

Wrath 231

Chapter 231:

With Lowell out of the picture permanently, Edwards Group was destined to become hers.

“Delilah, have you thought about leaving your current job to join Edwards Group?” Connor suggested earnestly. “I want you to start familiarizing yourself with the company’s operations.”

“Dad, am I really capable of that?” Delilah asked, uncertainty flickering in her eyes.

Connor felt a pang of empathy seeing her anxious expression. Perhaps she was worried about her legitimacy as an adopted daughter and the potential for gossip.

“Absolutely. You have been our family for years; no one can take that from you,” Connor said seriously. “When the time is right, I will make it clear to the board that you are my only daughter.”

“Thank you, Dad.” Overcome with emotion, Delilah embraced Connor, her voice filled with gratitude. “I promise to master the skills needed to manage our business and make you and Mom proud.”

“That’s my girl.”

Connor and Laurie soon left, leaving Delilah to accompany Carman.

Noticing Carman’s lifeless demeanor, Delilah feigned concern, though inwardly, she was filled with contempt. What a pathetic loser. After just one setback from Janice, he was already shattered beyond repair.

It was no surprise her brothers lacked resilience, crumbling under the slightest pressure. Carman’s realization of his own inadequacies had evidently devastated him.

Yet, for now, Carman remained a necessary ally; she couldn’t afford to let him stay in despair.

“Carman.” Delilah sat beside him, her voice gentle and soothing. “Could you please look at me?”

Carman’s eyelids flickered, and he slowly shifted his eyes to meet hers.

“Delilah, there’s no need to worry over me. Just leave me be.”

“How can I possibly do that?” Delilah took his hands and placed them against her cheeks. The warmth of her skin seemed to stir something in Carman, and a flicker of life returned to his otherwise empty eyes.

“Do you really expect me to handle Janice on my own?”

“Delilah, what are you implying?” Carman asked anxiously. “Has Janice been harassing you?”

Delilah cast her eyes downward, offering a bitter smile. “You’re aware I work at Delgado Jewelry, aren’t you? Janice is there too, and we’ve become rivals. She’s intent on winning over Stella and Kenneth, effectively isolating me. The upcoming jewelry exhibition with Freak Design is crucial. The designer whose work garners the most attention will be promoted and will oversee the others.”

At that, a single tear rolled down Delilah’s cheek. “I never expected Janice to be so ruthless. But seeing your condition now, it’s clear she’s aiming to dismantle our family. If she surpasses me, then—”

“No!” Carman shook his head emphatically, tightening his grip on her hands. “I won’t let Janice torment you!”

“But look at your current state, Carman...”

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“I have decided,” Carman said, taking a deep breath and briefly closing his eyes. “Perhaps I lack genuine talent in music, and that’s okay. I’ll consider it a dream that’s ended. Now, it’s time to wake up, face the truth, and defend my family.”

“Carman, you’re finally coming around!” Delilah cried, tears of relief streaming down her face as she embraced him.

Carman flushed with the intimacy but didn’t retreat. Instead, he returned her embrace firmly. “Thank you, Delilah. Without you, I would still be lost. From here on out, I’ll never let you face hardship alone.”

“Alright.”

Delilah’s lips curled into a slight smirk. So easy to manipulate!

The men of the Edwards family were profoundly naive. Just a few heartfelt words and a bit of vulnerability were enough to draw them out of their misery and into her corner as defenders.

“Carman, if music isn’t your passion anymore, perhaps you should consider acting,” Delilah suggested out of the blue. “With your striking appearance, you’d be a natural for lead roles. And despite the current backlash online, controversy does tend to draw the spotlight. If we play this right, you could rise to stardom.”

“You’re absolutely right! I’m not going to be brought down by this,” Carman declared resolutely.

Suddenly, the door to the hospital room was violently thrust open with a forceful kick.

“So, you want to try acting, Carman? Well, first you’ll need to clear your debts by selling yourself to the company!” Yvonne stormed in, flanked by two imposing bodyguards. Her icy gaze was locked on Carman, who lay in the hospital bed.

Despite the closeness Yvonne and Carman had once shared, it was evident that in the world of money and power, personal relationships were secondary to strategic alliances and rivalries.

The repercussions of Carman’s controversial fan event continued to escalate. Prescott tried to manage the online comments, but the chatter showed no signs of abating.

The public's attention remained fixed on Carman. He had been adored as an internet sensation, but now he was the target of widespread derision.

