

Wrath 351

Chapter 351:

"She won't admit it because she's too scared," Janice said, stepping up with a steely look and a piercing stare that nailed Laurie in place.

Laurie recoiled and turned away from Janice's gaze, but she couldn't escape the cold, heavy impact of her words.

"Admitting it would mean facing the truth," Janice continued. "It would mean acknowledging her blindness, ignorance, and total failure. But her pride won't let her do that—so instead, she chooses to cling to her mistakes."

Janice let out a derisive snort. "Such a selfish, cowardly fool. How did I ever get tied to a family like this?"

"No! You're wrong," Laurie said, her complexion pale, shaking her head in feeble denial. "I haven't made any mistakes. It's because of you that everything has fallen apart. You've torn this family to pieces."

"Mom, you need to stop deceiving yourself," Lowell said, his voice laden with resignation. "Have you forgotten how you built your reputation in the design industry?"

"Please, just stop," Laurie said.

Lowell paid no attention to her desperation. Instead, he met her gaze and said, "It was Janice who took your dull, unremarkable sketches and transformed them into something truly worth noticing. To shield your fragile ego, she had to act like her suggestions were nothing more than casual comments—when in reality, they were the reason your designs actually succeeded. You believed it was a creative breakthrough, but the truth is, it was never your own doing."

Lowell chuckled to himself, shaking his head in disbelief. "We're just leeches thriving on Janice's creativity. Dad's proposals? Janice was the one who fixed them. My successful bids? Janice wrote them. Carman's hit songs? They were plagiarized from Janice. Dotson's bestselling novels? Those, too, were stolen from Janice."

Lowell turned to Janice and asked, “Janice, just what kind of genius are you?”

With a slight smile, Janice answered, “When I returned, I brought a gift that could have elevated the Edwards family above all in Efrery. But seeing how twisted human nature could be, I realized then that you didn’t deserve it.”

Connor let out a mocking laugh, his face twisted with disdain. “A gift that could make our family the most powerful? What a joke! Are you seriously pretending the Green family doesn’t even exist?”

Janice looked at Connor with cool indifference. “Given your narrow view, it’s no surprise the Edwards family is destined for failure.”

“Say that one more time!” Connor’s face twisted in anger. “So what if everything Lowell said is true? You are my daughter, and that means your sole responsibility is to serve this family. My only regret is that I didn’t recognize your value sooner. Had I known, I would have exploited every bit of worth you had.”

“Dad, how can you say that?” Lowell exclaimed, despairing that his father seemed further unhinged rather than enlightened. “How can you not see that we were wrong about Janice?”

“Wrong? Absolutely not,” Connor said, his voice taking on a cold firmness. “Yes, she’s talented—far more than I had realized. However, that doesn’t alter the fact that we brought her back to be Delilah’s stand-in. Delilah is our family’s gem. There’s no way I would let her marry that cripple!”

“I’m curious. Who is this ‘cripple’ you’re referring to?”

A voice, sudden and sharp, sliced through the tension, causing the room to fall into stunned silence.

Everyone’s gaze turned to the source of the voice, and there he stood—a tall, commanding figure who radiated power with every step he took.

The moment he appeared, his presence commanded the attention of everyone in the room.

Even Carman, who had always been admired for his good looks, appeared ordinary and easily overlooked in comparison.

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It wasn't only the newcomer's appearance that captured attention, but the undeniable confidence he carried, as though the entire world was his to command.

Janice gazed at him, letting out a soft sigh. "Didn't I tell you to stay away?"

Aiden smirked as he stepped beside her. With casual familiarity, he tucked a strand of hair behind her ear. "I hadn't planned on it. But then someone insulted me. I couldn't just ignore that, could I?"

Janice blinked, caught off guard. That was indeed a compelling reason.

"You're Aiden Green?" Connor gasped, pointing at him, his complexion turning pale. Delilah, too, was visibly shaken.

Aiden's presence here, on his feet and exuding strength, meant only one thing—Bart's scheme had crumbled.

