

Wrath 1061

Chapter 1061:

Meanwhile, Bart entered the Welch family's estate.

Mateo, worn down by relentless pressure from the White family, looked haggard. Had Trenton not intervened to prevent some of the Whites' more aggressive tactics, the Welch family might have already collapsed.

Their underground empire was being picked apart by rival gangs. The Jaguar Gang, in particular, had claimed nearly a third of their territory, rising quickly thanks to Aiden's covert support. Other gangs, sensing blood in the water, began circling, convinced the Welch family was now too weak to resist.

But by the time they reacted, it was already too late. The Jaguar Gang had entrenched itself as the dominant force.

If Aiden chose to back them fully, the Jaguar Gang could soon become the city's most powerful syndicate.

Mateo's tension was palpable when Bart entered the room, an undercurrent of unease in the air.

"Out with it. What's going on?" Mateo lit a cigarette, exhaling a sharp plume of smoke. "If you're not bringing good news, you won't like my reaction."

Bart's face tightened. He hesitated, knowing full well that what he had to say wasn't what Mateo wanted to hear. And judging by Mateo's mood, bad news might set him off.

"Talk. Now." Mateo's glare bore into him.

"There's trouble with the Hillford project," Bart blurted. "We had Ethan in our pocket. As long as he gave the green light, the bid was ours. But White Group just flipped the script—they made the entire proposal public. Now the internet is in an uproar, rallying behind them and pressuring the authorities to accept their bid."

“What?” Mateo shot to his feet, fury burning in his eyes. “They made the bid public? And now they’ve got the whole damn internet backing them?”

Bart swallowed and met his gaze. “Exactly.”

It didn’t take a genius to see the implications. The White family was throwing down the gauntlet, daring them to react. If the Welch family backed down now, White Group would only gain momentum—and the Welch name would be tarnished by perceived weakness, inviting every rival to strike.

“The Payne family has withdrawn from the bidding, extending their congratulations to White Group on their success.” Bart’s words struck Mateo like a physical blow. With the Paynes out, the contest narrowed to a direct clash between the Welch family and the White family. White Group’s audacious tactics had given the Welches pause—no one wanted to respond rashly to such decisive pressure. It was a humiliating predicament for the Welches.

After being outmaneuvered repeatedly, the Welches had already endured significant losses. Now, confronted with an even more formidable bid, the pressure felt crushing. Janice’s confidence in their earlier meeting suddenly made perfect sense: it sprang not only from her family’s deep financial reserves but also from technical expertise that far outmatched Welch resources.

“What’s our next move, Mr. Welch?” Bart asked.

“Do I really need to spell it out?” Mateo sneered, flicking his cigarette so close to Bart’s face that embers scattered against his cheek. “After I got you released from jail and handed you control of Overden Group, you still come to me for guidance? Maybe you belong back behind bars.”

Bart fell silent, unable to summon a defense. The situation looked inescapable—any further struggle would only deepen their defeat.

Suddenly, Bart’s phone rang. He stepped away from Mateo, lowering his voice. “Delilah, what’s happening?”

Chapter 1062:

“Bart, check Twitter now. The development department just posted an update.”

Bart’s eyes narrowed as he ended the call and opened Twitter. A new announcement from the department dominated the trending feed. He tapped the link, and a relieved grin spread across his face.

“What’s going on?” Mateo asked, curiosity lacing his voice.

“Mr. Welch, there’s still hope,” Bart responded eagerly. “The development department has introduced a new rule to prevent malicious bidding, capping offers at five hundred billion. Now the substance of our proposal is what matters.”

Mateo frowned, suspicion in his eyes. “Is that so? It would make sense to allocate more to develop Hillford. Why impose such a cap?”

“Because we have Ethan in a bind,” Bart explained. “To secure his position, Ethan needs the Welch family to win. This cap gives us a tactical advantage.”

As a seasoned strategist, Mateo sensed something was off. “Do you really think so?”

“You can count on Ethan’s loyalty. We just need to tailor our bid and refine our proposal in light of what White Group has made public.”

After a prolonged silence, Mateo sat down. “This is indeed an opportunity. The White family’s dominance has overshadowed us for too long. Winning this bid will lift morale and prove our capabilities to the government. Additionally...”

