

Wrath 1031

Chapter 1031:

“Fair enough.” Janice stretched lazily. She had considered warning Aiden about Darrell, but it seemed he had already seen through him, just as she had.

If the assassin had truly been sent by the Welch family, the target should have been her, not Aiden.

Darrell’s reaction had been too precise, as if he had known what was coming. Even the wound he sustained felt staged. Most wouldn’t notice, but as a surgeon, Janice did.

The assassin’s final expression—shock and confusion—spoke volumes. He hadn’t understood what was happening. Ambition was one thing, but without the strength to control it, it could just as easily lead to self-destruction.

Darrell returned to his base, bringing Ennis with him.

His men were already waiting, unfazed by the sight of their leader’s injury.

“Darrell, what should we do with Ennis?” one of them asked, casting a serious glance at Ennis, who was bound tightly.

Darrell exhaled slowly and crouched down to meet Ennis’s fearful gaze. With his mouth taped shut, Ennis could only let out muffled protests, but his wide, panicked eyes said everything.

“I took you in because we came from the same hometown. I thought you deserved a chance to build a life for yourself. But you went and used my name to stir up trouble. Worse, you crossed someone you never should have.” Darrell tapped Ennis’s cheek, his expression unreadable, though the killing intent in his eyes was unmistakable. “In your next life, think twice before crossing the wrong people.” Then, rising to his feet, Darrell casually waved his hand.

Two men immediately stepped forward, grabbing Ennis and dragging him away. He thrashed, letting out desperate, muffled cries, but no one reacted. No sympathy. No hesitation.

Ennis had never truly been one of them—just someone given a chance because he shared a hometown with Darrell. And now, that chance was gone.

“Darrell, how’s your wound?” Another subordinate approached with a first-aid kit, ready to tend to him.

“It’s nothing serious.” Darrell lit a cigarette, his gaze dark and contemplative. “If taking this stab convinces Aiden I’m on his side, then it’s worth it. Send a million to the fake assassin’s family. Make sure his body is retrieved and given a proper, honorable funeral.”

“Yes.” The subordinate nodded, impressed.

Darrell had acted swiftly. Offending Aiden meant proving his loyalty—or risking being discarded. So he had orchestrated this move. He found someone willing to pose as an assassin supposedly sent by the Welch family to take out Aiden. Then, Darrell could play the hero, saving Aiden and neutralizing the fallout from Ennis’s mistakes.

Darrell took a deep drag on his cigarette, the light in his eyes growing more intense.

He had fought relentlessly to climb the ranks, but now, another motivation had taken root—to catch the eye of that stunning woman. Ever since their encounter at the restaurant, Janice had occupied his thoughts. Her beauty, her elegance—she was haunting.

Yet, she had never spared him a glance, as if they existed in different worlds, never meant to intertwine.

“Darrell, what’s on your mind?” The subordinate, having just finished tending to his wound, noticed Darrell’s distant smile and frowned with concern.

Snapping out of his thoughts, Darrell flicked his cigarette away. He had let it burn down too far, the ember singeing his finger.

Chapter 1032:

“Darrell, are you alright?”

“I’m fine.” Darrell pressed his fingers together, his expression turning cold and sharp. “Tell the guys we need to eliminate the Welch family’s underground operations as soon as possible. I want us to rise above every other gang and become the dominant force.”

“Got it.”

Meanwhile, Aiden had just stepped out of his car when his phone buzzed with a message from Darrell. Opening it, he was met with a chilling image—Ennis, lifeless.

“What are you looking at?” Janice leaned in, trying to peek at his phone, but Aiden quickly lifted it out of her reach. “Not something you need to see.”

Janice pouted, pretending to be annoyed. “What, a message from another woman?”

Aiden rolled his eyes, smirking. “Sorry, but there’s no such thing. You’re the only one for me.”

Janice cleared her throat awkwardly. Aiden’s cheesy compliments always left her speechless. “Was it Darrell?” she asked.

Aiden raised an eyebrow, letting out a small sigh. “Nothing gets past you. But trust me, you don’t want to see this photo.”

