

Wrath 141

Chapter 141:

Carman had already turned to Vernon for help.

Despite promising Leah to cut ties with Carman, Vernon still agreed to meet the desperate man. After all, he needed an outlet for the frustration he had endured from Leah earlier.

“Vernon, you can’t cancel my endorsements,” Carman begged, looking completely defeated. He had arrived brimming with confidence, ready to argue, but the moment he saw Vernon, his boldness disappeared.

“Please, I’ve worked so hard for these endorsements. If you cancel them, all my efforts will be for nothing! Besides, canceling unilaterally means you’ll have to pay compensation.” With a flick, Vernon lit a cigar, inhaling deeply before exhaling slowly.

The smoke veiled his refined features, making his thoughts unreadable. Carman’s heart pounded as anxiety gripped him.

“Carman, do you really think I care about your minor issues?” Vernon’s voice was raspy, barely masking his growing anger. “You’ve made a huge mess today, and I’ve let it slide. You should consider yourself fortunate. But now that you’ve approached me, I guess I need to do something.”

“Carman, what are you planning to do?” Carman asked. Vernon gestured, and several hidden bodyguards appeared, encircling Carman completely.

Carman’s chest tightened with fear. “Vernon, let’s discuss this calmly. Don’t do anything reckless! If you touch me here, you’ll be all over the news tomorrow.”

“Is that a threat?” Vernon narrowed his eyes, glaring icily at Carman.

"I'm an Edwards." Carman knew any hope of working with Vernon was gone, and his tone turned sharp. "I only tolerated you because of your resources, but now that you've cut all my endorsements, we're finished. I have no reason to accommodate you anymore."

Carman lifted his chin slightly, abandoning any sign of pleading, and exuded the confidence of a member of the Edwards family. "Even without your endorsements, I'm still the top singer out there. I can establish my reputation solely through my own work."

"Ha-ha!" Vernon laughed so hard that tears streamed down his face. "Carman, you really think too highly of yourself. Have you even written a good song lately? The one you're recording now barely makes the cut. Without those top producers fixing it, you wouldn't even be allowed in the studio. Honestly, with your supposed talent, how did you create those big hits before? Could it be plagiarism?"

Carman's face turned red with anger, and he shouted, "That's absurd! Those songs are entirely my work. I've just been in a slump, struggling with inspiration—that's why I haven't produced anything great recently."

"Do you dare swear on that?" Vernon asked, narrowing his eyes and mocking Carman with a sly look.

"Why wouldn't I dare?" Carman shouted confidently. "I swear, all my past songs were..."

But before he could finish, a sudden image flashed through his mind—a figure playing the piano. It was the same figure who had sparked his creativity during his struggles to compose.

Janice?

How could it be her?

Was it possible that all those hit songs he had created in the past were...?

No, it couldn't possibly be!

Carman shook his head repeatedly, trying to suppress the rising panic within him. Those songs were entirely his own work—there was no way they came from Janice’s random playing.

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“What’s the matter? Scared of being struck by lightning if you swear?” Vernon leaned back in his chair, smirking as he observed Carman’s restless behavior.

“I swear!” Carman gritted his teeth, his carefully composed face twisting with tension. “I wrote all my past hit songs by myself. If not, may lightning strike me dead.”

After hearing that, Vernon shook his head, clapping slowly. “Leah was right—people from the Edwards family really are shameless.”

“Vernon, I dare you to say that again!” Carman shouted, his fists clenched tightly. But surrounded by bodyguards, no matter how furious he was, he could do nothing but glare in frustration.

Vernon took a leisurely puff of his cigar, blowing out a cloud of smoke. “Beat him up!”

Without hesitation, Vernon gave the order, and the bodyguards began mercilessly punching and kicking Carman.

“Ah!” Carman cried out in pain, frantically shielding his face with his hands. His face was his livelihood—if it got damaged, how could he ever face his fans again?

Vernon squinted his eyes, watching Carman being beaten. The Edwards family truly lacked sense. No wonder Janice had severed ties with them so decisively.

If they ever learned the extraordinary status of the girl who had severed ties with them, they would probably regret it to the depths of despair.

How he wished he could reveal Janice’s real identity to these idiots!

He relished watching people drown in regret.

