

Wrath 121

Chapter 121:

“Mom, Sierra was simply misled by Janice,” Nellie interjected.

“Nellie...” Sierra wanted to defend her friend.

Nellie glared at Sierra, silently urging her to hold her tongue. Sierra bowed her head, her spirit dampened as the fiery resolve inside her began to wane.

Nellie continued to soothe her mother, gently patting Leonie’s hand. “Mom, as you witnessed earlier, Janice is both sharp and articulate. It’s quite understandable that Sierra, who lacks experience, was deceived. I promise to speak with her later. For now, let’s focus on maintaining our composure. You need to present yourself impeccably to the guests.”

Leonie exhaled deeply, massaging her temples as a sense of calm returned at Nellie’s reassuring words. “Nellie, you always manage to calm my concerns. Your sister has been overly independent at university. Once she graduates, I trust you’ll steer her in the right direction.”

“Yes.”

“By the way, how are things progressing with Kenneth?”

Leonie abruptly shifted her attention, catching Nellie by surprise. Nellie forced a smile and said, “Kenneth is quite the catch. He’s good-looking and ambitious, an ideal partner.”

Leonie’s expression brightened. “You seem to think highly of him. I’ll speak with his mother later, and perhaps you two can get married soon.”

Nellie kept up her smile, though her fists were clenched under the table.

The banquet then began, and guests commenced enjoying the evening's gourmet offerings.

As the attendees dined, a series of performances that Leonie had organized began to entertain them. The lineup included vocalists, dancers, and pianists, all enhancing the sophisticated vibe of the evening.

"Ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of our host for tonight's charity gala, Mrs. Ramirez, I extend our deepest appreciation for your attendance," the host said as he took the stage, preparing for the next part of the program. "Please join me in welcoming Mrs. Ramirez to the stage for her speech." The audience clapped enthusiastically.

Leonie stood, acknowledging them with a smile and a graceful nod, then proceeded to the stage.

"Dear guests, thank you for joining us tonight. This is the third charity gala I have organized. To me, it represents not just a social gathering but a tradition reflecting our dedication to kindness. The funds we've raised have supported many who are in need, and witnessing these individuals overcome their hardships is both touching and motivating. This reinforces the value of our efforts. I am committed to continuing this legacy of generosity throughout my life, even into my later years." The audience offered another round of applause.

Janice gave a lazy clap, having heard such overly formal speeches far too many times. She was eager to get to the auction, secure the item she wanted, and leave quickly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Ramirez, for that inspiring speech. We will now proceed to tonight's charity auction, where all proceeds will go to charity. Let's bring out the first item for auction." An usher appeared, carrying an antique vase.

Everyone present, with their keen eyes, quickly recognized it as a valuable piece, likely worth more than eight million. It was certainly no small amount.

“Before we begin, I’d like to extend our gratitude to Mr. Bart Green for his generous donation of this vase,” the host continued, pointing towards Bart as he was spotlighted. Bart acknowledged the applause with a refined smile, lifting his right hand.

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“Ah, so he secured his invitation by donating something so valuable,” Janice said, stroking her chin thoughtfully. “But how did an illegitimate son like him acquire such an expensive vase? Did Alcott provide it? How generous!”

Nina’s expression changed. She had been so focused on Leonie that she hadn’t noticed Bart until now. When she saw him, she was initially shocked, followed by a surge of fury as she confirmed the vase was indeed from Alcott.

“Alcott, you’ve really done something! You bought that vase for over eight million not long ago, only to pass it to your illegitimate son. How dare you!”

Janice and Aiden exchanged a glance, each recognizing the shared sense of schadenfreude in the other’s eyes. A confrontation seemed inevitable.

Unbeknownst to Bart, he was on the brink of facing serious repercussions for using the vase to gain entry to the gala.

“Nina, have some coffee.” Janice poured Nina a cup of coffee in an attempt to soothe her. “I suspect Alcott didn’t know about it. Bart probably took the vase without telling him.”

“Oh please, you think I don’t understand Alcott?” Nina sneered. “He needs to give me a proper explanation this time, or I won’t let it go.”

“Absolutely. We’ll confront him together when we return.”

“Janice, don’t try to persuade me. Wait, what?” Nina paused mid-sentence, staring at Janice in astonishment. “What did you just say?”

