

## **Wrath 301**

Chapter 301:

“Someone, escort Miss Edwards out. As for her plagiarism, Delgado Jewelry will issue a formal statement. Should any illegal activities surface, I will pursue all available legal remedies.”

Kenneth’s words fell like a judge’s gavel, shattering Delilah’s final thread of hope.

His declaration not only silenced any possibility of defense but dealt a devastating blow, effectively ending her career in the design world.

This wasn’t just the end of her jewelry design career—it was an execution order for her entire future in the industry.

Two security guards appeared beside her, and Delilah let them lead her away, her body moving mechanically.

“Mr. Delgado, you’ve made a wise decision.” Janice approached Kenneth with a smile.

Kenneth studied Janice, his eyes revealing a storm of emotions. Beyond the disturbing revelations about Delilah from Lowell, he was intimately familiar with the torment Janice had endured within the Edwards family.

The mental fortitude required to survive such a suffocating environment for an entire year was beyond his comprehension.

Like parasites, the Edwards family had systematically drained Janice’s spirit, feeding off her vitality drop by drop. Yet they remained wrapped in their cocoon of delusion, attributing their success solely to their own merit. Instead of gratitude, they accused Janice of causing trouble, claiming she was locked in a twisted competition for affection with Delilah.

Through it all, Janice had shouldered every burden, desperately seeking their validation and fighting to preserve the family’s harmony.

But they swallowed Delilah's poisoned half-truths whole, branding Janice as small-minded and intolerant, subjecting her to a relentless barrage of vitriol and abuse. Without Lowell's revelation, Kenneth would have remained blind to the Edwards family's true nature—their grotesque worship of an outsider while driving their flesh and blood to the brink of despair.

"Janice, you..." Kenneth reached for words of solace, but they crumbled before her tranquil smile, leaving him speechless. In that moment, he realized Janice had severed her emotional ties to the Edwards family. For her, those days had become nothing more than shadows in a fading nightmare.

"Lowell shared everything with you, didn't he?" Janice's voice carried the weight of quiet certainty. "What's done is done, and regret has no place here. Tell him that he must face the consequences of his actions, no matter how bitter the medicine. His remorse stems not from genuine understanding, but from the realization that he's reached his end."

Her words rendered Kenneth's prepared comfort hollow and meaningless.

Indeed, Lowell had hoped to channel his contrition through Kenneth, desperately seeking Janice's forgiveness.

But he had grossly underestimated Janice's ironclad determination to sever all ties with the Edwards family. Lowell's foolishness would exact its toll—a lifetime sentence of regret carved into his conscience.

"Let's leave these dark clouds behind. There are matters I'd prefer to discuss with you in private." Janice cast a meaningful glance at Nellie.

Kenneth's eyes flickered with understanding before he turned to Nellie. "I'll speak with Janice for a while. We can catch up afterward."

"Alright." Nellie gave a slight nod, then lifted two glasses of ruby-red wine, keeping one while extending the other to Janice. "But first, I'd like to share a drink with you."

"Me?" Janice arched an eyebrow at the offered glass, her lips curving into a subtle smirk. "Miss Ramirez, you're making it rather difficult not to suspect you've doctored this wine."

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Nellie remained silent, smoothly combining the contents of both glasses before separating them again with practiced precision. She took a sip, then met Janice's gaze with a challenging arch of her brow. "Does this satisfy your concerns about its safety?"

Janice remained unmoved, her voice cool and measured. "Give me a compelling reason to accept."

A shadow crossed Nellie's features as she lowered her voice. "While Sierra's association with you has stirred the family's wrath, I must acknowledge the kindness you've shown her these past days. This drink stands as a sister's gesture of gratitude, nothing more."

"A fair proposition," Janice replied with the ghost of a smile, finally accepting the offered glass.

Leah's and Sierra's faces contorted with barely concealed alarm at her acceptance, their protests rising to their lips only to be quelled by Janice's warning glance.