No wonder Bart hadn't responded yet. It seemed that Aiden had already taken care of him. A cold fear gripped Delilah's heart, and she felt an overwhelming urge to escape from this terrifying man.

However, the revelation that Aiden's disability was merely a pretense shocked her even more.

Had she known he was in perfect health, she never would have turned down the marriage. This realization flooded Delilah with a mix of bitterness and regret.

Becoming Aiden's wife might have elevated her to an unprecedented status within Efrery.

“Mr. Edwards, it’s come to my attention that Edwards Group is looking to partner with Mendoza Group for the West Suburb initiative. Is that right?” Aiden’s narrowing eyes and playful tone sent a shiver through Connor.

“Aiden, what are you planning to do?”

Turning to Janice, Aiden responded, “I’m simply upholding my wife’s honor.”

“What does that mean?”

Connor had barely finished his question when his phone rang.

He almost dismissed the call until he saw Korbyn’s name and swiftly picked up.

His expression of anger morphed into a grin. “Hello, Mr. Mendoza.”

“Connor Edwards, have you lost your senses? Your actions have placed me in a dire situation.”

“What do you mean by that? I can’t understand.”

“You had to go and offend Aiden Green, causing him to cancel our collaboration. Because of my greed for your small gains, I’ve been kicked out of the project.”

Connor stared at Aiden in shock, unable to comprehend what was happening. “How can this be? Isn’t that project managed by Forest Corp? What does Green Group have to do with it?”

“You fucking fool! How did I ever decide to work with someone as clueless as you? The balance of power in Efrery has changed, with Aiden now serving as the president of Forest Corp.”

The shocking news and explosive words made Connor stumble backward, barely managing to keep his balance. His face drained of color as he looked at Aiden, never imagining that he could be the president of Forest Corp.

As soon as Aiden appeared, it was clear he had taken on the role of the Green family's head. Alongside that position, he was also the president of Forest Corp.

The alliance between these two powerful forces made Aiden an unstoppable giant, unmatched by any other family.

A grim realization dawned on Connor in that moment.

It was the end of everything.

Disaster loomed over them.

"By the way, isn't your daughter married to Aiden? You should go to her right away and beg for her help. If he shows mercy, perhaps we can recover the situation."

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Connor's face twisted at the suggestion. How could he possibly bring himself to beg Janice? Wouldn't that force him to discard all his pride and principles, crushing them beneath his feet?

"Impossible!" Connor shouted. "There's no way I'm going to beg that ungrateful daughter. Even if the Edwards family refuses to cooperate, we'll find another way."

Enraged, he hurled his phone against the wall.

Turning to Delilah, he was visibly desperate. "Delilah, there must be something you can do. You managed to reach Korbyn; surely you can connect us with others."

“Dad, I...” Delilah stammered, her mind racing. With Bart out of the picture and Nellie in trouble, who could she possibly turn to? She felt an overwhelming urge to flee and cut all ties with the Edwards family. Crossing Aiden had sealed their fate.

“Connor, I’m truly disappointed,” Aiden said, his voice tinged with regret. “If only you had confessed your mistake to Janice, I might have offered you a way out. But...”

He stopped, his eyes narrowing. “Effective immediately, both Green Group and Forest Corp will exclude the Edwards family from our business networks.”

The moment he made the announcement, shock swept through the entire room.

What was supposed to be a casual fan meeting had unexpectedly turned into a high-stakes family conflict for everyone there.

As the head of Efrery’s most influential family, Aiden’s public decree resonated loudly.

Connor’s phone was quickly overwhelmed with a barrage of calls.

However, his phone was broken and couldn’t be picked up, while the phones of the other Edwards family members began ringing endlessly.

“Laurie Edwards, we are withdrawing all support for your company.”

“Carman Edwards, our company is imposing a permanent ban on you.”

“Dotson Edwards, you’re out of the writers’ association, and no one will publish your work anymore.”