Janice laughed. “Nina, if you’re angry, let it out. It’s not worth getting sick over some worthless man.”

Aiden, who was about to drink water, choked on it in surprise at her bold words.

He looked at the two women, seeing Nina’s surprise turn into agreement. “Janice, you’re spot on! It’s not worth our health to stew over a worthless man. I’ll make sure he regrets it when we get back!”

“Nina, I’m with you all the way. I’ll provide whatever you need to take him down.”

Aiden swallowed hard, silently feeling sympathy for Alcott, no matter where he might be.

The auction then proceeded with the vase starting at five million and selling for seven million, which only intensified Nina’s rage. Had Janice not been keen on bidding for an item, Nina would have stormed out to confront Alcott by now.

“Next up for auction is a painting,” announced the host with a touch of mystery, gesturing towards a painting covered by a red cloth. “Ladies and gentlemen, any guesses on the artist?”

“Correct! It is indeed JE! This piece is one of JE’s rarest, the only known painting from her childhood.”

The room filled with an eager buzz of anticipation.

Many had heard rumors that JE’s childhood painting would appear at tonight’s charity gala.

Fans and major collectors of JE's work had gathered, swelling the event to a size larger than typical.

Leonie gracefully enjoyed her wine, reveling in the ambiance she had anticipated.

"Nellie, have you seen that painting?" Sierra asked with curiosity. Nellie shook her head, indifferent. "I've been tied up with other matters and haven't had a chance to see it." What was there to see in a child's scribble, anyway?

"I first learned about JE during college. She's an incredible designer. Was she as gifted as a child?" Sierra asked, intrigued by JE's early potential. She admired how a woman could command such respect from prominent figures across various fields.

Chapter 123:

Nellie smirked, her expression filled with disdain. In her eyes, JE was someone who stayed behind the scenes. Maybe it was all just a team effort. Those so-called world-famous works could very well have been created by an entire team.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is JE's childhood painting, 'Family,'" the host announced. As the red cloth was unveiled, a vivid and innocent artwork was revealed to all.

At a casual glance, it looked merely like a child's scribbling, but a closer inspection revealed a keen sense of color and structure. The artwork's precise details and harmonious colors imbued it with a comforting warmth.

"Remarkable, absolutely remarkable! No wonder JE rose to be a leading designer; her talent was apparent even in her youth."

"I heard this piece was created when JE was just three years old. Such skill at such a young age is truly remarkable."

“This painting evokes such warmth and nostalgia in me. It makes me want to visit my parents.”

The crowd was full of praise for JE’s childhood painting. Even Nellie, who had been cold at first, was briefly stunned by the artwork.

Out of nowhere, a heart-wrenching sob pierced the air, jolting Nellie back to the present. She turned to see Sierra, tears streaming down her face for reasons unknown.

“What’s the matter?” Nellie asked, her brow furrowing with a hint of annoyance.

Sierra shook her head. “I can’t explain it. When I laid eyes on that painting, it felt like a weight settled in my chest. Even with Mom and Dad right here...”

She hesitated, casting a fleeting glance at Leonie, who was reveling in the admiration of the crowd. Oblivious to Sierra’s tears, Leonie basked in the spotlight.

Nellie gazed at the painting once more, and a deep sense of yearning and sorrow gripped her heart. In that instant, she grasped Sierra’s sorrow; the painting encapsulated a longing that felt just out of reach, and therein lay the root of their shared sadness.

“Now, let the auction commence.” With a swift motion, the host raised the gavel, striking it with authority. “We’ll start the bidding at five million, with increments of no less than one hundred thousand.”

“Six million.”

Before the host could finish, a steady voice cut through the air. All eyes turned to its source.

It was Janice, sitting tall and resolute, her gaze locked onto the painting on display.

Aiden shot a glance at Janice, his lips pressed into a tight line, sensing a mix of sadness and resolve in her eyes.

“Seven million!” Another bid came in.

It was Bart!

Bart shot a daring glance in Janice’s direction, silently challenging her to claim the painting. After enduring a fair share of embarrassment just now, he was determined not to let Janice waltz in and take the upper hand this time.

“Eight million!” Janice announced with cool composure, without casting a single glance at Bart. Her full attention was captivated by the painting before her.

