

Wrath 1021

Chapter 1021:

“Ahem.” Aiden coughed awkwardly. “Are you sure you didn’t do anything wrong?”

“Oh, I did,” Janice said, her sharp gaze making him a little uneasy. “Janice...”

Before he could finish, she suddenly leaned in and kissed his cheek. “There. That’s my crime—I stole a kiss.”

Aiden’s pupils dilated, his restraint wavering under her playful assault. How was he supposed to resist when she flirted like this?

“Thank you, Aiden.”

Janice’s expression of gratitude instantly calmed Aiden. “Why the sudden thanks? You didn’t really...”

Janice rolled her eyes again and flicked his forehead. “Ugh, you’re exhausting. You’re the one who orchestrated the gangs in Cloverhill to go after the Welch family’s illegal businesses, aren’t you?”

Aiden hesitated for only a moment before realizing she had figured it out. “You knew?”

“Who else could coordinate them so seamlessly and direct them against the Welch family? It could only be you.”

Janice exhaled, her tone light yet knowing. “Was this the surprise you mentioned?”

Aiden smirked, tucking a stray lock of her hair behind her ear. “It was. So, did I do well?”

“More than well. I planned to spend three days gathering these factions, and you managed it effortlessly. You’ve been hiding your true capabilities, haven’t you?” Janice asked.

Aiden chuckled. “If I were just an ordinary man, how could I be worthy of standing beside you?”

Aiden had once believed his power was unmatched. Whether on distant battlefields or within Every, he had always reigned supreme. However, meeting Janice changed everything. He realized that his strength alone wasn’t enough. To stand beside her, he had to keep pushing himself forward, ensuring they could move ahead together.

Without a word, Janice kissed him again.

This time, Aiden responded eagerly. In the dim underground parking lot, their lips met once more in a heated kiss.

Meanwhile, Mateo’s bloodshot eyes burned with fury as he shattered the priceless ornaments in his study. He had just received devastating news—the Welch family’s underground empire had been completely crushed by the very gangs that once cowered before them. Now, those same gangs had turned against them all at once.

Only one name came to mind—Janice.

“They’re driving us to destruction,” Mateo growled through clenched teeth, his expression dark and menacing. “I won’t let them get away with this. Even if I have to drag them down with me, I’ll make sure they burn in hell.”

“Dad!” Alissa burst into the room, breathless. “Uncle Gilmore and Calvin have returned.”

For the first time, a flicker of relief crossed Mateo’s face. “Where are they?”

“In Uncle Gilmore’s room. The family doctor is treating them.” Mateo’s heart clenched, and he hurried out.

He had believed that Gilmore, with his skill and Calvin's support, would make it back to Cloverhill unscathed. But now it seemed the ambush they had faced was even more brutal than he had initially imagined.

Chapter 1022:

When Mateo saw Gilmore, his stomach dropped. The once composed and shrewd man now lay weakly on the bed, his left arm missing.

"Dad, I'm sorry. I failed to protect Uncle," Calvin said, lowering his head in guilt.

Mateo's gaze shifted to his son. Calvin looked exhausted, as if he had lost significant weight in just a few days.

"Tell me what happened." Before Calvin could answer, the doctor stepped in.

"The patient is stable, but it'll take time for him to regain consciousness. Regrettably, his left arm couldn't be saved."

Mateo moved closer, his anger simmering beneath the surface. He had always disapproved of Gilmore for siding with Harlan. But with Harlan dead and Gilmore in this pitiful state, long-buried brotherly affection stirred within him.

"Thank you, Doctor," Calvin said, escorting the man out before returning to Mateo's side.

"When I arrived in Efrey, I was ambushed immediately. I barely escaped while searching for Uncle, dodging death at every turn," Calvin recounted, his voice laced with lingering fear. "Thankfully, he was able to find me, and once we reunited, we discovered a way to escape Efrey. But Janice and Aiden's forces were relentless. Not only them, but the other forces joined in hunting us down. Uncle took a bullet to his left arm while shielding me. With no access to proper medical care, we had no choice but to amputate it while on the run."

