

Wrath 331

Chapter 331:

Her fingers drummed lightly against the table, a rhythmic cadence that carried an unspoken message: she held the reins, not him.

Braylen turned his gaze from Janice to Aiden, silently acknowledging the sheer strategic brilliance of the two. Each move they made was calculated, deliberate, and unnervingly effective.

Whether it was Aiden's calculated schemes or Janice's precise tactics, their combined efforts left Bart cornered with almost no way out.

Bart's face was a storm of emotions. His jaw was tight, and his eyes darted everywhere as if scanning for a crack in the impenetrable wall they'd built around him.

Leonie squinted her eyes, her voice dropping to a near whisper. "Bart, do you have any moves left? If not, I quit."

Bart inhaled deeply, the tension coiling in his frame before he abruptly sank into his chair. A feral grin crept across his face. "Don't be so hasty! The show isn't over yet."

"You have a backup plan?" Leonie arched a skeptical brow, clearly not buying it.

Janice, now safe and sound, and Aiden, poised to claim the ten percent share left by his grandfather, were clearly in the driver's seat.

Every major shareholder had already declared their stance. On paper, Bart had no leverage left.

Could he be counting on the scattered shares? Leonie frowned. That idea seemed implausible—most of those shares were in her possession. Even if the remainder was consolidated, it wouldn't tilt the scales in his favor.

“Aiden, Janice, you’ve certainly tested my limits, but I never walk into a battle unprepared. I still have my ace.” Bart leaned forward, his voice laced with frost.

Both Janice and Aiden exchanged a glance, alert at Bart’s widening, ominous smirk.

“Have you heard of Forest Corp?” Bart asked in a low, deep voice. “It’s a rising giant in the business world, backed by both influence and a powerful network. I’ve already sealed a deal with Colson Navarro at Forest Corp.”

He leaned back, his wicked grin stretching further. “I’m selling all my shares in Edwards Group to them. Once Forest Corp gets a foothold, they’ll dominate Edwards Group. Aiden, you may think you’ve won this battle, but I’ll burn everything down before I let you take the victory. If I go down, we all go down.”

Bart’s reckless declaration hit the room like a thunderclap, sending a ripple of unease through the shareholders who had supported him until now. Had he gone mad?

They were in business for profit, not loyalty, not Bart’s vendetta. These were their investments at risk! How could they let that happen?

“Bart, you lunatic!”

“You maniac! Hand back my shares!”

“Ah! You’re going to destroy Edwards Group!”

The room erupted into chaos with their outraged voices.

Forest Corp’s meteoric rise was nothing short of formidable—a juggernaut driven by wealth and unshakable connections.

Its influence now loomed large, threatening the power and prestige of the four major families. The situation took a dire turn when Bart decided to sell all his shares to Forest Corp, leaving a gaping breach in Edwards Group's defenses. It was an open invitation for Forest Corp to storm in and seize control.

Bart's laughter rang out, sharp and maniacal. "Feel the panic. Taste the despair. This is the moment Forest Corp takes over Edwards Group!"

Reveling in the chaos he'd sown, he retrieved his phone, slipping one hand into his pocket. "Mr. Navarro, you can come in now."

He ended the call and turned his gaze to Aiden and Janice, a mocking smirk playing on his lips. "Well, what do you think? Does my trump card make your hearts race?"

Unfazed, Janice reached for her glass, taking a measured sip of water.

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"Braylen, pour Aiden a glass of water."

"Right away." Braylen nodded, quickly filling a glass and handing it to Aiden.

Aiden accepted the water, but his attention lingered on Janice. Her composure puzzled him. What was the source of her unshakable calm? Could she have already anticipated his move?

"Aiden! Janice! How long do you plan to keep up this act?" Bart's smug demeanor shattered as anger overtook him. "Edwards Group is finished! Your pretense is as useless as your so-called power!"

"Bart, I'm going to fight you!"

"He has betrayed us! Take him down!"

A tide of anger surged through the room as his allied shareholders turned on him in an instant.

They surged towards Bart, only to be intercepted by his bodyguards and thrown back.