"Carman is a total sham! After getting caught plagiarizing, he staged a fainting episode to dodge the backlash. Now, he's cowering in a hospital."

"I paid a visit to the hospital, hoping to confront him, yet he never ventured from his room. I didn't even get to throw an egg at him!"

"I'm a nurse at Auburn Hospital, and believe me, there's nothing wrong with Carman. He sprawls in his bed, indulging in fine cuisine as if he's at a five-star hotel. Claiming he's 'traumatized' and in need of rest? Utter nonsense."

"Carman, you've let me down completely. I'm done being your fan for good."

A torrent of vitriol swamped Carman's social media. His foremost post, heralding his new song, attracted over 200,000 seething comments, each more venomous than the last.

Subsequently, his track vanished from streaming services, leaving behind a trail of broken links.

Conversely, Janice's piano recital was climbing the charts in acclaim.

"Who is this breathtaking pianist? Even with her face blurred, she radiates like a goddess. I can only dream of how gorgeous she must be in person!"

Chapter 233:

"I saw her up close—she's stunning, like a living angel. And I know exactly who she is."

"Out with it! Rumor has it she hails from an illustrious lineage. Share with us!"

"I can't say a word. Those of us present that day, or even watching online, vowed to keep her identity a secret. She's our star, and it's up to us to protect her."

The mysterious quiet around Janice's identity left everyone puzzled. In a world ablaze with scandals and rumors, the unanimous choice to conceal her details was truly extraordinary.

Even Janice found herself astonished. She had braced for upheaval after stepping into the spotlight, yet it seemed as if the netizens had rallied to protect her.

For the moment, unless one had attended the event or caught the live broadcast, her identity remained shielded.

"Janice, you never fail to catch me off guard." Sitting in the car, Aiden glanced at Janice, his voice tinged with admiration. "I never imagined that the woman I married for convenience could possess such irresistible charm."

Janice turned her attention from her phone to meet his gaze. "Oh? Having second thoughts?"

"Second thoughts about what?" Aiden responded, briefly thrown off balance by her question.

In an instant, Janice leaned closer, her striking face just a breath away from his. Aiden tensed, his breathing faltering as his eyes darted anxiously. For the first time, a genuine sense of unease washed over him.

"About renewing our arrangement," Janice murmured, her voice playful yet enticing as her lips twisted into a sly grin. "I've mentioned before—I wouldn't be against making our arrangement a bit more permanent."

Aiden gulped, quickly looking away. "Why are you always teasing me like this? Do you find it amusing?"

"Quite interesting," Janice said, her eyes glinting playfully as she looked at Aiden. "The dignified heir of the Green family, showing such an awkward side—don't you think that's funny?"

Aiden frowned slightly, feeling a twinge of discomfort. He wanted to tell Janice not to push her luck, yet he found himself speechless.

"Don't worry, Aiden." Janice leaned back against the car window, her gaze lost in the distant view. A wistful shadow passed over her expressive eyes.

Watching her, Aiden felt an unexpected ache in his heart. It was as though he had lost something important, stirring a deep, unsettling restlessness within him.

"You've got someone else in mind, and I've no interest in getting in the way." Janice paused, then smirked. "Besides, I have no intention of being with someone foolish."

"Foolish? Are you referring to me?"

"Who else?" Janice replied with a shrug, rolling her eyes at him.

Aiden chuckled, though it carried a sharp edge of irritation. It was the first time he'd been called foolish, especially by Janice, and it caught him off guard. "Janice, would you mind explaining how exactly I'm being foolish?"

Chapter 234:

With a mischievous wag of her finger, Janice replied, "Explaining it would spoil the fun. You'll have to figure that out on your own. Just remember, our agreement doesn't last forever."

Aiden's frown deepened, feeling the knot of confusion tighten within him. Janice was clearly playing a game, but her intentions were elusive, veiled by her playful taunts and cryptic deadlines.

Lowering his gaze, Aiden absently rubbed the bracelet on his wrist.

"Do you like bracelets?" Janice asked suddenly.

"What?" Aiden looked up at her.

“Using a bracelet to calm yourself is smart,” Janice said with a smile. “But don’t depend too much on external things. Once it becomes a habit, losing it will leave you exposed. True strength comes from within, not from what you rely on.”

