooth things over.

"She's sorry?" Yvette laughed dryly. "If she was really sincere about it, she wouldn't have delivered her apology through someone else. With that attitude, does she think I'd consider dropping the charges? Dream on!"

"So, just to confirm, you're unwilling to drop the lawsuit, right?" Helena asked, needing a clear answer.

Yvette nodded, then softened her tone slightly. "But are you sure you're okay with this? I mean, you'll be going up against your cousin. Won't the Howards blame you? If it's going to cause an issue for you, I'd understand if you want to recommend another lawyer." Helena stood up. "Don't worry. It won't affect me. Just make sure you're ready to pay my legal fees in full-not a cent less."

At that moment, an idea suddenly popped into Whitney's mind.

She looked at Yvette and Helena.

"I think... there might be another way."

Yvette had been craving ravioli from Tanner's Table, so Whitney picked some up for her.

Just as Yvette finished her last bite, Thomas and Noel arrived.

Thomas' visit was understandable enough. But why did Noel show up too? That was unexpected.

"Well, well, Mr. Howard! I never thought I'd be important enough to merit a visit from you." Yvette's tone was half-teasing, half-sarcastic. After all, he was Damian's cousin.

And given his ambiguous connection to Whitney, Yvette figured a little light-hearted jab wouldn't hurt.

However, Noel hadn't come specifically to see her.

"I was visiting Rachel's ward and ran into Thomas, so I thought I'd stop by as well," Noel said plainly.

Yvette rolled her eyes. "Does he have to be so blunt?" Yvette thought.

She glanced at Whitney, who was quietly tidying up, her face expressionless as if she hadn't heard a thing.

"Since Rachel's also part of the Howards, it would be inappropriate for Noel not to check on her," Thomas added in explanation.

Then, he turned to Yvette. "You're being discharged tomorrow. I'll have a driver come pick you up."

"That's not necessary. I already have a driver," Yvette replied dismissively.

"Alright." Thomas nodded, then continued, "I heard the case has taken a turn. You're planning to press charges against Jenny?"

"What's the matter? You're not here to tell me to let it go, are you?" Yvette asked, moving closer to Whitney. "Whitney, why don't you tell him what we're planning?"

Whitney's expression remained calm. "For now, it's better to keep things under wraps. It's not exactly convenient."

As she spoke, her gaze drifted toward Noel.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 47 Misunderstanding Noel

Noel noticed Whitney's gaze on him and looked over. But by then, Whitney had already shifted her eyes away.

"I have things to handle at the institute. You all carry on," Noel said, his tone unreadable. He then left the ward.

"Since there's nothing else, I'll head out as well. I've got some personal matters to take care of," Thomas said, standing up. He remembered Elena's message and added, "My mom wants you to come over for dinner tomorrow."

"Do you want me to go over?" Yvette asked impulsively, immediately regretting it. She felt embarrassed-it was beneath her.

She had decided to stop harboring feelings for him. Had all those years of secretly liking him become a habit she couldn't break?

"Does it matter if I want you to come? Your legs don't belong to me," Thomas replied, his hands in his pockets. "If you're planning on coming, I'll let my mom know."

Yvette thought about how he'd been there for her these past few days, and her expression softened. She even allowed a smile.

"I'll think about it."

Thomas didn't say anything further and left the ward.

"Whitney, you were right. Maybe I misunderstood him. This whole experience hasn't been entirely bad," Yvette said, a bit moved.

"So, after all this, you're seeing that Thomas isn't so terrible?" Whitney raised an eyebrow.

"Something like that."

Just then, Yvette noticed Thomas had left his phone on the couch. She grabbed it and ran out to return it to him.

Whitney chuckled to herself. This was the duality of life-sometimes, hardship revealed unexpected truths. But only a couple of minutes later, Yvette returned, her face pale and her eyes red. "Didn't you go to return his phone? What happened?" Whitney asked, surprised.