His thoughts drifted to the three elders who held the majority of the family’s influence—he’d been waiting for a chance to seize control from them, and now felt the time was right.

“Calvin, bring the three elders here at once. We have urgent matters to discuss,” Mateo instructed over the phone.

While the elders made their way to the estate, Janice received the latest update. Seated in the garden pavilion, she sipped her coffee, her composed demeanor betraying no surprise. She handed Aiden a cup and picked up her phone. “Stephen, have you seen the development department’s latest update?”

“I have,” he replied. “Janice, were you behind this?”

“Indeed,” she admitted. “Although you were supposed to handle it, I pushed for stricter measures against the Welch family.”

A wry smile spread across Stephen’s face. “I can’t fault you for that. If anything, you’ve opened up more possibilities.”

Janice nodded in satisfaction. No longer just a charismatic figurehead, Stephen had become a formidable force. “Your original plan made sense.”

In these circumstances, a trillion-dollar bid would be too much for the Welch family to handle. It’s a financial abyss they could never recover from, and it would normally force them to withdraw. However, I’m not ready to let them off without a fight. They need to face some consequences.

Puzzled, Stephen asked, “Janice, are you intentionally drawing the Welch family deeper into this conflict? What price do you expect them to pay?”

“Stephen, have you heard of the elders of the Welch family? The ones who stood beside Grandpa as he built his empire from the ground up?” Janice asked.

“Yes.”

“They hold the reins on three-quarters of the Welch family’s power, and Mateo has his sights set on their influence like a starving wolf. He won’t let this chance slip by—he’ll push them into action. But if those three step into the fray, I can stir the pot, turn them against each other, and gradually weaken their grip on the Welch family’s assets.”

Realization dawned in Stephen’s eyes as Janice’s strategy became clear. He wondered why he hadn’t seen it sooner. He’d been too focused on the immediate battle to recognize the broader war.

Chapter 1063:

“Grandpa divided the Welch family’s power this way for a reason—to leave a weak spot, an opening for us to bring the giant down,” Janice said quietly, a flicker of thought crossing her face. Despite everything, the Welch family was Orson’s life’s work—an empire forged from his dedication and sweat.

Most people would have clung to their power, but not Orson. He had already stepped back, showing lenience rather than facing the family himself. In a way, Orson was a romantic—too loyal, too idealistic for a world ruled by power struggles.

“Stephen, you understand what comes next, don’t you?”

“Yes.” Stephen drew a steady breath, his eyes filled with determination. “I know. If I didn’t, I wouldn’t deserve to lead the White family.”

“Good. Then there’s nothing more to say—I’ll leave the rest in your hands.”

“Got it!” Stephen ended the call, his heart pounding with exhilaration.

Wendy reached over and wrapped her fingers around his slightly trembling hand. “Stephen, I’m lucky I didn’t offend Janice too much back then. Otherwise, she would have made my life miserable.”

“Janice is definitely a force to be reckoned with.” Stephen nodded, not quite confirming nor denying Wendy’s assumption. “She must have met with Ethan and given him a way out. He wouldn’t have released that statement otherwise.”

“With Janice’s expertise, erasing those photos is child’s play.”

As long as there was an internet connection, no device was safe from Janice’s reach. Once she locked onto Bart’s and Delilah’s phones, those photos would vanish as if they had never existed.

“Wendy, we need to issue another announcement,” Stephen said, his voice carrying a weight of finality. “Janice has set the stage, and at the end of this, we’ll deliver the final blow to the Welch family.”

Meanwhile, tension thickened the air in the Welch family’s conference room, an unspoken storm brewing among the members gathered there. Mateo, ever cautious, kept his distance to avoid raising suspicion, leaving Calvin and Gilmore to preside over the meeting.

Hughes, Cason, and Randall sat in uneasy silence, their faces marked by wariness and cold skepticism.

“Calvin, you want us to give up half of our assets to support you? That’s wishful thinking,” Hughes said icily. “You’re Mateo’s son. If you take our assets and deal with us, what are we supposed to do?”

“Mr. Dury, you must be joking. I called you here to fix the crisis threatening the Welch family,” Calvin replied, forcing a chuckle. “You all know the White siblings have set their sights on us, and it’s getting dangerous. If we don’t win this project, the higher-ups will throw their support behind them. Are you really willing to watch a century of Welch legacy collapse because of those two?”