Mateo's expression grew icier as he listened. A chill crept over him. His mind lingered on the horrifying ordeal his son and brother had endured.

Could Aiden and Janice truly command such dominance in Efrey? To unite so many powerful factions against the Welch family—it seemed inconceivable.

And yet, despite the Welch family's longstanding influence in Cloverhill, they could do nothing but suffer, powerless as their enemies trampled over them.

"Dad, we have to take revenge!" Calvin said, his fists clenched in fury. "If we don't strike back, the Welch family will be humiliated and lose its grip on Cloverhill's elite families."

Mateo took a deep breath and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, a dangerous glint flickered in them.

"If they want a fight, then so be it," he said through clenched teeth. "Inform them we will drive the White family out of Cloverhill, no matter the cost."

"Understood!" Calvin's fists tightened, his blood surging with anticipation.

The time had come for the mighty Welch family to assert its dominance, to remind everyone exactly who ruled Cloverhill.

"Dad, Kern Haywood is here," Alissa hurried in, her face tense. "He wants to see you."

Mateo's brows furrowed. Something felt off. "Kern, at a time like this? Could it be the Payne family's doing?"

A sinking feeling settled in his gut. Things were beginning to spiral beyond his control.

Kern sat in the living room, exuding an air of composure. Clad in a suit, he presented an upright and serious demeanor. Perhaps it was his years in high-ranking positions that had shaped this presence—one that made him seem distant and unapproachable. The faint tendrils of incense curling through the air nearby only added to his enigmatic aura.

After some time, Mateo arrived with Calvin in tow. Their expressions, once solemn, softened into smiles upon seeing Kern.

Chapter 1023:

Raising an eyebrow slightly, Kern sneered inwardly. There had been a time when Mateo wouldn't have shown him such courtesy, dismissing his authority as governor without hesitation. But the Welch family had suffered a series of setbacks lately, tempering their arrogance. Had it not been for these recent blows, their attitude would surely be different.

Kern, in fact, found himself rather pleased with the White family's offensive against the Welch family. It was precisely why he had chosen not to intervene over the past few days.

"Kern, my apologies for not welcoming you personally," Mateo said, putting on a respectful front.

"Mateo, I'll be direct. I'm here on behalf of a certain respected figure." Kern remained indifferent. "He wants to meet with you and Janice to discuss the recent unrest in Cloverhill and gain a clearer picture of the situation."

Mateo's expression stiffened, his brows knitting together. "Has our conflict with the White family really drawn his attention?"

"Did you truly believe an event of this magnitude could escape his notice?" Kern shook his head and let out a scoff. "Given the current circumstances, do you still think your family holds absolute control? The fact that he hasn't confronted you yet is already a sign of his leniency. Regardless, the details will be addressed in the meeting. From what I understand, he intends to mediate between your families and restore order to Cloverhill."

With that, Kern rose to his feet. "Tomorrow. Top floor of Promisun Tower. Don't be late."

Straightening his suit, he turned and left.

Mateo shot a quick glance at Calvin. "Go, see Kern out."

“Of course!” Calvin nodded and hurried after Kern, making a show of escorting him to the door.

Just as Kern stepped outside, Calvin suddenly asked, “Mr. Haywood, what does the respected figure think of the Welch family right now?”

Kern cast him a cool glance. “Does it even matter? Your family has been stirring trouble in Cloverhill for years. Do you think he hasn’t noticed? He let things slide because your actions were minor, and your family has contributed significantly to the economy. But now, the White family has returned—backed by JE Consortium and international forces. If this turns into an all-out war, it will throw everything into chaos.”

Kern sighed. He had no intention of saying more, but knowing how impulsive the Welches could be, he decided to make one thing clear. “If I hadn’t come today, your family would have already made a major move against the Whites, wouldn’t you?”

Calvin’s heart skipped a beat, his eyes widening in surprise—Kern’s words had hit the nail on the head. They had indeed been preparing for war. But now, at this critical juncture, the top authority had intervened, forcing them to comply whether they liked it or not.

That person held true power—not just over Cloverhill, but over the entire nation. No matter how firmly established the Welch family was, they stood no chance against that person’s wrath.