Aiden's eyes narrowed to slits as he watched Janice drink, his fingers unconsciously tightening around his bracelet until his knuckles whitened.

Janice drained her wine glass with deliberate slowness, a perfectly sculpted eyebrow rising as she placed it on the table with a soft clink. "Miss Ramirez, while I value your gratitude and accept your thanks, there's something crucial you need to understand."

"I'm all ears." Nellie's gaze lingered on the empty glass, a ghost of a smile playing at the corners of her mouth.

"Sierra deserves autonomy over her own destiny." Janice's voice carried the quiet authority of absolute conviction. "As Leah expressed earlier—Sierra is her friend, and Leah would protect her. And I would protect Sierra too."

A flicker of anguish crossed Nellie's features before she masked it, bitterness seeping through her carefully maintained composure.

The irony wasn't lost on her—how she bore the crushing weight of familial expectations while Sierra found herself cocooned in others' protection, their defiance of the family's wishes shielding her like armor. What made Sierra so deserving of such devotion? Nellie was the family's crowning achievement: intellectually superior, multi-talented, and impeccably educated. She'd worn the mantle of the golden child, basking in universal admiration.

Yet here she stood, shackled by obligation, while her younger sister, who'd never quite measured up, soared free. More galling still were the champions who rallied to preserve Sierra's freedom.

Nellie's attention turned to Sierra, who stood at Janice's side, her eyes sparkling with unmistakable trust and reverence.

The sight twisted like a knife in her chest. She struggled to recall when Sierra had last regarded her with such warmth and pride. Only one memory surfaced—Sierra at twelve, mesmerized by her masterful piano performance. The pure admiration in her sister's eyes then had filled Nellie with a glow she could still feel echoing through the years.

"I hear you," Nellie finally said, forcing a smile while fighting back the constriction in her throat. "But I'm powerless against my family's mandates. Whatever Sierra's fate may be, I hope you won't place the blame at my feet."

Janice's eyes sharpened to steel points as she studied Nellie. Something about this sudden show of submissiveness was not right.

She had anticipated Delilah's presence at the event as a direct challenge—a calculated move to cause trouble for her. Yet with Delilah now dispatched, the evening should have settled into peaceful waters.

Chapter 303:

Instead, Nellie's tranquility felt like a treacherous undertow, hinting at darker currents churning beneath her placid surface.

"Mr. Delgado, shall we?" Janice exchanged a meaningful glance with Kenneth. Together, they made their way to the side hall.

"Leah, do you think Janice will be alright after drinking that wine?" Sierra's whisper carried an edge of anxiety. Despite Sierra's attempt at discretion, her words reached Nellie's ears.

"Sierra, do you honestly believe I would sink to such depths?"

Sierra faltered, her eyes darting uncertainly to her sister's face. "Is it wrong that I care about Janice's wellbeing?"

Nellie exhaled softly, weariness seeping into her tone. "We've grown so distant, Sierra. Perhaps it's time we sat down and talked."

"That won't be necessary." Leah's voice sliced through the air like a blade before Sierra could respond. "What wisdom could you possibly impart when you can't even steer your own destiny? If you're so keen on playing mentor, perhaps first demonstrate that your words carry any weight."

The barb found its mark, and Nellie's face turned to stone. Her fingers curled into tight fists, but she remained silent, the weight of truth in Leah's words stealing her voice.

"Sierra, the dessert spread looks divine. Let's sample some," Leah suggested, guiding Sierra away with a gentle but firm grip on her arm.

Nellie watched their retreating figures, darkness clouding her gaze. Yet as they disappeared into the crowd, her lips curved into an unsettling smile before she walked away.

Delgado Jewelry's celebration was nothing short of magnificent, with delicacies from a five-star hotel gracing the tables and premium spirits flowing freely. No expense had been spared to create an evening of unparalleled luxury.

But Aiden couldn't bring himself to care about any of it.