But he also knew that if he dared to speak even a single word, Leah would make sure he ended up as fish food in the sea.

Aiden was an early riser, routinely up with the dawn to stroll through the courtyard. Despite feigning disability, he carefully maintained the image of someone earnestly trying to walk again—a strategy to lower the guards of certain individuals and garner sympathy.

On this morning, however, as he reached the courtyard, he encountered Janice. Her silhouette, accentuated by form-fitting workout attire, radiated elegance; her hair, neatly tied up, added to her vibrant energy.

Hearing Aiden's approach, Janice turned and greeted him with a luminous smile. "Aiden, you're up early too?"

Despite the darkness that still clung to the horizon, her smile was as warm as the first light of dawn.

A hint of surprise flickered in Aiden's eyes, and he nodded gently. Just as he was about to maneuver his wheelchair, Janice stepped forward and took hold of the handles. "Let me help you."

"Doesn't this interrupt your morning exercise?" Aiden asked.

"I've already finished a round, so it's a good time for a break," Janice replied, shaking her head.

Aiden glanced upward, his eyes landing on the beads of sweat glistening on Janice's chin. Clearly, she had risen at an even earlier hour and had already completed her morning exercise.

Janice, fresh from her workout and exuding warmth and vitality, sparked an unexpected desire in Aiden to stand and move as well. After years of pretending to be disabled, he had never felt such a strong impulse to exercise.

“Aiden.”

“Hmm?” Aiden was jolted back to the present, his eyes meeting Janice’s with a hint of intrigue.

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Janice blinked. “Have you ever considered getting a smart wheelchair? I see you manually pushing the wheels every time, and it seems quite strenuous. Doesn’t it tire you out? Watching you is exhausting.”

Aiden had expected her to say something significant, but her words were merely a practical suggestion.

“Don’t you think this feels more authentic?” he asked.

Janice was dumbfounded. “Aiden, are you serious? What’s ‘authentic’ about manually turning the wheels? You could touch phlegm.”

Aiden recoiled, visibly disgusted. He realized that conversing with Janice meant always being ready for her unexpected comments.

“Couldn’t you?” Janice pressed, noticing his silence. She stepped in front of him, leaned forward, resting her hands on her knees, and peered intently into his eyes. “The wheels roll over all sorts of things. Aren’t you worried about accidentally touching something unpleasant?”

Aiden inhaled deeply, the scent of her perfume filling his senses and momentarily clouding his thoughts. He wasn’t sure whether it was Janice’s fragrance that left him dazed or her blunt words that had stunned him.

“There’s a special rim for turning the wheels,” he managed to reply.

“But the rim is right next to the wheel, so you might still end up touching the wheel itself,” Janice pointed out.

Aiden raised his hand to his forehead in a gesture of frustration, signaling a desire to end the conversation. But then he remembered Janice's words and quickly lowered his hand.

"Be honest, have you ever actually touched it?" Janice leaned in closer, her face inches from his. Even bare-faced, her natural beauty was striking, a stark and refreshing contrast to the heavily made-up faces he was used to.

Aiden's breathing became slightly erratic, undoubtedly a reaction to Janice's challenging presence.

Nina stood by the expansive floor-to-ceiling window, her gaze fixed on the tender scene unfolding between Aiden and Janice. It had become a ritual for her to rise early, drawn to the garden to watch Aiden perform his morning exercises—a time of quiet observation she cherished. But today's scene held an unexpected element.

"Janice seems truly well-suited for Aiden," Nina murmured. "It's unusual to see Aiden connect with someone. With me, his mother, there's always a gap he doesn't let me cross." Yet, with Janice, he was different.

Contrary to the swirling rumors that painted Janice and Aiden's union as a mere strategic alliance for shares, Nina saw something deeper. The ease between them, these shared moments of intimacy, spoke of a genuine bond.

"Nina, don't let appearances deceive you." Alcott's voice broke through her contemplations, pulling her attention away from the couple. He joined her by the window, his eyes on the pair outside. "Their closeness might merely be a facade. You know, others may be oblivious, but I am keenly aware. According to my father's will, you have the authority to reject any decisions about the shares. Without your approval, Aiden cannot access those shares. And should you deem him unsuitable for leadership of the Green family, you have the authority to designate someone else to inherit that portion of the shares."