Yvette angrily wiped her face. "Some dogs never change. I'll never trust him again!"

"What happened?" Whitney took out a tissue and gently wiped Yvette's tears.

"I just saw him taking another woman to a prenatal appointment," Yvette said, her voice shaking with anger. "Do you know how big her belly is? She's practically ready to give birth!" When she chased after him to return his phone earlier, she saw him downstairs with his arm around a heavily pregnant woman. All the joy and hope she had felt vanished in an instant. Now, she realized how foolish her earlier thoughts had been. On her way back, she tossed Thomas' phone straight into the trash.

Whitney tried to comfort her. "Are you sure you didn't misunderstand?"

"That's just the kind of person he is. If that woman had nothing to do with him, why would he be accompanying her to a prenatal appointment?" Yvette replied, refusing to discuss Thomas any further. Whitney knew her own romantic life was a mess, so she didn't feel qualified to give advice. She simply patted Yvette on the back and said nothing more.

After a while, Yvette suddenly looked at her thoughtfully. "Earlier, I noticed you were pretty cold to Noel. He came in, and you didn't say a word to him. You were acting all secretive around him." Whitney's comment earlier had clearly been directed at Noel.

'Keeping things under wraps' meant it was inconvenient... Wasn't that because Noel was a Howard too?

"You know, he's not the type to go tattling. Besides, if he really wanted to side with Jenny and Rachel, he wouldn't have helped us. He wouldn't have helped you either."

Whitney let out a bitter laugh. "Help me? He wouldn't go that far."

The thought of him taking Rachel's side and defending her felt like a thorn lodged in her heart. Especially when he mentioned earlier that he had just come from Rachel's hospital ward. It felt like a heavy stone pressing down on her chest. "What do you mean? Hasn't he helped you?" Yvette looked at her seriously. "Remember at the banquet, when I was about to expose Damian and Rachel's relationship, and Noel stopped me? Do you remember that?"

"Yes, I remember. I thought... he was just trying to help you by speaking up for Rachel."

Whitney's tone was resigned. She remembered every word he said that night. "Help me? No, he was helping you!"

Yvette's expression was a mix of frustration and exasperation. "Whitney, how can you be so blind at a time like this? I thought you understood what he meant."

Whitney was completely stunned.

"When he said no to 'dragging in people who shouldn't be involved,' who do you think he was talking about?" Yvette asked pointedly.

"Wasn't he talking about Rachel?"

Yvette rolled her eyes. "No, he meant you. If I had exposed Damian and Rachel, it would've dragged you into the scandal. It would've humiliated you, and the whole of Seabourke would've been laughing at you. "He was trying to stop me for your sake. Think about it. With my personality, would I have let it go so easily if he was really just defending Rachel?"

Whitney thought about it. With Yvette's fiery nature, she would've fought back with everything she had if she had truly believed Noel was siding with Rachel. But Yvette had stayed silent after Noel's comment that night. Whitney was speechless.

So... she had completely misunderstood Noel?

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 48 Did He Fall for You

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 48 Did He Fall for You

Whitney had not been cooking at home as much lately ever since Yvette was hospitalized. Her refrigerator was practically empty, so she visited the supermarket near Coaska Heights to stock up. She pushed her cart through the produce section, selecting ingredients for her meal. The weather was getting colder, and Whitney planned to make a hearty beef stew. She had already picked out most of the ingredients, with potatoes being the last on her list.

As she reached for a sack of potatoes from the newly stocked display, another hand reached for the same one. Their hands touched, and Whitney looked up to meet a pair of dark eyes that flickered with surprise.

"Noel?" Whitney blurted out, surprised to see him there. She glanced at his cart, filled with frozen meals, milk, and bread.

"Go ahead and take this one. I'll grab another," she said, pulling her hand back.

"You can have it," Noel replied coldly, pushing his cart forward.