With each call, the Edwards family’s pride was shattered, sinking them deeper into despair.

Janice stood by, watching the dramatic scene unfold, her words caught in her throat. “Aiden, you’ve completely drained the excitement out of this for me.”

Aiden gazed at her, his smile warm and tender. “I was just trying to make things easier for you.”

“But...”

“Now, quiet down. Until we divorce, you’re still my wife.”

Janice sensed an underlying message in Aiden’s gentle words.

Lowell burst into laughter, his tone dripping with scorn as he eyed the crestfallen Edwards family. “Did you really believe you were the architects of your own success? Without Janice, you’re all just a bunch of losers, and that includes me.”

The Edwards family’s faces drained of all color, their expressions frozen in silent horror.

Aiden’s words carried a weight that crushed the air out of the room. His power was not just a threat to the Edwards family; it could obliterate the Ramirez family—second among the four great families—with nothing more than a casual decree. Their fate was sealed.

The Edwards family had fallen into an abyss from which there was no escape.

“The Edwards family, reduced to nothing more than a tragic joke.”

Leah stepped into the spotlight, her crimson gown flowing like liquid fire. Her gaze, sharp and contemptuous, lingered on the Edwards family with a cruel smirk.

“If you had even a shred of foresight, you wouldn’t have been here, wallowing in disgrace. You could have soared beyond even the Green family.”

Her audacity was palpable, yet Aiden, the subject of her bold remarks, seemed unfazed. His eyes danced with amusement, as though entertained by her insolence.

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“Enough!” Connor barked, his voice trembling as he stepped forward to shield Delilah. “Janice is nothing without the crutch of people like you! What else is she?”

“What else?” Leah’s expression darkened, her lips curling into a predatory smile. A flicker of malice passed through her eyes as she regarded Connor with icy disdain.

Janice met her gaze, her face unreadable, but a slight nod was all the affirmation Leah needed.

With permission granted, Leah’s cold smile sharpened into something feral, untamed, and electrifying. Her voice rang out, laced with dangerous glee.

“Connor, open your eyes wide and take in the fortune you’ve foolishly thrown away. You had the keys to a kingdom, and you let them slip through your fingers.”

As her words echoed, a sudden commotion erupted. From the shadows of the venue, a surge of bodyguards flooded in.

They began to drive the fans out of the venue.

“What’s going on?”

“You can’t just kick us out!”

“This is the best drama I’ve seen in years! We’re not leaving!”

“I came here for entertainment, and I’m not leaving until I get the full show!”

The protests turned into shouts, but their defiance was short-lived. The bodyguards unleashed high-pressure water cannons, sending icy torrents crashing into the crowd.

Fans screamed as the forceful jets drenched and scattered them.

The live broadcast screens flickered off and the once-packed venue was emptied, leaving only the Edwards family and Janice's group.

Connor, drenched and shaken, felt a sharp unease gnaw at his chest. His mind raced, piecing together the brutal efficiency of Leah's actions.

Why such extreme measures? Was it to protect Janice's identity?

"All this fuss!" Carman barked, her tone slicing through the rising tension. "For what? Janice is just some nobody riding on the coattails of men and her so-called friends. She's nothing without them."

Leah's smile didn't waver; if anything, it grew sharper, her voice a silken blade. "Is that what you truly believe? How sad! Do you even know the surprise Janice was prepared to give the Edwards family upon her return?"

"Let me guess—a hand-knitted keepsake from some orphanage workshop?" Dotson sneered, unwilling to believe that Janice's abilities far exceeded their imagination.

Leah's laugh was soft, almost pitying, as she shook her head. "It's heartbreaking, really. Your blindness, your arrogance. But I suppose it's a relief for the world that Janice held back her surprise. Because if she hadn't, Edwards Group's market value would have soared—by a hundredfold."

Connor burst out laughing, his amusement rippling through the room. "A hundredfold? Oh, that's rich! What is she, some undercover mogul? Royalty? Or, wait, let me guess—JE herself?"