“Fine, I won’t.” With that, Janice strolled into the house.

There wasn’t much going on at the company today. With Leah and Liliana handling matters, she had little to worry about.

Besides, Stephen had taken the initiative to help. If she didn't give him tasks to keep him busy, he'd probably feel restless.

And he did.

Eager to prove himself as a capable vice president, Stephen enlisted Liliana as his assistant, relying on her to guide him through the company's daily operations.

But once he stepped into the role, he quickly realized that being a vice president wasn't as effortless as it seemed. On screen, he had played powerful CEOs, always entangled in dramatic romances and willing to sacrifice everything for love.

Now, seated in this office and faced with real responsibilities, Stephen felt completely out of place.

"Why don't we take a break?" Liliana suggested, noticing the deep furrow in Stephen's brow and the exhaustion in his expression.

"That's right, Stephen. How about we step away for a moment and grab a drink?" Wendy chimed in, her heart aching for him. She knew Stephen well enough to understand that pushing him any further would only add to his frustration. She had stayed quietly by his side, hesitant to interrupt, and only spoke up after Liliana did.

Stephen pinched the bridge of his nose and shook his head. "No, there's no need. I have to get up to speed with the company's operations as soon as possible. If I don't, I'll have to depend on all of you for everything, and I won't be able to truly fulfill my role as vice president."

Liliana sighed internally. Janice had arranged this position for Stephen as more of an honorary title rather than a demanding role. After all, he was an actor, not a businessman. However, seeing his determination, she couldn't bring herself to dampen his enthusiasm.

A sharp knock on the door interrupted them.

“Come in,” Stephen called out, and Leah stepped inside.

The serious look on her face sent a jolt of anxiety through him. “Is something wrong?”

Chapter 1033:

“We’re attending the bidding for the Hillford project this afternoon. Are you ready?”

Stephen immediately straightened, his heart pounding. This was it—the real deal.

Despite all his confidence in past meetings, the reality of the situation still made him uneasy.

Sensing his tension, Wendy reached for his hand, her warm touch offering immediate comfort.

“Don’t worry; we’re all here to support you,” Leah said with a reassuring smile. “Our goal is simple—to win this project. Only by securing it can we establish ourselves, and once we do, the key players in Cloverhill will finally take us seriously.”

Stephen nodded, fully grasping the weight of the situation. The White family’s standing in Cloverhill hinged entirely on this project.

“Leah, Liliana, I’m counting on both of you this afternoon.”

“You can count on us.”

“And I’ll be helping you too,” Wendy added.

Stephen met Wendy’s steady gaze, and his unease eased considerably. The bidding was set to take place at a five-star hotel.

This esteemed hotel in Cloverhill, with a history of over a century, had hosted countless significant events over the years. It was only fitting that a major endeavor like the Hillford project would be held here.

Seated in the Rolls-Royce, Stephen pored over the bidding proposal, scanning the figures and project prospects, silently marveling at the sheer scale of what lay ahead. Was this the kind of confidence that came with the backing of JE Consortium? The proposed bid was beyond what any other competitor could afford.

“We’re here,” Lilitana announced, pulling Stephen from his thoughts.

Stephen glanced out the car window. Luxury vehicles were arriving, dropping off more guests, while elegantly dressed attendees filled the area. This was beyond mere opulence—it surpassed even the grandest red carpet events he had attended. Those born into wealth and influence carried an innate sophistication, a presence cultivated from childhood.

“Stephen, let’s go,” Wendy said, reaching for his hand.

With Wendy beside him, any lingering hesitation faded away.

“Okay.” Stephen nodded, stepping out of the car with her.

While he didn’t possess the effortless affluence of those born into wealth, his striking features turned heads. Moreover, Wendy’s refined elegance complemented him perfectly, drawing even more attention as they walked together.

“Which family do they belong to? They look impressive.”

“Strange—I know most of the prominent families in Cloverhill, but I don’t recognize them.”

“They’re from the White family!”

Someone in the crowd finally identified them. Those who had attended the White family’s banquet recognized them immediately, while others—mostly from lesser-known families—hadn’t been invited to that prestigious event.