“Nine million!”

In this round, Nellie made the bid.

“Nellie?” Sierra gasped, her jaw dropping in bewilderment as she turned to face Nellie. “Didn’t you seem to care little for the painting a moment ago? What’s with the sudden urge to bid?”

Chapter 124:

“Nellie?” Leonie furrowed her brow, a look of confusion crossing her face as she turned her gaze to Nellie.

Nellie pursed her lips for a moment before breaking into a grin. “Kenneth just became the head of Delgado Jewelry. I have a feeling that gifting this to him would bring him so much joy.”

Leonie’s expression softened right away. “Nellie, I can see how much you’ve developed. You have my support.”

“Thank you, Mom.”

Sierra furrowed her brow and regarded Nellie thoughtfully. Her instincts suggested that there was more to Nellie’s motivation for bidding on the painting than she had let on.

“Ten million.”

This time, the bid was made by Kenneth, who had previously remained quiet.

The atmosphere in the venue slowly grew more intense, as each individual present embodied considerable influence.

Those who understood the situation stayed quiet, choosing not to bid, even if they liked JE’s childhood painting. They didn’t want to get caught in the struggle for power.

“Thirteen million.” Janice remained unflinching, her expression unchanged as she placed her bid.

“Janice.”

“Hmm?” Janice turned to face Aiden, locking eyes with his intense and thoughtful gaze.

“Do you find this painting to be significant to you?” he inquired.

“Yes,” Janice acknowledged with a nod and turned her gaze back to the painting. “It’s quite significant.”

"I understand." Aiden exchanged a glance with Braylen, and without a word, Braylen stepped forward, pushing his wheelchair towards the stage.

"Aiden, what are you doing?" Janice asked hurriedly as she understood what was going on.

But Aiden didn't respond to her. He lounged in his wheelchair, his face serious, like a king who, even with his struggles, still radiated power and dignity.

Nina placed a comforting hand on Janice's and, while gazing at Aiden, said softly, "Janice, it's obvious that Aiden deeply values you."

Janice was utterly confused. How could this be his way of cherishing her? What on earth was Aiden planning?

Everyone turned their attention to Aiden as he made his way onto the stage, their expressions revealing surprise and curiosity about his intentions. At that moment, Leonie's expression darkened. She considered the auction her territory, and Aiden's move was offensive. Nellie, Kenneth, and Bart were all wondering what Aiden was planning to do.

"Sir, can I help you with anything?" the host asked, offering a polite smile to Aiden.

Aiden didn't answer him. He leaned back slightly in his wheelchair, propping his cheek with his right hand while his left hand rested on the handle, exuding a relaxed yet commanding presence. His penetrating gaze seemed to survey everyone there with a touch of disdain.

Suddenly, Braylen raised his hand and mimicked a gun with his fingers, pointing it at the crowd. The audience's expressions shifted at the gesture. Was he going to raise the stakes?

Chapter 125:

"Sir, are you planning to raise the stakes?" the host asked, his voice wavering a bit, aware of the implications of such a move at the auction. Raising the stakes at an auction is a bold play,

typically reserved for the very wealthy. It means committing to outbid others, regardless of how high the price escalates, until securing the item.

“Ladies and gentlemen, my wife has taken a liking to this painting. To make her happy, I must raise the stakes,” Aiden said calmly. His tone was moderate, but his words carried across the room, clear to all.

At that moment, Janice looked at Aiden with mixed emotions. She hadn’t expected Aiden to raise the stakes just to win the painting for her.

“Janice, do you see?” Nina asked emotionally, watching Aiden on stage. “Aiden really cherishes you. I’ve never seen him treat anyone else with such affection in all these years.”

Janice offered a hesitant smile. Her marriage to Aiden was simply a business arrangement. With Aiden making such a scene now, how would they manage the situation if they were to divorce in the future?

“I wonder if Aiden is being too spontaneous,” Janice murmured, feeling a bit lost. “Won’t raising the stakes in front of Mrs. Ramirez offend her?”

Nina laughed and said, “Janice, it seems you still don’t fully understand.”

“Hmm?” Janice looked at Nina, clearly puzzled.