Hughes, Randall, and Cason exchanged uneasy glances, the weight of the decision heavy between them.

They had fought hard for their share of the Welch fortune. Handing it over to Calvin meant risking Mateo’s grip tightening on it, but refusing could bring disaster to the entire family. If the higher-ups withdrew their support, half of the Welch family’s legacy could be lost forever.

“I understand your hesitation,” Gilmore interjected, his tone calm and measured. “That’s exactly why I’m here—as a mediator. I personally guarantee that any assets you put forward will go strictly into the bidding process. Mateo won’t get his hands on them.”

"Gilmore, you've always been fair," Cason said, exhaling slowly. "The Welch family is backed into a corner. Orson has shut himself away, and if we don't stand together, we're finished."

Chapter 1064:

He glanced at Randall and Hughes before nodding. "I'll put up half my assets for this bid."

"If Cason's in, then so am I." Randall gave a brief nod, falling in line. Hughes hesitated, uncertainty flickering across his face, but with no other viable option, he reluctantly agreed.

"Thank you. You won't regret this." Calvin could hardly contain his excitement as he expressed his gratitude. "Once we secure the project, the profits will exceed anything we've ever imagined."

Gilmore narrowed his eyes, a quiet sense of unease settling in his chest. These elders had no idea what they were getting into. Once they handed over half their wealth, there would be no getting it back.

Gilmore had promised that the assets wouldn't end up in Mateo's hands, but he had said nothing about Calvin. If Mateo and Calvin joined forces, the Welch family would fall completely under their control.

"Janice, the Welch family has made their move and launched a counterattack!" Leah, thrilled by the latest news, rushed to inform Janice. "They've put nearly half their fortune on the line to stay in the game, but even then, they still can't match our position." Despite the Welch family's vast fortune exceeding a trillion, their liquid assets were limited. They had barely managed to gather five hundred billion dollars.

Janice had instructed Ethan to hold back a crucial move, ensuring that the Welch family couldn't join the bidding easily. They needed to drain their resources first.

"They'll definitely keep pushing forward. They're in too deep to pull back now, so they have no choice but to press on. Once they commit over half their assets, that's when we'll make our move," Janice said.

"Janice, are you really planning to buy up their shares?"

“Yes.” Janice twirled a pen between her fingers, a cold glint in her eyes. “So what if they have deep roots? This isn’t the past, where power depended on old money and influence. We’re in the digital era now. If the Welch family wants to expand, they have to adapt to the internet. And if they dare to put their shares up, I’ll make sure they lose everything.”

Desperate to secure liquidity, the Welch family would inevitably be forced to mortgage their shares. During that process, Janice would have plenty of opportunities to make her move. By the time they realized their shares had been acquired, the damage would already be done. With the Welch family thrown into chaos, she could dismantle their influence piece by piece.

“Janice, this is the fastest approach, but it’s putting a lot of pressure on JE Consortium,” Leah cautioned, her brows furrowing. “Our available capital is running low.”

“Don’t forget Lancelot and Cherriton. They’re closely tied to JE Consortium and eager to invest if it means working with me.” Leah’s eyes brightened as she remembered that JE Consortium wasn’t alone. With such powerful allies, the Welch family was hardly a threat.

Before Leah could reply, her phone buzzed. She answered, her expression quickly shifting to one of concern. “What?”

After ending the call, she relayed the news to Janice. “Prescott just informed me—someone has mysteriously injected enough funds to fill the Welch family’s financial gap.”

Janice’s eyes grew sharper as she considered the implications. “It looks like we’re dealing with more than just the Welch family. Could it be Leonidas?”

Leonidas had gone underground overseas, his exact location unknown. If he were orchestrating this, Prescott would have picked up some sign. The possibility seemed slim.

Chapter 1065:

“Janice, do you think it could be the Payne family?” Leah asked anxiously. “They publicly withdrew from the bidding, but maybe they’re waiting for us and the Welch family to wear each other out before making their move.”

“Highly unlikely.” Janice shook her head. “Their relationship with the Welch family is already fractured, and there’s no strategic benefit in secretly supporting them just to take us down.”

