

## Chapter 861 Dispute

A vicious argument tore through the Norris living room, violent enough to swallow the sound of footsteps in the foyer.

Adah froze in the entryway when she realized she was the subject. She stood there, listening.

The butler scrambled in behind her, mouth opening to announce Adah's arrival. One look from her—cold, sharp as a blade—sent him stumbling backward into silence.

The conflict centered on summoning a press conference to publicly disown Adah.

Adah's uncle Westley Norris and his parasitic family had pushed for the idea, and Gia had blessed it. Only her father, Leonel, stood against the tide.

"Mom, if you go through with this press conference, you might as well announce you're disowning me, too." Leonel's voice cut through the room, steady and final.

Adah's eyebrow lifted. Surprise flickered through her chest. For as long as she could remember, her father had been soft-spoken—a devoted son who never defied his mother. Even when Gia had blatantly favored her uncle's family, he had always accepted it in silence.

Adah never expected Leonel to take her side against the rest of the Norris family—she hadn't even dared to hope for it. Hearing that steel in his voice now felt surreal.

Crash! Glass exploded somewhere in the living room.

Gia's voice followed, shrill and venomous. "Leonel! Have you lost all respect for your own mother?"

"Mom, please, calm down. Don't work yourself up—if you get sick, I'll be heartbroken." Westley's voice dripped false concern as he rushed to



placate her. Then, he whirled on Leonel, features twisting into something harsh and calculating. "Leonel, how dare you speak to Mom like that? She is the head of this family—her decisions are not up for debate. Apologize to her. Now!"

"Heh." The sound that left Leonel's throat was dark and humorless. "Westley, you've spent your entire life weaponizing that silver tongue to curry favor with Mom and Dad. You've taken advantage of me for half my life. You should be satisfied by now." He paused, letting the words settle. "I'm your older brother, but I owe you nothing. Don't expect me to keep pretending there's anything brotherly between us."

Leonel turned back to Gia. His voice stayed level, but something dangerous lurked beneath it. "Mom, you raised me. I've been your dutiful son for forty years. I've provided you with wealth, comfort, and security. I've done everything expected of me. Now, I'm going to live for myself."

"You..." Gia's finger trembled as she pointed at him. "What exactly are you saying?"

Leonel dropped a stack of papers onto the table in front of her. They landed with a sharp slap. "This is my resignation letter, along with the transfer documents. Since Westley has been reaping all the rewards, it's time for him to take over the company and shoulder all the responsibility. I'm taking Adah and leaving. I'm done working for this family."

Panic rippled through the room like a shockwave. Everyone knew the truth. Westley might hold the title of family head and own all the shares of Norris Group, but he couldn't run a lemonade stand, let alone a corporation. His only skills involved spending money and chasing women. The company under his leadership would be bankrupt within a year.

"Leonel, how can you be so selfish?" Kimberly Norris, Westley's wife, hissed as she lunged toward Leonel. "You're the eldest! The future of this entire legacy sits on your shoulders. You can't just walk away because you're throwing a tantrum!"

"Exactly!" Rowena chimed in, her voice sharp with unearned arrogance. "Uncle Leonel, stop being so dramatic. Think about what's best for the family for once."

Westley straightened his silk tie, regaining his condescending smirk. "Using your resignation as a bargaining chip? That's a bit pathetic, don't

you think?"

"Selfish? Dramatic? Pathetic?" Leonel sneered, the sound sharper than the broken glass on the floor. "Westley, I've slaved for the company on a pittance of five thousand a month while you hoarded the shares. Your wife and daughter draped themselves in diamonds while my daughter was exiled to the dirt of a backwater town. Tell me—who is the shameless one here?"

Westley's mouth snapped shut.

Gia slammed her palm against the table, the wood groaning under the force. "Leonel! Are you still whinging about that? Adah is just like her mother—she's a blight on this bloodline. I was being merciful by not strangling her the moment she was born! Sending her away was already an act of charity!"

Leonel's eyes turned a dangerous, bloodshot red as he stepped closer to his mother. "Sally has been in her grave for years, and you still slander her. Adah is your granddaughter, but you treat her like an infection. Fine. I'll be the one to protect her. She has nothing to do with this family anymore."

He turned on his heel, heading for the door.

"Leonel!" Gia screamed, lunging to her feet. Her voice was so shrill that it cracked. "You would really trash your inheritance—abandon your own mother—for that ugly, backwater brat?"

Leonel stopped dead. He didn't turn around, but his shoulders were tight with fury. "Adah is not an 'ugly backwater brat.' She is my daughter, the only piece of my beloved that I have left. From this second on, she is the only person I live for."

"Fine! Have it your way!" Gia snarled, her face contorting into something monstrous. "You've made your choice. Don't cry to me when I get cruel. I'll send someone to scrub that unlucky little wretch off the face of the earth tonight. Let's see how well you 'live for her' when she's in the ground!"

Leonel spun back, his face a mask of pure disbelief. "Mother—how can you be this vile?"

Just then, a low, freezing laugh cut through the heat of the room like a



winter wind. All eyes snapped toward the archway.

"You want my life, Gia?" Adah stepped out of the shadows and into the light of the chandelier, her expression terrifyingly calm. "I'm standing right here. Why don't you come and take it?"

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