

Wrath 1041

Chapter 1041:

“What else can we do? We must wait for Mr. Barker’s decision.”

“Speaking of Mr. Barker, hasn’t he been gone for quite some time? Why hasn’t he returned yet?”

Amidst their growing apprehension, the door burst open. With a hard look on his face, Ethan walked back in, and the air shifted—everyone braced themselves, sensing he might explode at any second.

“Mr. Barker, we’ve concluded our analysis. The White family’s proposal appears most favorable,” a professional began, trying to steer the conversation onto more stable ground. “Their strategic planning and investment have taken us by surprise. It seems prudent to entrust them with the project.”

“Is that so?” Ethan’s gaze shifted to the professional, his response cold. “And what of the Payne family’s proposal?”

“The Payne family’s proposal has merit too. However, it slightly pales in comparison to that of the White family.”

“Understood.” Ethan nodded, his face betraying no emotion. “Hand over the three proposals to me.”

“Certainly!”

Ethan received the three proposals and casually thumbed through them before stepping outside.

The crowd outside buzzed with anticipation, each conversation little more than a facade as everyone’s thoughts lingered on the potential outcome of the bid. Among the contenders, the Payne family seemed to have the upper hand, with the White family and the Welch family trailing behind. Though both the White and Welch families had joined the competition midway, the White family’s financial prowess was notably superior.

Recently, the Welch family had been thrown into turmoil by the strategic maneuvers of the White family, which had aggressively targeted their industries. The White family's ability to shake the foundations of a century-old dynasty showcased their formidable and unexpected strength.

"Mr. Barker has returned."

At that moment, all eyes turned as Ethan stepped back onto the stage. The room fell silent, everyone drawing closer, waiting on the edge of their seats for the announcement.

Stephen's hands clenched into fists, his heartbeat thundering in his ears. Representing the White family at such a pivotal event for the first time, he felt the weight of expectation heavy on his shoulders. Failure to secure the project would render all their efforts futile.

"Thank you all for waiting," Ethan said solemnly, laying the three bids out on the table with deliberate care. "After a meticulous evaluation by our team of professionals, the winning bidder is Overden Group."

The announcement stunned not only the gathered crowd but also the team of professionals backstage, as whispers of disbelief rippled through the air.

"No way! Overden Group actually won? That means the Welch family takes the victory!"

"This is simply unbelievable, isn't it? We considered every possible scenario, and yet the most improbable one prevailed."

"There's definitely some trickery involved!"

The crowd erupted into murmurs of disbelief, with everyone casting doubtful looks at the integrity of the bidding process.

Chapter 1042:

A professional hurried forward, leaning in to whisper urgently to Ethan. "Mr. Barker, could there be an error? Out of the three proposals, Overden Group's was notably lackluster. Why would you select theirs?"

Ethan shot him a chilling glance. "Are you challenging my decision?"

"I wouldn't dream of it, sir!"

"Then step aside!" Ethan commanded, and the professional recoiled, quickly backing away from the stage.

Stephen's brow furrowed deeply. He could have accepted losing to the Payne family, but defeat at the hands of the Welch family was far harder to swallow.

"Wendy, what's your take on this?" he asked quietly.

Wendy's eyes narrowed, her gaze icy as she focused on Ethan. "Mr. Barker seems to be hiding something."

"What do you mean?" Stephen's voice held a hint of surprise, and he quickly pressed for details.

"Earlier, Mr. Barker was all smiles, the epitome of friendliness and openness. But now, he's visibly agitated." A cold smirk played on Wendy's lips. "It's likely that he's been coerced. Otherwise, his sudden change in demeanor wouldn't make sense."

"Really?" Stephen's expression showed his astonishment. Who would have the audacity to intimidate Ethan at such an event? Yet, given the reputation of the Welch family, it wasn't out of the realm of possibility.

"Stephen, I've played the villain for years. I've come to understand a thing or two about human nature." Wendy offered him a reassuring smile and gently stroked his cheek. "I'm rarely wrong."

Tension etched itself across Stephen's face, his eyes reflecting a storm of emotions.

"Do you need my assistance?" Wendy asked, her lips curling into a sinister smile, her gaze icy and piercing.