Aiden paused, her words hitting deeper than he expected. Janice’s bold, free-spirited advice was so like her—provocative yet strangely inspiring. It stirred a conflicted mix of admiration and irritation, but he had to admit, she had the strength to back her words. Aiden smirked, not angry, but rather relieved by Janice’s words. Perhaps he had indeed relied too much on the comfort the bracelet provided. Or perhaps he was holding on too tightly to memories of the past.

The habit had begun years ago after he spotted a bracelet on the woman’s wrist, sparking an unexplained compulsion to wear one himself.

Touching the bracelet had become his way of soothing distress, bringing fleeting moments of peace as he remembered their meeting.

A sudden thought crossed Aiden’s mind, and his expression hardened with determination.

Just then, Janice’s phone buzzed with an incoming message.

“Janice, was this really necessary? You got yourself kicked out of the Edwards family. If you show remorse, we might take you back. But instead of regret, you choose revenge. Maybe our parents were right to let you go.”

“Dotson?” Janice’s eyes glinted as a cold smile played on her lips. Clearly, Dotson had caught wind of Carman’s troubles and decided to preach now.

She quickly typed back, “Dotson, struggling with writer’s block again? Or are you just stalling as usual? Honestly, you and Carman are a lost cause. Aside from plagiarism, how else could you ever produce anything groundbreaking?”

With a flick of her finger, she hit send and immediately blocked him. Putting away her phone, she turned to Aiden with a faint smile. “I’ll be back late today, so don’t bother picking me up.”

“Where are you headed?” Aiden asked without thinking.

“Focus on your date,” Janice said, stepping out of the car and leaving him puzzled and uneasy.

She knew about that too?

Phyllis Restaurant was renowned throughout Efrery for its mouthwatering dishes and creative menu. The establishment regularly drew an array of socialites and notable figures.

“Excuse me, are you Janice Green?”

Upon reaching the entrance, Janice was greeted by a courteous waiter.

Chapter 235:

“Yes, that’s me.”

“Mr. Fletcher has already arrived.”

Janice raised her eyebrows slightly. Nolan sure was punctual.

The interior of the restaurant was sparsely populated, with only a few tables occupied here and there. Scanning the room, Janice quickly located Nolan.

Today, he presented himself with an uncommon formality. His typically unkempt hair was now slicked back, and his beard was meticulously trimmed, lending him the air of a polished gentleman.

It seemed the anticipation of meeting someone he respected might have unnerved him. There he sat, nervously checking his watch and occasionally taking a sip of water.

Janice couldn't help but find his demeanor endearing. For a man graced with his years and wisdom, one who had doubtless experienced much, his apparent nerves were telling. They underscored the importance he placed on this encounter.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Nolan."

At the sound of her voice, Nolan rose, his gaze locking with Janice's warm smile.

"Not at all! I've only just arrived myself." Regaining his composure, he motioned gracefully. "Please, take a seat."

Janice settled into her seat with an air of ease and poise, contrasting sharply with Nolan's evident discomfort.

Even the waiter couldn't help but notice the peculiar interaction. Nolan, typically exuding the confidence of a seasoned veteran, now appeared oddly submissive in the presence of the younger woman.

Brushing aside his curiosity, the waiter attended to his tasks.

"Mr. Fletcher, would you like me to serve the dishes now?"

"Yes, please, that would be lovely."

"Right away, sir." The waiter turned and made his way back to the kitchen.

Janice turned to Nolan, her tone light but pointed.

"You've really gone out of your way for today's meeting."

"The pleasure of dining with you is a privilege. I certainly felt the occasion warranted a bit of formality," Nolan replied, adjusting his posture to appear even more upright.

Janice's lips curled into a knowing smirk as she leaned back comfortably in her chair.

"You're being far too formal. Honestly, with your depth of experience, I'm the one who should be learning from you. This level of courtesy might just make me embarrassed."

"Embarrassed?" Nolan blinked, his expression one of genuine surprise. "Why would my respect cause you any embarrassment?"

Janice arched an eyebrow, her voice playful yet sincere.

"Well, you're treating me like I'm some sort of royalty. Really, it should be the other way around. You're the one with the venerable experience, after all."

Nolan let out a soft chuckle, relaxing into his chair.

Chapter 236:

"Experience isn't the only thing that matters, you know. Talent is equally deserving of respect, regardless of age. Besides, isn't there an adage about being able to learn from anyone, especially those who have achieved great things?"

Janice chuckled.

