

## **Wrath 1011**

Chapter 1011:

He then spat it out. "What is this? It's absolutely awful!"

Janice burst into laughter. "Sorry, Aiden! But I just want to share everything with you."

Aiden shot Janice a reproachful look while dabbing his mouth with a napkin. Her radiant smile made it impossible for him to maintain any genuine annoyance, so he turned his attention to Wendy instead. "Did you do this on purpose?"

"Huh? What do you mean?" Wendy appeared genuinely confused. "This drink is really good." To prove her point, she took a hearty gulp, looking completely satisfied.

Stephen sighed, his expression tinged with resignation. "To her, it really is delicious. But for us, it's an acquired taste."

"Stephen, you don't like it either?" Wendy's brow furrowed as she fixed Stephen with an accusing glare.

Stephen quickly laughed off the tension, deftly changing the subject. "Janice, are you heading to the office?"

"Yes," Janice said with purpose. "Today is the company's opening day. As the boss, I need to be there to set the direction for future development."

"Got it!" Stephen paused thoughtfully before continuing, "I think I'll drop the new TV show and focus entirely on helping you manage the company."

He had been wrestling with this decision, feeling as though he was simply going through the motions. Whether during the conflicts with the Welch family or throughout the company's growth phase, it had always been Janice and her team putting in the real effort.

He felt a growing need to contribute more significantly, or his conscience would give him no peace.

“Stephen, there’s no need for this.” Janice shook her head. “Leah and Liliana have everything under control. You don’t have to stress over it.”

“Janice, I trust you to handle things perfectly. But as the head of the White family, I can’t just sit back and focus on myself. If I don’t step up, how can I truly call myself the head?” Stephen’s gaze dropped, his expression darkening. At last night’s grand celebration, he stood in the spotlight as the leader of the White family, yet every ounce of praise rightfully belonged to Janice. The weight of his own inadequacy pressed heavily on him.

He couldn’t allow his sister to bear the burden of the Welch family’s threats alone while he remained in the shadows. He needed to stand his ground and face the Welch family’s challenges head-on instead of watching from the sidelines.

“Janice, you’ve carried so much on your shoulders. I can’t just stand by and take the rewards without lifting a hand to help.”

Seeing the resolve in his eyes, Janice paused, considering his words. After a moment, she said, “Stephen, I respect your decisions, but I still believe you shouldn’t abandon your acting career. Some might look down on acting, but to me, it’s a craft worthy of the highest respect. I’ve seen the sacrifices you’ve made, the dedication you’ve poured into becoming a true actor. Maybe this career isn’t just a job for you—it’s what keeps you moving forward. I don’t want you to throw away your dreams out of guilt or resentment.”

A tremor ran through Stephen’s chest, emotions flickering across his eyes. At that moment, warm hands gently enveloped his. It was Wendy, offering silent reassurance.

Memories flooded his mind—Wendy was the first to recognize the fire within him, the one who had guided him, shaping him into an award-winning actor. And now, his sister understood him just as deeply. The emotions he had buried, the silent struggles he had never voiced—Janice had seen right through them. He had spent years wandering, directionless, a man without a purpose, believing he was fading into insignificance.

Chapter 1012:

Then, by sheer chance, he had stumbled upon an interview with a veteran actor. The man had said, “I became an actor to explore diverse lives and make my own life different.”

That single line had changed everything. Stephen had thrown himself into acting, and with every role he played, he came to understand—on stage, he wasn’t just pretending to live. He was truly alive. And so, with each character he portrayed, he slowly filled the hollow spaces inside him, shaping himself into someone whole.

“Stephen, no matter what you choose, you have my support.” Janice smiled, her voice warm. “Just promise me one thing—think it through before you decide.”

“Alright.” Stephen gave a slight nod, his mind already working through his next course of action.

After last night’s widespread buzz, the Eternity Building had become the focal point of the city’s gossip. The elite families of Cloverhill were all ears, eager for any update—especially regarding the White family’s stance against the Welch family, a move that would determine their own positions in the brewing conflict.

Many stood on the sidelines, waiting to see whether the Welch or White family would prevail. But in wars like this, those who simply watched were left with nothing but crumbs. The real rewards belonged to those bold enough to take the first step.