Stephen shook his head, clasping Wendy's hand. "Since this project is under my watch, it's only right that I handle the resolution."

"Are you certain you're up to the task?"

"Yes, I'd like to tackle it myself."

A glint of desire flickered in Wendy's eyes, her body tense with a predatory eagerness to claim Stephen in that very moment. Stephen had matured significantly. Faced with relentless pressure, he didn't falter; instead, his resolve only hardened. He was undeniably the man she had envisioned.

Suddenly, a shiver ran through Stephen. He fixed Wendy with a stern look. "What are you trying to do?"

Wendy grinned playfully, her fingers creeping daringly toward Stephen's lower body.

"Stop that!" Stephen caught her hand, his cheeks flushing with embarrassment. "Let's focus on resolving this issue first. Afterwards, you can have your way with me once we're home."

"Fine," Wendy said, pulling back her hand with a hint of reluctance.

At that moment, chaos erupted around them, with numerous allies of the Payne family voicing their support.

“Mr. Barker, the projects in Hillford have always been overseen by the Payne family. They know the terrain better than anyone, and their proposal was undoubtedly going to rival that of Overden Group.”

“Overden Group just sprang up last week. It’s inconceivable that they’re equipped to handle such a colossal undertaking.”

Chapter 1043:

“Enough!” Ethan’s commanding voice cut through the murmurs like a knife. He surveyed the room with a piercing look, his tone grave. “I have made my decision. The contract goes to Overden Group. I trust that Overden Group will live up to our expectations and rise to the challenge.”

Bart lifted his fist, a triumphant grin spreading across his face. “Thank you, Mr. Barker, for placing your faith in us. On behalf of Overden Group, I assure you we will not let you down.”

“Minnie, what’s our next move?” The outcome had caught everyone off guard. Tricia was visibly unnerved. “Are we really going to let the Welch family take this from us? It feels like we’re surrendering our crown.”

Minnie’s gaze hardened as she stared intently at Ethan. Ethan shrank under her intense scrutiny, his gaze darting away nervously.

“Ethan has been threatened,” she murmured.

“What?” The word escaped Tricia’s lips before she could stop it, her tone a mix of shock and disbelief. “Who would dare threaten Mr. Barker? He presides over the Hillford project department. Even we wouldn’t contemplate such a reckless idea.”

“Yet, someone reckless might dismiss the risks.”

Tricia’s expression darkened, her eyes narrowing as she threw a disdainful look toward Bart’s self-satisfied smirk. “What can we possibly do now? Even if we know Mr. Barker has been threatened, we have no evidence and can’t change the situation.”

“Mr. Barker!” Stephen stood, commanding the room’s attention. “I stand firm on the integrity of this bidding process—its transparency is absolute.”

He lingered on the word transparency, ensuring it carried over the sea of skeptical faces.

“Given the widespread doubt shadowing these proceedings, I trust you will lay bare the details of the bids to silence the skeptics,” he added.

Ethan’s pupils dilated slightly as he turned to face Stephen, his surprise evident. He hadn’t anticipated such a direct challenge from Stephen, the newly appointed head of the White family.

Stephen’s rationale was sound and persuasive, leaving Ethan with the uneasy realization that any refusal might only taint him with suspicion and guilt.

“Mr. White, I understand you’ve just arrived in Cloverhill and may not be aware of the rules,” Bart said coldly, his tone sharp. “However, the experts unanimously approved the bidding result. By questioning them now, you’re essentially challenging the entire project department.” Bart’s words carried significant weight, creating a dangerous situation for Stephen. Failing to navigate this could easily make him the target of ridicule.

Stephen glanced over, his composed and confident presence radiating authority. As an award-winning actor, his talent was undeniable. Yet, it was his ability to fully immerse himself in each role that truly set him apart.

In that moment, Stephen embodied the persona of a powerful tycoon, fully attuned to the tense energy in the room.

“Is that so?” Stephen’s response was calm as he stepped closer, hands casually tucked in his pockets, his stance relaxed yet formidable, his gaze piercing and cold.

For a moment, Bart felt as though he was facing a relentless CEO whose ambition knew no limits.