The shareholders, unused to physical confrontation, were effortlessly subdued and left groaning in pain on the floor.

“Aiden, we were wrong!” One shareholder, his pride discarded, crawled to Aiden and clasped his hands in a plea. “Please, help us recover our shares. We swear our loyalty to you!”

Bart sneered, his voice dripping with derision. “You’re barking up the wrong tree. With Forest Corp at the helm, Aiden can’t save you. Soon, Edwards Group will bow under their banner, and if you want to keep your positions, you’d better beg me instead.”

“Bart, how can you be such a beast?” George spat angrily. “You’re a Green! How dare you betray your family and sell out Edwards Group to outsiders? How can you face your—”

“Don’t mention that loser to me!” Bart snapped. “If not for him, my mother would still be alive. I returned to this wretched family for one reason—to destroy it. Every last Green will suffer because of me!”

The tension in the room reached a crescendo as the conference room door creaked open.

Colson Navarro strode in, resplendent in a pristine white suit, flanked by an entourage of bodyguards.

“Mr. Navarro, you have the contract, don’t you?” Bart approached him with a flattering smile. “Once I sign, Forest Corp will officially claim its stake in Edwards Group. And what you promised...”

“Rest assured; you’ll get everything we agreed upon.” Colson fished out a document and handed it over. “Here is the share transfer contract. All that’s left is your signature.”

Bart seized the contract with a determined grasp and prepared to commit his signature.

“Stop him immediately, before it’s too late!”

“He absolutely can’t sign! Green Group will crumble if he does!”

The frantic shouts of George and Ian filled the air as they charged towards Bart in one final effort to intervene.

Yet, Bart’s bodyguards, bolstered by Colson’s reinforcements, promptly blocked their path, an unyielding barrier against their desperate charge.

“Hah! Worthless morons!” Bart spat, his eyes glinting with contempt. “You think you can stop me? Dream on, you useless trash!”

With a steady hand, he lifted the pen, ready to etch his signature.

“Bart, don’t say I didn’t warn you,” Aiden declared, his voice eerily composed but biting. “If you sign that, you’ll destroy everything you have.”

Bart paused, his gaze shifting momentarily to Aiden, then he erupted in scornful laughter. “Ha! Scared now, are you? Regret won’t change a damn thing—it’s over!”

Aiden, however, appeared unruffled, his fingers absentmindedly playing with his bracelet. “I’ve already warned you. You simply chose to ignore it.”

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“Are you still playing your little games?” Bart huffed, his laughter echoing off the walls as he pressed the pen to the contract, his signature a bold declaration of his defiance. “Watch closely, Aiden, as Green Group crumbles right before your eyes.”

Colson grabbed the freshly signed contract, scanned it briefly, and then his face broke into a gratified smile. “Bart, it’s a pleasure doing business with you.”

“The feeling is mutual.” Bart allowed himself a smug grin, exhaling a cloud of smoke from his cigar as he fixed his gaze on Aiden, expecting to see a look of defeat. Instead, Aiden maintained his usual, unflappable demeanor.

“Aiden, isn’t it amusing how some are so eager to part with their fortunes?” Janice’s voice rang out, tinged with a playful note.

Aiden let out a chuckle, his expression finally relaxing into a smile. “I did try to warn him, but he just wouldn’t listen.”

“I honestly thought this would pose more of a challenge. It turned out to be almost too simple.” Leaning forward, Janice rested her chin on her palm, her lips curling into a teasing smile.

She then turned her attention back to Aiden, her expression one of playful intrigue. “I have to say, you’re really good at hiding yourself. Who would’ve thought...” She trailed off, her gaze resting on Aiden with a meaningful air.

Catching her look, Aiden’s smile widened, and he redirected his focus to Bart.

Seeing Aiden’s composed face, Bart felt a flicker of doubt. Aiden’s serene confidence was starting to unsettle him. He turned to look at Colson. “Mr. Navarro, our agreement still stands, correct?”

Colson flashed a sly grin. “Absolutely. You transfer your shares to me, and in return, I appoint you as vice president of Green Group. That was the understanding, correct?”