“Janice, I won’t be heading up with you. There’s something I need to take care of.” Aiden pulled up at the entrance, his tone casual yet firm.

“Aiden, is this about your company?” Janice arched a brow, remembering that he had already set up his foothold in Cloverhill. But she still didn’t know in what capacity. If he was operating under his family’s name, why hadn’t there been any buzz about it?

“I know exactly what’s running through your head, but hold off on the questions. I’ll make it a surprise.” Aiden leaned in, pressing a brief kiss to her forehead before flashing a confident smile. “Go on now, don’t keep them waiting.”

“Alright.”

Aiden watched as Janice disappeared into the building, then revved the engine and steered toward Hillford.

It wasn't long before Aiden pulled up outside a club. The guards, recognizing the sleek vehicle, stepped forward without hesitation. "Mr. Green."

"Everyone inside?" Aiden stepped out, his expression turning cold as an air of quiet dominance settled over him. In an instant, he slipped back into the ruthless persona that made men respect him—and fear him.

"They're waiting inside."

Aiden gave a curt nod and strode in.

The conference room was packed with rough-looking men—each of them menacing and clearly not upstanding citizens. At the head of the room sat Braylen, brooding in silence. His very presence radiated a lethal intent that kept the entire room on edge.

"How much longer are we supposed to sit here?" A scar-faced brute shot up from his seat, frustration evident in his voice. "We've been waiting over an hour. If he's not coming, I'm leaving."

Braylen's gaze flicked toward him, ice-cold. "Go if you want. But be ready to face the consequences."

The man stiffened, his bravado faltering. He parted his lips as if to argue but thought better of it, sinking back into his seat with a disgruntled huff. His mind flashed back to the previous night—the moment he was overpowered and taken down in the very territory he ruled.

The men had materialized as if from thin air, striking without warning. In mere moments, they tore through his gang, dismantling it with ruthless precision. If he had been alone, he might have handled the fear. But the room was filled with other gang leaders, each wearing the same grim expression—proof they had all suffered the same crushing defeat.

Chapter 1013:

This wasn't just any gathering—it was a secret council of Cloverhill's underground rulers, each one a feared name in the city's underworld. Yet here they sat, stripped of their usual dominance, a rare and unsettling sight.

Just then, the steady rhythm of heavy footsteps filled the air, each step reverberating through the tense silence. Braylen's gaze sharpened, a flicker of intrigue flashing in his eyes as he turned toward the entrance.

The sound reached the others as well, sending a ripple of unease through the room. Heartbeats stuttered. Heads turned.

A string of silent curses ran through their minds. Who the hell was this, wielding such presence with nothing more than their approach?

The door swung ajar, breaking the tense silence in the room.

A wave of tension rippled through as a tall, cold-faced man strode in, his presence cutting through the air like a blade. One glance was enough to send a chill down their spines—a lethal presence clung to him, far more suffocating than Braylen's. It carried the unmistakable scent of death.

It was the aura of a man who had danced with death, who had walked through fire and left a trail of bodies in his wake. These men were no strangers to violence—they had seen blood spill and felt the weight of their own sins. That was why they recognized true danger when they saw it.

"Mr. Green." Braylen rose to his feet, offering a slight nod of deference before stepping aside to surrender his seat.

Aiden approached with measured steps, lowering himself into the seat with unhurried ease. Yet even in his stillness, an unseen force pressed down on the room.

His piercing gaze cut through them like a razor, making even the most hardened men avert their eyes. Fear curled in their guts, though they loathed to admit it.

"I appreciate your patience." Aiden's words carried a glacial sharpness, freezing the air in the room and forcing everyone to hold their breath.

"By now, I assume you're all aware that the Welch family is under siege. Their businesses are crumbling, one blow at a time." Leaning back into his chair, he crossed his legs lazily, hands resting on his thighs—an image of ease, yet carrying an air of absolute control. "It won't be long before they collapse entirely."

One of the men hesitated before speaking. "Mr. Green, are we here to back the Welch family?"

Aiden chuckled, the sound devoid of warmth. He lifted a hand slightly, and without hesitation, Braylen stepped forward and struck a sharp slap across the man's face.