“Mr. Green, your confidence in your proposal is quite evident. Could you share the scale of your intended investment in this project?”

“Why must I disclose that to you?” Bart retorted, his composure wavering under Stephen’s intense scrutiny. Even though Stephen was just an actor, his authority felt real—if only for this moment, his performance was utterly convincing.

Chapter 1044:

“White Group plans to invest a staggering one trillion,” Stephen declared, his voice clear and resonant, silencing the room. “If your investment exceeds ours by even a single cent, I’ll pay you double, which is two trillion.”

Leah and Liliana were left speechless by the staggering figure. Even for the financial giant JE Consortium, a commitment of two trillion would stretch their resources thin. Yet, they composed themselves and watched Stephen in silent awe.

The entire room was shocked by Stephen’s bold declaration. He not only proposed to invest a trillion, but also promised to give Bart two trillion if Overden Group’s investment surpassed his. How audacious!

“Don’t underestimate White Group,” Stephen mocked, his smirk broad, his posture exuding sheer confidence. “You’re all well aware of the powerhouse backing us.”

Bart broke out in a cold sweat, caught off guard by Stephen’s aggressive stance. Stephen’s confidence in his proposal was overwhelming, as if even the formidable Payne family couldn’t compete.

No other family could surpass their bid. Wendy watched Stephen, her excitement growing with each passing moment. Her cheeks glowed, hands pressed to her face, her eyes filled with adoration. Stephen’s formidable aura was overwhelming, drawing her even closer to him.

“What’s the matter? Are you scared?” Stephen asked as he stepped closer to Bart, a teasing spark in his eyes. “I’m curious—what makes Overden Group’s bid so groundbreaking and remarkable that it stands above all the rest?”

He then turned to address Ethan. "Mr. Barker, surely you can clear this up for us, can't you?"

"Come on, Mr. Barker, show us the numbers."

"With the results in, we have nothing to fear from disclosure. Let's see them."

The assembly picked up Stephen's challenge, urging Ethan to respond. Ethan was visibly shaken, knowing his career was on the line if he failed to justify his decision. But...

"Revealing the bids now seems like the best thing to do," Minnie interjected, her gaze fixed on Ethan onstage. "Transparency and fairness are what this conference stands for. I'm sure the superiors will back our decision. To be honest, we, the Payne family, were always confident about winning the bid. But after hearing Mr. White's offer, I realized I had overestimated myself. In the end, our offer amounted to just half of what the White family had put forward."

The revelation widened the gap of astonishment among the crowd, heightening their intrigue regarding the bids of the three families. For the Welch family to win the project, their bid would have to be truly exceptional—or something suspicious was at play.

Stephen nodded at Minnie in acknowledgment, fully immersed in his role as the head of a powerful family. Suddenly, Ethan collapsed.

"Mr. Barker!"

Staff members backstage rushed over to lift Ethan and take him away. Confusion swept through the audience, with many questioning how Ethan could collapse so suddenly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we regret to inform you that due to Mr. Barker's sudden heart attack, today's bidding is postponed and will be rescheduled later. Concerns regarding the bidding outcome have led our experts to declare it null and void."

With the proceedings abruptly halted, the day's efforts seemed wasted. The attendees were baffled, but many were increasingly convinced that the Welch family must have done something underhanded. Otherwise, such a dramatic turn of events would not have occurred.

Chapter 1045:

Bart's expression darkened with displeasure at the disrupted outcome.

They had been on the verge of victory, only to see it snatched away at the last moment.

"Bart, what's the situation now?" Delilah hurried back, scanning the scene. The once-bustling crowd had scattered, leaving only a few lingering figures. Confusion flickered across her face. "Did we win the bid?"

"We'll talk about it later." Bart cast a brief glance at Stephen and Minnie before turning away, his expression unreadable.

Delilah frowned, unease settling in her chest. Judging by the look in his eyes, things hadn't gone as smoothly as she had hoped.

Meanwhile, Stephen and Minnie struck up a conversation.

"Mr. White, if you hadn't stepped in, the Welch family would have had the perfect opportunity to take full control," Minnie said, admiration in her voice.