“Just go back and tell your father to think carefully about how to handle tomorrow’s meeting.”

With that, Kern got into his car and drove off.

Calvin watched the taillights disappear into the distance, his expression darkening. His fists clenched tightly. Was he really expected to swallow this resentment?

“Fuck!” Back in the hall, he found Mateo seething with fury. His face was twisted with rage, a terrifying presence that made the surrounding servants too afraid to breathe.

Chapter 1024:

“Dad.”

Calvin’s voice snapped Mateo out of his thoughts, and he turned to his son. “What did Kern say? Did he leave any instructions?”

Calvin shook his head, frustration creeping into his tone. “Not much. He just told you to think carefully about tomorrow’s meeting.”

A sudden crash echoed through the room.

Mateo had slammed his fist onto the coffee table, his eyes burning with venom.

“Why now? Just when we were about to strike back, we’re ordered to stop. Why?”

“It’s because of the Payne family!” A cold voice cut through the air.

Mateo paused. Slowly, he turned to see Gilmore sitting in a wheelchair, carefully pushed forward by Alissa.

“Gilmore, you’re awake!” Mateo stood up abruptly, taking the wheelchair from Alissa and pushing it forward.

“If I hadn’t woken up, the Welch family would be in serious trouble,” Gilmore replied, his pale face betraying his exhaustion. Without his leadership, the Welch family’s fate might be sealed.

“I’ve already learned the general situation from Alissa,” Gilmore continued, coughing weakly. “Kern’s arrival at this moment is too coincidental. Someone has been pulling the strings. The only person who could manage such precise control must be Minnie Payne.”

“Minnie? Uncle, you must be overestimating her,” Calvin said with a skeptical frown. As a man, the idea of being outdone by a woman stung, and he quickly dismissed it. “Even though Minnie is celebrated as

the most talented heiress in Payne family history, she's still in her twenties. How could she foresee all of this?"

"I agree," Mateo added, echoing Calvin's doubt. "With her limited experience, how could she predict such outcomes and control them so exactly? It's absurd!"

Gilmore shook his head in dismay as he looked at Calvin and Mateo.

"Mateo, Calvin, though you are both clever, you still don't match Minnie."

Calvin's eyes narrowed, and his hands balled into fists, his irritation growing. Why did Gilmore always praise Minnie and never say anything positive about him? It felt unfair.

"Kern has favored the Payne family for a long time," Gilmore continued. "The ongoing strife between the Welch family and the White family is at a critical juncture. She must have anticipated this and tipped Kern off. Kern likely acted on her suggestion and alerted that influential individual."

At this, Mateo and Calvin exchanged a knowing glance. Their minds raced as they connected the dots. Whether it was Kern's timely intervention or the influential figure's awareness of the dynamics, even the Welch family's strategy against the White family seemed to have been anticipated by Minnie.

Could it really be true?

But how had Minnie predicted all of this?

Calvin shivered. He had underestimated Minnie, but now he felt a palpable fear of her, as if she were looking down on him with icy detachment, watching him flounder as though he were merely an ant trapped in an immense loop.

"Kern has delivered the message to that influential figure. He's gained recognition, and his position has changed. I'm worried that he won't fear the Welch family anymore," Gilmore sighed deeply, his breathing strained. After a forceful cough, he added, "Tomorrow's meeting is critical for the Welch family's future. I must attend it myself."

“Uncle, you’re not strong enough...”

Chapter 1025:

Gilmore waved his hand, offering Calvin a weak smile. “I can still speak.”

Watching Gilmore, who was clearly pushing himself too hard, Mateo felt compelled to dissuade him but knew better than to argue with Gilmore’s stubborn streak.

Years earlier, Orson had chosen Gilmore as a mediator for good reason. Not only was Gilmore composed, but also sagacious—traits neither Mateo nor Harlan possessed.

What Mateo couldn’t grasp was why someone as capable as Gilmore, who was ideally suited to lead the Welch family, had been relegated to a mediator by Orson.