“Indeed!” Bart exhaled a deep breath of relief. Everything was unfolding perfectly. Yet, why did Aiden remain so unnervingly composed? Could he merely be putting on a brave front?

Colson, clutching the contract, strode decisively towards Aiden.

Bart’s complexion turned ashen. Instinctively, he sensed trouble brewing, but before he could piece anything together, the moment had slipped away.

“Mr. Green, please review this equity transfer contract,” Colson stated, extending the document with formal respect.

A heavy hush enveloped the room, with everyone gasping at the unfolding drama—except for Janice, who watched with a knowing gaze.

Aiden’s lips twisted into a subtle smirk as he leisurely scanned the document. “Nothing is wrong.”

“Mr. Navarro! What the fuck is happening here?” Bart recoiled, his voice laced with dismay. “Why are you giving him the contract?”

Colson pivoted, his face now etched with a grave and commanding air. “May I make a formal introduction—this gentleman is the president of Forest Corp.”

“What?” The room exploded in a cacophony of shocked voices.

George and Ian stood petrified, their eyes wide and mouths agape. The air buzzed with whispers and gasps from the other shareholders, their astonishment palpable.

“Aiden is the president of Forest Corp?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me! How can that even happen? Forest Corp’s president has been an enigma—no public appearances, no photographs. How on earth could it be Aiden?”

“This is beyond belief! Aiden’s not just the president of Forest Corp; he’s also acquired Bart’s shares. Doesn’t this mean he essentially dominates the entire Green Group now?”

The room reverberated with the impact of this revelation. Ever since Green Group went public, even Kristopher had maintained only a 51% shareholding. But Aiden, with the addition of Bart’s shares to his portfolio, now wielded control over more than 90% of the company.

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Moreover, with Forest Corp under his sway—a titan comparable to Green Group in both size and influence—Aiden’s power was immense.

The western district development project was set to boost Forest Corp’s stature dramatically, securing its position among the city’s elite family-owned enterprises. In comparison, Edwards Group seemed trivial, a mere footnote.

Bart’s hands trembled violently as he gripped his cigar, the pressure snapping it in half. His face contorted with fury and disbelief. “Aiden! How did you end up leading Forest—”

Aiden responded with a nonchalant shrug, his expression unfazed. “Shout all you like, Bart, but it won’t alter the reality. In fact, I owe you a debt of gratitude. Not only did you expose the traitors among us, but you also delivered me the majority of Green Group’s shares on a silver platter. To be honest, getting them myself would’ve been far more of a headache.”

Disbelief and frustration washed over Bart like a tidal wave. After all the effort he’d poured in—not just recently but over the past three years—what had it all been for?

He had been meticulous in his plan up until this moment, working strategically to win over the majority of the shareholders and ensnare Aiden.

But it turned out he was the one caught in his own trap. All his years of effort had been nothing more than a stepping stone for Aiden’s triumph.

Now that Aiden held Forest Corp and the majority of Green Group’s shares, solidifying his dominance in the business world, Bart could hardly fathom the heights Green Group might reach in the future.

“I’ve warned you earlier, Bart,” Aiden drawled as he leaned back in his wheelchair. “But you wouldn’t hear it.”

If humiliation had a face, it would be Bart at this moment. The room suddenly seemed to spin around Bart, and his knees gave way, causing him to collapse to the floor.

But his steel gaze flicked to Aiden, who sat in his wheelchair and looked down his nose at him with a royalty's bravado.

Despite his best efforts to defeat Aiden, he had failed, only to be lured into his own trap, leaving him feeling like nothing more than a marionette in Aiden's hands.

"Wonderful!" George exclaimed, barely able to contain the joy that swept away the despair creeping into his heart after discovering the truth. "Your grandfather can finally rest in peace."

"Indeed. His chosen heir is nothing short of brilliant with such a power move! We old folks are in awe."

"It's amazing how Aiden managed to establish Forest Corp, outshining his grandfather in both achievements and skill!" The praise for Aiden was endless.

Bart could hardly sit through it, the slew of exaltation making his ears bleed and driving him to the brink of ruin.