Stephen offered a modest smile. "Miss Payne, you're giving me too much credit. Even without my interference, I have a feeling you had a contingency plan, didn't you?"

Minnie arched an eyebrow, amused. She had, in fact, prepared a strategy, but with Stephen taking charge, things had played out far more favorably. The Payne family was content to remain in the shadows if it meant the Whites could take center stage.

"So, do you know why Mr. Barker did that?" she asked, watching him closely.

“He was threatened.” Stephen’s response came without hesitation, catching Minnie off guard.

Perhaps she had misjudged him. Until now, she had assumed he was just a gifted actor with little insight into business affairs. But now, she saw him in an entirely different light. His perceptiveness ran deep—deeper than she had expected.

No wonder he was Janice’s brother. The Whites were truly a force to be reckoned with.

“Since you already know, there’s no need for me to elaborate,” Minnie said smoothly. “If you ever need support, don’t hesitate to ask. The Payne family will stand behind you.”

“I appreciate that.”

“Stephen, it’s time to go home.” Wendy approached, slipping her arm through his and giving Minnie a challenging look.

Minnie simply smiled, unbothered. With a graceful nod, she bid farewell and walked away with Tricia.

As soon as they were alone, Wendy tilted her head up, studying Stephen’s face. Though he appeared composed, she noticed the faint tremor in his fingers. The weight of his performance was starting to sink in.

“Stephen, are you okay?”

He exhaled slowly. “Wendy, just now...”

“I know.” She didn’t wait for him to finish. Instead, she pulled him into a tight embrace and pressed her lips to his. “You were incredible. Absolutely brilliant.” Her eyes sparkled with admiration. “Right now, I just want to devour you.”

“Not here. Let’s go home first.”

Meanwhile, Leah and Liliana reported to Janice immediately after returning from the bidding.

Janice sat in the study, leisurely sipping her coffee. Even as they recounted the unexpected turn of events, not a flicker of surprise crossed her face.

Chapter 1046:

Leah and Liliana exchanged glances. Her composure was almost unsettling.

“Come on. After all that talking, have some coffee to soothe your throat.” Janice poured two cups and placed them in front of the girls with deliberate ease.

With no better option, they took their seats and wrapped their hands around the warm mugs.

“Janice, you’re too calm! I was a nervous wreck back there,” Leah admitted, shaking her head. “Liliana and I were ready to intervene, but then your brother stepped in like a total boss.”

“I think he was simply playing the part of an assertive leader,” Liliana observed, arching a brow. “But I have to admit, he nailed the role flawlessly.”

Janice smiled, taking an unhurried sip. “That’s exactly why I don’t want him to quit acting. He doesn’t just play roles—he embodies them. He can be himself or anyone else he needs to be.” She toyed with the rim of her cup, her gaze turning contemplative. “Even though he’s never set foot in business, he’s lived countless lives through his characters. The world itself is a stage. If he enjoys performing, then I’ll make sure he has the perfect stage to command.”

“Janice, how do you always see things so clearly?” Leah let out a low chuckle. “With his talent, he really could carve out a place in high society.”

Liliana nodded, looking at Janice. “Janice, are you planning to let him take the reins on this?”

Janice lifted her gaze, meeting Liliana's with approval. "Exactly. Right now, he's full of self-doubt, constantly questioning whether he's capable. If we don't believe in him, he'll only sink deeper into that mindset. This is his chance."

Leah sighed, her expression complex. "Janice, you're just like before, always carrying the weight of everyone else's worries. First me, then Prescott and Costello, and now your brother. But who's looking out for you?"

Janice didn't answer right away. A shadow of a smile touched her lips as Aiden's face flickered through her thoughts. She had always relied on herself. But now, perhaps she didn't have to.

"Keep an eye on things. If my brother runs into trouble, I'll step in."

"Understood."

Janice added, "By the way, I won't be in the office tomorrow. I have a meeting."

Leah tilted her head. "With who? Must be someone important if you're making time for it."

Janice took another slow sip, her gaze sharpening. "The head of Cloverhill."