“This is going to be interesting. The project was originally meant for the Payne family, but then the Welch family stepped in, complicating everything. Now, with the White family entering the fray, this could turn into a ruthless competition.”

“But aren’t the Payne and White families allies? Why would they go up against each other?”

Chapter 1034:

“You don’t understand. The White family is new to Cloverhill and needs a major win to establish themselves. Securing this project could determine their future standing.” The crowd quickly grasped the situation.

Many had arrived expecting a routine business event, but it was clear that today would be anything but ordinary.

“Look, the Payne family just arrived.”

“And the Welch family too!”

All eyes turned to the three powerhouses.

The White, Payne, and Welch families were poised to form a tripartite power structure in Cloverhill.

Bart was dressed sharply in a crisp white suit, his hair perfectly styled, looking fresh and full of energy. He showed no sign of despondency; instead, he radiated confidence. The small smile on his lips said everything about how sure of himself he was. It seemed almost impossible to believe that he had once been a prisoner.

Beside Bart stood Delilah, wearing a stunning black designer dress, their contrasting outfits capturing everyone's attention.

"Really, representatives from the Welch family are outsiders? That's quite fascinating."

"You're missing the point. The rivalry between the Welch family and the White family is so fierce that they can't spare any attention from the Hillford project. By letting outsiders handle it, they can avoid a lot of complications."

People who understood the situation recognized the strategy behind the Welch family's choice to delegate; it was a wise way to allocate their resources. Despite the internal conflict within the Welch family, this wouldn't hold Overden Group back, allowing them to remain strong and competitive in securing the project bid. After all, who would trust the Welch family, caught up in so much turmoil, to handle a project of this scale?

Bart scanned the room with a sharp gaze, his thoughts drifting to the unpredictable nature of life. Who could have predicted that after his jail time from the fallout with Aiden, he'd be back in the game? Now, he stood on a prestigious platform, confronting his arch-enemies once again. Janice and Aiden, his sworn enemies, now eyed the Hillford project. He was determined to stop their plans.

"Do you see what's unfolding, Bart?" Delilah whispered, tilting her head back slightly. "Starting today, your name will spread across Cloverhill. Soon, you'll be the man everyone seeks out."

"Likewise," Bart responded, turning his attention to Delilah. "We make a powerful team. Your success will grow alongside mine, but first, we need to win this bid, or we'll face the Welch family's disdain. Have you given any thought to what I suggested?"

Delilah tensed slightly, her smile forced. "I'm weighing my options. Rest assured, I'll have a decision by the time we bid."

“Understood,” Bart replied, consciously easing off the pressure. His gaze moved across the room, landing on Stephen and Wendy, and his expression tightened. To his surprise, it was them—rather than Janice or Aiden—who had come to place a bid today.

One was a performer, the other his partner. Neither of them came from any notable background, making their presence here feel somewhat out of place. Perhaps Janice and Aiden thought the project was already secured, which was why they didn’t see the need to show up in person.

Bart’s gaze then drifted to Minnie and Tricia, who stood in striking contrast—one radiating soft elegance, the other vibrant and bold. The women from the Payne family truly were remarkable. Aligning his future with Minnie, Cloverhill’s renowned prodigy and the heiress to the Payne family, appeared to be a promising path. What man wouldn’t see someone like her as the ideal partner? If he were to reach the height of success, only someone of her caliber would be his equal.

Chapter 1035:

Minnie noticed Bart’s lingering gaze and met it with a look that was cold and filled with caution.

“Can you believe Bart?” Tricia frowned. “After all the chaos he caused in Efrery and his stint in jail, here he is, paraded by the Welch family as though we’re all fools.”

“Just ignore him; he’s merely playing the fool,” Minnie replied, averting her eyes. “Let’s keep our attention on the White family instead.” She cast a glance at Stephen and Wendy.

Tricia expressed her disbelief. “Why bother with them? I could understand being cautious if Janice and Aiden were here, but with these two...”