His mind had been in turmoil since Janice left with Kenneth. An invisible weight pressed down on his shoulders, making everything and everyone around him feel like an irritation. The cold fury radiating from him kept the other guests at bay.

Even the women who usually jumped at the chance to chat him up seemed to sense the storm clouds gathering around him and stayed clear.

"Mr. Green, are you feeling alright?" Braylen asked.

Aiden blinked, caught off guard. "What do you mean?"

Braylen nodded toward Aiden's hands, where his fingers wouldn't stop fidgeting with his bracelet. "I've never seen you this wound up before. And honestly, you look like hell."

It wasn't until then that Aiden realized he'd been strangling the bracelet. Braylen had a point—he couldn't seem to get a grip on himself.

His eyes drifted back to the side hall for the hundredth time. Was he really this worried about Janice?

He knew Janice had left with Kenneth to dig for information about the car accident that had happened to him years ago. But knowing that didn't do anything to settle the knot in his stomach.

Ding!

His phone screen suddenly lit up with a notification. When Aiden checked it, his brow furrowed at the sender's name: Tess.

"Mr. Green, something crucial just came to mind."

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Aiden's eyes narrowed as he considered his response.

After a moment's pause, he typed, "What is it?"

"It's about your car accident from years ago. I think I've found a clue that could lead us to whoever was behind it."

A muscle twitched in Aiden's jaw as his grip tightened on the phone. He took a measured breath before replying, "We can discuss this over dinner tomorrow."

Tess replied, "I don't think I can wait. I feel like someone is watching me right now. I'm terrified. Could you please come? I think whoever tried to hurt you back then knows I remember something. They might be trying to keep me quiet."

A glacial chill crept into Aiden's gaze as he glanced once more toward the side hall, searching in vain for any sign of Janice.

Tess added, "I know you're busy, and maybe you don't believe me. But I swear someone's lurking outside my door. I'm not sure I'll survive until morning."

Aiden massaged his temples, his patience wearing dangerously thin. After a long moment, he fired back, "Send me your location."

Within seconds, a pin dropped on his screen.

"Braylen, take me here," Aiden cast one final, lingering look toward the side hall. "And dispatch a team to keep watch over Janice."

"Yes, sir."

Meanwhile, Janice and Kenneth had slipped into the side hall, their presence causing an immediate exodus of the other occupants. The bodyguards stationed at the entrance sealed the door behind them with practiced silence.

"Janice, what is it you'd like to talk about?" Kenneth asked. "And shouldn't we consider how compromising this situation might appear to some certain people?"

Janice met his gaze with unwavering composure. "Let's dispense with the games. I'm here to discuss the car accident that nearly claimed Aiden's life three years ago."

Kenneth's expression darkened instantly. The faint smile on his lips disappeared. "I'm not sure I understand what you mean."

"As Aiden's wife, I have every right to demand justice for him, Mr. Delgado." Determination blazed in Janice's eyes, her gaze so piercing that even Kenneth found himself unsettled beneath its weight.

Rather than responding immediately, he reached for a bottle of red wine from the nearby shelf. "Care for some?"

Janice kept her steady gaze fixed on him, offering only a slight shake of her head as she watched him fill his glass. Kenneth studied the crimson liquid, watching the ripples dance across its surface as he swirled the glass. “Do you believe it was me?”

“Yes.” Her response cut through the air like a blade—swift and decisive, born of unwavering conviction. “After that incident, there were rumors that you were behind it. Given your rivalry with Aiden and how he overshadowed you back then, it’s not hard to imagine you harboring such resentment. Logic suggests you conspired with others to orchestrate that car accident.”

Kenneth cradled his wine glass, letting the weight of her accusation settle in the space between them. His eyes searched hers, hunting for even a flicker of doubt. But her gaze remained as still and fathomless as a midnight lake, revealing nothing of what lay beneath.