Leah's smile stretched wider, her confidence unshakable. With a deliberate snap of her fingers, she delivered her bombshell with relish. "Precisely. Janice is JE."

The laughter evaporated. A heavy, stunned silence descended, as if the air itself had been sucked out of the room.

Connor blinked, then threw his head back in roaring laughter, breaking the quiet. “Janice? JE? That’s the best joke I’ve heard all year!”

The Edwards family erupted into mocking laughter, the sound bouncing off the walls like cruel echoes.

“Saying she’s JE’s friend is already laughable, and now claiming she’s JE herself is the biggest joke of the year.” Dotson’s face twisted with disdain.

Through it all, Janice remained unmoved. Their taunts rolled off her like water off stone. She knew the truth—and she knew they’d never accept it. Their small minds were bound by their own limitations, incapable of grasping the extraordinary.

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“Do you believe it?” she suddenly turned to Aiden.

Aiden’s lips curved into a soft, knowing smile. “I do. In fact, I already suspected as much.”

Janice tilted her head, intrigued. “Oh? And what gave me away?”

Aiden’s gaze shifted momentarily to Leah before returning to Janice. His tone was calm, measured. “Leah can’t quite mask the depth of her respect for you. It’s subtle, but it’s there—slipping through in her words and actions, no matter how hard she tries to conceal it. And then there’s you. Your unwavering composure, your confidence—it’s not the kind that can be faked. It’s the kind forged through extraordinary ability. So, the notion that you’re JE’s friend? That’s a smokescreen. The truth is, you are JE.”

Janice studied him for a moment, a hint of amusement playing on her lips. “What a terrifying man you are, Aiden. It feels like you’ve unraveled every secret about me.”

Aiden responded with a faint smile, silent but satisfied.

If he hadn't been so attuned to her every move, her every nuance, he might have missed the subtle tells that led him to this conclusion.

A sudden gasp shattered the quiet. Sierra clapped her hands to her mouth, eyes wide with astonishment. "Janice—wait, you're JE? The legendary designer who founded JE Consortium?"

"Don't be too shocked, Sierra. Janice's capabilities are on a level you can't even begin to imagine," Leah said, her expression glowing with pride.

"Aw, I've hit the jackpot with such a powerful ally, huh?" Sierra took a steadying breath and glanced at the Edwards family, her gaze piercing. "But look at them—so blinded by their arrogance that they've lost the chance of a lifetime. What fools."

The Edwards family exchanged uneasy glances, their expressions flickering between disbelief and dread.

They clung desperately to their pride, refusing to acknowledge the truth that loomed over them like a storm cloud.

"Just admit it already." Leah's smirk grew sharper as she turned her attention to Connor and Laurie. "Deep down, you know Janice is JE. But you're too cowardly to face the reality of your own ignorance and failure."

"No way! She can't be JE. That's impossible!"

"Exactly! If she's JE, then I'll eat my shit!"

Their voices grew louder, the desperation bleeding into their words, but the cracks in their composure were impossible to hide.

Meanwhile, Delilah stood frozen, her gaze fixed on Janice. A maelstrom of emotions played across her face—resentment, envy, and bitter realization.

Janice was JE.

It all made sense now—the brilliance of her designs, the effortless grace with which she carried herself.

It had been Janice all along—the one person who could have elevated Carman, Dotson, and even Lowell to heights they could only dream of.

But in their arrogance and shortsightedness, they had squandered their chance, dragging themselves into disgrace instead of greatness.

Delilah, however, burned with an even deeper regret. Had she discovered Janice's secret sooner, she could have exploited it to climb to unimaginable heights.

She wouldn't have hesitated to flatter and grovel if it meant securing Janice's acknowledgment as her sister. With Janice's support, there would have been no limits to what she could achieve.

But her scheming had backfired. In her relentless efforts to align with the Edwards family and exile Janice, she had unwittingly severed her own lifeline to boundless fortune.