The longer it dragged on, the more he felt like a joke for playing along to Aiden's toying.

"Fool!" Leonie rose to her feet and slapped Bart across the face. "I thought you'd pull this through, but you're useless! What will happen to my investment now? How will you repay me?"

Bart was so out of it that Leonie's words didn't register in his head, and the slap seemed like nothing.

"Are you leaving already?" Aiden glanced at Leonie as she ambled to leave, his gaze frosty. "Won't you stay a bit longer and watch the show?"

Leonie felt her cheeks burn at his insinuation. If she stayed, her family's reputation would be in tatters. "You'll definitely make a name for yourself someday. But unfortunately, you're still stuck in that wheelchair," she retorted, aiming for a personal attack.

The insult didn't land, though, as Aiden remained unfazed, meeting her with an impish gaze as he tilted his head. "I see you're still sticking with arrogance. Too bad I'm actually quite interested in a few of your family's projects."

"What do you mean?" Leonie narrowed her eyes undauntedly. "Are you seriously thinking of going against my family?"

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"Why? Am I not qualified to challenge?" Aiden retorted coldly. "Or perhaps you think your family isn't worth my attention?"

Leonie's expression hardened. Aiden's insinuation was meant to publicly disgrace her.

Green Group alone could easily take down the Ramirez family. And he also had Forest Corp. One word from Aiden and the Ramirez family would be finished.

Now that the majority of the shares were returned to Green Group because of Bart's stupidity, the Ramirez family would be nothing in comparison.

"I'm an impartial person." Aiden glanced at Janice. "If you happen to run into my wife next time, please take a detour. She isn't so fond of you."

Leonie balled her hands into fists in anger, her eyes gleaming with rage, but said nothing.

Even if she didn't want to admit it, Aiden certainly held the power in this situation.

Janice jerked an eyebrow at Aiden, giving him a second look. Was he standing up for her?

It seemed that Aiden hadn't forgotten the incident at the charity banquet and was using this opportunity to chastise Leonie.

"Don't you think you're being presumptuous, Aiden?" Leonie asked.

“Presumptuous?” Aiden’s gaze flicked to Braylen, who approached Leonie at his signal and hurled a slap across her face.

The impact echoed in the room.

Leonie didn’t see Braylen’s action coming and was utterly stunned.

“Now that’s presumptuous,” said Aiden.

“How dare you!” Leonie glared at Aiden, her features contorting with fury. “You crossed the line!”

“Just accept the harsh truth,” Aiden said, fixing her with a brittle look. “If I were not in a particularly good mood right now, you’d be facing your death, not my staff’s palm.”

Janice’s brow perked up. She remembered saying something along those words before, and now Aiden was using them to put Leonie in her place. Were they on the same wavelength now?

Leonie pressed her lips into a firm line, her eyes flashing with a mix of indignation and resentment.

As the respected lady of the Ramirez family, she had always carried herself with dignity. Yet here she was, having been slapped in the face, unable to even defend herself. The humiliation was unbearable.

“The Ramirez family means nothing to me!” Aiden’s voice was cold and commanding, his words slicing through the air. “If I want your family to survive, it will. If not, it’s gone. Now, I’ll give you one last chance to save your family. Kneel and beg for mercy! I might spare your family then. Otherwise, the Ramirez family will be destroyed, and you won’t leave this room alive.”

Leonie was paralyzed with fear. She had hoped her seniority would give her leverage over Aiden, but when their eyes met, it felt like being hunted by a predator. Her bravery crumbled in an instant.

“Aiden, your mother and—”

“Hmm?” Aiden let out a low hum, and at his signal, Braylen immediately slapped Leonie across the face.

“Do you want to die?” he demanded harshly.

“I’ll kneel!” Leonie gasped, terror flooding her senses as she collapsed to her knees in a panic.

Gone was the poise of the noblewoman she once was; she was nothing more than a trembling, fearful woman, her dignity completely shattered.

Janice watched from a distance, her gaze icy and unfeeling. She was supposed to help Leonie for Sierra’s sake. But some people only learned their place after being utterly crushed. It was the only way they understood their true worth.