"What the hell?" The man clutched his cheek, shooting a furious glare at Aiden.

"Say something that idiotic again, and I'll make sure the fish in Cloverhill get a fresh meal. I hear they haven't been fed in a while."

A shudder passed through the room. The man before them wasn't just powerful—he was death in human form. His voice was calm, but the weight of his words crushed them like iron.

"I brought you here for one reason—to ensure the Welch family's downfall." Aiden's voice remained steady, unfazed. "Every last piece of their underground empire will crumble."

Gasps rippled through the room. Wide-eyed stares locked onto Aiden, filled with disbelief. The Welch family might be struggling, but their foundation ran deep. A few setbacks wouldn't be enough to bury them.

But Aiden actually wanted to kick the Welch family while they were already down. And he expected them all to join him. If the Welch family clawed their way back, there would be hell to pay for everyone in this room.

Chapter 1014:

“Mr. Green, you’re new to Cloverhill, so you might not fully grasp the kind of power the Welch family holds.” A wiry man spoke, forcing a smile. “They’ve been around for a century, their influence running deep in this city. Sure, they’ve taken a hit, but once they bounce back, they’ll come for us with everything they’ve got. It’d be wiser to stay out of this mess.”

Without hesitation, Braylen stepped forward and delivered another slap.

“You...” The thin man shot Braylen a venomous glare, but the moment his eyes met Braylen’s cold, unfeeling stare, his defiance crumbled.

“I’m not asking. I’m telling you.” Aiden stood, resting his hands on the table as his icy gaze swept over the room. “You’re free to refuse me, but be ready to face the consequences.”

A cold dread settled over the room. Aiden wasn’t just ruthless—he was insane. He wasn’t offering them a choice; he was cornering them. Yet refusing him meant gambling with their lives—one they weren’t sure they’d survive.

They had seen firsthand the kind of power Aiden commanded. In one night, he had torn through multiple factions like a storm, leaving nothing but destruction in his wake. Against him, they were nothing.

“Well? What’s it going to be?”

“Mr. Green, if I may ask something,” a bespectacled man ventured.

“Speak.”

“Why take things this far? Logically speaking, as a newcomer, you should focus on securing your footing, not waging war against the Welch family.”

Aiden locked eyes with the man, a slow smile curling his lips. “Because my woman wants them destroyed.”

His straightforward, almost absurd reasoning only confirmed one thing for everyone present—he was a lunatic.

The bespectacled man exhaled sharply, then smiled. “Count me in. I’ll fight for you, Mr. Green.”

“Darrell Finch, if you have a death wish, don’t take me down with you!” A bald man shot up from his seat, slamming his hands on the table. “This guy’s just some newcomer! Why should he be the one to take on the Welch family? We were blindsided, that’s all. Once we’re ready, no matter how tough he thinks he is, he won’t be able to take on the real power players of this city.”

“Couldn’t have said it better myself, Alister,” another wiry man chimed in with a smirk. “We didn’t come here to watch a power show. Now then...”

Alister Chavez and the thin man shared a quick look before drawing their guns, both barrels locking onto Aiden.

Braylen’s gaze turned sharp as he swiftly stepped in front of Aiden, his eyes burning with a lethal warning as he stared down the gunmen. “How the hell did you smuggle those in?”

“You think we’d last this long without a few tricks up our sleeves? You either pay us back for what we lost and leave Cloverhill, or you don’t leave at all.”

The other underworld bosses were stunned by the abrupt attack from the two men. No one had expected them to be this bold, revealing their true intentions so openly.

Darrell’s brows furrowed as he observed Aiden, who, despite having two guns pointed at him, remained eerily calm.

“Braylen.”

Aiden’s voice was soft but firm. Braylen hesitated briefly before stepping aside without question.

Chapter 1015:

Aiden leaned back in his chair, his gaze settling on the two men with a hint of amusement. “Did you really think I wouldn’t notice you smuggled guns in?”

Their expressions darkened, yet they remained silent, their eyes locked onto Aiden.

“I need loyalty, not opportunists.”

Aiden snapped his fingers. In an instant, a shadow flickered—swift as lightning—materializing beside the two men.