Resentment settled in Alcott's heart like a shadow he couldn't shake. His wife held his father's favor, the authority over the shares resting solely in her hands. Despite her deep affection for her son, Nina never wavered in honoring her father-in-law's will and upholding his trust.

Alcott's insecurity was palpable. He dreaded the thought of losing Nina's trust, well aware that it was his only ticket to the Green family's fortune.

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Casting a penetrating gaze at Alcott, Nina retorted, "Aiden is my son. I don't need anyone to tell me if his feelings are true. Now, what about you? Don't you owe me an explanation?"

"Explanation? What are you talking about?" Alcott stuttered, caught off-guard.

"Why was Bart at the charity gala last night? And why did he donate the vase you purchased for over eight million? That was a rather lavish act, don't you think?"

To the affluent Green family, eight million was a mere trifle. But for Bart, a son born out of wedlock, stripped of claim and privilege, it was the kind of fortune one could only...

As Nina advanced, her imposing demeanor compelled Alcott to retreat a step, his back nearly brushing against the wall.

As the realization dawned on him, Alcott's face turned a deep shade of red, a clear sign of his mortification. "I felt overwhelmed with guilt for neglecting him over the years, so I decided to offer him some compensation."

"Compensation?" Nina's laugh was sharp and mocking. "What kind of compensation does an illegitimate son even deserve? Why such a lavish gesture? The real point here is that he's exploiting the vase to wriggle his way into the charity event. Don't tell me he went through all that trouble just to do charity work?"

"Nina, I truly had no clue," Alcott replied, his voice tinged with distress as he furrowed his brow in frustration. "All I did was hand over the vase to him. The thought that he would exploit it in such a manner never crossed my mind. If you doubt my words, I'm willing to bring him here to explain himself."

Nina let out a long sigh, her eyes wandering back to the serene scene of the couple in the garden. "Alcott, I'm not asking you to spoil Aiden, but please don't disappoint him."

Alcott absorbed her words in silence.

“We’ve shared years of marriage. I’ve grown to understand the unspoken truths you carry,” Nina continued, her eyes glimmering with a trace of melancholy. “You’ve harbored a deep-seated bitterness for not being chosen as the heir. You don’t understand why he chose Aiden over you or why he left the power of decision in my hands.”

In the quiet that followed, Alcott’s eyes shimmered with a cold, hard edge of resentment.

“To put it bluntly, your father thought you were too simpleminded. You’re overly ambitious, but you lack the skills necessary to achieve your goals. As a result, you fail to see the bigger picture and always end up focusing on short-term gains.” Nina’s words stung Alcott.

How could a healthy man stand being looked down upon by his own wife?

“You say that I don’t have the skills? That I ignore the bigger picture?” Alcott’s voice was hoarse as he tried to suppress his anger and resentment. “If all of that was true, the old man would have never had the chance to write such a will in the first place.”

“Alcott, do you even realize what you’re saying?” Nina’s piercing gaze snapped him back to his senses.

“Sorry, I got a little carried away.” Alcott took a deep breath and refused to meet her eyes. “If nothing else, Nina, you must believe one thing—I will never do anything to harm the interests of the Green family.”

Nina pressed her lips into a thin line and said nothing more.

She believed him—Alcott would indeed not harm the Green family. But there was no guarantee that he would never hurt Aiden.

“What are you doing?”

Chapter 145:

A stern voice suddenly echoed in the courtyard, pulling Nina out of her thoughts. She looked over to find that Bart had arrived, uninvited.

He was holding a thermos, looking flustered as he apologized repeatedly to Aiden and Janice. "I'm sorry! I didn't mean to. It was an accident. I was hoping to prepare breakfast as an apology to Aiden."

Janice paid him no mind and proceeded to wipe the spilled hot porridge off Aiden's legs.

It was scalding to her touch. She couldn't even begin to imagine how Aiden was feeling at that moment.

But Aiden himself was unruffled. He even flashed Bart a meaningful smile.

"This is bad! Your burns are serious. We need to have these treated as soon as possible." Without wasting another second, Janice straightened and wheeled Aiden into the house.