“Then who could it be?” Leah wondered aloud. Having only recently arrived in Cloverhill, they were still learning the city’s power dynamics. For someone to quietly inject such a large sum of money suggested they were up against more than just an ordinary family.

Ten billion dollars might seem small compared to five hundred billion, but for any family, it was still a staggering amount.

“Tell Prescott to keep a close watch on this,” Janice instructed, her gaze turning steely. Though she doubted her suspicions, she wasn’t about to leave anything to chance.

Meanwhile, the development department released an official announcement:

“In light of heightened public interest in the Hillford project, we reaffirm our commitment to fairness and transparency. The maximum bid remains capped at five hundred billion dollars, but financial figures alone will not determine the winner. Proposals will be judged comprehensively, and exceptional content will be given due consideration. To prevent manipulation, all bidder funds will be frozen for three days and released only after verification.”

To the general public, the move appeared fair and reasonable.

However, unease lingered within the Welch family as they read the new guidelines.

“Why is Ethan stressing that the bid isn’t the only deciding factor?” Calvin asked Bart, his tone uneasy. “Something about this doesn’t feel right.”

“I just spoke with Ethan,” Bart replied. “He claims it’s to give us more flexibility in the bidding process.”

“Is he really being that considerate?” Calvin muttered, skepticism clouding his expression. He didn’t know Ethan well, but his instincts screamed that something was off. “Bart, the Welch family can’t afford to lose this project. If you fail to secure it, don’t expect to keep your position as CEO of Overden Group.”

“Mr. Welch, you have nothing to worry about. We have leverage on Ethan—there’s no way he would dare betray us,” Bart said confidently. “All that remains is to fine-tune our proposal against White Group’s. With the financial boost we’ve just received, securing this project is as good as done.”

Calvin’s eyes narrowed. Something still felt off. Hughes, Cason, and Randall had already leveraged their stocks, yet the funds had fallen short. As they were backed into a corner, an unexpected benefactor had stepped in, bridging the financial gap with ease.

“Have we identified them?” Calvin asked.

Bart shook his head. “No. Whoever they are, they’ve covered their tracks well. But they did leave a message—once we secure the project, they want our help acquiring the Payne family’s Zalion Group.”

“Zalion Group?” Calvin leaned back, rubbing his temples as surprise washed over him. The Payne family had established Zalion Group as their foothold in the overseas market. Someone wanted to cut off the Payne family’s expansion before it solidified—either an old rival seeking revenge or a competitor eager to dominate foreign territories.

“Regardless, the enemy of my enemy is an ally. If they’re willing to invest this much to support the Welch family, we owe them a favor,” Calvin said, a slow smirk spreading across his lips.

Chapter 1066:

“Understood.”

“Tomorrow is the bidding. Nothing must go wrong.”

“Consider it done.” Bart straightened, his confidence unwavering. “With everything in our favor, if I fail to secure this project, I might as well step down.”

Shortly after Calvin left, the door to the CEO’s office swung open and Delilah sauntered in.

“How are things looking?” she asked, leaning against Bart’s chest, her fingers playfully tracing his collar.

“This project is already in the bag.” Bart tightened his grip around her chin, his gaze dark with intent. “And you know what you need to do, don’t you?”

A faint blush colored Delilah’s cheeks, but her eyes sparkled with mischief. She cast him a coy glance before lowering herself, her movements slow and deliberate.

Bart exhaled, anticipation coursing through him. Tomorrow would be his triumph, his moment to shine. He couldn’t help but feel grateful that Ethan had fainted—if not for that incident, this entire city-wide bidding spectacle might never have unfolded. “Hey, hey, easy...”

Delilah chuckled, tilting her head. “What’s the matter, Bart? Afraid of a little pain? Maybe I should give you something exciting instead.”

His brow arched. “Oh? And what would that be?”

She grinned wickedly. “Popping candy. Ever tried it?”

The Hillford project bidding had become a widely discussed event, capturing the attention of both businesses and the public. To ensure transparency and appease public sentiment, the development department decided to livestream the entire bidding process, allowing citizens to witness this pivotal moment in real time.

Today, only two contenders remained in the race—the Welch family and the White family. The sheer scale of the bid had discouraged other competitors, leaving only these two powerhouses to battle it out. Representing the Welch family was Bart, while Stephen stood as the face of the White family.