The room was stunned as Leonie, once so full of pride, dropped to her knees before Aiden, begging for forgiveness. If this were in the past, Aiden wouldn’t have acted so boldly. But now, with Forest Corp behind him, things were entirely different.

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“Aiden, I’ll make you pay!” Without warning, Bart, who had been sitting quietly, sprang at Aiden with all his fury.

The crowd was focused on Leonie, and Bart’s move went unnoticed. Even the bodyguards failed to react in time.

With fury in his eyes, Bart gripped a dagger, his gaze locked on Aiden.

In the blink of an eye, Aiden extended his hand, effortlessly catching the dagger and halting Bart’s advance.

Fear shot through Bart as his pupils narrowed in terror.

He clenched his jaw, trying to force the dagger forward, but it remained unmoving. Aiden's grip was unyielding, like a vise, keeping the dagger locked in place.

"So, this is your last try, huh?" Aiden's voice dripped with mockery and disdain. "What a shame. I saw this coming from a mile away."

"Aiden! Die!" Bart screamed, straining with everything he had, but the dagger remained completely still.

Aiden exhaled slowly, his voice steady. "I see you're still hanging on. Well then, let me show you something."

In a single motion, Aiden applied pressure, and to Bart's growing terror, he slowly rose from his wheelchair.

"You can stand?" Bart's eyes widened in shock, his face contorting with disbelief. This had been Aiden's only vulnerability, but now, even that was gone.

Aiden stood upright, his form now looming like a towering mountain in Bart's eyes. Despair crushed Bart's heart. "I was never really disabled."

Bart stiffened, a bitter laugh escaping his lips. "So it wasn't just a hallucination. You really can stand."

He glared at Aiden, his face contorting with a mix of rage and disbelief. "Are you even human? You pretended to be disabled for years just to trick me. You even put up with all my tests, all to deceive me."

Aiden laughed loudly, without holding back. "If I hadn't shown weakness, how would you have dared act so arrogant? If I hadn't acted weak, how would you have shown your weakness? And if I hadn't pretended to be weak, how would I have gotten to enjoy such a great performance?"

Each of those sharp retorts pierced through Bart's pride, shattering it into pieces and sending him spiraling into a dark, bottomless pit of despair.

George, Ian, and the others watched in awe, their eyes welling up with emotion as they saw Aiden rise to his feet once again. In that moment, the heir of the Green family had finally become everything they had hoped for—strong, unwavering, and perfect.

“Kristopher, did you see that? Your grandson can stand!”

“Kristopher, Aiden is exceptional! You’ve picked an incredible successor for Green Group.”

The room hummed with praise and excitement.

Aiden was no longer just a powerful figure; he was now in perfect health. With his strength and resolve, it was clear that he was poised to dominate the future of Efrery.

Leonie watched in stunned silence. The young man she had secretly scorned was now revealed to be completely healthy. The realization hit her hard—if the Ramirez family wanted to survive, they would have to be extremely cautious around him. Any misstep could lead to their complete destruction.

In that moment, fear gripped her heart, and she didn’t dare think about revenge anymore. All she could focus on was how to protect her family.

Nina...

Leonie’s mind raced, and she knew she had to contact Nina right away. Only Nina might be able to control Aiden and prevent things from spiraling any further.

Janice looked up at Aiden, her eyes soft and a smile tugging at her lips. She felt genuinely happy for him.

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After years of humiliation, he was now able to show his true power, causing his hidden enemies to tremble with fear.

Was her mission now complete?

A loud crash echoed as Aiden kicked Bart away.

Aiden brushed off his pants, savoring the feeling of standing tall.

With his hands in his pockets, Aiden walked towards Bart, his strides long and purposeful.

Bart fought to push himself up, fear and helplessness flooding his chest as Aiden drew closer.

It was the first time Bart had seen Aiden standing, radiating an overwhelming aura. With each step he took, Aiden seemed to loom like a demon emerging from the depths, and Bart was left feeling completely powerless.

“Stay back! I’m the vice president of Green Group...”