“First off, the Green family isn’t concerned about offending anyone, not even Leonie. And Aiden’s gesture isn’t just about securing the painting for you; it’s also a display of his support for you.”

Upon hearing this, Janice suddenly grasped the situation.

“When you were with the Edwards family, you had their name to bolster your standing, and people wouldn’t dare dismiss you lightly. But since being excluded by the Edwards family, even though you’re now with the Green family, many still believe Aiden only married you for his grandfather’s shares. They don’t really respect you.”

Janice was actually aware of this. Earlier, when she interacted with Leonie, Leonie hadn’t even made proper eye contact with her.

“Aiden is making it clear to everyone that you are his cherished wife!”

Janice turned her gaze to Aiden, feeling a surge of warmth. On stage, Aiden looked relaxed and in control, lounging in his wheelchair, yet his presence was as commanding as ever. Perhaps touched by his actions, Janice now saw Aiden in a more attractive light than before.

The crowd fell into a prolonged silence. While they were captivated by JE’s childhood artwork and ready to invest heavily, defying Aiden and the influential Green family for a single painting seemed reckless. Despite Aiden’s disability, his position as the Green family heir meant he still embodied their powerful legacy.

Confronting such a towering institution as the Green family? They would rather face the other three major families instead. Kenneth’s gaze darkened as he observed Aiden, his eyes filled with curiosity as he attempted to discern Aiden’s intentions. Was he really going to great lengths just to win Janice’s favor?

Janice sat nearby, under the soft glow of ambient lighting. Her presence was luminous, overshadowing even the most extravagant women around her with her quiet radiance. Kenneth turned away, a sigh escaping him. Whatever complexities surrounded Aiden and Janice’s union, Aiden’s discerning taste was undeniable.

“Aiden is really something!” Sierra commented, her gaze fixed on Aiden as he dominated the stage, her admiration evident yet distinctly non-romantic. She couldn’t help but envy Janice, cherished so deeply by a man, and admired her resolve to chase her true desires.

Chapter 126:

Turning, Sierra was about to share this thought with her. However, she noticed Nellie's ashen face. Dread settled heavily in her stomach, as she remembered Nellie's long-held affection for Aiden. Now, with Aiden tied to Janice and having gone to great lengths for her, the realization must have struck Nellie with crushing force.

Sierra paused, the right words eluding her, and she chose silence instead. She decided it was best to tread lightly around Nellie. Any attempt to comfort Nellie might provoke her temper, and she wasn't eager to face Nellie's wrath.

Nellie's heart ached profoundly. In the past, she had worked tirelessly to become the pride of the Ramirez family, all in the hopes of being closer to Aiden. The Ramirez and Green families seemed like a perfect match—everything about their union had felt possible.

But life had other plans. A car accident had turned Aiden, once the embodiment of strength and success, into someone the world now labeled as disabled.

The Ramirez family, ever pragmatic, would never permit her to marry a man who might lose his heir status at any moment. Yet, for Nellie, Aiden's condition didn't matter to her; he was the man she had always loved, regardless of his circumstances. But what could she do? Her life was no longer her own. It was inextricably tied to the interests of the Ramirez family. To them, she wasn't a person with hopes and dreams—she was a bargaining chip.

"Nellie, what are you doing?"

Leonie's sharp voice snapped Nellie out of her reverie. Nellie looked down and realized, to her shock, that she had unconsciously reached to place a bid.

"Aiden has already raised the stakes. Bidding now is pointless. And if you're thinking of raising the price just to spite him, you'll only end up offending the Green family." Leonie's cold gaze turned to Aiden, who remained poised and resolute on the stage. "I underestimated Janice. I never imagined Aiden would go to such extremes for her."

She had undeniably underestimated Janice before. How could a woman, cast out by the Edwards family, possibly command her respect? And yet, Aiden's actions forced her to see Janice in a new light. Without the support of the Edwards family, Janice still had the unwavering backing of the Green family. If their marriage were simply a matter of convenience, there was no way Aiden would go to such extraordinary lengths for her.

Meanwhile, Bart toyed with the idea of raising the price, just to needle Aiden. But he knew better. Such a move would undoubtedly provoke a stern rebuke from Alcott and risk Nina's ire. Reluctantly, he held back, suppressing his spiteful impulse. As for the rest of the crowd, they didn't dare to challenge Aiden.