Kenneth took a measured sip of wine, his lips curving into a smile that never reached his eyes. “You’re not wrong about the accusations. After Aiden’s accident, many suspected I was behind it. But neither the police nor the Green family could unearth a single thread connecting me to the incident. So—”

“Mr. Delgado, I only need to ask you one thing.” Janice cut through his words with a wave of her hand.

Chapter 305:

Kenneth was surprised. “Just one question? And here I thought you’d assembled an arsenal of evidence against me.”

Janice held his gaze, unflinching. “Did you do it?”

For the first time that evening, Kenneth’s carefully crafted mask slipped, revealing something raw beneath. “I didn’t.”

“Got it.” Janice nodded without a moment’s pause, her lips curving into a smile. “I believe you. You had nothing to do with the accident.”

Kenneth stared at her, caught completely off guard. “You believe me?”

Janice's lips curled. "I trust my instincts. I can tell when someone is lying. And after these past few weeks working alongside you, I know you're not capable of something like that."

Kenneth fell into contemplative silence.

For years, that shadow of suspicion had clung to him like a second skin—a burden he'd shouldered without complaint. Yet here was someone who chose to believe in his innocence. The simplicity of her trust stirred something long dormant within him.

"You're quite an extraordinary woman," Kenneth said at last, his voice holding a note of wonder.

"Should I take that as a compliment?" Janice's smile held a playful edge.

Kenneth lifted his glass to his lips, using the moment to gather his thoughts. "Take it however you wish. But let me be clear—yes, Aiden and I have always been rivals. And yes, he's consistently held the advantage. But I don't resort to underhanded tactics. When I claim victory, it will be on merit alone."

"Success will surely find you one day. But surpassing Aiden? That's a dream you might want to keep dreaming," Janice remarked with casual confidence before her lips curved into an impish smile.

Kenneth found himself laughing despite himself, caught off guard by her frank assessment. "That sharp tongue of yours takes no prisoners, does it?"

capabilities. It's simply that Aiden is extraordinary. And he never stops evolving."

Her words, though meant as praise, only stoked the smoldering frustration in Kenneth's heart. Still, he held his tongue. Experience had taught him that excessive words often betrayed weakness, and true power lay in action.

"Mr. Delgado, thank you for answering my question," Janice said as she rose to leave. "Next time, dinner's on me."

“Janice, if there were no engagement binding you to Aiden, would he still be your choice?” Kenneth asked before Janice could leave the side hall.

Janice pivoted, meeting his gaze. “Yes.”

Kenneth stood frozen, struck by the unwavering certainty in her response. “Why?”

A radiant smile appeared on Janice’s face, her beauty so transcendent in that moment that Kenneth felt as though he were witnessing divinity made flesh. “Because I chose him—not the other way around.”

“Hmm?” Kenneth blinked, momentarily lost in the labyrinth of her words. By the time clarity returned, Janice had already left.

She chose Aiden?

Kenneth’s brow furrowed as doubt clouded his thoughts. He watched the wine ripple in his glass, mind churning. To his knowledge, Janice and Aiden had been strangers before they got married.

Had they crossed paths before Janice’s return to the Edwards family last year? If not, what lay behind her claim of choice?

Kenneth struggled to reconcile the idea that someone as measured and logical as Janice would succumb to love at first sight. A woman of her caliber surely wasn’t governed by mere impulse or raw emotion.

With a weary sigh, Kenneth emptied his glass. Somehow, it tasted far more bitter now than it had earlier.

Chapter 306:

When Janice emerged from the side hall, her searching gaze swept across the room, finding no trace of Aiden, Sierra, or Leah.

“Janice!” Cheryl scurried over, plastering an apologetic smile on her face as she drew to a halt. “I wanted to apologize. I wasn’t myself earlier. I let Delilah’s deception cloud my judgment, and I treated you unfairly.”

Janice arched an elegant eyebrow, a glimmer of wry amusement dancing in her eyes. “So with Delilah out of the picture, you’ve decided to curry favor with me?”

Her words cut through the air like a blade, leaving no room for pretense.