“Not anymore.” Aiden’s smile was sharp and cold. “I don’t care about your deal with Colson. You’re done.”

What a foolish deal it was! Bart had given away more than half of Green Group’s shares, only to be made a fool of.

“I won’t kill you, Bart.” Aiden stopped and looked down at him with a cold gaze. “For someone as selfish, arrogant, and ignorant as you, simply living is the worst punishment.”

Those around them didn’t understand Aiden’s choice, but Janice did.

Bart’s jealousy had driven him to plot against Aiden for years. Now, after being humiliated with no chance to fix things, he would always live under Aiden’s shadow, trapped by his own mind.

The more successful Aiden became, the more it would eat away at Bart.

In the end, Bart's limbs were broken, and he was tossed out of the Green Group building like a useless rag. Alongside him, all the unfaithful shareholders were also removed.

At the same time, Aiden gave orders to merge Green Group with Forest Corp. This strong partnership would create an unbeatable force in Efrery, shifting the balance of power among the top families.

From this point on, the four families would be reduced to three, with the Green family at the forefront.

Inside the car, Janice sat beside Aiden, who was driving. With no need to hide anymore, Aiden took the wheel, but the air between them was tense and quiet.

"Are you sure you don't need my help?" Aiden asked after a long silence.

"No, I'm fine." Janice shook her head, a playful smile tugging at her lips. "Green Group is settling down now. You've got enough on your plate. Besides, you've had your time to shine. Now it's my turn."

Aiden blinked in surprise before giving a resigned smile.

"Okay, I won't take the spotlight. Looks like it's time for the Edwards family to finally wake up."

"Exactly," Janice agreed. "I'm getting sick of dealing with them too."

"Honestly, I'm curious," Aiden said, a frown creasing his forehead and a bitter smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. "Are they really this clueless? Being made fools by Delilah?"

"Maybe they've figured out the truth for a while but refuse to face it. Admitting it would mean accepting their own foolishness and becoming the joke. They're just too full of themselves to face the truth," Janice responded.

Aiden was quiet, pondering her words.

She was right; the Edwards family had always been like that.

Time and again, Laurie had seen the truth but turned away from it, too proud to face her own mistakes.

But that kind of ignorance would be their downfall.

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“Aiden?”

“Yeah?”

Janice’s voice was soft, yet there was a weight to it. “Now that you’ve secured your grandfather’s shares, I guess our partnership is over, right?”

Aiden instinctively tightened his grip on the steering wheel, his throat constricting as words failed him.

“Let’s meet at the Court tomorrow at nine in the morning.”

She turned to him sharply, her piercing gaze making Aiden feel uncomfortable. “Aiden, don’t tell me you’re having second thoughts?”

“Hell, no way,” he shot back quickly, but the moment the words left his mouth, regret flooded him. It was too late to take it back, so he simply fell silent.

“Fine. Tomorrow at nine, the Court. Don’t keep me waiting.” With that, she stepped out of the car.

Aiden opened his mouth, wanting to speak, but the words wouldn’t form.

His heart felt heavier, more chaotic than ever before. Not even the car accident from years ago had left him this confused. Had he really fallen for Janice?

And why had he said that? His stubborn pride seemed to be steering him toward disaster.

Janice didn't notice the burning gaze following her. She pulled out her phone and called Prescott. "It's time to begin." After speaking, she tucked her phone away and walked towards the Fashion Plaza.

At home, Delilah couldn't stay still, her nerves getting the best of her as she skipped lunch.

Her thoughts kept racing as she anxiously waited for a call. She was hoping to hear that Bart had been named the Green family heir, but time dragged on, and there was still no news. On top of that, she was still waiting for Janice's scandalous photos to surface.

Then, suddenly, there was a knock at the door.

Delilah jumped, startled by the unexpected sound. "Who is it?"

"It's me." Laurie's voice called from outside. "Delilah, you haven't eaten. No matter what's going on, you should at least eat something."

"I'm not hungry, Mom," Delilah snapped. "I'll eat when I'm ready."

"By the way, Dotson just sent a message saying we need to head to the Fashion Plaza. He's got a surprise waiting for us."