Their pupils shrank. Just as they squeezed the trigger, they realized, in horror, that their gun-wielding arms had already been severed.

They shrieked, writhing on the floor, clutching their severed limbs in sheer agony.

“Too noisy.”

Aiden frowned and flicked his wrist. In an instant, a blade flashed—silent, precise. The two men barely had time to register their fate before their throats were slit, their screams cut short forever.

Darrell’s breath hitched as he stared at the woman who had seemingly materialized from thin air, a shiver running down his spine. Had she been here the entire time? How had he failed to notice another presence in the room?

Her movements were too precise, too ruthless—void of hesitation. She carried the air of a trained assassin, her presence colder than death itself.

“Sloane, well done.”

Aiden cast a glance at the woman, his praise laced with quiet approval.

Sloane Cohen's striking features remained expressionless, her gaze colder than a winter storm. "Step back."

Sloane gave a subtle nod before retreating to Aiden's side, positioning herself next to Braylen like a silent sentinel.

"Now, does anyone else wish to object?"

"No! Not at all!"

"Mr. Green, we swear our loyalty and will follow your lead."

"Yes! From this moment on, you rule Cloverhill's underworld."

The room echoed with unanimous submission, fear and reverence glimmering in every gaze. Aiden's ruthless display had erased any thought of defiance.

There was a time when they thrived on danger, fearless and bold, but years of excess had dulled their instincts and softened their resolve.

"You must know one thing. Working for me only brings rewards, never losses. Your profits will only grow under my rule."

Aiden's tone was almost lazy, but the promise carried undeniable weight.

Moments later, the gang leaders' phones buzzed almost in unison. As they read the messages flashing on their screens, their eyes widened, excitement surging through them.

"A hundred million? No way!"

“It’s legit! A full hundred million!”

The underworld bosses gasped in disbelief. A fortune they had spent years clawing for had just been handed to them with a casual flick of Aiden’s finger. How could they possibly defy a leader so generous?

“Consider this a welcome bonus. Finish the job, and there’s plenty more where that came from.”

Aiden’s words sent a surge of adrenaline through the room, turning every man there into a hunter eager to dismantle the Welch family’s illicit empire.

Chapter 1016:

Meanwhile, Janice was seated in the meeting room of the Eternity Building. Stephen sat beside her, his posture stiff with unease. Surrounded by a room full of sharp-eyed professionals, Stephen felt a wave of nervousness. After all, these were elites, reportedly top talents transferred from JE Consortium.

“Everyone, allow me to introduce someone.” Janice turned to Stephen with a warm smile. “This is my brother, Stephen. He’s now the vice president of White Group.”

A round of applause filled the room as the attendees congratulated Stephen. To them, who held the vice presidency didn’t matter, since Janice was the president.

“In the near future, we will develop a groundbreaking large-scale AI model that seamlessly integrates with various industries. Our ultimate objective? To eliminate the Welch family’s presence from Cloverhill entirely.”

Janice’s words filled the crowd’s eyes with determination.

“Leah, could you tell us the challenges we’re facing?” Janice looked at Leah.

Leah nodded, picked up a document, and began. “Large-scale AI models are a hot trend, with numerous companies jumping into the field. However, most of what they’ve developed is uninspired—nothing truly revolutionary. Simply put, if we can crack the code and create a truly cutting-edge AI, we won’t just dominate—we’ll become the world’s leading tech giant.”

Excitement flared in the eyes of the attendees. Their confidence in the project burned bright. After all, JE Consortium had started with nothing more than a vision, yet it had forged one miracle after another, rising to become a powerhouse with global influence.

The road ahead was tough, but with JE at the helm, they had no doubt they would push through and achieve yet another industry-defining breakthrough.

“I’ve received word that the Welch family is making moves in this field as well. They’ve launched Overden Group to spearhead their large-scale AI development. Backed by the Welch family’s vast resources, Overden Group is set to be our toughest competitor.”

A smirk played on Janice’s lips. The Welch family wasn’t blind—they had seen the potential and stepped in, clearly setting themselves against her.

She was curious—just how much trouble could those two lackeys, Bart and Delilah, stir up?