"Connor, you said it yourself." Leah's mocking applause jolted the room. "Get ready to eat your shit."

The screen behind them flickered to life. A grand building came into view, its sleek facade emblazoned with bold letters: JE. Even without the label, its iconic design was unmistakable—the headquarters of JE Consortium.

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The camera panned inside, revealing rows of polished business elites standing at attention. Their sharp suits and commanding presence radiated power.

Even Connor, for all his denial, recognized several of them as untouchable figures far beyond his reach. His voice faltered, trembling. "This can't be real."

“Turn it off. Turn it off right now!” Laurie shrieked, her panic spilling over. “It’s all fake—some elaborate special effects! This isn’t JE Consortium!”

But before her protests could gain traction, the people on the screen greeted Janice in unison, calling her their boss.

The Edwards family reeled, their faces ashen. They didn’t need anyone to tell them who that greeting was for. It was for Janice, the girl they had belittled and cast aside.

Janice raised a hand and spoke with quiet authority. “Get back to work. This charade has already taken up too much of your time. The Edwards family is not worth it.”

At her command, the elites on screen dispersed without hesitation, and the screen went black.

The silence that followed was deafening, heavier than the weight of their shame.

The truth had been laid bare, ripping apart the Edwards family’s pride and pretenses.

They were left with nothing but the realization of their ruin. The wealth, the power, the status they could have claimed—it was all gone, driven away by their own blindness and cruelty.

“How does it feel to trade diamonds for glass? You’ve turned mistaking trash for treasure into a family tradition,” Leah said, her smirk as sharp as a blade.

Connor’s jaw tightened, his voice a strained growl as he forced out, “So what? Status or no status, Janice could never hold a candle to Delilah in my eyes.”

“Is that really how you feel?” Janice stepped forward, her presence calm but tinged with a quiet sadness. “Then allow me to peel back the curtain and reveal the real Delilah—the one you cherish so dearly.”

“Janice, what are you doing?” Delilah’s voice cracked, her usual fragile charm unraveling as panic lit her eyes. She clutched at her composed mask, but it was slipping. “You’ve already destroyed the Edwards family! Isn’t that enough for you? Do you despise me so much that you won’t stop until there’s nothing left?”

Janice’s lips curled into a cold, humorless smile. “Despise you? No, I don’t. You’re not worth the energy. You’re rotten to the core—a hollow shell. But you make my skin crawl.”

“That’s enough!” Connor bellowed, stepping forward like a shield. “I won’t let you talk about her that way. If you have a problem, take it up with me!”

“Exactly!” Laurie chimed in, though her voice wavered with uncertainty. “Who do you think you are to bully Delilah? She’s worth more than you’ll ever be!”

The Edwards family clustered around Delilah like a crumbling fortress, their blind loyalty a desperate attempt to salvage their shattered pride.

To them, protecting Delilah meant holding on to the last shred of their dignity.

Janice raised her hand and snapped her fingers. The screen that had been silent behind her flickered to life. All eyes turned to the screen as Delilah’s face came into view. The footage was raw and unmistakably candid.

The color drained from Delilah’s face. “Stop it! Turn it off this instant!”

Her desperate pleas went unheard. The Edwards family had already seen it, and an eerie silence filled the room. Their expressions were locked in utter shock as their eyes stayed glued to the screen.

The scene revealed Delilah in bed, leaning closely against Bart. The redness on her cheeks betrayed the intimate nature of what had just happened.

“Delilah! What on earth is this?” Carman’s voice shook, as if someone had torn his heart to pieces. His feelings for Delilah had always been a mix of things—never just brotherly—but with an awkward, almost romantic twist to them.

Dotson wasn’t doing any better. Stunned and thrown off balance, he stared at Delilah as if he didn’t know her, his eyes filled with uncertainty and disbelief.

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Lowell let out a harsh, bitter laugh. There was a time when he had been drawn to Delilah, completely taken in by her flawless act of innocence. But once he saw through her schemes, he realized she had purposely lured him in, using his loyalty to turn him into nothing more than a pawn in her game.