Bart continued to apologize behind them, but as soon as the couple disappeared through the door, his expression turned grim. Had he been mistaken last night?

The porridge he had brought was fresh from the pot. Any normal person would have cried out in pain upon contact. Yet, not only had Aiden not made a single sound, he had even silently mocked Bart with that pointed glance. That must mean Aiden's legs were really numb. His disability was the real deal.

Bart furrowed his brows. Last night, it seemed like Aiden could stand on his own legs. But now he felt nothing down there? Bart was still pondering this mystery when he sensed someone approaching from behind. He quickly schooled his expression. "Nina—"

He didn't even get to finish his sentence when Nina slapped him hard across the face. She used so much force that his lip split, and blood trickled down the corner of his mouth.

"I already forbade you to step into this property. Are you too dumb to understand, or are you doing all this on purpose?" Nina gave him a menacing glare that sent shivers down his spine. "And you dare to pour hot porridge on my son's legs? Are you trying to kill him now?"

"No, I really didn't mean to do it." Bart looked aggrieved as his eyes turned glassy with unshed tears. "I just wanted to make amends with Aiden, so I got up early to make porridge and brought it over. I got too excited when I saw him and tripped on a stone. I lost my balance and accidentally spilled the porridge on him. I'm really sorry! If it makes you feel better, please feel free to hit me or scold me. I won't resist!"

After his little speech, Bart dramatically closed his eyes, looking like he was bracing himself for death.

Nina laughed humorlessly and proceeded to roll up her sleeves. "Do you think I won't do it? Bring the whip over!"

The butler hurried off to carry out her orders and returned in just a matter of seconds.

Bart could feel himself shaking. He had fully expected that his act would be enough to win Nina's sympathy. He had worked hard to earn Nina's trust, but ever since Janice came into the picture, Nina's attitude toward him had taken a sharp turn.

It suddenly occurred to Bart that Janice might just be the biggest obstacle in his plan to take control of the Green family.

"Nina, stop! What's happening here?" Alcott demanded, his expression a storm of anger and concern as he grabbed her arm. "Bart has already made it clear that the incident with the hot porridge was purely accidental. He didn't mean any harm. I understand that you're worried about Aiden, but you can't just act on impulse like that."

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"Alcott, remember, he's your son as well! He's been burned by scalding porridge!" Nina's voice surged with fury as she gripped Alcott's collar fiercely. "And yet, you stand here, blatantly more concerned about your other son who hasn't even suffered a scratch?"

Alcott's mouth twitched, almost revealing that Aiden, due to his condition, was insensible to the pain, which meant the alarm was unnecessary. But he bit his tongue, knowing such words would only ignite Nina's wrath into a fiery spectacle.

"Dad, it's fine." Bart cracked a strained, melancholy smile. "I have indeed caused Aiden harm, and we can't deny that. If taking the blame soothes Nina, then I'm willing to accept it."

"Bart, you're being too self-sacrificing. It was an accident; you don't deserve to be condemned for it," Alcott said, heartbroken for Bart.

Biting back her frustration, Nina let out a scoff, her smile sharp and cynical as she turned away in disdain. Long ago, Alcott's father had recognized his nature and had vehemently opposed entrusting him with the leadership of the Green family. He had foreseen that under Alcott's management, it wouldn't take long for the family to crumble.

"Someone, get Bart out of here!" Nina called out, her voice weary as she retreated back into the sanctuary of the house. In response, several bodyguards approached, their expressions frosty as they fixed their gaze on Bart and Alcott.

"Dad, I'm really sorry, it wasn't intentional," Bart pleaded, his tone dripping with feigned innocence, successfully clouding Alcott's judgment.

"I know you didn't mean to." Alcott sighed, his voice laced with a hint of helplessness. "Nina is extremely protective of Aiden. She sometimes overreacts. This will blow over soon. Besides, Aiden's already lost feeling in his legs, so the spill isn't as disastrous as it seems."

Bart opened his mouth to say something, but the advancing bodyguards signaled that his time was up. Their stern faces suggested they were prepared to escort him out by force if necessary.

"Just leave for now. I'll take care of things." Alcott gestured dismissively, urging Bart to make his exit.