“Ms. White, with the Welch family under siege from every side, do they even have the bandwidth to handle Overden Group?” A voice suddenly broke the silence with a pointed question.

At that, several people nodded, their thoughts aligning—given the Welch family’s current struggles, how could they possibly have the capacity to focus on Overden Group?

Without the Welch family’s backing, Overden Group was little more than a hollow name. How much damage could a company without a solid foundation really do?

Janice’s lips curved slightly, yet she remained silent. Instead, she shifted her gaze to Liliana. “Your thoughts?”

Liliana blinked, caught off guard. She hadn’t expected Janice to throw the question her way.

After a brief moment of thought, Liliana spoke. “The Welch family may be struggling now, barely keeping their grip, but let’s not forget—they have a legacy stretching back generations. Their current

troubles stem from being blindsided, from growing too comfortable, not from a lack of strength. Once they regroup and steady themselves, they may strike back in ways we can't even predict. And let's not underestimate Overden Group—if it were just an impulsive move, they wouldn't have positioned it so boldly at the forefront of their operations.”

Chapter 1017:

“Liliana, aren't you giving the Welch family too much credit?” someone scoffed, shaking his head. “Sure, they have history, but we are JE Consortium—our reach spans continents. We have powerful allies from Aerith to Cherriton. Tell me, how many groups in this country can even dream of matching our influence?”

Many in the room nodded in agreement, their confidence in JE Consortium unwavering.

JE Consortium wasn't just powerful—it was a force of nature, a legend in the corporate world. Few, if any, could ever hope to stand against it. Liliana frowned, sensing the quiet ridicule in the room. Still, these were the same people who had helped build an empire under Janice's leadership. Maybe they understood the bigger picture better than she did.

Suddenly, Janice drummed her fingers against the table, the sound cutting through the conversation like a blade.

Instantly, all eyes turned back to her, waiting for what she had to say next.

“I'm with Liliana on this.”

Janice's words hit like a thunderclap, leaving the room in stunned silence.

No one had anticipated Janice siding with Liliana—it almost felt like an admission of doubt in their own power. But no one dared to challenge her. Instead, they held their breath, waiting for her reasoning.

“Liliana's right. The Welch family has had its roots buried deep in Cloverhill for years, with its influence stretching across countless factions, far beyond what meets the eye.” Janice spoke with steady composure. “We've only struck at the Welch family's overt businesses. But have you considered their underground networks and political connections?”

At those words, a flicker of realization swept through the room.

Indeed.

They had misjudged the Welch family. A dynasty that had ruled unchecked for so long couldn't have survived on legitimate businesses alone. There had to be hidden industries, deep-seated alliances, and powerful figures shielding them from the shadows.

Just like when the White family was wiped out, the scandal that shook the city was swiftly silenced, undoubtedly with official assistance.

Liliana's eyes burned with newfound admiration for Janice. At that moment, she felt truly seen, a rush of exhilaration swelling in her chest.

"Janice, our dominance in open warfare is clear, but the Welch family's grip on the underground and their government ties won't be easy to break," Leah said, her brows knitting together. A trace of concern crept into her voice as she asked, "How do we move forward?"

"We wait." Janice half-closed her eyes, exuding the composure of someone who had already foreseen the next move. "Right now, the authorities are watching from the sidelines, weighing their options. They won't step in until they're certain of where the real power lies. Only when we've proven our strength will they consider negotiations on equal footing."

Leah arched a brow, realization dawning. The Welch family had influence, but the government would consider their own interests. Otherwise, Kern wouldn't have joined Janice's banquet. He was using that to rein in the Welch family's unchecked arrogance.

Now was the time for Janice and her team to gauge where the Welch family's backers truly stood. At the same time, they had to display overwhelming strength, making sure the government took them seriously.

"Nellie, get me intel on every major gang in Cloverhill. I need it by today."

Chapter 1018:

“Got it!” Given such a crucial task, Nellie’s determination ignited like a spark catching dry kindling.

“Leah, reach out to the government. Let them know White Group’s only target is the Welch family and that we’re fully invested in Cloverhill’s growth.”

“On it!” Having navigated the world of high-ranking officials for years, Leah was more than suited for this task.