In the end, Aiden won the painting for thirteen million. Janice achieved her goal and, even more importantly, earned the respect of the crowd. From that day forward, everyone in high society would remember one truth: Janice was not a mere pawn in the game of shares, but Aiden's rightful wife through and through. The atmosphere was peaceful on the deck of the Starlit Club.

Janice sat by the pool, gazing up at the night sky, completely relaxed. The painting, valued in the tens of millions, lay unattended beside her. Aiden, positioned behind her, watched as she beamed a joyful smile towards the heavens. It was a spontaneous, radiant smile.

"Thank you, Aiden," Janice said as she turned around, running her fingers through her hair. "Thank you for securing this painting for me."

She lifted the painting beside her, and as she looked at the family portrayed in it, her eyes shimmered with a mix of sorrow and resentment. "Thirteen million for this painting is really excessive. I'll give you the money."

Aiden raised an eyebrow and responded casually, "Do you think the money means a lot to me?"

Chapter 127:

“Your mother mentioned that money is the one thing you never worry about. Thirteen million might be negligible to you, but I can’t stand to see you squander such an amount.” Aiden looked puzzled. “What do you mean by that?”

“Do you know why I was so determined to acquire this painting?” Janice continued, her gaze turning from melancholy and bitterness to sharp resolve. “It’s because I want to say goodbye to my past.”

With those words, Janice pulled out a lighter and, without a second thought, set the painting ablaze right in front of Aiden. Aiden’s eyes narrowed as he watched the fierce flames devour the painting, consuming the family portrayed within it under Janice’s hands. First the father, then the mother...

As the fire reached the midpoint, Janice threw the painting aside, watching emotionlessly as it burned completely to ashes. She had created this artwork with a heart full of hope and yearning for her family. Yet, after reuniting with them, she discovered they were far from what she had envisioned.

They were cold, selfish, greedy, and ignorant, and over time, they slowly shattered her idea of what a family should be. Reflecting on the past year, Janice felt naive. Although she had been framed by Delilah and punished by the Edwards family so many times, she had clung to the faint hope that they would recognize her value. But in the end, her hope only deepened her disappointment. She had fully awakened, relinquishing any fantasies about her family. At that moment, all she desired was for them to face the consequences of their ignorance and foolishness, providing her some solace after enduring a year of suffering.

“You said you wanted to say goodbye to your past by burning this painting, Janice. Does this mean...?”

“Huh?” Janice snapped back to reality and looked at Aiden in horror.

Holy crap! Had she given herself away? Aiden must have pieced together that she was the artist behind the painting—JE.

“Did JE give you this painting? Were you both at the same orphanage?” Aiden asked.

“Huh? Yes!” Janice quickly nodded, a sense of relief flooding through her. “We were really close friends back then. She knew how much I yearned for a family, so she painted this for me. Later, when the orphanage faced financial troubles, I had no choice but to sell the painting to help them out.”

She really nailed it with that response. Her explanation was practically perfect. She hoped Aiden wouldn’t catch on that she was improvising.

“It seems your connection with JE must be pretty special. No wonder you were ready to offer thirteen million earlier. I suppose JE gave you the money too?” Aiden asked.

Janice nodded vigorously. She truly admired Aiden’s imagination. The gaps in her story, which she hadn’t yet figured out how to fill, were effortlessly completed by him.

“Yes, we’re like sisters. She always said once she made it big, she’d make enough money for both of us to enjoy. All I need to do is relax and live a carefree life.”

Aiden laughed, folding his arms as he regarded Janice. “Being JE’s best friend alone should have made the Edwards family think twice before disowning you. But what’s your plan now?”

Janice smirked, leaning back and propping herself up with her hands as she looked up at the night sky. “I want the Edwards family to lose everything and live with regret. I want them to see Delilah for who she really is. After how they’ve disgusted me this past year, they’re going to pay for it.”

Aiden sighed, coming to the realization that she was a woman who held grudges. He knew he had to be careful not to upset her.

Chapter 128:

“Care for a drink? I’m in quite a good mood and could use one,” Janice suggested.

“Sure.”

“Just wait here for me, then.”

Janice stood, straightened her attire, and walked back towards the event. Aiden remained seated alone, his gaze fixed on the small heap of ashes nearby, deep in thought.