She dismissed them with a shake of her head, clearly unimpressed by their credentials. Her investigations had revealed that Stephen’s background was simply that of an actor, though he was an award-winning one. Yet, without Janice’s support, his position as the head of the White family seemed unconvincing. In this setting, he wouldn’t even attract a second glance.

Wendy, for her part, came from a humble background. After cutting ties with the wealthy Chadwick family, she now stood by Stephen. To the outside world, Wendy’s decision seemed like a step backward—choosing a life with an actor over one in high society could only be seen as either a foolish choice or an act of deep love.

“Do you really think Janice and Aiden are naive?” Minnie asked, her expression serious. “Their confidence in sending Stephen and Wendy speaks volumes. I’d actually feel more at ease if Janice and Aiden were here in person—it would mean they weren’t entirely sure of themselves. But now...”

“Minnie, are Janice and Aiden really that incredible?” Tricia asked, her voice tinged with doubt.

Minnie let out a sigh. It was hard to believe that anyone could be that exceptional, yet when Janice and Aiden were together, they exuded an unstoppable presence, making it nearly impossible for others to find any faults.

Clenching her fists, she thought about her long-held ambition—to become someone extraordinary and dazzling enough for Aiden to finally take notice of her.

But now...

“Minnie, you’re here too.” A well-dressed man approached, calling out to her. He had a charming presence, though nothing about him suggested power or wealth.

Minnie blinked in surprise. “Ethan?”

With a bright smile, Ethan Barker chuckled. “So you still remember me. I thought after all these years since graduation, you might have forgotten me.”

Minnie returned his smile. “You were quite popular back in school, so of course I remember you. What brings you here, though?”

“Same reason as you—the Hillford project.”

“Are you a bidder?” Minnie looked at him in surprise. She recalled that Ethan came from a modest background, an ordinary working-class family. How could he be involved in such a high-profile project?

“That’s a secret. You’ll find out soon enough,” Ethan said, his tone playful. “It’s been a long time, but you’re as stunning as ever. I wonder if the most admired girl from our school days would do me the honor of having dinner with me after the bidding?”

“Sorry, my cousin is very busy and doesn’t have time for that.” Before Minnie could answer, Tricia cut in with a frown, her tone laced with clear disdain.

Ethan’s smile faltered briefly at Tricia’s outright dismissal, but he quickly recovered.

“Tricia, mind your words,” Minnie chided before turning to Ethan with an apologetic smile. “Please don’t take offense—she’s just straightforward. As for dinner, how about we turn it into a small reunion and invite some of our old classmates?”

Chapter 1036:

Her response was tactful, preserving Ethan’s dignity while sidestepping the awkwardness of a one-on-one dinner.

“You’re as kind and considerate as ever. Alright, I’ll arrange something after the bidding conference.” Ethan nodded, accepting her suggestion with grace.

Just then, an assistant approached Ethan and whispered something in his ear.

“I have to take care of something,” Ethan said. “Before I go, can I have your number? I’ll message you once everything’s set.”

“Sure.”

After exchanging numbers with Minnie, Ethan left with the assistant.

“Minnie, why waste your time on him?” Tricia scowled. “He’s just some ordinary guy. How does he deserve to have dinner with you, let alone your contact?”

Minnie sighed. “Tricia, you shouldn’t judge people based on appearances. Especially when it comes to so-called ‘ordinary’ people—you never know who they really are. What if he’s secretly a big deal? Your attitude just now might have offended him deeply.”

Tricia scoffed, full of disbelief. “No way! He can’t be some big shot.”

Minnie shook her head, choosing not to argue further. She simply led Tricia inside. The banquet hall buzzed with activity, filled with guests engaged in conversation.

The bidding conference provided free-flowing drinks and gourmet food, but most attendees weren’t there for that. Most were busy networking, eager to forge valuable connections. Though only a few true power players were present, the event still attracted a massive crowd due to the prestige of the platform.

Stephen and Wendy navigated the setting with ease. Despite his lack of real-world business experience, Stephen had played the role of a CEO enough times to exude the right demeanor. Wendy, who frequently organized such events, was effortlessly in her element. People from prominent families approached them, eager to establish ties or explore possible partnerships.