"A surprise?" Delilah's eyes brightened as she remembered it was Dotson's fan meeting today. Could he be planning to publicly attack Janice? But why would he want the entire family to be there?

It was a monumental day for Dotson. Not only was he preparing for his third offline fan meeting, but it also marked the long-awaited moment to finally meet his cherished friend Latonia in person.

Recently, Latonia had messaged him to explain her delayed responses; she had been overwhelmed with work and unable to connect online. Now that she was free, she was eager to meet him face-to-face.

Filled with excitement, Dotson could hardly wait for their meeting. They arranged for Latonia to make a special appearance at the fan event.

Determined to make a great impression, Dotson spared no expense on his outfit, choosing a sophisticated and elegant look. He even replaced his old glasses with a stylish new pair, giving him the air of a refined scholar.

"How's everything looking outside?" Dotson asked, adjusting his tie as he turned to Candace Lawrence, his editor and manager.

Candace smiled brightly. "Dotson, the insights you've been sharing online have really struck a chord. Your fan base has grown tremendously, and the hall is buzzing with anticipation."

A hint of smugness appeared on Dotson's face as he raised an eyebrow. "That's the last bit of usefulness Janice has left. But I'm not done with her yet. Later, I plan to expose her actions publicly."

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"I've set up a live broadcast to make sure your voice reaches across continents. Your fame is about to soar," Candace said, her eyes shining with relentless ambition.

Though morally questionable, Candace remained indifferent to ethics, focusing solely on the benefits.

"By the way, your sister and the rest of your family are here too."

"Delilah?" Dotson asked, surprised. "What are they doing here?"

"They said you invited them," Candace replied with a casual shrug. "Should I bring them in?"

Had he really extended such an invitation? Dotson's frown deepened as he searched his memory, but no clear recollection surfaced. Still, he quickly dismissed the oversight. After all, the more, the merrier.

"Sure, bring them over, please."

Soon, Delilah and the others made their way backstage.

As Dotson caught sight of them, he asked, "What brings you all here?"

"Oh, it's not just us; even Daryl made it." Delilah nodded toward Daryl, who lingered in the background. She moved closer to Dotson, linking her fingers with his. "Your fan gathering is quite the affair, Dotson. It's every bit as grand as Carman's fan meeting."

At her words, a shadow crossed Carman's face.

The once-celebrated musician, now ostracized by his former label, struggled to find new opportunities in the industry.

Sensing Carman's discomfort, Dotson said, "Carman, I've made some contacts in a few agencies. Let's talk after the event. I'll see what I can do to help."

Carman hesitated, his pride nearly getting the better of him, but reality urged him to nod in acceptance.

"Don't worry, Carman. You'll climb back to the top in no time," Laurie said encouragingly, her voice warm. "You're good-looking and..."

She paused, the word talented hanging unsaid.

Carman's eyes narrowed slightly, but he accepted the partial compliment. "I may not shine in music, Mom, but acting could be my forte. With my features, failure isn't an option."

"Couldn't agree more, Carman. I'm with you on this. Count me in," Delilah exclaimed, her eyes sparkling as she grasped Carman's hand warmly. She had also been ostracized in the design world and was now venturing into entertainment. "Together, we'll climb to the heights of fame and success."

Carman looked at her, his eyes softening as he returned the squeeze of her hand. "You're absolutely right, Delilah. With your support, I'm certain we can both stage a remarkable comeback."

"I'm tempted to try my luck in showbiz as well, especially if it means sharing the screen with Delilah," Dotson added, a hint of envy in his voice as he watched their joined hands.

"You should keep thriving in your own field," Carman quipped playfully. "I hear you're finally going to meet your pen pal at the fan event?"

"That's correct!" Dotson replied, his eyes lighting up with anticipation. "We've been writing to each other for ages, and now I'll actually get to see her face-to-face. I'm curious to see what she looks like."

Connor and Laurie exchanged a knowing glance, clearly understanding Dotson's excitement.

"Dotson, if you have feelings for her, don't hold back," Connor urged firmly. "With the Edwards family's influence, she'd find it difficult to say no to you."