Meanwhile, Janice reclined in the pavilion of her home, leisurely brewing coffee with Aiden.

“Janice, are you really that confident?” Aiden mused, sipping his coffee as he studied her with intrigue. “Now that the Welch family has secured their funds, they only need to refine their proposal to counter yours. That could give them the upper hand.”

Janice chuckled, her fingers lightly tapping her cup. Amusement danced in her eyes. “Aiden, must you always state the obvious?”

Aiden shook his head, a smile tugging at his lips. “I just enjoy hearing you talk.”

“Very well, then.” Janice lifted her cup, taking a measured sip before setting it down. “They believe our public proposal shows the full extent of our vision, but that’s just the surface. The future belongs to artificial intelligence. A new era of smart technology is upon us. Whether it’s education, healthcare, or urban development, AI will be at the core of it all.”

Hearing this, Aiden finally understood the magnitude of Janice’s vision. If Hillford transformed into a fully integrated AI-driven community, the project would be nothing short of revolutionary. The scale of investment required was immense, but the potential impact was unparalleled.

Compared to this bold blueprint, the previous proposal seemed almost rudimentary—a mere stepping stone to something far greater.

“No wonder you’re Queen. Only someone like you would have the audacity to dream this big—and the power to make it real. But are you expecting someone today?” Aiden asked.

Chapter 1067:

Janice simply smiled, setting her cup down with a gentle clink. She glanced at the time, her expression unreadable. “It’s about time.”

Aiden opened his mouth to ask what she meant, but before he could speak, the deep growl of an engine echoed from outside. Janice rose gracefully to her feet. "Come on, Aiden. The bidding is only part of today's excitement. There's another spectacle waiting for us."

"Now you have my attention." Aiden's pulse quickened.

Time with Janice was never dull. Every moment with her led to something unexpected—something exhilarating.

As Aiden and Janice approached the gate, they spotted Minnie waiting beside a gleaming Rolls-Royce, her posture composed and elegant. The moment Minnie saw Aiden, a flicker of emotion crossed her eyes—quickly masked by composure.

Since Janice and Aiden had arrived in Cloverhill, they'd been inseparable.

"Minnie, you're right on time," Janice greeted her, a warm smile playing at her lips.

"Today is a significant day, isn't it?" Minnie replied, her poise and refined manners revealing her impeccable upbringing. Though there was a quiet fondness in her eyes for Aiden, she kept a respectful distance, never allowing her gaze to linger.

"Indeed," Janice said, glancing at Aiden with a subtle nod before slipping her hand into his. She guided him toward the Rolls-Royce. "I hope you don't mind me bringing Aiden along."

"Of course not," Minnie answered, opening the car door with a gesture full of genuine humility. "Janice, I trust you to take good care of my brother today."

"You have my word. Once we get to the hospital, we'll have a clearer picture of things."

"Very well."

At Andromache Hospital, Oliver had just completed a series of tests and now rested quietly in his bed, preparing for the operation ahead.

Outside his room, a group of doctors gathered in the corridor, their faces alight with anticipation. They were moments away from meeting the legendary surgeon known as MO—a figure who had become a beacon in the world of medicine.

Many of them were devoted admirers, inspired by MO's groundbreaking achievements and reputation. MO was more than just a surgeon; they represented the pinnacle of medical excellence and innovation.

"Here they come!"

A sudden exclamation cut through the hushed excitement. The doctors quickly formed a neat line along the hallway, ready to greet their idol with respect.

All eyes turned toward the elevator. With a gentle chime, the doors slid open, and a figure of striking elegance stepped into view.

"Is that MO?"

"No, it can't be! So young, so stunning—could she truly be MO?"

"MO is Janice White. Who would have imagined that the famed golden mask hid such a radiant beauty?"

Janice's presence captivated the entire hall, her unique charisma pulling every gaze. Even with Aiden and Minnie at her side—each impressive in their own right—Janice outshone them all, a diamond among gemstones.

"Master MO!"

The doctors bowed in unison, their respect palpable.

Chapter 1068:

Janice raised an eyebrow, glancing at Minnie.

“They heard you’d be operating on my brother and insisted on being here. I couldn’t hold them back,” Minnie admitted with an apologetic, wry smile.