Stephen managed these interactions with practiced ease—neither too eager nor too dismissive. He carried himself with the quiet authority of someone representing the White family, striking the perfect balance between politeness and restraint. Wendy watched him with approval.

“Stephen, you’re doing well,” Wendy remarked, raising her glass to his. “You don’t need to be overly accommodating to those looking to curry favor, but maintaining courtesy is essential. That’s the White family’s way.”

Stephen took a sip of his wine and smiled. “After playing similar roles so many times, I’ve picked up a thing or two. Besides, as the White family’s representative now, I can’t afford to let us lose face.” His

grip on the wine glass tightened, his gaze unwavering. Though his memories were fragmented, he could still recall the grand banquet his parents once hosted at their home.

Back then, the wealthy elites had been just as eager to curry favor with his parents as the guests here were now. The White family had been on a meteoric rise, swiftly gaining influence across Cloverhill and establishing itself among the city's elite. If not for the Welch family's ruthless strike, the Whites might have stood as their equals today.

He wondered if his parents could see this.

Stephen took a deep breath, letting his eyes sweep over the opulence surrounding him. Twenty years had passed, and now he stood here again under the White name, reviving the glory of the past.

A cool voice cut through Stephen's thoughts.

He turned sharply, his gaze narrowing into an icy glare. "What are you doing here?"

Chapter 1037:

Bart lifted his glass with a smirk. "Just dropping by to say hello. After all, we're about to compete for the project. I believe in playing nice before the real fight."

Stephen scoffed, his voice laced with disdain. "Playing nice? You're nothing but the Welches' lapdog, wielding power that isn't yours. But don't expect any courtesy from me—only a fight. Let's skip the chatter and see who wins at the bidding."

Bart's brow arched, surprised by the sheer audacity of the so-called actor. "No wonder you're Janice's brother. That bold presence of yours is almost impressive. Too bad your little foray into the business world only drags down the prestige of this event."

His smirk vanished, replaced by open hostility. "Overden Group has spent months preparing for this bid. You, a mere entertainer, better not make our victory too easy."

“Bart, please, he’s just an actor. What does he know about bidding? My guess? Janice and Aiden already see defeat coming, so they threw him in as a scapegoat,” Delilah interjected with a cruel smile, her words dripping with malice.

She and Bart had long-standing grudges against Janice and Aiden, and now they seized the chance to humiliate Stephen.

The crowd watched in silence, treating the confrontation as an entertaining spectacle.

“Stephen, has Janice ever told you about her suffering with the Edwards family? The beatings, the starvation, the constant humiliation?” Delilah’s eyes gleamed with cruelty as she tilted her head. “A woman of so many titles, yet nothing could save her from the Edwards’ cruelty. And JE, MO, RAIN? How laughable!”

“How dare you!” Stephen’s fingers curled into fists, his knuckles whitening.

A fire ignited in his chest. Janice had never spoken of such torment. To hear it now, from Delilah, sent a surge of fury through him.

His sister—his proud, resilient sister—had endured all of that in silence. She deserved to be celebrated and honored, yet the Edwards family subjected her to nothing but humiliation and torment.

All of it happened simply because the Edwards family had wrongly believed she was one of them. If only he had found her sooner, maybe she wouldn’t have suffered so much.

Now Stephen understood Janice’s deep longing for family and why it meant so much to her. Otherwise, with her status, she would never have endured such hardships.

“Stephen.” Wendy’s calm voice cut through his rage. She shook her head slightly, a silent plea for restraint.

“Janice is my sister-in-law. Anyone who slanders her is insulting me.” Wendy turned to Delilah, raised her hand, and delivered a fierce slap. A sharp sound echoed through the hall.

Delilah’s eyes widened in shock. “You hit me?” She clutched her cheek, disbelief twisting into fury. “This is a bidding venue. Aren’t you worried about being kicked out for causing a scene?”

“I slap who I want, when I want.” Wendy stepped closer, gripping Delilah’s collar. “Keep your little schemes to yourself. They mean nothing to me. The only thing you’ll earn is another slap.”