"What do you mean, Dad?" Dotson asked, his cheeks coloring slightly, though his eyes sparkled with even more intensity.

"Speaking of which, where's Lowell?" Dotson looked puzzled. "Even Daryl's here, so why isn't he?"

"Don't even bring up that worthless fool." Connor's voice was laced with anger as he spoke about Lowell. "He's been completely brainwashed by Janice, ranting about how he was wrong and calling Delilah a fraud."

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At his words, a shadow flickered briefly but unmistakably across Delilah's face.

Daryl shifted uncomfortably in her seat, sensing the tension, while the rest of the Edwards family simmered with resentment, squarely blaming Janice for Lowell's outburst.

“Dad, don’t worry. I’ll make sure Janice faces public scrutiny today,” Dotson interjected sharply, his gaze cold. His voice held no warmth when speaking of his sister, only a frosty, detached calm. “She’s been skulking in the shadows, too scared to show her face, right? Well, I’ll drag her into the daylight and let everyone see the disgrace she really is.”

“Dotson, isn’t that going a bit too far?” Delilah’s voice wavered as she feigned concern, biting her lip. “Regardless of everything, she’s still family. If we push her away too harshly, she might never come back.”

“That’d be a damn relief,” Connor sneered, disdain dripping from his voice. “I’d prefer it if she stayed far away from us, forever. All she’s done is humiliate this family, tarnish your name and your mother’s, and accuse you of things you didn’t do. A daughter like that isn’t worth keeping around.”

“That’s right! She aimed to destroy me. Why should we hold back? She deserves to be obliterated,” Carman exclaimed, his voice full of malice.

“Yet there’s Delilah, remaining so compassionate, even after all the harm Janice inflicted on her.” Dotson released a deep, resonant sigh. “But don’t worry. I’ll make sure Janice is seen as the villain by everyone.”

Laurie remained motionless, her eyebrows deeply furrowed. Beneath her calm exterior, a quiet storm of emotions brewed.

However, she quickly cast these thoughts aside, convincing herself that Janice was at the core of their troubles and fully deserved everything coming her way.

“Dotson, it’s time,” Candace declared, moving closer to them.

A gleam of determination flashed in Dotson’s eyes as he adjusted his jacket, preparing to face the crowd.

Pausing momentarily, he checked his phone one last time. An email from Latonia confirmed her presence. His heart thudded in his chest. After inhaling deeply to steady himself, he marched toward the stage.

The hall overflowed with excitement.

Every corner buzzed with fervent chatter from Dotson's fans, their voices a blend of eagerness and admiration. Among them were many new faces, recently captivated by his celebrated sense of justice that had come to light in recent days.

In the harsh reality of today's world, marked by self-interest and the pursuit of personal gain, Dotson emerged as a beacon of moral fortitude.

His commitment to justice, even at the expense of his family ties—particularly his bold decision to publicly challenge Janice—had earned him immense respect. Cheers erupted throughout the crowded space. "Dotson, we love you!"

"Dotson, come out already! We've got to see you!"

"Is today the day he reveals something about his new book? I've been dying to know!"

As the excitement built to a crescendo, the host seized the perfect moment to intervene.

"Ladies and gentlemen, please put your hands together for the bestselling author—Dotson Edwards!" The announcement sent a wave of applause rippling through the crowd.

Spotlights danced across the hall, finally converging on Dotson as he made his charismatic entrance onto the stage. As he lifted his chin slightly, a self-assured smirk adorned his face, reveling in the thunderous applause.

"Dotson! Dotson!"

The thrill of hearing his name chanted like a mantra washed over him; in that instant, he felt like nobility, basking in the undying loyalty and adoration of his followers.

Yet, amid the sea of faces, his mind wandered to one person—Latonia.

“Thank you all for being here today,” Dotson began, accepting the microphone from the host. “This fan meeting is particularly meaningful to me. Over the past year, I’ve been blessed with immense success—three consecutive bestsellers that have captivated readers far and wide. However, I couldn’t have done any of this without your unwavering support. Today, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.”