Cheryl’s face bloomed crimson with shame.

“Janice, we’re colleagues, aren’t we? Must you be so direct?” Cheryl forced out a brittle laugh. “I mean, I know your family’s influence is considerable, but...”

“Stop.” Janice lifted her hand, silencing Cheryl midsentence. “My lineage has nothing to do with this matter. I’m quite the vengeful soul. When someone shows me disrespect... if I’m in a good mood, I might let them off with just a slap. But if not...”

She leaned forward, her gaze piercing through Cheryl like winter frost. A serpentine smile played across her lips. “I’ll make them disappear.”

Cheryl’s body betrayed her fear as she trembled, the color draining from her face. “You...”

The words caught in her throat like trapped birds, leaving her stammering helplessly as Janice regarded her with unveiled contempt.

“Oh, relax. I’ve already had my entertainment at Delgado Jewelry. You won’t have to endure my presence much longer,” Janice remarked with an indifferent shrug before gliding past Cheryl, resuming her search for Sierra and Leah.

“Janice!” Cheryl’s call cut sharply through the air. “What—”

Janice whirled around just in time to see Cheryl hurling a glass of red wine at her.

Janice dodged to the side, narrowly evading the direct hit. Yet despite her quick move, a splash of red still stained the hem of her luxurious, tailor-made dress.

“You think just because Mr. Green and Ms. Sugden back you, you can behave any way you please? Arrogant people like you eventually pay for their actions!” Cheryl hissed, her voice trembling with anger.

Moving forward, Janice delivered a sharp slap across Cheryl’s face. “I’m in a good mood today, so I’ll let this slide with just a slap. Try anything like this again, and I won’t be so forgiving.”

Stunned by the sudden strike, Cheryl froze. Her cheek burned with the sting, and she clenched her fists, ready to lash out. But the cold, calculating look in Janice’s eyes made her hesitate.

Her courage wavered. She dropped her eyes, swallowing her frustration, and decided to stay silent.

Janice walked past her, her eyes briefly falling on the red stains on her gown. With a frown, she quickly made her way to the restroom, eager to clean the stain before it could set.

As soon as Janice vanished from sight, Cheryl’s trembling lips curled into a wicked smile. She quickly pulled out her phone and typed a message to Delilah. “It’s done.”

Outside the venue, Delilah sat in a sleek black van, a victorious smirk playing on her lips as she read Cheryl’s message.

“Janice, did you honestly think I came here just to cause trouble? No. I was here to distract you—to make you drop your guard.”

She grabbed her phone once more and called Connor. “Dad, Janice fell for it. Go ahead now.”

“Excellent. It’s high time that ungrateful child experienced what destruction feels like,” Connor said, his voice deep and menacing.

After ending the call, Delilah composed a new message to Nellie. "Get ready. The show's about to start."

Chapter 307:

Soon after, Nellie texted back. "I'm all set to watch."

Delilah reclined in her chair, arms folded, wearing a self-satisfied grin. "You think you're beyond reach, Janice? We'll see how you manage when chaos hits you from every direction."

At the same time, Janice was in the restroom, dabbing at the wine stains on her dress.

The stains were persistent and wouldn't disappear without thorough cleaning. She did her best to lessen their appearance.

She stopped abruptly. A feeling of discomfort swept over her. Something was off.

She had been inside for several minutes, yet not a single person had come in. That felt strange. An event this busy should have people constantly coming and going, so why was the restroom completely deserted?

Janice narrowed her eyes, her gut feeling intensifying. The setting seemed normal, yet the pit in her stomach grew tighter.

Janice's instincts, sharpened by years of handling crises, screamed at her to stay alert. They had saved her life countless times before, and she wasn't about to disregard them now.

She quickly adjusted her dress and moved to leave. However, just as she was about to head out, dizziness overwhelmed her. Her vision blurred, and her legs trembled, almost buckling beneath her.