Delilah trembled with rage, her humiliation bubbling over. Just as she raised her hand to strike back, Bart grabbed her wrist.

“Don’t let them provoke you,” he murmured, his voice low and warning. “We’re representing the Welch family now. If we cause a scene, it’ll hurt us more than them.”

Chapter 1038:

Delilah clenched her teeth, struggling to keep her fury in check. A surge of humiliation washed over her as she recalled the stinging slaps from the past, each one a searing reminder of her powerlessness. Whether it was Janice or Wendy, they struck her without hesitation, as if she were nothing more than an insect beneath their feet.

Unfortunately, both Janice and Wendy had the authority to do as they pleased.

At that moment, Delilah’s hunger for power intensified. She had to use the Welch family as her stepping stone to the top—and when she got there, those who had dared to strike her would pay dearly.

“Bart, I’m on board with your plan,” she suddenly said.

Bart’s eyes gleamed with satisfaction, a cold smile stretching across his lips. “Delilah, I knew you’d come around. This is our chance to rewrite everything, but we have to be prepared to risk it all.”

“Power is all that matters. If I have to sacrifice my dignity or even my body to get it, so be it.”

Delilah's gaze darkened as she fixed her eyes on Stephen and Wendy, a silent promise burning within her. One day, she would crush them beneath her feet—and Janice and Aiden as well. Every humiliation, every slap, every wound—she would return them tenfold.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm thrilled to welcome you all to today's bidding for the Hillford project."

The host's voice echoed across the grand hall, instantly drawing the attention of the attendees. Conversations hushed as the crowd instinctively turned toward the stage, anticipation mounting.

"This bidding will be personally overseen by none other than Mr. Ethan Barker."

The host stepped aside, shifting his gaze to the edge of the stage.

"Now, please give a warm welcome to Mr. Barker, the director of the Hillford project department."

All eyes turned as a poised man with a confident smile ascended the stage.

Minnie froze the moment she heard his name and saw him step onto the stage. It was Ethan—the same man she had encountered just outside moments ago.

"Minnie, do you have some kind of sixth sense?" Tricia whispered, her voice tinged with disbelief. "Good thing I didn't mess up earlier, or..." The repercussions would have been unthinkable.

The Payne family was one of Cloverhill's elite, but even their influence had its limits. Offending a man like Ethan, who now wielded the power to decide the outcome of this bidding, would have been a disaster.

Minnie exhaled slowly, still processing the revelation. The man she had assumed to be just an ordinary guy had turned out to be a key figure in this project.

“Well, this should be a lesson in caution for you,” Minnie said gently.

“Absolutely!” Tricia nodded vigorously, though her eyes lingered on Ethan with newfound appreciation.

Ethan addressed the audience with ease, his charisma commanding the room. “As director of this project, I’m honored to be among so many talented minds. I have no doubt that within this crowd, we will find the perfect partners to bring this vision to life. Now, please submit your bidding documents.”

A flurry of movement followed as participants rushed forward, documents in hand.

“Stephen, go ahead,” Wendy instructed.

Taking a steadying breath, Stephen clutched the document and approached the stage.

Chapter 1039:

Despite the formality of it all, everyone knew the real competition was among three families—the Welch family, the White family, and the Payne family.

As the last document was submitted, workers gathered the proposals and disappeared backstage for evaluation.

“The review process will take some time. Meanwhile, please enjoy the refreshments and take this opportunity to connect with one another. This event is more than just a bidding competition—it’s a platform for collaboration.”

With that, Ethan stepped off the stage, and lively chatter resumed. He headed backstage to deliberate with the professionals on which family’s bidding document best aligned with the west area’s development requirements.

“Focus only on the Payne, White, and Welch families’ proposals. The rest are just formalities. They likely don’t have the capability to compete with those three families.”

“Understood.”

The professionals sifted through the documents. Upon reviewing the Payne family’s submission, they nodded in agreement. The planning and investment were precisely what they had anticipated.

“The Payne family clearly did their research. They understand the project’s needs down to the last detail. Their planning and investment align perfectly with our requirements.”