"Seems like you've got a knack for surprises. Alright, I'll let the age difference slide—we might just make a good team after all."

"That would be absolutely fantastic!" Nolan replied, his face lighting up with excitement. He had long been intrigued by RAIN, the artist shrouded in enigma. Now, as fate would have it, his visit to Veland had serendipitously led him to meet her.

Much to his joy, she wasn't just immensely gifted but also breathtakingly attractive.

Before long, their table was brimming with an array of dishes, many of which Janice recognized as her personal favorites. It was evident that Nolan had meticulously prepared for their meeting, which earned her genuine admiration.

“You didn’t happen to drive here, did you?” Nolan asked as he poured two glasses of rich red wine, offering one to Janice with a hopeful smile. “This moment seems perfect for a toast.”

“Absolutely,” Janice agreed, their glasses chiming together in a light toast.

She savored a tentative sip, the initial sharpness of the wine mellowing into a delightful sweetness that complemented the exquisite meal. Encouraged, she allowed herself a few more flavorful bites.

As the evening progressed and their wine glasses were frequently refilled, Nolan found the courage to voice the proposal that had been weighing on his mind.

“I’m planning a concert here. Would you consider joining me as a special guest performer?”

Janice squinted at Nolan, her eyes narrowing with a sharp, cool gaze. Nolan felt his heart skip a beat under her stare, a nervous laugh escaping him. “Whoops, that was a bit forward. Let me apologize to you with a drink.”

Janice watched him knock back a glass of red wine before a faint smile curled at the edges of her lips.

“Well, it’s not entirely out of the question. My schedule’s pretty flexible, so if I’m free, I might just join in on the fun,” said Janice.

“Huh?” Nolan blinked, caught off guard. “Are you serious?”

“Do I look like I’m joking?” Janice asked, her lips pulling into a lazy, nonchalant grin as she took another sip.

"That's fantastic!" Nolan clapped his hands in excitement, causing a few curious eyes to turn to them. He quickly composed himself, locking his eager gaze on Janice. "I can't wait for you to show up. It'll be the biggest surprise at my concert."

Janice remained silent, her expression neutral. Attending Nolan's concert as RAIN would definitely stir up a frenzy. Knowing Nolan, he likely intended to keep her appearance a secret, saving the shock for the audience and leaving those who missed out regretting it deeply.

"Oh, and there's something I should mention before this meal ends," Janice said, suddenly looking serious.

Chapter 237:

"Huh?" Nolan tilted his head, intrigued.

Janice met his gaze squarely. "Even though I've revealed who I am, I'd still like to keep a low profile. So, keep it under wraps, alright? Most importantly, don't tell that guy."

"Who's that?" Nolan asked, genuinely puzzled. "Exactly, are you talking about?"

"Lancelot Marquez."

"What?" Nolan inhaled sharply, his face flushing with embarrassment. "I'm afraid I can't promise that."

"Hmm?" Janice's brow furrowed, her eyes flickering with suspicion. "You didn't already tell him, did you?"

Nolan hesitated before nodding sheepishly. "Well, after I got back that day, Lancelot showed up, asking about you. I got carried away and spilled the beans."

Janice raised a hand to her forehead in disbelief, then suddenly stood, as if a realization had just hit her.

"Wait, what's going on?" Nolan asked, his concern growing.

"If I'm right, that guy probably..."

"Hey, RAIN! I finally get to meet you in person!" A tall, cheerful man appeared out of nowhere, dressed in a sharp black suit that fit him like a glove, his hair styled to perfection. His face was nothing short of stunning, with a refined yet gentle bone structure. His bright blue eyes sparkled like sapphires, drawing the gaze of everyone in the room.

But Janice, standing in the midst of such charm, couldn't help but frown, a look of frustration creeping across her face. She shot a sharp look at Nolan, who, like a child caught with his hand in the cookie jar, was too stunned to speak. He quickly took a sip of his wine, trying to swallow his unease along with it. It dawned on him that he'd made a mess of things.

He hadn't anticipated that Janice would use this dinner to warn him not to reveal her identity to Lancelot. But Lancelot had approached him the same day he had discovered RAIN's identity. In his excitement, he'd blurted out that Janice was RAIN without a second thought.

"RAIN, are you not glad to see me?" Lancelot asked, his brow furrowing, his exquisite face somehow making the sad expression all the more captivating.