Maybe Orson never intended for the Welch family to thrive... The thought flashed by, and Mateo dismissed it with a shake of his head. How could that be possible?

Orson had dedicated most of his life to elevating the Welch family to heights others found difficult to attain. Why would he want to destroy it?

“By the way, Mateo, it’s time to bring Harlan back,” Gilmore paused briefly before continuing. “With the Welch and White families now openly clashing, there’s no need for Harlan to stay hidden.”

At Gilmore’s words, everyone’s expression turned somber, a trace of sorrow briefly crossing their faces.

Gilmore sensed the tension and asked sharply, “What happened? Is something wrong with Harlan?”

Mateo and Calvin exchanged uneasy looks, reluctant to reveal the truth. Finally, Alissa broke the heavy silence. “Uncle Harlan has passed away.”

“What?” Shock tightened Gilmore’s features, and he began coughing violently. “What are you talking about? I was just speaking with Harlan on the phone. How could he be dead?”

“Uncle, please calm down. You’re still recovering and need to remain calm,” Alissa urged gently.

“It’s true.” Calvin sighed deeply. “Uncle Harlan was killed the night he left, and his body was found at the bottom of the river.”

Upon hearing the news, Gilmore shook with fury, anger bubbling up within him. Suddenly, he coughed up blood.

“That means all the messages and phone calls I’ve received recently were fake,” he said, his voice hollow. “It was AL. They used AI to mimic Harlan’s voice and deceive me.”

“Calm down, Gilmore, try not to get too worked up,” Mateo urged, gently patting his back.

“We’ve been made fools of!” Gilmore chuckled bitterly, his eyes rolling back as he lost consciousness.

Aiden and Janice had lunch at a quaint roadside eatery, brimming with local charm.

When Janice saw the place, she raised an eyebrow. “Is this the nice restaurant you mentioned?”

“Absolutely!” Aiden laughed, taking her hand and leading her inside. “The food here is the real deal of Cloverhill. Why? Surely, a top chef like you wouldn’t mind the setting?”

Janice shook her head. “I just didn’t expect someone of your stature to pick such a modest spot for lunch.”

“I’m all about pleasing you.” Aiden guided Janice to a seat and sat next to her, arranging her utensils. “You have discerning tastes, and the finest dishes are often hidden in unassuming places. The setting might not impress, but the flavors are unmatched.”

Chapter 1026:

“It seems you’ve done your research.” Janice leaned on her hand, gazing at Aiden with a mix of surprise and admiration. “I’m already feeling a connection, and we haven’t even started eating.”

Aiden smirked. “Given your near victory in the culinary contest, I knew it would take effort to impress you.”

The implication was clear—the way to a woman’s heart was indeed through her stomach.

Janice gave him a thumbs-up. Who would have thought the man who revolutionized Cloverhill overnight would be so considerate?

The eatery buzzed with activity, packed with diners.

Had Aiden not reserved a table, they would have faced a long wait, showcasing his thoughtful planning.

Janice observed the setting—worn tables and chairs, walls coated with a sheen of grease. Despite the grimy appearance, everything was impeccably clean. The stains were a testament to the eatery’s long history and its bustling past.

“I’ll go order our meals. Be right back,” said Aiden.

“Okay.” Janice picked up her water glass, took a sip, and pulled out her phone to check her messages. “Hmm?”

A message from Minnie caught her eye: “Meet me on the top floor of Promisun Tower tomorrow. Someone important will be there, along with the Welch family.”

The message was brief, yet it was enough for Janice to piece together the potential significance of tomorrow’s meeting.

"It looks like the person I've been waiting for is about to emerge." Janice narrowed her eyes. "The timing couldn't be more perfect."

"Hey, beauty!" Just then, a voice cut through her thoughts.

Janice looked up to find a man with a sleazy demeanor standing before her.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Do you mind if I sit here?" Without waiting for an answer, the man took the seat next to Janice.

His eyes gleamed with greed and audacity, seemingly captivated, as if he had never encountered a woman of Janice's caliber before.