At first glance, the Promisun Tower seemed like nothing more than an average restaurant. Yet its foundations were steeped in history, spanning several centuries. It was a venue where influential figures frequently gathered for covert discussions.

On this particular day, the Promisun Tower had been exclusively booked by someone of great importance.

Janice stepped out of the car, her eyes sweeping over the area with a nonchalant gaze. The crowd appeared ordinary at first, but her instincts picked up on an undercurrent of tension. It quickly became

clear that these were no ordinary bystanders; they were highly trained bodyguards, meticulously positioned around the Promisun Tower to ensure its security.

“The security is incredibly tight here,” Janice commented, one eyebrow arching slightly. “It seems unlikely the Welch family would dare cause trouble in a place like this.”

“Absolutely,” Aiden agreed with a nod. He had also noticed the tight security and the professionalism of the bodyguards, underscoring the significance of the person they were about to meet.

Chapter 1047:

“Come on, let’s not make it look like we’re putting on airs,” Janice suggested with a shrug, leading the way into the Promisun Tower.

As they entered, two men posing as waiters approached them. The sharpness in their eyes and the confidence in their stride betrayed their true roles—they were clearly not ordinary staff.

“Sir, ma’am, we need to conduct a security check on everyone who enters. Please cooperate,” one of them instructed.

With a curious lift of her eyebrow, Janice extended her arms, showing her willingness to comply without hesitation.

As one of them reached out, Aiden grabbed his hand.

The waiter’s eyes instantly narrowed, his muscles tensing, ready for any sudden moves.

“Is this typical behavior in Cloverhill?” Aiden asked, his voice cold with disdain as he tightened his grip. “Having a man search a woman—should I take this as rudeness or an intentional insult?”

The waiters exchanged a brief, cold look before one of them responded, “Sir, this is the policy at Promisun Tower. We ask for your cooperation, or you will be denied entry.”

With a scornful glance, Aiden released the waiter's hand and positioned himself protectively in front of Janice, his expression hard and unwavering. "It's not about whether we can enter or not. Given your demeanor, we see no point in proceeding with today's meeting."

Meanwhile, Janice watched silently from behind Aiden, a subtle smile gracing her lips. Seeing Aiden stand up for her filled her with a comforting sense of security and trust.

"What is happening here?" The moment was interrupted by the arrival of a middle-aged man with glasses, descending the staircase.

"Mr. Hoffman, these two refuse to comply with the security check," one of the waiters informed respectfully.

The man, Finley Hoffman, fixed a piercing gaze on Janice and Aiden, one that could unnerve most. Yet, they met his look with composed defiance.

Finley nodded slowly, seemingly impressed by their steadiness. "Are you Miss White and Mr. Green?"

"We're here to meet someone. We might be new to Cloverhill, and perhaps we're not yet accustomed to the local traditions. I didn't anticipate that a man could frisk a woman freely," Aiden said, his voice calm but edged with sarcasm.

Finley offered a faint smile. "It seems we've all been caught in a simple misunderstanding. I was under the impression that Mr. White would be visiting today. It turns out, it's Miss White. Please accept my apologies for any confusion or offense caused."

With a discreet gesture, he signaled to the waiters. "You may all dismiss yourselves. Miss White and Mr. Green are not armed. They are here to make their mark in Cloverhill and would surely not engage in such rash behavior."

"Understood," the waiters responded in unison.

Janice and Aiden shared a knowing look, aware of Finley's subtle play for control. Despite his attempts to intimidate them, they stood their ground, prompting him to drop the pretense.

"Please, follow me. The chief is waiting," Finley said.

"Thank you," Janice replied with a nod.

Chapter 1048:

As they followed Finley, Janice and Aiden were led to a secluded room at the pinnacle of the building. The room, steeped in elegance, summoned the essence of a bygone era, reminiscent of an ancient chamber from centuries past.

Inside, the Welch family occupied one side of the room, while the Payne family sat opposite them.

"Newcomers have no manners," Calvin scoffed, his voice dripping with disdain as soon as he laid eyes on Aiden and Janice. "Considering the time, it's evident you place little value on today's meeting."

Seated across from him, Minnie and Walter looked at the couple when they heard Calvin's words.