“Mr. Green.” A woman’s voice came over.

Aiden snapped back to reality and turned to the voice, watching as Nellie approached slowly.

His expression hardened, his tone cold as he said, “Miss Ramirez, shouldn’t you be busy hosting? How do you find the time to roam around here?”

Nellie compressed her lips, sensing from Aiden’s tone that he was not in the mood for small talk. Yet, she pressed on with questions she felt compelled to ask. “Are you serious about your relationship with Janice?”

Aiden narrowed his eyes and smirked at Nellie. “What does that concern you?”

“If it’s merely a strategic marriage to acquire shares you’re after, I could serve that role too,” Nellie suggested, her voice tense. “She’s just a girl disowned by her family. What claim does she have to stand beside you? I believe my involvement could lend more credibility and expedite your acquisition of the shares.”

The very idea of Nellie stooping to partake in Aiden’s scheme was demeaning. If word got out, it would undoubtedly disgrace the Ramirez family. But driven by her fixation, Nellie was willing to

gamble. She felt that if she didn't express her feelings now, she might lose Aiden to someone else forever.

Aiden turned his wheelchair to squarely face Nellie, his look intensifying, cold, and piercing.

Nellie met his gaze and suddenly felt a surge of fear. Aiden hadn't said a word yet, but his eyes communicated everything she feared.

"Nellie Ramirez, what makes you think you have the right to challenge my decisions?"

Aiden's words struck Nellie like sharp needles piercing her heart. Her face turned pale, and her vision blurred as the weight of his cruelty sank in. How could the man she had admired for so long, the one she had held in such high esteem, be capable of saying something so devastating?

"Aiden, you're going too far!" Nellie cried, her fists clenched, her voice trembling with a mix of anguish and fury. "Am I really worth less to you than a disowned daughter from the Edwards family?"

"What gives you the right to compare yourself to her?" That single sentence left Nellie reeling, her words stuck in her throat.

Aiden's index finger lazily tapped against the armrest of his wheelchair, the soft rhythm echoing the finality in his tone. "I've already told you—who do you think you are to matter to me? We've only met a handful of times, exchanged nothing more than pleasantries, yet you dare to believe you deserve to stand by my side?"

Nellie felt her composure slipping. His words crushed her, grinding her pride and dignity into dust.

As fragments of the past flickered through her mind, she realized how shallow her connection to him truly was. Their interactions were fleeting: overheard conversations among elders, polite

nods at events, stolen glances from across crowded rooms. Yet, even in those brief moments, she had fallen for him—drawn to his presence, captivated by the aura he exuded.

“Huh.” Aiden chuckled.

Chapter 129:

“Why are you laughing?” Nellie stared at him, trying to decode the hint of mockery she now saw in his eyes.

“I’m laughing because you’ve let yourself be blinded by something as fleeting as infatuation.”

Nellie froze for a moment, her teeth sinking into her lower lip. “So, you’re saying I’m not good enough?”

Aiden frowned slightly. He hadn’t anticipated the depth of her infatuation, which seemed to surpass all reason.

Despite his disdain, Nellie refused to waver. She had convinced herself that her supposed lack of excellence was the only reason she hadn’t earned his attention.

“Miss Ramirez, you really should get your head checked,” Aiden said bluntly, shaking his head with a flicker of exasperation crossing his face. “I don’t want to continue this conversation. Please, leave.”

“Aiden, I won’t give up.” Nellie stood her ground, her dim eyes now glowing with fierce determination. “I will do everything possible to stand by your side. I’ll become so exceptional that you won’t be able to refuse me.”

Her love-struck mind had spiraled beyond reason, clinging to her resolve despite the harsh reality before her.

Taking a deep breath, Nellie turned to leave, but froze when she came face-to-face with Janice.

Janice had just returned, carrying a bottle of red wine and two glasses. She blinked, an awkward smile spreading across her face. “Did I interrupt something?”

“No,” Aiden replied smoothly before Nellie could speak. He offered Janice a gentle smile. “Miss Ramirez was simply asking my thoughts about the charity gala.”

“She is truly dedicated,” Janice remarked with a warm smile. “She’s poured her heart and soul into making us feel welcome.”