Indeed, Janice had drawn many gazes upon entering the restaurant, but most patrons only admired her from a distance, recognizing the boundaries set by their social statuses. However, this man, lacking any sense of discretion, approached her blatantly, his intentions clear and repugnant on his face.

"Get lost!" Janice commanded coldly.

"Oh, feisty, aren't you?" The man leered, attempting to drape his arm around Janice's shoulder. But as he reached out, Janice brought her glass crashing down on his head.

With a resounding crash, the man's head started bleeding.

"Ah!" he yelped, clutching his injured forehead. "Damn! How dare you! You'll pay for this!"

"I'll give you one more chance. Leave now, or I'll make sure you regret it." Janice's tone was icy, filled with threat. Yet, blinded by rage, the man failed to heed the warning in her words.

“My boss is Darrell Finch from the Jaguar Gang. If I’m not pleased today, I’ll make your whole family pay!”

Chapter 1027:

The man glared at Janice, his threats meant to intimidate. Yet, Janice’s unfazed expression showed that she didn’t take him seriously at all.

“Fine, very fine...”

Before the man could finish, a figure materialized beside him.

Before he could react, a chilling sensation crept through his body.

“Darrell Finch, you say?”

A deep voice, sinister like a venomous snake, seemed to coil around his throat.

The man had never experienced such intense fear, leaving him speechless.

Darrell had submitted to Aiden because he saw an opportunity. From his entry into the underworld, he aimed not just to lead locally, but to dominate the entire criminal network.

Yet, Cloverhill was rife with complex gang dynamics, and the Welch family held significant sway. It was unrealistic for him to reach the top on his own.

Until now, no one had dared challenge the Welches’ reign and unify the underworld.

Previous challengers to the Welches had vanished, leaving nothing but their legacies behind.

Despair had gripped Darrell, making him accept that he might never realize his ambitions.

Then came Aiden, who quickly unified Cloverhill's factions with his decisive actions, kindling a spark of hope in Darrell.

He might not outshine Aiden, but he could still rise to prominence, becoming second only to him.

Thus, when the crackdown on the Welch family's operations began, Darrell was at the forefront, contributing significantly.

"Darrell, we just hit one of the Welch family's nightclubs. We took some hits, but the Welches took it harder. They can't operate now, and they've got over a dozen down," a subordinate reported proudly to Darrell.

"Well done!" Darrell lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply, and smiled. "Double the payout for our injured men."

"Thank you, Darrell!"

His subordinates buzzed with excitement at his generosity.

"But, come to think of it, is it really wise for us to push so hard?" One subordinate hesitated, voicing a concern that seemed to resonate with others. "While other gangs also target the Welch family's operations, they all hold back. Only we attack with such ferocity. If the Welch family strikes back..."

Darrell exhaled smoke, his eyes narrowing as he fixed a cold stare on the questioning subordinate.

The man, unsettled by Darrell's intense gaze, managed a nervous smile. He was about to speak again to lighten the mood when Darrell's hand struck his face.

The slap resounded, silencing the room.

Darrell surveyed the room, his voice icy. "Let me make this clear—if you're with me, you follow my orders and nothing else. Just do what I tell you. Don't worry about anything else. Understood?"

“Yes.”

Darrell took another drag of his cigarette and spoke with conviction. “The other gangs are finished. Soon, Cloverhill will be ruled by one gang alone—Jaguar Gang.”

His words ignited a wave of excitement among the men.

Chapter 1028:

They were loyal to Darrell not just for his leadership but for his vision. Unlike other gangs focused merely on profit, Jaguar Gang aimed higher, striving to dominate.

“Also, when you’re out there, aside from dealing with people and businesses related to the Welch family, stay under the radar and avoid trouble.”

“Yes.”

Darrell finished his cigarette, tossed it to the ground, and crushed it beneath his boot.

The atmosphere in Cloverhill was charged with instability and peril. A misstep now could turn his high aspirations into mere folly.

He was betting heavily on the feud between the Welch and White families, hoping the White family would emerge victorious. Being the most active supporter, he expected to earn Aiden’s favor.

He knew Aiden had no desire to rule the underworld himself; someone would need to manage it on his behalf.