Bart nodded stiffly and took a step away, his mind spinning with suspicion. Was Aiden's condition real, or was this an elaborate ruse? If he was faking it, the sheer cunning behind it was terrifying. The thought of enduring such pain himself seemed unimaginable.

Back inside, when Janice wheeled Aiden to his room, she found him soaked in sweat, his face ghostly pale from the intense pain he was suffering. Without hesitating, she reached forward to help him, starting with the buttons of his pants.

“What are you doing?” Aiden pressed, seizing her wrist with a fierce glare.

“Aiden, your burns are severe. If we don’t address them immediately, infection is inevitable,” Janice stated firmly, her voice carrying both urgency and worry. “You wouldn’t dare let anyone realize that your so-called disability is nothing but an act, right?”

Aiden looked at her with mixed emotions.

Janice studied Aiden for a moment, her expression softening as she guessed he might be feeling self-conscious. It dawned on her that Aiden had always maintained a distance from women. Considering his lack of romantic encounters, his shyness around her began to make sense. A faint smile played on her lips.

“What’s so funny?” he demanded.

“Nothing much!” Janice chuckled, feigning innocence. “Just thought about how the neighbor’s cat just had kittens. It cheered me up a bit.”

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Though Aiden found her words absurd, he hesitated briefly, weighing his options before replying curtly, “I’ll do it myself.” Standing upright, he loomed over Janice, his height casting a shadow that made her suddenly aware of how much taller he truly was. Janice couldn’t help but notice how well-proportioned his physique was.

He had concealed his physical advantages well under the guise of disability—a fact that, if known, would have surely drawn the attention of many.

Realizing she was privy to Aiden’s secret gave Janice a peculiar sense of excitement.

“Cut out the mischief, Janice.” Aiden chided her, catching on to her speculative silence. “And turn around.”

With a soft murmur of protest, Janice turned around, complying with his firm directive.

“Done.”

As Aiden’s voice reached her ears, Janice spun around to find him resettling into his chair, now clad in shorts. Upon noticing his exposed thighs, her face took on a grave expression. The skin was inflamed and angry, marked by patches of red and swollen tissue, some areas even showing signs of blistering. Most would have succumbed to tears at such agony. Yet, Aiden bore the pain with an astonishing stoicism, even taunting Bart as if unaffected by his own suffering.

“You really are tough,” Janice noted, her voice tinged with a mix of awe and concern.

Unruffled, Aiden replied, “If I weren’t tough, the tougher ones would take me down without a shred of mercy.”

Her eyes widened, admiration mingling with surprise as she absorbed his words. For years, Aiden had masqueraded as a cripple, skillfully navigating the treacherous waters around Bart and trying to figure out those hidden in the dark. This act of endurance was no small feat. It was something beyond the capacity of an ordinary person.

In that instant, a surge of deep sympathy swept through Janice. Beneath his shrewd, resilient exterior lay a fragile, tender side.

“You’re lucky to have me here,” she said, her voice carrying a hint of protective warmth.

Caught off guard, Aiden looked at Janice with confusion. “What do you mean by that?”

“I mean, I have a knack for handling burns,” Janice replied, her voice light, a small chuckle escaping her as she pulled out a first-aid kit.

True to her word, Janice's adeptness was unmistakable. Whether it was cleansing the wounds, applying ointments, or wrapping them with bandages, she moved with the precision and grace of a seasoned professional.

A professional doctor, perhaps?

This thought made Aiden pause, a flicker of surprise crossing his features as he regarded Janice with a newfound curiosity. "Were you a doctor before?"

Janice shook her head, her tone nonchalant. "I wouldn't want to be a doctor, not with the hectic schedule and the endless stream of patients. It's too much for me. I just picked up a few things about medicine along the way."

At her words, Aiden's expression fell slightly. He couldn't pinpoint why, but the realization that Janice wasn't a doctor somehow left him feeling unexpectedly deflated.

At that moment, a knock sounded at the door.

"I'll get it," Janice said, quickly draping a blanket over Aiden's legs before moving to answer it.

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Upon opening the door, she was greeted by Nina's worried expression.

"Janice, how is Aiden?" Nina asked urgently.

"I've treated Aiden's burns; it's nothing serious for now," Janice reassured her, glancing back at Aiden, who maintained his usual calm and composed demeanor.