Ethan smirked, his gaze thoughtful. “Minnie’s involvement explains the quality of their proposal. It wouldn’t surprise me if they won this bid.”

“Mr. Barker, please have some coffee.” A staff member approached, offering him a cup.

“Thank you.” Ethan reached for the cup, but in an unfortunate misstep, the staff member fumbled, sending the hot liquid splashing onto Ethan’s pristine white shirt.

“Oh no! I’m so sorry, sir!”

“What’s wrong with you? Do you even know how to hold a cup properly? What if you burned Mr. Barker?”

The staff member kept apologizing profusely, while the supervisor, seething with anger, pointed at him and reprimanded him harshly. Ethan frowned, glancing at the spreading stain on his shirt.

“It’s not a problem. I’ll clean up in the restroom.”

Ethan rose to his feet, choosing not to make things harder for the staff member. “Carry on with the evaluation. I’ll finalize the decision when I return.”

“Understood.”

Ethan made his way down the corridor toward the restroom. The moment he pushed open the door, he stopped.

A woman stood inside, her entire body trembling. Her wide eyes met his, filled with fear.

“Miss, this is the men’s room.” Ethan frowned, puzzled. “Did you come in by mistake?”

Delilah recoiled, her disheveled clothes and trembling form giving the impression that she had just been assaulted.

Understanding the gravity of the situation, Ethan asked, “Did something happen to you? Tell me; I promise I’ll help.”

Delilah broke into uncontrollable sobs, her distress tugging at Ethan’s sense of duty. Unable to stand by, he instinctively took a step forward. Just then, the door behind him slammed shut.

Chapter 1040:

The team of professional evaluators was diligently analyzing the proposals from the three competing families.

Regarding the Payne family’s proposal, there was unanimous consensus that it aligned perfectly with the project’s demands.

“Overden Group’s proposal is rather lackluster. Both the pricing and the planning details come across as utterly mundane.”

“This is baffling! Given the Welch family’s backing of Overden Group, how could their submission be so underwhelming? Do they actually believe this effort will win them the project?” Heads shook in disbelief around the room.

The longstanding rivalry between the Welch and Payne families made the former's inferior submission all the more perplexing. Indeed, their proposal left much to be desired.

"Now, let's examine the proposal from the White family. I must admit, I'm quite intrigued by this newcomer in Cloverhill."

"Do we really need to review theirs? Considering their recent arrival in Cloverhill, they're probably not well-acquainted with the local dynamics and might lack the financial backing necessary for such a vast project."

"Let's not make hasty judgments. We should at least give it a look."

Upon opening the White family's proposal, the evaluators were visibly astounded.

The proposal was meticulously detailed, surpassing even the Payne family's in its depth and thoroughness.

"How can this be? Are they really newcomers to Cloverhill?"

"Is this bid truly from a new player in Cloverhill?"

Nobody could believe their eyes. The proposal was exceptionally thorough and surprisingly specific, surpassing all expectations with its numerous innovative ideas.

The professionals had initially believed the Payne family's offer would meet their criteria, but upon reviewing the White family's proposal, they realized a shocking truth: there was always someone bigger in the game.

"Don't be too taken aback. While their proposal is indeed formidable, the funding..."

Their eyes widened in disbelief as they scrutinized the projected investment detailed in the proposal, leaving them utterly dumbfounded.

“Could they have accidentally added an extra zero? This is ridiculous!”

“That fund is over twice the size of the Payne family’s. This is unreal.”

“I just remembered. Rumor has it that the White family is supported by JE Consortium. With such a financial titan behind them, this offer is completely plausible.”

The mention of JE Consortium shed light on the situation. With such a powerhouse backing them, it was no wonder the White family could pledge such a substantial amount. After all, JE Consortium’s fortune was massive—enough to silence any doubters. It was a force to be reckoned with in its own right.

If JE Consortium’s base were in Cloverhill instead of abroad, with their staggering financial might, the Welch and Payne families would barely be noticeable. However, being internationally based allowed the consortium to accumulate a global fortune, securing their dominant stature.

“What are your thoughts?”

The gathered professionals exchanged uneasy looks, their faces reflecting a shared concern.