Suddenly, the ring of his phone snapped him out of his contemplations.

He glanced at the caller ID, his pupils narrowing with apprehension.

It was Aiden!

Why would Aiden call him unexpectedly?

A wave of anxiety washed over Darrell.

He inhaled deeply and answered.

“Darrell?”

“Yes, it’s me.”

“Is Ennis Byrd one of your men?”

At the mention of the name, Darrell’s heart dropped. He sensed imminent trouble.

Ennis, a brash and womanizing individual from his village, had been a questionable addition to his crew. Darrell had hesitated to include him but ultimately did so out of a sense of loyalty to their shared hometown.

It now appeared this misstep was about to backfire.

Darrell sprinted towards the restaurant where Aiden was.

By the time he arrived, the place had been emptied, leaving only three people inside. One of them, kneeling on the floor in a battered, defeated state, was none other than Ennis.

The overturned tables and shattered glass hinted at the intensity of the fight, leaving no doubt about the outcome—Ennis had suffered a crushing defeat.

Knowing Aiden all too well, Darrell was certain this had been no fair match. It was likely a one-sided onslaught. Ennis' shattered pride was evident; he wouldn't be kneeling so submissively if he had any fight left in him.

"Mr. Green," Darrell approached cautiously. "What happened here?" Aiden didn't even glance his way—his focus remained on Janice. The air in the room was so tense that Darrell felt an invisible pressure bearing down on him.

"Darrell, what are you doing here?" Ennis' eyes lit up at the sight of him, as if seeing a savior.

"Idiot!" Darrell struck Ennis across the face, his anger flaring. "Do you even realize who you've offended?"

"Who could I possibly offend? You're the biggest name in this city. Even if these two have some money, they shouldn't be enough to make you nervous, right?" Ennis scoffed, still oblivious.

The moment he tried to stand, Darrell kicked him back down. "Mr. Green, I sincerely apologize! Ennis is from my hometown—I took him in because he had nowhere else to go. I had no idea he would cause such trouble for you."

Chapter 1029:

"Darrell, what nonsense are you talking about?" Ennis scoffed. "Get some men and take him down! Sure, he's strong, but we outnumber him!"

"Shut up!" Darrell landed another kick before yanking Ennis up roughly. "Are you really this clueless? Do you even know who you've crossed? This man is Mr. Aiden Green!"

"Aiden Green?" Ennis froze, his face draining of color. "You mean the one who took control of every major gang in Cloverhill so quickly?"

"That's him." Darrell was livid, barely containing his frustration.

If Ennis had any sense, he would have never picked a fight with Aiden. Now, because of his reckless actions, Darrell was left to deal with the fallout.

He had referred to Aiden as Mr. Green repeatedly just now, yet Ennis had remained blind to the warning signs. Now, he regretted ever taking Ennis in. He realized he had dug his own grave.

“Mr. Green, I beg you, please forgive me!” Ennis pleaded, his desperation spilling over as he slapped himself in remorse, tears streaming down his face.

He didn’t care about the force of his own blows—his only concern was appeasing Aiden. If he failed, survival was far from guaranteed.

Meanwhile, as Darrell and Ennis spoke, Aiden and Janice continued their meal undisturbed, as though the commotion didn’t exist. They were in a world of their own, utterly detached from the tension unfolding before them.

Darrell, anxious and uneasy, stole a glance at Janice, and for a moment, he was stunned. She was breathtakingly beautiful.

He blinked, unsure if his eyes were playing tricks on him. He quickly cleaned his glasses, half-expecting her to vanish like an illusion.

But when his vision cleared, she was still there, her radiant smile directed at Aiden—warm, bright, and effortlessly captivating, like sunlight cutting through winter’s chill.

“Aiden, it’s getting noisy,” Janice remarked casually.

Aiden nodded, his gaze shifting to Darrell in silent command.

Darrell's stomach twisted into knots. He turned to Ennis. "Mr. Green, I'll take care of this and ensure it never happens again."

Without another word, he grabbed Ennis and dragged him towards the exit.