"Of course I'm happy," Janice replied, lowering her hand and flashing a smile. "After all, meeting a prince from the royal family in such a setting is a real honor. Who wouldn't be thrilled?"

Her eyes narrowed as she shot Nolan another pointed glare.

Nolan, now thoroughly shaken by her two fiery stares, nearly choked on his wine in a panic.

"You two catch up. I'll just slip away for a moment," Nolan stammered, eager to escape Janice's searing gaze. He quickly made a beeline for the restroom, desperate for some space to breathe.

"RAIN, this gift is especially for you." Lancelot whipped a vibrant bouquet of flowers from behind his back, offering them to Janice with a grand gesture. "Do you like them? I grew these myself, just for you. To ensure they stayed pristine, I even had them transported here on a private jet."

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Janice eyed the bouquet, dew still sparkling on the petals—Lancelot's words were no boast. An inward sigh escaped her; there was no dodging this conversation, she realized. Steadying herself, Janice offered a courteous smile. She didn't accept the flowers. Instead, she seated herself, her face etched with a slight aloofness.

"Lancelot, why are you here? Aren't you supposed to be busy with your engagement ceremony?"

The flowers remained in Lancelot's outstretched hand, his face turning somber. "RAIN, my feelings for you are no secret. You're the love of my life, now and forever."

Janice inhaled deeply, her tolerance waning. "Yet, I don't feel that way about you. Lancelot, go after someone who can truly love you back. Don't waste your heart on me."

"No. I'll never give up on you." Lancelot's voice rang out with unwavering conviction.

Once he fixed his purpose on a goal, he was relentless. When Nolan mentioned Janice was RAIN, he gathered vibrant, fresh blooms and boarded a private jet in the shadowy depths of night, all to stand by her side. Yet, his impulsive journey had stripped the royal family of their grace.

Today was meant to be the celebration of his engagement to Eleanor Frazier, a young woman from a distinguished noble lineage. Instead, he was in another country, wooing another woman.

A throbbing headache began to build behind Janice's eyes. Had she foreseen the chaos her public appearance would incite, she would have declined the royal summons to perform at the palace banquet. That memorable evening had ensnared Lancelot. He was now driven by an unyielding desire to win her heart.

"Lancelot, love cannot be compelled," Janice stated, her arms crossed as she leveled a frosty gaze at him. "I may not sway your feelings, but I have every right to turn you away."

“In that case, I’ll keep chasing after you.” Lancelot edged the bouquet of flowers closer, his smile widening with hope. “I’m convinced that through unwavering persistence and genuine affection, I will eventually capture your heart.”

For God’s sake! Janice felt a sinking sense of desperation. She could easily outmaneuver business adversaries and captivate audiences worldwide with her prowess, yet here she was, utterly defenseless against this stubborn man.

What could she possibly do now? Was it time to disable him and send him back? Wouldn’t that end up offending the entire royal family?

As Delilah strolled into Phyllis Restaurant for her meeting, she immediately noticed Janice engaged in a lively conversation with Lancelot. Just as she entered, she spotted them talking.

“Is that guy hitting on Janice?” Delilah muttered, her tone laced with disbelief and jealousy. She hadn’t anticipated Janice capturing the interest of such a remarkably handsome man. The elegance of his suit and the way he carried himself left no doubt he was far from ordinary.

A surge of jealousy tightened its grip on Delilah, sharp and relentless. Yet, a spark of cunning lit up her eyes. Slyly, she drew her phone from her purse and discreetly took a picture of the pair.

Chapter 239:

“Let’s see how you deal with this, Janice.”

With a crafty smile playing on her lips, Delilah cast one last lingering look at the charismatic blonde man before she headed to her reserved dining area.

Upon pushing open the door to the private room, she was met with the sight of a woman whose sharp features exuded an innate sophistication. Delilah quickly adopted her most charming smile. “Nellie, how punctual of you!”

Nellie regarded her coolly, her voice flat. “I prefer not to be late.”

Delilah momentarily stumbled, a touch of embarrassment coloring her cheeks. She hadn't expected her slight tardiness to be an issue, yet Nellie's stern expression suggested it was.

"Nellie, to make amends for my delay, allow me to share something quite intriguing with you."

Nellie raised an eyebrow, her interest piqued for the first time.

Delilah showed Nellie the photo of Janice and Lancelot that she had taken.