"It seems to me that you're the one with no manners," Janice countered, her smile icy as she took her seat, her eyes locked on Calvin. "The host has yet to speak, and here you are casting aspersions. To those less informed, it might appear you're just trying to steal the spotlight for yourself."

"Hey!" Calvin's face reddened with fury at Janice's sharp retort.

"Calvin, stay cool," Gilmore said, attempting to calm him. He understood why Calvin was so easily provoked. Recent setbacks had taken their toll, and Calvin was starting to lose his way. If things continued like this, he might be beyond saving. With Jensen incapacitated, Calvin was the Welch family's last remaining pillar—losing him would leave them utterly adrift.

“Miss White, you’re right. As guests, we should allow our host to speak first. However, I must remind you that since you’ve only just arrived in Cloverhill, you might not be familiar with the local customs. Mistakes are understandable, but offending the wrong people could spell trouble for the White family.”

On the surface, Gilmore seemed to be defending Janice, but anyone perceptive enough could hear the underlying mockery. He was implying they were outsiders, bound to make blunders due to their lack of refinement.

Janice was not one to accept insults lightly. “Please, cut the sarcasm. If I’ve made a mistake, be direct and tell me what it is.”

Gilmore’s expression darkened, his gaze turning cold. “I’ve been trying to show you some respect. There’s no need to be so ungrateful.”

“Ridiculous! If I had actually made a mistake, your words might be considered respectful. But now, you’re making baseless accusations. That’s not respect—it’s provocation.” Janice lifted her chin slightly, her gaze frosty. “Let me give you a piece of advice. Those who don’t deserve respect shouldn’t speak of giving it. It only makes them a joke.”

Her words struck a heavy blow to the Welch family’s dignity. The message was clear—Gilmore’s so-called respect meant nothing to her.

A tense silence settled over the room. Minnie and Walter lowered their eyes, choosing not to get involved.

Aiden scoffed. He knew Gilmore bore a deep grudge against him and Janice—especially after losing an arm—and would seize any opportunity to make them look bad.

Despite his composed exterior, Gilmore was seething with fury, perhaps even more than Calvin. There was a time when Gilmore handled matters with composure, but hatred had blinded him, making him reckless—just as Janice had planned.

“Miss White, do you even know the distinguished individual we’re meeting today? We arrived early out of respect, yet you show up late. Is that not a mistake?” Gilmore challenged.

“Disrespectful to him. Cloverhill values its traditions. If you don’t understand them, either learn them well or leave.”

Janice just shook her head. Then she stepped forward, her presence growing more commanding. “Could you tell me the current time?”

Chapter 1049:

“One in the afternoon,” Minnie answered after checking her watch.

Janice nodded. “Exactly. The message I received stated that the meeting would take place in the afternoon at the top floor of Promisun Tower. So tell me, is it afternoon now?”

Gilmore’s eyes narrowed, his expression turning icy. He realized Janice was toying with semantics. Technically, she was correct—it was still the afternoon.

The meeting time had been intentionally vague to allow flexibility for the honored individual’s schedule. But now, that ambiguity had given Janice the perfect loophole.

“Answer me,” Janice pressed, her presence intensifying as she closed the distance, commanding the full attention of everyone in the room.

Gilmore clenched his fists, his eyes burning with venom. Janice was clearly determined to make him look bad. But he had asked for this himself.

Walter glanced at Minnie, finally understanding why Janice had been causing so much trouble for the Welch family. Her sheer dominance was undeniable.

Just then, a hearty laugh echoed from outside, breaking the tense atmosphere.

All eyes turned to the entrance as a middle-aged man in a sharp suit entered with Finley.

“Miss White, you’re absolutely right! It’s still afternoon, and you are not late,” the man said with a warm smile, his eyes filled with admiration. Despite her youth, she possessed a commanding presence that set her apart from her peers. “The misunderstanding is partly my fault—I should have provided a more precise time.”

“Greetings, Mr. Truman.”

Everyone who recognized the middle-aged man rose to their feet, offering a slight bow in respect. Even Walter and Gilmore, despite their differences, looked at the man with reverence.