"Aiden," Nina called softly as she stepped inside, her eyes scanning him. Noticing his composed expression, she allowed herself to relax slightly. "How are you feeling? Does it hurt a lot?"

Aiden shook his head, his lips curving into a wry smile. "Sometimes I wish I could feel the pain."

Nina paused, her heart sinking further. "Aiden, what do you mean? Your legs... I'm committed to finding a solution. We've consulted many doctors over the years, but I'm confident there's one out there who can help you. As long as we don't give up, there's hope."

Aiden nodded silently, his expression unreadable. Out of the corner of his eye, he caught Janice smirking.

Why was she amused at such a moment? Did she not grasp the gravity of their situation?

Janice arched an eyebrow, flashing a mischievous grin at Aiden before her face settled into a more serious expression. "Don't worry, I'll take good care of him. He can't come into contact with water these days, so I'll personally handle his hygiene needs."

Aiden's expression changed. What was she plotting now? She actually volunteered for that?

"Janice, I'll trust him in your capable hands then," Nina said, her voice warm as she gave Janice's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Aiden is truly fortunate to have married you. I'm increasingly convinced that the Edwards family didn't realize what they were giving up—a truly remarkable girl."

Janice shook her head modestly, her voice soft. "If they hadn't let me go, I wouldn't have met you and Aiden."

Nina paused, her laughter filling the room a moment later. "You're right. I should thank them for their short-sightedness. In fact, I ought to send them a grand gift as a token of my gratitude."

With those words, she quickly exited the room.

Janice watched her departure, a mix of amusement and helplessness washing over her.

“What were you laughing about earlier?” Aiden suddenly asked. Janice snapped back to reality, her eyes twinkling with mischief. “How did I not notice before that you’re such a skilled actor? I almost believed you were truly disabled.”

Aiden let out a harsh laugh, his tone deep and resonant. “After pretending for so many years, you tend to pick up a few tricks.” His words were laced with a trace of bitterness, leading Janice to cross the room and offer a comforting touch on his shoulder. “I have a feeling your days of pretending are coming to an end.”

“What makes you say that?” Aiden asked, his curiosity piqued.

Janice let out a light laugh, easing the tension. “It’s just a feeling I have. But on a different note, your mom is truly delightful. I’m really starting to warm up to her.”

“What are you planning?” Aiden asked, eyeing Janice with a cautious lift of his eyebrow. “Are you considering becoming her real daughter-in-law?”

“I wouldn’t be opposed to the idea,” Janice replied, her lips curving into a sly smile, her candidness catching Aiden off guard. “However, since your heart is already taken, I won’t intrude.”

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With a quick glance at her watch, she stood up gracefully. “It’s time for me to head to work. You don’t need to come with me today.”

As Janice walked away, Aiden was swamped by a tumult of emotions. Moments earlier, he hadn’t brushed aside her playful remarks as usual. Instead, her reference to the person in his heart stirred an inexplicable irritation within him. It was a feeling he hadn’t experienced in years.

“How did she know I have someone in my heart?” Aiden wondered, suspicion creeping in. “Is she investigating me too?” Memories of someone digging into the details of his car accident from three years earlier surfaced.

The infiltrator had been highly skilled, turning formidable firewalls into mere paper. Had he not caught and countered the intrusion in time, secrets from that time might have been exposed. His current plans could tolerate no disruptions, lest they tip off his adversaries.

Meanwhile, Laurie woke up later than usual, the unresolved project issues at work weighing on her. Opting to skip the barrage of questions that awaited her at the company, she decided to stay home.

On the other hand, Connor skipped breakfast and went straight to the office, burdened by the fallout of a failed bid that left the company grappling with many issues. Carman hadn't come home all night, caught up in some conflict with Vernon, though the specifics remained murky.

Delilah managed only a bit of porridge before heading out to her job.

Laurie sighed deeply. The house, once a hub of vibrancy and joy, now echoed with a palpable coldness and emptiness.

"Mrs. Edwards, Lowell's breakfast was delivered, but he still refuses to eat," Daryl reported with concern. "If this continues, I'm afraid his health won't hold up."

Laurie frowned, then replied with a nod. "I understand. Please continue with your tasks."