Her soft-spoken words and delicate tears had clouded his judgment, pushing him to go after Janice over and over again.

Yet, even with all of that, he hadn’t seen this coming. The same woman who had long feigned fragility and purity had now revealed her sultry side by sharing Bart’s bed.

“Speak up!” Carman bellowed, his voice jolting Delilah out of her stupor.

Tears filled her eyes as she collapsed into sobs, stirring a flicker of pity in both Carman and Dotson.

“I didn’t have a choice!” Delilah sobbed, grabbing hold of Carman’s and Dotson’s hands. “Please, you have to believe me! I was forced into it—to protect Dad’s company and help Mom through everything she’s been dealing with!”

Connor and Laurie shared startled looks at Delilah’s confession. “Are you serious?”

“Delilah, I’m so sorry! I can’t believe I doubted you. You’ve given up so much for this family, and I...” Connor felt bad for Delilah.

Carman and Dotson, too, were consumed with guilt, their previous anger melting into a deep shame for ever doubting her.

“Dad, Mom, I’d give up everything for this family.” The sincerity in Delilah’s words was undeniable, drenched in deep love and self-sacrifice.

“You’re despicable, Janice! You’ll do anything to frame Delilah.” Connor whipped around to face Janice, fury written all over his face. “What does it matter if you’re JE or hold all that power? We won’t let you destroy this family!”

Janice stayed unbothered, her steady gaze fixed on the Edwards family, a look of both pity and contempt in her eyes.

Before she could respond, Lowell cut in sharply, “Is that all it takes? A few tears and a sad tale, and you’re back on Delilah’s side? Have you forgotten one thing? This is a video.”

The words landed on the Edwards family like a blow, knocking the breath out of them.

At that moment, Leah subtly signaled to the crew, and the video started playing.

In the video, Delilah was pressed up against Bart, her eyes full of heat and her voice smooth and enticing—nothing at all like someone who was being forced.

“Bart, once you’ve secured the Green family, don’t forget me. I’ve already given you the most valuable thing I have.”

“You’re such a little slut. I can’t wait to see the shock on the Edwards family’s faces when they find out what you’re really like. To them, you’ve always been so innocent. But look at you now, behaving like a cheap whore.”

Bart’s words were brutally harsh, and the expressions on the Edwards family’s faces told everything. They looked as if they’d just been poisoned.

Even if they had been in denial before, the video shattered any illusions. The truth was unmistakable. Delilah wasn’t a victim. She wasn’t forced. She was willing, eager, and executing her role flawlessly.

The video played on, and what followed destroyed the last of the Edwards family's hopes.

"The Edwards family is full of fools. I've been toying with them like puppets, and they haven't even figured it out. All I have to do is look hurt, and they'll scramble to protect me—like loyal dogs. And Carman and Dotson? They're the worst. I barely have to blink, and they're both ready to sleep with me. Once I have the Edwards family wrapped around my finger, I'll make them regret it."

"Damn, you're brutal. Should I be concerned? If I lose my power, will you do the same to me?"

"Bart, how could you think that? I'm serious about us. Once you have control of the Green family, I won't even need the Edwards family to stay on top."

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"You really are bold. But that's exactly what I admire about you."

"Want to see just how bold I can get? I'll make all your fantasies a reality."

Then the video abruptly ended.

But the damage had already been done. No one in the room needed to witness the rest to understand what was coming next.

Aiden glanced at Janice, shaking his head and letting out a soft sigh. "Janice, I clearly misjudged you. I never thought you'd get your hands on something this damning."

Janice grinned, her eyes scanning the Edwards family, who were now paralyzed with anger and disbelief.

"If I hadn't shown them the truth, how else could they confront their own foolishness?"

"Delilah Edwards!"

Connor's voice thundered, shaking the very air around them.

"Dad, please, let me explain—" Before Delilah could finish, his hand struck her cheek with a force that echoed in the silent room.

