

Wrath 1261

Chapter 1261:

Up without exception. Now, most of the royal family threw their support behind Lancelot.

Lancelot, once immature and reckless, had started to shed his youthful illusions. He was learning the ropes of ruling a kingdom. He and Eleanor had even chosen a date for their wedding.

Despite all the shame Eleanor had endured, Lancelot never looked down on her. Quite the opposite—he treasured her more than ever, handling her with care and reverence. At last, he was becoming the kind of man who could carry a crown without stumbling.

This brought Elizabeth a sliver of peace.

At least she hadn't been wrong about him. Once this young man found his footing, he was bound to become a king of undeniable greatness.

A servant announced, "Your Majesty, RAIN is here."

Elizabeth gave a faint nod and turned, her eyes softening as Janice approached in a flowing white dress.

"RAIN, you've been through a lot these past few days."

"Not at all, Your Majesty." Janice gave a graceful bow and sat beside her. "It's an honor to ease your burden."

Elizabeth smiled faintly. "It's just the two of us here—no need for formalities. Honestly, it took a lot of courage to make the choice I did."

Janice's smile faded, her expression turning solemn. "Your Majesty, you are wise and far-seeing. I know this decision wasn't made lightly, but I truly believe it will lead to a better future."

After a brief pause, she added, “There’s no need to shoulder guilt or regret. In the end, everyone walks their own path.”

Elizabeth shook her head, a bitter smile tugging at her lips. She understood Janice’s words—Wells had made his own bed.

But no matter what he’d done, Wells was still the child she had carried for nine long months. Watching him fall so far, how could any mother stay untouched?

Yet she was not only a mother—she was also a queen. And a queen must bear the weight of an entire nation. If she placed her son above her people, she’d betray every soul who trusted her.

For the greater good, for the sake of her people, she had no choice. She had to turn her back on Wells, no matter how it tore at her heart.

“Your Majesty, I understand your pain. But you gave Wells more chances than anyone deserved. He never took them. He sealed his own fate.”

Elizabeth took a slow sip of coffee, her voice like a whisper in the wind. “As you said, maybe I’ve been a capable queen, but I’ve failed as a mother. If I’d spent more time guiding Wells, perhaps he wouldn’t have strayed so far.”

Janice gently shook her head. “Life is full of unexpected turns. We can never truly control another’s fate. Look at Lancelot and Wells—they were raised under the same roof, yet their fates couldn’t be more different.”

Elizabeth fell silent, lost in thought, before a soft smile returned to her lips. “RAIN, your musical genius is unmatched, but I see now—you have the soul of a healer.”

“Surely, you can’t be serious. I only brought it up casually. Understanding my point, though, rests with you,” Janice responded, her smile softening. “Your Majesty, you know what your heart tells you. I am merely here to confirm that instinct.”

Chapter 1262:

A sense of relief appeared on Elizabeth’s face as she lifted her cup for a sip. “You have my complete support. After all, you’ve helped me a lot.”

“Thank you, Your Majesty.”

With the queen’s endorsement secured, the decline of the Welch family seemed imminent.

Over the following days, Janice and Nina seized the opportunity to relax and delve into the local delights of Aerith.

In the meantime, Aiden and Alcott found themselves laden with shopping bags, the result of the women’s enthusiastic purchases. Despite the physical exhaustion, the joy on the women’s faces made their efforts worthwhile.

A line of high-end vehicles was parked outside a villa in Efrery. When the car doors opened, a group of individuals dressed in formal attire emerged and gathered at the entrance.

They moved with a commanding presence, yet their faces were marked by a deep, lingering worry—one that seemed impossible to erase.

“Is Dad truly here?” Mateo asked, his expression somber.

“Absolutely! We’ve verified it. He is indeed living in seclusion here,” said a companion.

Mateo took a deep breath, feeling a surge of frustration. The idea of Orson hiding in Efrery was unexpected.

If the Welch family weren't already in such dire straits, with disaster breathing down their necks, he would never have come to beg Orson for help.

But then, he was surprised to find that Orson was no longer in Cloverhill.

A meticulous search had led them to discover Orson's secluded residence at Cloudridge Villa in Efrery.

Realizing that both Janice and Aiden originated from Efrery, Mateo felt deeply unsettled. It seemed as though Orson had abandoned the Welch family.