These were some of the country’s most esteemed physicians, each with a collection of honors—yet today, they’d gone to extraordinary lengths just for a glimpse of Janice. Minnie hadn’t had the heart to turn them away.

“It’s fine,” Janice said with a gentle sigh. There was a time she concealed her identity, protecting herself behind secrecy, but now there was no point in hiding. “We’re all here for the same reason—to heal and save lives. If watching me work helps them refine their own skills, I welcome it.”

Her words sent a ripple of excitement through the crowd.

“Are you really letting us watch your surgery?”

“To see MO in person—this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance!”

“Incredible! I can’t wait to tell everyone about this.”

The doctors were brimming with enthusiasm, hardly believing their luck.

“I’ll go see the patient now,” Janice said. “Wait here, and I’ll let you know when the operation is about to begin.”

“Of course! Take your time.”

Minnie watched in awe. Physicians who were usually so proud and self-assured now stood humbled before Janice—a scene she never imagined witnessing.

Despite the Payne family's influence and respected status, they always treated the medical community with courtesy. Illness and misfortune spared no one, and maintaining goodwill with doctors could one day mean the difference between hope and despair.

Yet now, these physicians—some of them respected veterans—stood bowing to Janice with genuine reverence, humility replacing their usual pride. It struck Minnie how Janice's reputation as a surgeon far outstripped anything she'd previously imagined.

Janice knocked lightly at the door, and a calm voice responded from inside. "Come in."

She slipped quietly into the room, her gaze settling on Oliver, who was reclining on the hospital bed. He seemed at peace, his attention focused on a pair of vibrant green plants on the windowsill.

"Mr. Payne, how are you feeling?" Janice's tone was gentle, her concern sincere. She closed the door behind her and crossed the room to his side.

"Everything is normal," Oliver said, keeping his attention on the two green plants, deliberately avoiding Janice's eyes. But was such a detached response expected from someone about to undergo surgery?

Janice stood a meter away, maintaining a respectful distance. "Mr. Payne, it seems you're not very hopeful about regaining your ability to walk."

At that, Oliver finally looked at her. His eyes were calm, almost resigned, like a still pond without a ripple. "After being paralyzed for so long, I've adapted. Does it really matter whether I walk again or not?"

Janice's lips curved slightly, and she asked, "Actually, do you even want to stand on your feet again?"

A flicker of disturbance crossed Oliver's face, but he didn't answer. Janice didn't press him further and smoothly changed the subject. "I've looked into the longstanding feud between your family and the Welch family. For years, the Payne family was always at a disadvantage—until your sister took charge. Since then, your family has been able to counter the Welch family's influence. Lately, the Welch family has lost their former confidence, constantly on guard against Minnie, knowing that any weakness could be used against them. Despite being a woman, her strategic skills rival, and perhaps even surpass, any man's. She's a true leader."

Chapter 1069:

"What's the point of this story?" Oliver replied, his voice tinged with disinterest. "It doesn't seem relevant to the surgery today."

"You're right; it's unrelated. I just admire your sister." Janice exhaled deeply and smiled. "Once you're back on your feet, you can resume your military career, and family disputes won't be your problem anymore."

Oliver's eyes narrowed slightly, a change Janice noticed, making her wonder.

"It's time for your surgery." Janice leaned over and gently patted Oliver's leg. "I'm determined to see you walk again."

As Janice left the room, she was met by the anxious faces of the doctors, Minnie, and Aiden.

With steady confidence, Janice assured them, "Mr. Payne's pre-op is complete. We're ready for surgery."

"Janice, we're all counting on you," Minnie said, taking Janice's hands. "Whether my brother can walk again is in your hands."

"Don't worry. I never take on surgeries I'm not confident about. Now that I've agreed to this, he will definitely walk again." Janice's assurance lifted everyone's spirits.

The medical team was well aware of Oliver's prognosis. While recovery was possible, the odds were slim due to the complexity of the procedure. Despite their expertise, confidence among them was scarce. The lead surgeon estimated only a thirty percent chance of success, knowing that failure could have serious consequences.

Meanwhile, as Oliver's surgery began, the Hillford project's bidding conference was being broadcast live. All eyes were glued to screens as attendees and viewers absorbed the details of this monumental event.