“Liliana, work with Nellie. Your skills should keep things running smoothly.”

“Understood!”

Janice issued her orders with calculated precision.

Her approach was sharp and deliberate—tightening the noose around the Welch family from all sides while extending an olive branch to the government, keeping them neutral and at ease. As for seizing control of the gangs, that would be the final step—trapping the Welch family in an unescapable vise and tearing them out by the roots.

Just then, Janice’s phone buzzed, slicing through the room’s tense silence.

“Prescott.” Janice arched a brow before answering.

“Janice, something big is happening. Every gang in Cloverhill has gone completely insane.”

“Insane?” Janice halted, her brow furrowing in confusion. “What makes you say that?”

“The gangs in Cloverhill have unleashed a full-blown onslaught against the Welch family’s illicit businesses.” Prescott’s voice crackled with barely contained excitement. “Their strikes are relentless—

overpowering, even! The Welch family's black-market dealings are crumbling, mirroring the downfall of their above-board ventures. This twin assault might not spell the end for the Welch family, but it'll certainly leave them licking their wounds for a good while."

Janice's forehead furrowed deeper. She hadn't even lifted a finger against those gangs, yet they had already begun dealing with the Welch family.

"Keep your eyes peeled and report any fresh twists the moment they happen," she instructed.

"Understood."

As she hung up, Janice cast a glance at Nellie and Liliana. "It looks like you won't need to investigate the gangs anymore."

"Janice, what is going on?" Nellie inquired, her curiosity piqued. "Every last gang in Cloverhill has gone off the rails, targeting the Welch family's illicit operations."

The room fell silent, astonishment rippling through the air. For years, the Welch family had kept these gangs in their pocket, and now, in a bewildering twist, those same allies had turned into foes. It was nothing short of mind-boggling.

"Someone has clearly stolen a march on us and rallied those gangs under one banner," Janice mused, a faint smirk tugging at her lips. Then, an idea sparked in her mind. "Nellie, Liliana, your next move is to gather the paperwork for the Hillford project."

"Janice, are you aiming to snatch that project?" Nellie asked, her tone laced with unease. "It's practically got the Payne family's name on it. Won't stepping in ruffle their feathers?"

"True, the project has been earmarked for the Payne family. But the Welch family's got their sights set on it too," Janice conceded with a sly grin. "Our timing couldn't be better. Besides, if I don't show a little goodwill, how can we earn the respect of Cloverhill's officials?"

Nellie caught her drift in an instant. This wasn't just about sticking it to the Welch family—it was a chance to prove their mettle to the government.

Chapter 1019:

The Hillford project was the golden ticket to revitalizing Cloverhill's dilapidated old quarter. Once finished, it promised to reshape the community, lifting countless souls out of hardship.

While the Payne family had their hearts set on clinching the project, other forces were eager to carve out a piece of the pie—though few had the chops to pull it off. Now, with White Group stepping into the ring, a three-way showdown seemed all but certain.

"Now..." Janice began, only to be cut off.

"Janice, could I take the reins on this one?" Stephen's voice interrupted, his gaze fixed on Janice with quiet resolve.

"You want to spearhead this project?" Janice asked, caught off guard. "But—"

"I know I'm just an actor with no clue about running a project, but as vice president of White Group, I want to pull my weight." Watching Janice deftly navigate the chaos and call the shots had left Stephen feeling like a spare wheel. As her brother, he couldn't keep coasting on her coattails forever.

"Don't worry, Janice, I won't go off half-cocked," Stephen reassured her. "With Nellie and Liliana backing me up, I'm confident I'll manage."

Janice weighed his plea for a moment before nodding. "Fine. If you're set on this, I won't stand in your way. Any hiccups, just lean on Nellie and Liliana."

"Got it."

The others exchanged dubious glances.

Sure, Stephen was Janice's brother, but their respect for him began and ended with Janice. To them, Stephen was just riding her wave of success.

Stephen wasn't blind to their skepticism. His choice stemmed from a burning need to prove he wasn't merely a shadow basking in his sister's spotlight.

To cement his role as vice president, he had to show he brought more to the table than a fancy title. Otherwise, he would forever be dismissed as a hollow figurehead.