"Has he chosen Stephen and Janice over the Welch family?" he murmured.

Anxiety filled Mateo as he squinted, his hands tightening into fists. If Orson had indeed sided with the White siblings, forsaking the Welch family, what would their fate be?

Considering Orson's pivotal role in elevating the Welch family to its prestigious position, Mateo guessed Orson could not simply observe its downfall.

Mateo exhaled deeply and exchanged a significant glance with Calvin and Jensen.

Jensen had been confined to bed for several days and had only just awoken. His complexion was still pale and weak, far from fully healed. Their doctor had expressed concerns about Jensen's recovery, cautioning him against any strenuous efforts to prevent further serious complications.

Effectively, Jensen had become a mere fragment of the man he once was, no longer able to live as he had before.

Boxing had been Jensen's passion, and the inability to fight in the ring now seemed like a life-ending verdict.

Calvin, now missing an arm, had turned contemplative and moody, a stark contrast to his once assertive demeanor.

Chapter 1263:

Moreover, since the accident, Calvin's moods had grown increasingly unpredictable, often resulting in outbursts of anger toward the household staff.

Gilmore had been taken for questioning over allegations of illegal substance use and instigating a diplomatic scandal—a grave accusation.

Despite their status, the Welch family found themselves powerless, forced to silently endure the situation.

Mateo had heard from reliable sources that Gilmore's imprisonment was inevitable, and its duration would probably be influenced by the White family's preferences. This reality was a source of deep humiliation for Mateo.

Historically, the Welch family had been a powerful influence, often managing to extricate members from trouble with minimal effort. Now, they were powerless to defend even their own, turning them into a mockery among their peers.

The Welch family's stability was now as dangerous as a house of cards, vulnerable to any disturbance.

Mateo was both physically and mentally drained, the relentless stress causing sleepless nights. He hadn't managed to sleep at all recently. Every attempt at rest was disrupted by nightmares of corruption within his family or unceasing assaults on their business interests by rivals.

At that moment, Jensen approached the gate and rang the bell.

"Who is it?" came a voice from within.

"It's Mateo Welch. I need to speak with my father," he declared.

"You've got the wrong place," the man said, his cold voice tinged with disdain, which Mateo could clearly hear.

Mateo's expression hardened as he continued, "I have verified that he is residing here in solitude. The Welch family faces severe threats. We need his help urgently."

"No visitors." The response came without delay, clear and absolute.

Mateo's face clouded over, the color draining from his expression as the cold rejection sank in. He had come all this way to see his own father, only to be turned away.

He took a step back and lifted his gaze to the locked gate. "Father, I know you're in there! I don't know why you've locked yourself away in this place, but the Welch family is hanging by a thread. Please, help us out of this mess before it's too late."

As soon as the words left his mouth, he turned to Calvin and Jensen, who stood tense and silent by his side.

They understood without needing a cue, and began calling out to Orson as well.

"Grandpa, it's me, Calvin. We've come to see you." A trace of bitterness laced Calvin's tone. How had it come to this? They shared blood, yet now they stood on opposite sides of a closed gate.

Jensen followed. "Grandpa, it's Jensen. All the core members of the Welch family are here. We're not here to cause trouble. We just want to see you. Please, let us in."

They called again and again, but the villa remained silent, as if no one lived there at all.

Chapter 1264:

Mateo's composure cracked. He was so frustrated that he slammed his foot against the gate, hard. Then he sat on the curb, muttering under his breath, and lit a cigarette.

But before the first puff left his lips, Alissa stepped forward with a pout. "Dad, Grandpa doesn't like the smell of smoke."

Mateo froze, cigarette halfway to his mouth, and turned in surprise to see Alissa watching him. "How do you know that?"

Alissa had been little more than an afterthought in this ordeal. When he told his two sons to call out to Orson, he hadn't even considered letting Alissa join them.

She was a woman, an outsider even within her own bloodline—tolerated only because she bore the Welch name. But now, for the first time, he looked at her differently.

"I used to visit Grandpa and chat with him often, so I know a bit about his habits," Alissa answered honestly.

Mateo's eyes flickered with a sliver of hope. "Alissa, you try. You used to be close to him. Maybe he'll want to see you."

"Are you sure?" Alissa asked, a little nervous.

"Just do it! Don't waste time," Mateo said, frowning as he nudged her forward.