"Mr. Green..." Darrell hesitated, sneaking another glance at Janice. Even now, she remained dazzling. "I'll take him away now."

Aiden merely waved a hand in dismissal. Taking the cue, Darrell bowed again before pulling Ennis outside.

"Darrell, what are you going to do? We're from the same hometown!" Ennis whimpered, sensing the chill in Darrell's gaze. The reality of his predicament hit him hard. "You can't kill me. I swear I'll make amends! Just give me a chance! I'm sorry!"

Darrell remained silent, his expression unreadable behind his glasses. Yet, the cold gleam in his eyes sent a shiver down Ennis' spine.

Then, just as Darrell stepped outside, a sudden blur shot past him—someone sprinting towards the restaurant, a knife tightly gripped in their hand, heading straight for Aiden and Janice.

Darrell's eyes narrowed as his instincts kicked in. He spun around and grabbed the man's sleeve. A sharp tear echoed through the air. A piece of fabric ripped away, but the attacker remained undeterred, lunging fiercely at Aiden.

Darrell's expression darkened. Without hesitation, he threw himself forward, tackling the assailant to the floor. The man, however, was just as relentless, slashing wildly with a knife. Darrell winced as a searing pain shot through his arm, the blade carving a deep wound. He gritted his teeth but recovered swiftly. In one smooth motion, he wrenched the knife from the attacker's grip and plunged it into his chest.

Chapter 1030:

"You..." The man's eyes widened in shock. His mouth parted as if to speak, but before another word could escape, his head slumped lifelessly to the side.

Darrell let the knife clatter to the floor and pressed his bleeding arm tightly against his side while pushing himself upright. His gaze swept over Janice and Aiden. "Are you both okay?"

Aiden met his eyes with an unnervingly calm expression, completely unfazed by the chaos that had just unfolded. "Figure out who sent him."

"On it."

"Handle the aftermath. I don't want anything like this happening again."

"Understood." Darrell gave a slight nod, pressed his lips together, and stepped away.

"Janice, let's continue." Aiden offered Janice more food, a small smile playing at his lips.

The restaurant owner stood frozen, watching in disbelief. The attacker had been ruthless, a blade in hand, fully intent on killing. Yet, Aiden and Janice barely reacted. It was as if none of it had ever happened.

His stomach twisted with anxiety. The restaurant had been packed, business thriving. But now? Broken tables, overturned chairs, an undeniable mess. The cost of repairs would sting. He exhaled heavily, resigning himself to the damage.

Still, he dared not complain. Cloverhill had been in turmoil lately, with gangs clashing throughout the city. He had convinced himself it wouldn't touch him, but tonight had proven otherwise.

"Excuse me, can we get the check?"

"Right away!" The owner snapped out of his daze and hurried to the table, only to see Aiden and Janice already walking away.

“Hey...” He opened his mouth to call after them but hesitated. Remembering their cold efficiency, he swallowed his words.

“Guess I’ll have to write this off as a loss,” he muttered, shaking his head.

Just as he turned to clean up the wreckage, a soft chime sounded from his phone—a payment notification.

His eyes widened at the deposit of ten thousand. He shuddered, momentarily frozen.

He had braced himself for financial loss tonight. Yet, not only would this cover the damage, but it would also leave him with a tidy profit.

A pleasant surprise, indeed.

“Looks like I misjudged them.” He let out a breath, shaking his head with a wry smile. “Of course, people of their caliber wouldn’t stoop to something so crude.”

Inside the car, Janice leaned against the window, her gaze drifting toward Aiden. “What do you think?”

Aiden raised an eyebrow. “About what?”

Janice poked his cheek, her voice teasing. “Don’t play dumb.”

Aiden smirked, understanding her unspoken question. His tone remained calm. “Darrell is ambitious and ruthless.”

“Exactly.” Janice withdrew her hand, tapping her lips thoughtfully. “To pull off something like this on such short notice... that’s no small feat. So, what’s your plan for him?”

Aiden maneuvered the steering wheel with ease, his tone carrying a subtle weight. “For now, he’s a weapon. Once the feud with the Welch family is resolved, we’ll keep that weapon sheathed.”