Nellie's expression tightened into a frown as she scrutinized it. "Janice was dining with a man?" The man seemed vaguely familiar, yet his identity eluded her. She couldn't quite pinpoint where she had seen him before. "How much do you think this photo could stir things up?" Nellie saw the slyness in Delilah's eyes. "You're planning to send this to Aiden? To sow discord between him and Janice?"

Delilah's expression hardened, her voice chilling as she confirmed, "Exactly. Janice draws her confidence from her ties to the influential Green family. If she and Aiden were to have a falling-out, what damage could she possibly inflict? I suspect you'd relish seeing Janice and Aiden's relationship crumble even more than I would, am I right?"

A shadow passed over Nellie's features as she mulled over the implications. Deep down, she harbored hopes of driving a wedge between Janice and Aiden, potentially opening a path for her own affections to grow. "But are you aware that Aiden and Janice's union is merely contractual?"

Delilah recoiled slightly, taken aback by the revelation. "You mean their marriage is nothing more than a strategic alliance to secure his grandfather's shares?"

"Exactly," Nellie affirmed with a nod. "If you send this photo to Aiden, he might just shrug it off without a second thought."

Delilah's brow furrowed in disbelief, struggling to come to terms with the situation. "How could this be possible? If their marriage is merely a convenient arrangement, then why does Aiden go to such lengths to defend Janice? What makes her so invaluable that the Green family would go out of their way to protect her?"

Nellie's gaze sharpened, her fingers drumming a soft rhythm against the wood. "I've been pondering that as well. You should still forward that photo to Aiden." She was determined to validate her suspicions. Was the bond between Aiden and Janice simply contractual, or had their relationship blossomed into genuine affection?

"Moreover, consider leaking this photo to the tabloid media," Nellie added, her eyes glinting with strategy. "They'll jump on it instantly."

Delilah's eyes lit up. "That's brilliant! Why didn't that cross my mind?"

Chapter 240:

Energized by the plan, Delilah navigated her phone to send the photo to Aiden. But the message wouldn't deliver. Aiden had blocked her.

"Allow me to handle this," Nellie said smoothly, observing Delilah's flustered reaction, masking a knowing smile.

Fortunately, Aiden hadn't blocked her from his contacts, which brought Nellie a slight sense of solace. Yet, she couldn't shake off the nagging thought that maybe he had simply overlooked the idea of blocking her, a notion that slightly deflated her spirits.

Resolutely, she clicked the "send" button. "Aiden, I'm curious to see how you'll react now."

Simultaneously, Delilah was busy circulating the controversial photo among various news outlets, confident that it wouldn't be long before the image set the internet ablaze.

The image, depicting Aiden's wife in a clandestine rendezvous with another man, promised to be the latest juicy scandal, potentially tarnishing the esteemed Green family's image.

In the opulent surroundings of Fantasy Restaurant, a venue rivaling the renowned Phyllis Restaurant, Aiden sat in his wheelchair, his demeanor relaxed yet radiating an air of sophistication and nobility. Facing him was Tess, clad in a flowing orange dress complemented by minimal makeup, enhancing her natural beauty.

Today, she had cast aside her usual professional and stern demeanor as a doctor, radiating a gentle and charming aura instead. She had toyed with the idea of applying heavy makeup but then recalled that the CEOs in those romance novels rarely favored women who wore it thick. Opting for subtlety, she chose a light makeup style that straddled the line between simple elegance and captivating beauty.

“Mr. Green, I’ve been eager to try this restaurant for quite some time. What a delightful surprise it is to share this meal with you here,” Tess remarked, her smile warm and her presence composed.

Her statement appeared straightforward, yet a playful undertone of flirtation was unmistakably present. She was subtly suggesting that perhaps fate had played a hand in their meeting.

Aiden’s expression remained as cold as stone, his chiseled features betraying nothing. Tess waited, hoping for some flicker of reaction, but Aiden’s indifference only stretched the silence into something heavier.

Why was he so composed? Was her outfit not dazzling enough? Or had her words, carefully chosen, somehow fallen short?

Before her thoughts could spiral further, Aiden lazily snapped his fingers, an effortless gesture that exuded charm. Tess’s heart momentarily skipped a beat. So this was real power—effortless, controlled, and absolutely magnetic. Every move, even the slightest, carried an air of confidence she had never encountered before.

“Mr. Green, is there anything else you’d like?” a waiter stepped forward, breaking the stillness.

“Bring the food,” Aiden said smoothly.

“Right away.”