She nodded, steadying herself with a breath, then stepped to the gate and pressed the bell. "Grandpa, it's Alissa. May I come in?"

There was a beat of silence. Then at last, the man who had stood at the gate as a messenger relented. "You may come in."

A rush of excitement swept through Mateo and his sons. Who would have thought the invisible one—the one person they'd overlooked—would be their ticket?

The heavy gate creaked open. Mateo instinctively took a step forward, but the man's voice snapped out again, firm and final. "Only Alissa is allowed in. No one else is to set foot past the gate."

Mateo's face tightened, his pride pricked. For a moment, it looked like he might argue, but then he caught himself. One wrong move, and Orson might refuse to meet him ever again. "Alissa, once you're inside, you must convince your grandpa. Be honest. Don't sugarcoat the truth—tell him exactly how dire things are. Do you understand?"

"I understand." Alissa gave a determined nod, then walked in.

Meanwhile, Janice and Aiden had just returned from Aerith. But instead of flying straight to Cloverhill, they landed in Efrery.

Janice wanted to visit her hometown—so many familiar faces, so many memories etched into the streets.

But barely had their plane touched down when her phone buzzed.

"Janice, have you landed yet?" Leah's voice came through tight with urgency, catching Janice off guard.

"Leah? What's going on? Don't tell me the Welch family's causing trouble again."

"It's them. They're trying to pull Orson in to bail them out. Somehow, they've tracked him down. Now the whole family's gone to Clouddridge Villa."

Chapter 1265:

Janice's expression changed sharply. She turned to Aiden, who had already caught the signal in her eyes.

“I’ll take care of it,” he said, already pulling out his phone. He called Colson.

Within minutes, transportation was arranged. A car would pick them up and take them straight to Mount Cloudridge.

Nina and Alcott had initially offered to come along, but Janice gently declined. This wasn’t their burden to share. The entanglement between the White and Welch families was long, bitter, and personal.

Though Nina was worried sick, she didn’t argue. She knew Janice well enough to recognize her resolve. With a reluctant nod, she and Alcott went back to take care of the wedding preparations.

Meanwhile, over at Cloudridge Villa, Alissa stepped through the gate. The air was fragrant with blooming flowers, birdsong drifting lazily through the trees. But the peace only fueled her resentment.

The Welch family was out there, barely holding it together, hounded from all directions, while Orson was lounging here living the life. How was that fair?

The old man once led the Welch family. Could he really just stand by and watch them fall apart?

“Ms. Welch, this way, please,” a man said, interrupting her bitter thoughts with a polite gesture.

She masked her frustration with a nod and followed. Now wasn’t the time to spark conflict. They still needed Orson—whether they liked it or not.

Soon, they reached the courtyard.

And there Orson was. For a moment, Alissa forgot why she’d come. The sight of him—the familiar silhouette in the garden—hit her like a memory slipping through time. She was a child again, racing barefoot across the grass, laughing as she chased the man who once felt like the world.

“Grandpa.” Alissa stood before Orson, her voice a soft whisper of uncertainty as she greeted him.

Orson didn’t spare her a glance. He sat there, sipping his coffee slowly, his eyes locked on the pond ahead, where vibrant fish danced in a swirling frenzy beneath the surface.

His gaze was as unyielding as a mountain range, devoid of even the slightest tremor of emotion.

Alissa felt the full weight of his authority bearing down on her, as if the air itself had thickened. Every breath seemed like a forbidden act, and she stood frozen, her pulse pounding in her ears, waiting for his next word.

Though Orson had long since stepped down from his role as the family patriarch, his presence still commanded reverence and obedience, an unspoken force that made defiance feel like an impossible notion.

“Sit,” Orson finally said after a long stretch of silence.

Alissa exhaled a breath she didn’t realize she’d been holding, the tension in her chest finally releasing. She’d half expected to be left standing there until nightfall. Thankfully, Orson wasn’t the coldhearted figure her nerves had painted him to be.

Without a word, he poured a cup of coffee and handed it to her. Alissa accepted it with both hands, her surprise barely contained. She whispered a quick thank you.

Chapter 1266:

“There’s no need to be so nervous,” Orson said with a faint smile, and just like that, the tension in the air seemed to melt away. Alissa felt a small knot of anxiety loosen in her chest.