Nellie’s attention turned to Aiden. His gaze towards Janice was soft, brimming with tenderness and affection—a stark contrast to the cold, dismissive way he looked at her.

The difference was unbearable, each glance from him cutting deeper into her pride.

Why?

She was the daughter of the prestigious Ramirez family, blessed with beauty, status, and dual degrees in finance. By every standard, she was exceptional. And yet, Janice—a disowned daughter of the Edwards family with no noteworthy status—was the one standing by Aiden’s side. How could Janice compare to her? How could Janice be the one he chose as his wife?

Janice, unaware of Nellie’s darkening expression, waved the wine bottle in her hand towards Aiden with a carefree smile. She brushed past Nellie.

At that moment, something snapped within Nellie. A cold, calculating glint flashed in her eyes. Without a word, she stepped forward and gave Janice a sudden shove, sending her stumbling toward the nearby pool.

Caught off guard and with her hands full, Janice couldn't regain her balance. Her gasp of surprise was cut short as she fell, the splash echoing loudly in the silence.

"Janice!" Aiden shouted, his voice filled with urgency. His hands gripped the armrests of his wheelchair as he was about to stand.

Aiden was just getting to his feet when he saw a figure dart into the pool, rushing to Janice's rescue.

Clutching the armrests of his wheelchair tightly, Aiden slowly eased himself back down, his gaze reflecting a mix of emotions.

Chapter 130:

"Janice, are you okay?" Kenneth asked with concern as he helped her to the pool's edge.

"I'm fine," Janice reassured him, catching her breath before turning to Nellie, who seemed stunned by her own impulsive act.

Janice expressed her thanks to Kenneth, then deftly climbed out of the pool on her own.

Watching her move so effortlessly, Kenneth realized he might have overreacted. Janice knew how to swim; she wasn't in any danger of drowning.

Reflecting on his actions, he felt slightly bewildered. He had initially stepped out for some air when he saw Nellie shove Janice into the pool. At that moment, for reasons he couldn't understand, his heart tightened. Without a second thought, he rushed over and dove into the pool, not hesitating for an instant.

Kenneth glanced at his hands, which still seemed to hold the gentle warmth from Janice's touch.

A sharp slap shattered the moment, pulling Kenneth back to the present.

He looked up to see Nellie holding her cheek, staring at Janice in shock. "You dare hit me?"

"What if I did?" Janice, completely drenched, maintained her poise and elegance despite her soaked appearance.

At that moment, someone handed her a towel.

Janice looked at Aiden, nodded her thanks, and took the towel before refocusing on Nellie.

"You confessed to Aiden and he refused you. Why drag me into your mess?" Janice confronted Nellie without holding back, publicly shaming her. "Honestly, if Aiden gave you any attention with your current sense of judgment, I'd question his sanity."

Aiden, unexpectedly dragged into the fray, touched his bracelet, quietly thankful for his clear-headed decision-making.

"Janice, shut up!" Nellie hissed through clenched teeth. "You're nothing but a reject from the Edwards family, with no real standing. How dare you align yourself with Aiden?"

As she dried her hair, Janice responded with a mocking laugh. "Well, sorry to disappoint you, but this lowly Edwards family outcast has become Aiden's wife. What can you do besides throw a tantrum? Oh, you could also pretend to be the victim, play the helpless one, and try to seduce Aiden with manipulative charm. Maybe..."

“Ahem!” Aiden interrupted, giving Janice a sharp look. “Alright, my husband doesn’t appreciate manipulative flirts, so it’s best you leave.”

Janice glanced over at Kenneth. “I once thought you and I would be a good match, but now, you don’t even deserve him.”

Kenneth was caught off guard. How had he been pulled into this mess? Was that supposed to be a compliment from Janice? While he pondered, he felt two intense stares directed at him. Looking up, he caught Aiden’s stern gaze.

Kenneth offered a courteous smile, but Aiden’s look remained unyielding and indifferent.

Kenneth frowned, wondering why Aiden seemed suddenly antagonistic. He hadn’t done anything to provoke such a reaction.

Meanwhile, Nellie was in a daze.

Janice’s biting remarks felt like a brutal assault on her pride. Being rejected and humiliated by Aiden had already been painful enough, and now she was being told she wasn’t even worthy of Kenneth.