As he started to walk away, Whitney called out, "Wait!" She hurried to catch up with him. "You probably haven't eaten yet. I'm making stew and a few other dishes. Why don't you join me?"

Noel studied her for a moment, his gaze intense and his voice low as he asked, "Weren't you planning to move out?"

Whitney shook her head. "Not anymore."

Noah was caught off guard by her answer. After a brief pause, he said, "I remember you saying you didn't want me coming over for meals anymore."

"I wanted to apologize for that. I misunderstood and thought you were..." Whitney trailed off, embarrassed as she stared at her feet.

"Thought I was what?" Noel's voice came from above her.

"It's in the past now. I was wrong, so please just accept my invitation," she stated.

Even Yvette could tell what Noel meant, yet it seemed to fly over her head. Whitney thought it was just stupid of her, so she avoided any explanation. She feared that Noel would be upset at her foolishness if he found out the real reason. Whitney also could not forget Yvette's words from before, in which she told her, "Noel seems to care so much about you, Whitney. Did he fall for you? I know Noel pretty well. He's a good guy and incredibly handsome, but his family background..."

"Being from a political family is different from your usual wealthy family. He probably has little say in who he marries, and someone of our social status wouldn't be considered suitable."

Whitney felt a strange stir in her heart when she heard Yvette's remark. Nonetheless, she quickly brushed it off and said, "I'd have to be crazy to develop feelings for Noel, especially since he's Damian's cousin."

Yet here she was, trying to apologize without giving Noel any confusing signals. She decided that some misunderstandings were best left alone.

"Are you coming?" Noel's voice snapped her back to reality.

"What?" Whitney was startled.

"Aren't you making dinner?" He was already walking ahead. "Any later and it'll turn into a midnight snack."

Realizing he had agreed, Whitney quickly pushed her cart to catch up with him.

Since Whitney had not driven, she rode with Noel. She considered sitting in the back but did not want to make him feel like a driver, so she took the passenger seat instead.

"Yvette has decided not to sue Jenny," Whitney said, breaking the silence in the car. "Instead of continuing this cycle of revenge, we're negotiating a deal. If Jenny can get Rachel to drop her other charges against Yvette, we won't press charges against her." After all, litigations would do no one any favors. If they chose to proceed with the lawsuits, it would surely sour the relationship between the Howard and Jennings families and give Yvette another headache. Hence, going this route might not only give Jenny a lesson but also spare Yvette from a mountain of legal troubles.

Noel focused on the road, glancing at the stream of cars ahead. "You sure you're okay telling me this? What if I spill it?"

Whitney felt embarrassed, remembering how she had previously refused to share information with him. She even insisted it was confidential, but she had done that merely out of frustration and a hint of distrust. Now that she had casually brought it up, she could not blame him for the sarcastic tone.

Swallowing her pride, she replied, "I was being petty before. I know you'd never tell anyone."

Noel glanced at her before returning his attention to the road. As they approached Coaska Heights, Whitney remembered she had forgotten a crucial spice at the supermarket. Fortunately, there was a convenience store nearby that stocked everything they needed. "Could you pull over quickly? I need to grab some seasonings. I'll be right back."

Noel steered the car to the curb, and Whitney immediately jogged toward the store. Across the street, a black Maybach drove past, with Damian driving. He turned his head just in time to see Whitney getting out of the passenger side of what he recognized as Noel's G- Wagon.

Damian's expression darkened instantly. Moments later, he watched Whitney jog back to the car, and the black G-Wagon disappeared into the underground parking garage of Coaska Heights. His grip on the steering wheel tightened until his knuckles turned white.

Contact- ToS

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 49 You Deserve to Be Alone

"What? Not only does she want Rachel to drop the charges, but I also have to post an apology video?" Jenny exploded in Helena's office.

"Many guests attended that birthday banquet, and while the Jennings family might not be as prominent as the Howards, they still have a reputation to maintain. All she wants is a public statement clearing things up," Helena explained calmly while typing on her computer. "So, I have to admit that I took the necklace and framed her? How's that any different from being sued?" Jenny's eyes widened in panic.