“You’re my granddaughter, Alissa. Blood binds us, no matter the storm.”

“Grandpa, the Welch family is hanging by a thread right now. I’m afraid you’re the only one who can pull us back from the brink,” Alissa blurted, echoing Mateo’s urgent plea.

Orson’s smile slipped away like a mask, his eyes narrowing as he took another slow sip of coffee. “Is that your idea, or Mateo’s?”

Alissa blinked, caught off guard by the question. “It’s Dad’s,” she replied honestly.

“And what about you?” Orson’s gaze shifted, locking with hers. “Do you want me to step in and save the Welch family?”

Alissa’s heart skipped a beat. The question hung in the air, thick with meaning, as confusion flickered behind her eyes. “Grandpa, I...”

“Think carefully,” Orson interrupted, his hand rising in a casual wave that silenced her. His eyes returned to the pond, the moment stretching taut like the calm before a storm. “Give me an answer when you’re sure.”

Alissa’s mind raced, her brow furrowing as she tried to make sense of his words. The Welch family was teetering on the edge of ruin. Who among them wouldn’t want to salvage this crumbling legacy?

Yet, deep inside, Alissa couldn’t help but question—did she truly want to save it at all?

Outside, Mateo’s anxiety was growing with each passing minute. Thirty minutes had slipped by since Alissa entered, and there hadn’t been a single word.

Not even a hint of progress. He had no clue if Alissa had managed to sway Orson, or if she was even making an effort at all.

“Dad, what now?” Calvin’s voice broke through the stillness, laced with growing concern. “Are we just going to wait here?”

“What choice do we have?” Mateo let out a cold, bitter laugh, his voice tinged with resignation. “Father is our last lifeline. If we can’t get back in his good graces, the Welch family might as well prepare for bankruptcy.”

Bankruptcy would be the least of their problems. The debts they were drowning in had the power to destroy them completely.

Calvin knew all too well how dire the situation was, and with each passing moment, his anxiety only deepened.

Orson was the gatekeeper to every crucial connection they had, and those power players would only move at his word. If he chose to stay silent, they’d watch the Welch family crumble without lifting a finger. They couldn’t have cared less about the Welch family itself—what mattered was Orson.

Most importantly, with the White family closing in, only Orson had the pull to convince Janice to back off.

Just then, another motorcade crept into view.

Mateo’s face tightened the instant he spotted it, and a wave of tension rippled through the group, as if a formidable enemy had just arrived.

They had come from Cloverhill, and while the Welch name still held some weight, they were now on unfamiliar ground—someone else’s turf. Their very presence was a gamble. If they were exposed...

Chapter 1267:

The convoy screeched to a halt.

To Mateo’s disbelief, Janice and Aiden stepped out of one of the cars, and the air seemed to grow heavier with their presence.

They radiated an undeniable power, their mere presence causing the hearts of the Welch family members to race with fear.

Once, the Welch family had been the ones who struck fear into others. Now, these two—Janice and Aiden—had become their living nightmare.

“Mr. Welch, what brings you to Efrery for a visit?” Janice said, her voice smooth, yet her eyes glinted with a sharp, almost playful malice. Her words were veiled in politeness, but to Mateo, they carried an unmistakable challenge.

“Janice, we’re here only to see my father. We have no intention of causing any trouble,” Mateo responded, invoking Orson’s name like a shield, hoping it would keep her in check.

Janice’s gaze hardened. Aiden raised his hand, and in an instant, a group of bodyguards spilled from the cars, surrounding the Welch family in a tightening circle.

“Janice, what the hell do you think you’re doing?” Mateo barked, his voice rising with fury, his neck veins straining. Was she seriously going to make her move right in front of Orson?

The rest of the Welch family stood frozen, their faces pale with horror, panic radiating from every pore. It had been a while since they’d felt this kind of fear, and now that it had come rushing back, it was sharper, more suffocating, more overwhelming than they could have ever imagined.

“Mr. Welch, everyone, there’s no reason to be so nervous,” Janice said, her voice smooth and dripping with mock sweetness as she casually looped her arm through Aiden’s. “As your hosts, it’s our responsibility to make sure nothing happens to you. After all, it wouldn’t look good for Efrery, would it?”