Janice immediately realized the man before her was none other than Trenton Truman—the highest authority in Cloverhill.

“Please, take a seat.” Trenton made a subtle gesture before striding to the center, settling into his chair with effortless ease. Though his posture was casual, the weight of his presence alone demanded respect.

“Miss White, you’ve only recently arrived in Cloverhill. Have you settled in?” The moment Janice sat, Trenton addressed her with an easy familiarity, bridging the gap between them.

Janice offered a small smile. “I fit right in. Maybe it’s because this place feels like home to me.”

Trenton gave a slow nod, his expression somber. “I heard about what happened to your family. They say armed intruders stormed the estate, slaughtering over a hundred people. Those responsible were caught and sentenced to death. I’m truly sorry.”

Janice met his gaze but said nothing.

"I also heard the Welch family played a key role in capturing the culprits. If not for their help, the arrests might have taken much longer." As he spoke, Trenton cast a brief glance at Gilmore—a simple look, yet enough to make the man stiffen.

Everyone in the room understood Trenton's intent. He was extending an olive branch, nudging both families toward reconciliation. What remained to be seen was how the Welch family would respond.

"We just did what needed to be done," Gilmore said with a strained smile. "For the sake of Cloverhill's stability, the Welch family would not hesitate to offer help. Moving forward, we will fully support the White family in reclaiming their former stature."

Chapter 1050:

Trenton shifted his gaze to Janice. "What's your take on this?"

Janice shut her eyes for a moment. When they opened, they gleamed with steely resolve. "I believe you're overestimating how forgiving the White family is."

The air in the room turned dense, weighed down by her words. Even Minnie's brows creased in concern as she eyed Janice cautiously. Was Janice really about to rip off the mask of civility right here? If so, that was a blatant affront to Trenton.

Finley's face hardened. His gaze, sharp and unyielding, bore into Janice. No one had dared challenge Trenton so brazenly before. Janice was powerful, but this was still Cloverhill—a city where a single word from Trenton could erase a family overnight.

"The White family holds grudges. Anyone who wrongs us pays in full. No matter how much time passes, we never forget a blood debt. And as for rising to the top, we don't need anyone's hand to pull us there."

A collective gasp swept through the room at Janice's brazen words. Speaking like that in front of Trenton was nothing short of defiance—a challenge that could have serious consequences.

Yet Janice stood firm, undeterred by the looming threat. Her gaze was icy, her posture unwavering.

"I'm here today, first and foremost, out of respect for Mr. Truman and for the sake of Cloverhill's stability. Second, to make the White family's stance clear."

"Janice White, do you even realize what you're saying?" Finley snapped, his voice laced with cold fury. "You're asking for trouble!"

Trenton lifted a hand, and Finley immediately fell silent, stepping back without another word.

Trenton's eyes gleamed with intrigue. "From what I've heard, you're not just the founder of JE Consortium—you're also the world-famous surgeon MO and the internationally celebrated maestro, RAIN."

"I am," Janice answered coolly. "But if you think my confidence comes from those titles, then you're sorely mistaken."

"Oh?" Trenton's interest sharpened. He laced his fingers together, settling them at his side. "Care to elaborate?"

"White Group, under my leadership, is crafting a groundbreaking AI model. Once unveiled, it will reshape entire industries and propel the world into a new era of artificial intelligence."

"That's ridiculous!" Gilmore let out a derisive chuckle. "AI development has hit a wall. If you think it can revolutionize industries anytime soon, you're dreaming—it'll take at least another fifty years of advancement."

"Tell me, Mr. Welch, do you actually know anything about AI?" Janice shook her head in mock disappointment. "If not, do yourself a favor—stay quiet and stop embarrassing yourself."

"You—"

“Enough, Gilmore!” Trenton didn’t need to say a word—one sharp glance was enough to silence Gilmore instantly. He then turned his attention back to Janice, a faint smile playing on his lips. “Your vision is certainly ambitious. But given the current technological landscape, achieving such a breakthrough—”

“Sir, does the name Queen mean anything to you?” Janice asked.

“Queen?” Trenton’s brow furrowed in thought. “You mean the number one hacker on the global rankings?”

“Exactly.”