Janice held onto the sink's edge for support and took a deep breath to calm herself.

She then realized the aroma filling the restroom was unusually potent.

Although it was a scent commonly found in hotels, tonight it seemed much more overpowering.

“Am I poisoned?” Janice mumbled to herself, slapping her face to stay conscious. “Why then? The restroom has been busy all evening. If it were poison, wouldn’t others be affected too?”

Her dizziness grew stronger, and her vision became blurry. The world around her started to double, slipping out of focus.

“Help...” Janice tried to call out, but her voice was so weak it barely escaped her lips.

In a desperate attempt, she gritted her teeth and slapped herself once more. Usually, the sharp sting would clear her mind, but this time it had no effect. The poison had spread through her, and she realized she had only seconds left before her body would fail her.

In one last desperate move, Janice seized a nearby vase and brought it down forcefully against her own hand.

The sudden, intense pain shot through her body, jolting her back to reality. Seizing that brief moment of clarity, she stumbled out of the restroom.

The moment she stepped out, her heart sank. A waiter stood nearby, positioned next to a sign that read “Out of Service.”

“Miss, is there anything I can assist you with?” the waiter asked, his voice polite and calm, almost soothing. But the tone only deepened Janice’s sense of impending danger. She had to escape before it was too late.

Before she could move, the waiter closed in, supporting her as she teetered. His smile seemed rehearsed, but his eyes were calculating and cold. “You seem to have had too much to drink. Let me help you to your room.”

“Let go...” Janice murmured, her voice faint as she weakly tried to pull away, but her strength had nearly vanished. Scanning the area discreetly, the waiter guided her weakening body toward the elevator.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the presidential suite, Andrew paced nervously.

“Is she really going to show up?” he muttered quietly to himself.

He had missed the celebratory banquet, choosing instead to arrive early and wait in this room.

Chapter 308:

The person who had orchestrated this encounter had vowed to satisfy one of his deepest, most secretive wishes—the opportunity to possess Janice.

Ding!

His phone screen lit up with a new message.

Andrew hurriedly opened it, his hands shaking. Inside were only a few words: “Your target approaches. Relish the moment.”

A surge of excitement washed over Andrew, his pulse racing. “Is this really happening? Can I truly have Janice?” he muttered under his breath repeatedly, his excitement mounting, until the doorbell echoed through the room.

Rooted to the spot, Andrew held his breath, fixated on the door. The scenario seemed too fantastical to be true.

Yet reality was about to manifest his fantasy.

The doorbell chimed once more.

With a gulp, Andrew mustered the courage to move. He shuffled to the door and pulled it open, his hands still quivering.

The vision before him left him breathless. It was indeed Janice.

Tonight, she looked breathtaking, her beauty divine, as if a goddess had descended to earth.

“Mr. Walsh, I have delivered her as requested. Enjoy your evening. Just remember your promise,” the waiter said coldly.

“Yes, yes! I’ll handle it!” Andrew nodded eagerly, his hands shaking as he wiped the sweat from his palms onto his pants. He could hardly wait to be close to this woman.

With a dismissive snort, the waiter pushed Janice forward. “She’s yours now.”

In the garden, Leah and Sierra looked around, their faces marked by confusion.

“This is strange! Didn’t someone tell us to meet here?” Sierra’s voice carried a hint of annoyance, her cheeks flushed with frustration. “Is this some kind of joke?”

Leah furrowed her brow, pausing to think for a moment before replying, “The banquet organizer is Delgado Jewelry. Have you seen that waiter before?”

“Huh?” Sierra blinked, caught off guard. “No, I don’t remember seeing him. But now that you mention it, it does seem odd. We checked all the hotel staff while setting up the event. We made sure to exclude anyone who didn’t meet our standards or seemed suspicious. But that waiter... I don’t recall him at all.”

Leah pulled out her phone quickly and dialed Janice’s number.

The phone rang steadily, the silence around them making the sound feel louder, even though Leah wasn’t using speakerphone.