“Janice, do you really think we’ll just drop our guard because of your pretty words?” Calvin shot back, his voice icy. “Don’t flatter yourself. The Welch family may be on the ropes, but we used to be the rulers. Even a fallen giant still has a few teeth left. If you think you can wipe us out that easily, you’re dreaming.”

Janice clapped slowly, her lips curling into a smirk. "Impressive. Even after losing an arm, you've still got some fight in you. I thought you'd be a broken man by now, completely finished."

"What the hell did you just say?" Calvin's fury erupted, his fists trembling with rage at her cruel mockery.

But Mateo stepped between them, blocking Calvin's path. "Calvin, don't let her get under your skin. Your grandpa's right here. She wouldn't dare make a move with him around."

A confident smile played on his lips as he added, "And besides... we're still family. If your grandpa gives the word, I'm sure Janice will play nice for his sake."

Janice's expression darkened, her eyes narrowing. Mateo's words hit her harder than she let on.

If it weren't for Orson's hold on her, she would have liked nothing more than to burn the entire Welch bloodline from her memory. To her, their blood was nothing but poison—the very worst kind of filth.

Chapter 1268:

"Mateo, don't flatter yourself," Janice said coldly, her words like daggers. "If Gilmore hadn't been arrested, he'd tell you—everything you're doing now is just a waste of time."

"What the hell do you mean by that?" Mateo snapped, his gaze sharp as he glared at her. "Stop talking nonsense. Alissa has been inside for almost an hour. I'm sure she's convincing my father to step in and save the Welch family."

Aiden watched Janice closely, worry flickering in his eyes like a brief shadow.

Knowing her better than anyone, he understood how fiercely loyal she was to those she cared about. If Orson decided to step in for the sake of the Welch family, it would tear Janice apart inside.

Their relationship was still fragile, only recently mended. If Orson turned his back on her now, it would shatter what little foundation they had built.

"I'm alright," said Janice, catching the concern in Aiden's gaze. She shook her head gently. "I trust Grandpa will make the right call. Something tells me the feud between the Whites and the Welch family is finally coming to an end today."

Aiden's face brightened. His faith in her instincts had never wavered.

The Welch family's situation had already crumbled to the point of no return. Even if Janice did nothing more, there were plenty of predators circling, ready to tear apart whatever remained.

Their downfall was inevitable. The enemies they had accumulated over the years would soon do the rest.

Without warning, the heavy gate creaked open.

All eyes turned sharply to the entrance, where Alissa stepped into view. Mateo broke into a sprint toward her, desperation written all over his face. "Alissa, what did he say? Did Father agree to help us?"

With a blank expression, Alissa met Mateo's anxious stare. She showed no hint of relief or anger, leaving the Welch family paralyzed with dread.

"Say something, Alissa!" Calvin shouted, his frustration boiling over. "Have you gone mute? If it weren't for your cozy relationship with Grandpa, you would have never been our representative!"

A soft, bitter laugh slipped from Alissa's lips. "Grandpa saw through everything. In your eyes, I was never worth more than a pawn anyway."

“Cut the nonsense!” Calvin snapped, reaching out to seize her arm, but Jensen stepped in and blocked him.

Janice stood silently, watching the scene unfold. It was clear to her now how drastically things had changed. Calvin, once composed and deliberate, now acted like a fool. Meanwhile, Jensen, who had always been reckless, had somehow grown calm and steady after everything they had endured.

She could not help but find the role reversal tragically amusing.

“Alissa, did Grandpa say anything at all?” Jensen asked, his voice much gentler than before.

Letting out a long sigh, Alissa finally answered, “He said that the consequences of your sins are yours alone to bear. The Welch family must now pay for everything they have done.”

Chapter 1269:

“What?” The Welch family gazed at Alissa, unable to believe what they were hearing.

This was the man who had poured his entire life into building the Welch legacy. How could he just stand by and let it all fall to pieces?

“Enough, Alissa!” Mateo shouted, his voice tight with frustration. “Stop playing games. What did Father actually say?”

Alissa shook her head, a bitter smile pulling at the corners of her mouth.

Mockery danced in her eyes as she stared at the Welch family, unable to believe how blind they had been to their own cruelty. Deep down, what stung the most was simple—she had never wanted anything more than to be loved by her family. Instead, they had used her like a tool.