As the Howard family's heiress, she was used to other socialites vying for her friendship. The thought of facing such public humiliation was unbearable.

Helena looked up from her screen. "Why didn't you think about the consequences before doing it?"

Jenny fell silent, but it was clear that she was still fuming. She was burning with resentment but knew she couldn't defend herself.

Suddenly, she pointed at Helena accusingly. "Why are you taking their side? You're defending outsiders against your own cousin. No wonder Gavin left you! You deserve to be alone!"

"Jenny!" Helena's expression turned fierce, her gaze sharp and fierce. "One more word, and you're out!"

Intimidated by Helena's glare, Jenny backed down. The mention of Gavin Tyson had stirred up emotions Helena had long tried to suppress.

After collecting herself, she continued, "Whitney has already thought this through for you. The video only needs to state that it was a misunderstanding and that Rachel's necklace was found elsewhere. Neither your nor Yvette's reputation will be affected." After leaving the office, Jenny immediately called Rachel, and the two met at a nearby café. As she listened to Jenny explain the situation, Rachel's hand tightened on the edge of her coat. A flicker of anger crossed her face.

"Rachel, we may have lost this round, but don't worry-we'll find another chance," Jenny said, trying to reassure her.

Rachel forced a smile. "It's fine. What matters most is that you're okay. We're family, after all." She added resignedly, "Maybe we should stop messing with Whitney. She's going to marry Damian, and Grandpa adores her. I'll just avoid her from now on." Jenny grabbed her hand. "Rachel, you're more of a Howard than Helena ever was. Don't worry-as long as I'm here, Whitney won't dare bully you! The two of us can definitely handle her!" Rachel's eyes welled up with tears as she squeezed Jenny's hand back.

...

When she returned to work after her leave, Whitney sat at her desk and turned on her computer to write her resignation letter. After thinking it through, she decided to quit Howard Group.

Damian obviously did not love her, and with Rachel joining the company, the last thing she wanted was to be around two people she had no desire to see. Besides, she had only taken this secretary job for Damian, and she did not even enjoy the work. As Whitney quickly typed on her keyboard, her office phone suddenly rang. She picked up the call, answering flatly, "Yes, Mr. Howard."

"Come to my office," Damian said.

Whitney paused her typing and headed to his office. When she entered, Damian was on a call. Seeing her approach, he said into the phone, "Why don't you tell her yourself?" before extending the phone to Whitney.

Whitney was puzzled. "You want me to take it?"

Damian nodded, gesturing for her to listen.

Holding the phone to her ear, she said, "Hello?"

William's voice came through the line. "Ms. Spencer, it's me. I've obtained the medicine, and I'm flying back tomorrow. We can go to the hospital together the day after and start Madam Colin's treatment. She should wake up soon." Whitney was stunned, and she could hardly believe it. "Are you saying my mother can start the treatment the day after tomorrow?"

"Yes, I'll go straight to the hospital when I return. You and Mr. Howard can meet me there."

"Yes, of course. Thank you so much, Professor Morris. I really appreciate everything!"

As she ended the call, tears began streaming down her face. Damian handed her some tissues, saying gently, "Why are you crying? You should be happy that Madam Colin will wake up soon." Whitney nodded, taking the tissues to wipe her tears.

"I'll wait for you after work. We can go back to the villa together, then head to the hospital the day after tomorrow," Damian suggested.

Whitney looked up at him. "I need to go home and tell my dad about this. We can discuss my move later."

Damian's expression briefly darkened before he masked it. Then, he replied warmly, "Alright, whatever you want."

As Whitney left, Damian's smile disappeared.

Back at her desk, Whitney stared at the unfinished resignation letter for a long time before finally closing it.

Just then, her phone buzzed. It was Noel.