After a whirlwind morning, Janice had divvied up the tasks, setting the wheels in motion. White Group's operations were steadily finding their footing, and with Leah and Liliana at the helm, everything promised to glide along seamlessly.

During this stretch, Minnie reached out to Janice with a call. She updated Janice on Oliver's health and pinned down the surgery date—set for three days hence.

Janice had no qualms about the procedure or its timing and gave her swift approval. She also let slip that White Group was throwing its hat into the ring for the Hillford project—a move Minnie had seen coming from a mile away.

"Minnie, you've got the foresight of a true Payne family heiress," Janice commended her over the line.

"Janice, you're too kind. I just figured a project this ripe with potential would catch the White family's eye as a way to pledge their loyalty," Minnie said, echoing Janice's earlier musings about winning over Cloverhill's officials.

"I'm glad you're on the same wavelength. Still, when the bidding rolls around, I won't pull any punches."

"I wouldn't dream of it. I'm eager for a fair fight," Minnie replied with a spark of anticipation.

Their exchange flowed warmly. Though a quiet rivalry simmered beneath the surface, it did little to dent their camaraderie.

“Janice, I’ll let you get back to it. See you at Andromache Hospital in three days.” With that, Minnie ended the call.

Chapter 1020:

Minnie exhaled in relief and reached for the cup on the table. Noticing the coffee had gone cold, she set it back down. “Tricia, could you pass a message to Kern?”

“What?” Tricia blinked in surprise. “Why not just call him yourself, Minnie? Do I really have to go in person?”

“It’s better discussed in person; it adds sincerity.”

With Minnie putting it that way, Tricia had little room to argue. “What do you want me to say?”

“Tell him that Cloverhill needs to hold steady.”

Tricia’s brows furrowed. “Are you suggesting an official intervention for peace?”

Minnie began brewing a fresh pot of coffee, her tone composed. “The Welch family may seem to be in disarray, but their foundation is solid. They could strike back at any moment, and if both sides escalate, it’ll be a brutal war. Now is the crucial time for intervention—any later, and it would be meaningless. Besides, if the Payne family proposes it, it will prove our strength to both the authorities and Janice.”

Tricia might not have been the most politically astute, but she grasped Minnie’s reasoning. Both the Welch and Payne families had deep-rooted influence spanning generations.

If the Welch family retaliated, Cloverhill would spiral into chaos, making intervention futile. But by proposing peace now, the Payne family would assert its significance—sending a message that Janice couldn’t ignore.

Tricia couldn’t help but admire Minnie’s strategic mind. Many in the family acted out of self-interest, rarely thinking ahead. Minnie, however, always saw the bigger picture, weighing every possibility to find

the best course of action. It was no wonder her father constantly reminded her to follow Minnie with unwavering loyalty.

Meanwhile, Janice had just ended a call when her phone rang again—it was Aiden. “Come downstairs.”

“Aiden, you’re right on time,” Janice said, a smile naturally forming at the corner of her lips. “For lunch.”

“I figured you’d be hungry,” Aiden replied warmly. “I found a great restaurant—let’s go together.”

“Alright, give me five minutes.”

A few minutes later, Janice stepped into the parking lot and spotted Aiden’s sleek black sedan. He had always preferred to keep a low profile, driving unassuming cars unless an important event required him to make an impression.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.” Sliding into the passenger seat, Janice glanced at Aiden. As always, he looked effortlessly handsome, and she couldn’t help but voice her thoughts. “Aiden, you’re really easy on the eyes.”

Just as Aiden started the engine, her comment caught him off guard. He blinked in surprise.

“What do you mean?”

“Movie stars might be striking at first, but the more you look, the less impressive they become. But no matter how many times I look, I never get tired of you.” Janice smiled and leaned in, her finger gliding softly along Aiden’s jawline. “Look at this perfect jawline and handsome face...” Her teasing made Aiden’s throat tighten, his gaze darkening.

“Janice, did you do something you shouldn’t have?”

“Why do you say that?”

“You sound like you’re trying to make up for something.”

Janice scoffed and rolled her eyes. “So I can’t just be nice to you? Maybe I should go back to being mean instead.”