Sierra felt uneasy, watching Leah hold the phone, her breath held slightly.

As the ringing continued, tension grew between the two.

“No answer?” Sierra asked, a mixture of disbelief and concern in her voice. “Could Janice still be deep in conversation with Kenneth?”

“That’s unlikely,” Leah said firmly, shaking her head. “Janice wouldn’t ignore my call unless something was wrong.”

Suddenly, the call connected.

A smile spread across Leah’s face. “Janice, you finally picked up. I was starting to worry.”

“Thought I was kidnapped?” Janice’s calm voice came through, instantly easing their nerves. “Who could possibly kidnap me nowadays?”

Her usual confidence, tinged with a hint of arrogance, reassured Leah. “Maybe I was worried for nothing. Have you finished your chat with Kenneth?”

“It’s done,” Janice replied smoothly. “I’m going to be away for a while, so I’m counting on you to handle things.”

“That’s fine by me.” Leah ended the call, fully trusting Janice’s judgment. She smiled at Sierra and said, “Janice is fine, so there’s no need to worry. But she did mention she’ll be gone for a while.”

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“Really? So I won’t see her?” Sierra’s disappointment showed as she frowned slightly. “I was hoping to take a break and travel abroad with her.”

“Abroad?”

“Yes!” Sierra’s mood brightened as she laughed. “Nina is off enjoying herself in Aerith and says she misses us. I figured with things quiet at the company, it would be the perfect time to jet over and surprise her with Janice.”

Leah shook her head, smiling as she tousled Sierra’s hair. “It’s no surprise Janice is so fond of you. You two share the same spontaneous and inventive spirit.”

Sierra stuck out her tongue playfully. “Are you saying you’re not a fan of mine, Leah?”

Leah laughed heartily. “How could I not adore you? You’re too endearing not to. Let’s head back and dig into some more of those snacks. We barely got a taste earlier.”

“Alright.”

As they walked back, Leah’s phone buzzed with a new message.

“Prescott?” Leah tapped the message and found a link. She clicked it and instantly felt a surge of anger.

“What’s wrong, Leah?” Sierra noticed the sudden fury in Leah’s expression and grew concerned. “What happened?”

“Just look.” Leah handed her phone over without further comment.

Sierra took the phone, tilting her head as she read. A quick scan of the article stirred her anger as well. “I can’t believe the Edwards family! How could they spread such lies about Janice?”

The article was written by Dotson, a well-known columnist celebrated for his incisive social critiques and bestselling books. His sharp commentaries and popular novels had earned him widespread acclaim. As a respected author and social critic, his words carried significant weight.

In this piece, Dotson was relentless. He accused Janice of three “serious crimes.”

First, he described her as close-minded and intolerant. Then, he attacked her character, calling her ungrateful and unethical, painting her as cruel and spiteful in her dealings. Finally, he portrayed her as haughty and rude, accusing her of abusing her position to bully others. Dotson's depiction of Janice was unforgiving, branding her a remorseless villain.

His followers quickly echoed his sentiments, their harsh comments flooding the article's comment section and igniting a firestorm of online backlash.

"Janice is absolutely disgusting! The Edwards family should have left her out in the cold instead of welcoming back a ticking time bomb!"

"Poor Delilah. She had a spotless reputation until her so-called 'sister' returned. Janice must have set her up for that plagiarism scandal!"

"Absolutely! Delilah is such a sweetheart; it's impossible to imagine her plagiarizing. It's clear she's been framed."

"Janice is a disaster! She's ruined Delilah's good name, driven her brother to madness, and even pushed Carman out of the business. She seems determined to tear down the Edwards family!"

Recently, rumors spread that the Edwards Group was struggling financially. Guess who was behind it? Janice. She was definitely sabotaging them from behind the scenes.

Uninformed online users joined in, attacking Janice with relentless hostility. Despite knowing nothing about her except Dotson's one-sided accusations, they launched insults and judgments as if they were judge, jury, and executioner.