The stakes were clear: White Group had set the investment cap at five hundred billion dollars, making it apparent that only those with immense financial resources could participate. Few families could even consider raising such a sum.

"I'll be your host for today's bidding," Ethan said with a calm smile to the camera. "Like everyone else, I'm eager to see what surprises the bidders have in store. Let's introduce our participants."

The broadcast shifted to highlight Bart and Stephen. Next to Stephen, Bart seemed less striking. With his background as an acclaimed actor, Stephen commanded the screen effortlessly. Now, as a CEO, his presence easily eclipsed Bart.

The audience was buzzing with excitement.

"Wow, it's really Stephen! The rumors were true—he's of noble descent, like something out of a fairy tale."

"Who's that next to Stephen? Sharing the screen with him is practically an invitation to be overshadowed."

"Will Stephen keep acting now that he's a CEO?"

"Stephen's performances are unforgettable. The more I watch, the more I admire his talent."

This outpouring of support for Stephen caught many elite families by surprise. Those who had once looked down on actors now faced mockery themselves, as Stephen's rise to prominence exposed the flaws in their own elitism.

"Alright, you both know the bidding details. Let's begin with your presentations," Ethan said, inviting them to introduce their proposals.

The transparent nature of the bidding process left little room for manipulation.

"I'll start." Bart stood up, offering a confident smile. His demeanor radiated charisma and assurance.

Chapter 1070:

"Everyone, I'd like to extend a special thanks to White Group." Bart turned his gaze to Stephen, a smile spreading across his face that clearly conveyed his confidence in winning the bid. "Without their disclosed proposal, Overden Group might never have identified the critical flaws in our own. Thank you for your generosity, which has allowed us to improve our proposal."

He then bowed to Stephen, the gesture showing both humility and a sharp, strategic mind that recognized every advantage.

The audience was taken aback by White Group's decision to make their bid documents public, essentially handing over their blueprint to their rivals. This move allowed Overden Group to refine their approach precisely where it was most needed, bringing them one step closer to certain victory.

"White Group has sabotaged themselves by revealing their strategy so openly. How can they expect to hold their ground now?"

"Exactly. They may have thought their trillion-dollar proposal would scare off competitors, but with the development department setting a limit of five hundred billion, Overden Group saw a golden opportunity. Now, it seems that White Group's bold gamble has backfired."

"Still, the final results have yet to be announced."

The crowd buzzed with conversation, with the general sentiment being one of doubt regarding White Group's chances. Many viewed their openness as arrogance, ultimately self-sabotaging. Bart straightened up, preparing to redirect the conversation.

"Next, I'll present our plans for the future of Hillford. As you're likely aware from White Group's proposal, our vision for Hillford builds upon Overden Group's initial ideas but incorporates significant enhancements and optimizations aimed at creating a sustainable and enjoyable community."

Bart then opened a PowerPoint presentation, revealing the contents of their bid document. His presentation was a strategic master class, targeting the weaknesses in White Group's bid with precision. He outlined a vision for an eco-friendly park, enhanced by digital management, projecting a forward-thinking community.

"Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time and attention." Bart concluded his speech with a slight bow, acknowledging the clear astonishment and growing interest his revelations had sparked.

Their proposal had received strong support, clearly benefiting from White Group's disclosure. Without it, they wouldn't have secured such an advantage.

"Mr. Green, your proposal is truly inspiring. I'm eager to see it come to life." Ethan walked over and extended his hand to Bart, shaking it firmly.

"Thank you, Mr. Barker. We're all working to boost Hillford's economy and enrich our community," Bart responded with a smile that masked his usual indifference to others unless it served his interests.

"I'd like to ask something." Stephen raised his hand to interrupt, his face showing clear skepticism. "May I, Mr. Green?"

Stephen's interruption drew curious glances from the audience. Was he trying to stir up controversy? Given that White Group's bid already seemed weaker than Overden Group's, Stephen's timing suggested he was looking to cause trouble.

Ethan glanced at Bart, silently asking if he should allow the question.

With a polite smile, Bart acknowledged Stephen. "Certainly, Mr. White. What would you like to ask?"

Stephen took a moment, briefly shutting his eyes before rising, his demeanor commanding respect, embodying the poise of a decisive leader.

Beside him, Wendy's excitement was unmistakable as she clasped her hands to her chest in admiration.