Drawing in a slow breath, Alissa knew they thought she had a close relationship with Orson. But he only cared about Janice and Stephen. Ten minutes earlier, Orson asked, “Have you made up your mind?”

Without hesitation, Alissa gave a firm nod. "Please, stay out of this." A glimmer of understanding passed through Orson's gaze. "Good. At least you are still redeemable, unlike the others."

"For so long, I acted proud of being the Welch family's heiress. I threw my weight around, thinking it was proof of my family's affection." Pausing, Alissa let out a hollow laugh. "But the truth was uglier. I was nothing but a pawn, a piece to watch their enemies and flash the family name. They would shield me from minor trouble, but if I ever brought real shame, they would throw me away without a second thought."

Bitterness laced every word she spoke. On the surface, her life had seemed glamorous, but in reality, she had been nothing more than a dispensable figure.

The illusion of being the Welch family's heiress had been a cruel joke.

"Even today, when they sent me to beg you for help, they cared only about what I could do to save them. If I had no value left, they would not spare me a second glance," she said bitterly.

Orson listened, offering her no comfort, letting her spill her regrets without interruption.

The longer she spoke, the more her composure crumbled. The memories of her mistakes, especially toward Janice, gnawed at her until the tears finally came.

"I feel terribly sorry," Alissa whispered, bowing slightly. "Grandpa, I know I've wronged Janice a lot. I don't deserve her forgiveness. But at the very least, I want her to know that I truly regret everything."

Taking a slow sip of his coffee, Orson sighed deeply. "You may leave."

There was more she wanted to say, but seeing the finality in his eyes, Alissa only managed a quiet farewell before stepping out of the room.

Shaking off the heavy weight of memory, Alissa turned to Janice and spoke with trembling sincerity. "I'm sorry."

Hearing Alissa's apology caught Janice completely off guard. "Alissa, those words sound strange coming from you."

"I know it sounds odd. Honestly, it feels just as strange for me. But I mean it." A small, almost self-mocking smile touched Alissa's lips. "Whether you believe me or not, that's the truth. And the Welch family really has no right to exist anymore."

Chapter 1270:

"You ungrateful girl!"

Mateo lost all control. His hand shot up, ready to strike Alissa across the face.

Before the blow could land, Aiden moved with lightning speed, catching Mateo's wrist in a steel-like grip.

"You might want to remember whose territory you're standing in." Stepping between them, Janice cast a cold glance at the remaining Welch family members. "If Grandpa made his decision, then so be it. Escort them back to Cloverhill."

"You've got some nerve, Janice!"

"Our power might be fading, but we are still the Welch family! If you lay a hand on us, Mr. Truman will not let you off easy!"

Their cries filled the air, but fear quickly spread through their ranks as Janice's elite guards moved in, swift and efficient. One by one, they were restrained and ushered toward the waiting cars.

Turning slightly, Janice looked at Aiden. "I'll leave the cleanup to you."

Aiden gave her a reassuring smile and nodded. "Consider it done. I'll be right here waiting for you."

With a soft smile in return, Janice turned and walked into the house.

"Grandpa!"

The moment Janice entered the house, her eyes immediately locked onto the familiar, hunched figure.

Resting in a high-backed chair by the pavilion, Orson sat motionless, his gaze lost in the reflection of the pond.

Even though it had only been a short time since they last met, Janice could see how much weaker he had grown. The strain of the Welch family's downfall had clearly worn him down.

Despite everything, he remained tied to the Welch name. Watching it crumble must have torn at him, yet the bitterness he felt toward his sons had not faded.

"Janice!" Orson greeted, his face lighting up with a rare, gentle smile that momentarily erased his sorrow.

Without hesitation, Janice walked over and sat beside him. "Grandpa, I know today must have weighed heavily on your heart."

With a dismissive wave, Orson brushed her concern aside. "I expected them to come crawling eventually. What disappoints me is how blind they still are. They think that the family name alone would make me rescue them."

"It's not that they refuse to change. It's that they never had to face the consequences before. If given another chance, maybe they would finally think before acting," Janice said flatly.

Understanding flickered in Orson's eyes as he gave a tired smile, shaking his head slowly.

There was no changing the past. Regret served no purpose now. What had been set in motion could not be undone. Everyone had to answer for their own actions.

"Janice, don't hesitate," Orson said firmly. "Do what must be done. You'll always have my full support."