Driven by misguided outrage and a distorted sense of justice, they eagerly played into Dotson's hands, repeating his claims without a second thought for fact-checking.

As Leah and Sierra read the barrage of cruel comments, their faces grew grim. Dotson's tactics were not just irresponsible—they were deliberately inflammatory and blatantly crossed the line.

Meanwhile, Dotson reveled in the praise flooding his feed. He smirked triumphantly, his eyes gleaming with hatred. “Janice, this is what happens when you bully Delilah. Unless you step forward and apologize, I’ll keep posting articles like this every day.”

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Then, a new comment caught his attention. “Dotson, what about your new book? You promised it a month ago, but there’s been no news since. What’s the delay?”

Dotson’s smile stiffened. His mood soured as he adjusted his glasses and hurriedly checked his email. His eyes fixed on a contact with a grayed-out profile picture and a status showing no activity for over 100 days.

“Why haven’t you replied, Latonia?” Dotson’s voice was hoarse, heavy with disappointment and resignation. “How am I supposed to write another book without you?”

The email window glowed faintly before him, silently bearing witness to the dozens of messages he had sent to Latonia—none of which had been answered.

In the past, her replies had been punctual—never more than an hour after he’d sent a message.

But now, a hundred days had dragged by, each unanswered email feeling as if it had been cast into a bottomless pit.

Dotson removed his glasses and pressed his hands to his weary face, as if trying to rub away the exhaustion etched into his features. “Are you in trouble? Or did I do something to upset you?” he murmured, his mind adrift in memories of Latonia.

From the moment he entered the world of literature, his journey had been rough and unyielding. Every manuscript he produced met either silence or harsh criticism. People said he lacked talent, that his work was amateurish and unpolished.

The sting of rejection pushed him into a dark corner, making him question whether he was cut out for this path at all.

Then, like a guiding star piercing storm clouds, Latonia appeared. She became his lifeline, offering encouragement when he was ready to give up.

She was his muse, his angel, lifting him from the depths of self-doubt. She even shared her own stories and insights. Thanks to her, he created his first hit novel.

When his work finally earned rave reviews and a loyal following, he felt as if he'd been given a second chance at life.

He was deeply grateful to Latonia. He had always dreamed of meeting her in person, looking her in the eye and thanking her.

Yet Latonia remained an enigma, always avoiding his invitations, insisting that true connections were forged not in person, but through the digital threads that linked their hearts.

From that point on, they maintained a steady correspondence. Whenever he prepared to start a new novel, Latonia generously offered a wealth of ideas, even helping craft detailed plans and draft outlines. With Latonia's guidance, he went on to publish a series of widely acclaimed novels.

Now, he was just one bestseller away from landing a prestigious publishing deal with the platform. But at this crucial moment, Latonia had vanished without a trace. Without her guidance, he felt like a ship lost at sea, drifting aimlessly with no direction. If this continued, he feared the platform would soon lose faith in him. On the brink of success, Dotson couldn't afford to let this opportunity slip away.

He took a deep breath and wrote another email.

"Latonia, I'm not sure what's going on with you right now, but after all this time talking, I've realized just how much you mean to me. Please, reply. There's so much I need to say."

After hitting send, Dotson glanced at the draft of the article he had written to tear Janice apart, a cold smirk curling on his lips.

“Let her have it. Rip her to shreds. Push her to the brink until she’s broken—and it’ll be her own doing. Who cares if she’s my sister? If her character is flawed, I’d rather not be stuck with a sister like that.”

Muttering a curse, Dotson grabbed his phone and dialed Delilah.

Delilah asked, “Dotson, I saw the article you posted. Are you sure about this?”

Dotson chuckled darkly. “Oh, come on, what’s the worst that could happen? When I say I’ve got your back, I mean it. Just watch. If Janice doesn’t step up and apologize to you, I’ll keep this train rolling with more articles that’ll tear her apart.”