She knew Lowell well—fiercely proud and ambitious. Since becoming the vice president of Edwards Group, he had been driven to elevate the company to new heights. However, his bid proposal had faced harsh criticism this time, with rumors circulating that his past proposals might actually have been the work of Janice. How could he withstand such a blow to his pride?

Laurie sighed deeply, contemplating a conversation with Lowell later. If he couldn't confront his true self, he might be heading for a fall.

"Mrs. Edwards," Daryl returned, interrupting her thoughts, holding a box. "Nina Green sent a gift for you."

“A gift from Nina?” Laurie’s brow furrowed. Why would Nina send her a gift now, especially after their conflict the previous night? What was she trying to imply?

She accepted the box with a mix of curiosity and caution, carefully lifting the lid. Inside was a large, lustrous pearl, gleaming with an eerie perfection.

Laurie was taken aback. They had just clashed, but now Nina was extending such a grand, enigmatic gesture. The situation left her more puzzled than ever.

“There’s also a card,” Daryl added, extending it towards her. Laurie took the card and read it. “Mrs. Edwards, thank you for giving me such a wonderful daughter-in-law. I’m glad you’ve signed the agreement to cut ties with her. From now on, Janice will devote all her love to me.”

Laurie’s eyes narrowed, her hand trembling as she clutched the card. “Nina Green!”

The pearl in the box had turned from a marvel to a symbol of humiliation—a mockery, insinuating she had mistaken something of value for something worthless.

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“Mrs. Edwards, don’t let anger get the best of you,” Daryl cautioned, taken aback by Laurie’s intense reaction.

Laurie took several deep breaths to steady herself. “Get rid of this,” she commanded with controlled fury.

“What?” Daryl looked bewildered, his eyes drifting to the large pearl, thinking it a shame to simply discard it.

“Do it quickly,” Laurie snapped, her glare piercing Daryl before she turned and ascended the stairs.

She was resolute in her judgment.

Despite Delilah being adopted, Laurie was certain of her worth. Delilah was the pearl, while Janice was worthless.

Aiden couldn't take Janice to work himself, so he asked Braylen to handle it.

Janice sat in the car, scrolling through her phone with a slight smile.

As predicted, last night's event had gone viral on social media, with headlines like "Edwards Family Heiress Exposed as a Fraud" trending everywhere.

Even though Carman had rallied the company's PR team, they could hardly control the damage. Stopping the chatter completely was out of the question.

Furthermore, Carman's live stream had not yet started. With Vernon's presence, making a move was out of the question for Carman.

Janice refreshed her social media feed and noticed a post about Carman struggling with creativity and failing to produce a new song.

She squinted and smirked. "No surprise you can't make a new song without me."

When she first rejoined the Edwards family, she had been hopeful, doing everything possible to earn their approval while carefully avoiding their wounded pride.

Take Carman, for instance—an average person with no real talent but dreaming of becoming a singer.

To help him chase his dream, Janice would purposely play the piano while he composed. Politely put, she was "sparking his inspiration." Frankly, she was letting him steal her ideas. Over time, Carman relied on this so much that he convinced himself he had genuine talent.

"Mrs. Green, we're here!" Braylen pulled over.

Janice glanced up, saw the company entrance, and nodded. "Thank you."

"You're too kind. It's my job," Braylen responded with a warm smile before stepping out to open the car door for her. As Janice got out, she noticed a figure hurrying towards her.

Braylen moved quickly, blocking the person before they could get closer. He stepped forward, caught the outstretched arm, twisted it, and in one smooth motion, threw them over his shoulder, slamming them to the ground.

"Ouch!"

"Sierra?" Janice finally recognized the figure. It was none other than Sierra. "What are you doing here?"

"Janice, your bodyguard is way too fast!" Sierra frowned, rubbing her arm. "I came to surprise you, but I ended up scaring myself instead."

Sierra glanced at Braylen with fear, realizing he was even more intimidating than her own bodyguards.

Janice sighed, helping Sierra to her feet. "Braylen is a top-tier bodyguard. His reflexes are sharp, and his skills are unmatched. Don't pull that stunt again."

Sierra pouted, clearly shaken, the pain serving as a harsh reminder.