When Love Is a Lie (Whitney and Damian)

Chapter 50 A Rare Initiative

Whitney opened Noel's message, only to find that it was just a link with no additional text. Curious, she clicked on it and landed on an architectural design website showcasing award-winning buildings from the past two years along with industry trends.

Their dinner conversation a few nights ago had been pleasant. When Whitney casually mentioned wanting to return to her original field in architecture, Noel engaged in the discussion but bluntly pointed out how outdated her knowledge was.

Despite his straightforwardness, Whitney was not embarrassed and acknowledged that he was right. After all, she had spent the past few years focusing on Damian instead of keeping up with her profession. Hence, she had decided that night that she would not waste any more time. However, William's news had changed things. With all Damian had done to help with Margaret's situation, resigning from Howard Group seemed inappropriate.

"Thanks, Noel. I'll study it carefully," she texted back. After sending the message, she did not receive any response.

Later, Whitney drove to the Spencer residence and excitedly shared the good news with Westley. Westley simply nodded and said, "That's good news."

His expression was rather calm, not showing much excitement. Then, he wrote a check and handed it to Whitney, adding, "Margaret will be able to attend your wedding once she wakes up."

The mention of the wedding tugged at Whitney's heart, but her joy about Margaret's recovery overshadowed it. "Dad, what's the plan when Mom wakes up?"

Things were not like they were 20 years ago. Westley was now married to Rebecca, and they had Stella and Matthew. If Margaret moved back in, she would undoubtedly feel out of place.

Westley considered for a moment before replying, "Let's have Margaret stay here first. She'll need care while recovering, and we can figure out the next steps later."

It made sense to Whitney as she would not be able to care for Margaret while working. "Okay, we'll do it your way."

Outside the study, Rebecca's expression darkened. She was jealous, thinking Margaret was lucky. After 20 years in a coma, she would wake up to find her daughter grown and marrying into the prestigious Howard family.

Rebecca feared that once Margaret moved in, she would no longer have a place in the family and would be forced to move out. She glanced at the closed study door and quietly headed downstairs to the kitchen.

...

Two days later, Whitney woke up early for her appointment with William. After getting ready, she called Damian, who had promised to pick her up. It was nearly 8.30 am, but he had not yet arrived.

The phone rang until it went to voicemail. Whitney figured he might have had an emergency and decided to drive herself.

As she opened her door, Noel emerged from his apartment in a dark suit. "You seem to be in a good mood today," he remarked. It was rare for him to initiate a conversation.

Whitney smiled. "Yes, we're starting my mom's treatment with a new medication today."

Noel nodded. "That's definitely good news."

They walked to the parking garage together. "I should get going. I don't want to be late," Whitney said cheerfully, jingling her keys as she headed to her car.

With a quick wave, she hurried to her car. Noel watched her drive away before walking to his own vehicle.

...

At the hospital, Whitney rushed to Margaret's ward, but William was not there. She tried to stay calm, assuming he was stuck in traffic.

She gazed at Margaret's peaceful face and whispered, "Mom, you'll be waking up soon. Let me get some water to freshen you up."

As Whitney stepped out, she saw Damian and Rachel leaving the critical care room next door. Whitney froze, realizing this was why Damian had not picked up his phone he was at the hospital with Rachel. She smiled wryly as she pushed her feelings aside. She was used to this anyway.

"Whitney, I'm sorry I couldn't pick you up. Rachel's friend's mother had an accident, and it was urgent. I didn't have time to let you know," Damian explained.

"Rachel's friend's mother," Whitney thought bitterly about how distant that connection was, yet it took priority.

"It's fine. Your matters are more important," Whitney replied coldly. She checked the time and noted that William was late. Growing impatient, she took out her phone to call him. Suddenly, Damian stopped her. "Are you calling Professor Morris?"

Whitney just nodded and said nothing.

"Professor Morris has already left," Damian informed her.

Whitney was shocked. "Left? But wasn't he supposed to wait for me before starting my mom's treatment?"