Delilah staggered, clutching her face, eyes wide with shock and disbelief. "You hit me? Dad, you've never hit me before."

"And maybe I should have sooner!" Connor loomed over her, his face a mask of fury. "I've given you everything—food, shelter, every damn thing you ever wanted. I even threw my own daughter out of this house for you. And this is how you repay me? You're not just ungrateful. You're a monster."

He used to call Janice ungrateful, but now Delilah's actions were so vile that even that term fell short. She was a demon.

"Delilah, what did we ever do to deserve this from you? Because of your schemes, we drove our own daughter out of this house! How could you?" Connor's voice cracked under the weight of betrayal.

He clenched his fists, his regret bubbling to the surface, raw and unrelenting. Moments ago, he'd clung to reasons to protect her, but now, now it all seemed absurd.

What was he even defending her for? She was the demon that poisoned the Edwards family.

"Go to hell!" Connor roared, raising his hand to strike her again.

But before he could, Daryl stepped in, positioning herself as a shield between them.

"Daryl, what the hell are you doing?" Connor's eyes narrowed, his fury redirected. "How dare you defy me!"

"Mr. Edwards, please! There must be some misunderstanding."

“Misunderstanding?” Connor’s laughter was cold, sharp, like the edge of a blade. “The evidence is right here. What misunderstanding could there possibly be? Step aside, or you can leave the Edwards family too.”

“Leave? I’ve been waiting for you to say that.” Daryl’s demeanor changed, and she let out a sharp, mocking laugh. “I don’t care anymore. The Edwards family is a sinking ship. Do you think I want to stick around and clean up your mess? After offending the Green family and JE, you’ve got nothing left. The Edwards name is finished.”

The stark truth landed like a slap, leaving the Edwards family frozen, their faces drained of color.

Daryl’s brutal honesty had shattered any illusions they still clung to.

Their ruin was self-inflicted—a product of their own arrogance and shortsightedness.

A slow, mocking smile crept onto her lips as Delilah surveyed the broken family before her. “Well, since it’s all out in the open now, there’s no point pretending anymore.”

“Delilah!” Connor’s voice wavered, disbelief mingling with fury as they all turned to her. “You mean you’ve been deceiving us this whole time?”

Delilah let out a sharp, derisive laugh. With a casual shrug, she crossed her arms, her posture oozing confidence and contempt. “Of course. I was playing the long game—stringing you along, milking this pathetic family for everything it was worth. But now? You’re done. The money and shares you so graciously handed over are more than enough to set me up for life. You hold no value to me anymore.”

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Delilah’s eyes darted to each member of the family, her sneer deepening. “Connor, Carman, Dotson, Lowell, you’re all such fools. You succeeded because of Janice, yet you thought it was your own doing. Connor, you could have become the head of the most influential family with JE’s support, but now you’re nothing more than a nobody. Carman, you could have been a top singer, but you destroyed your own future. Dotson, you could have been a celebrated author. Instead, you sabotaged your own career. And you, Lowell, you woke up just in time to avoid the others’ stupidity, but it’s too late for you now.

The bridge to Janice is burned. She could've pulled you to greatness, yet you pushed her away. Now, you're just another failure in this tragic circus."

Each word struck like a dagger, cutting deeper into the already fractured family.

Delilah's gaze finally turned to the pale, trembling figure at the edge of the room. "And Laurie... I know you've uncovered the truth. But you're too blinded by your precious pride to admit it. Even with the truth staring you down, you clung to your delusions, stumbling deeper into the abyss with every mistake. If any family deserves ruin, it's yours. It's a miracle you had anything at all to begin with. But miracles don't last, do they? The Edwards family is already a relic of the past. You're finished. I'll be living my best life, watching you collapse under the weight of your own stupidity."

"You wretch! I'll kill you!" Carman's roar ripped through the air, raw and feral. His face contorted with rage, veins bulging.

But before he could reach her, Daryl's hand met Carman's cheek with a ferocity that stunned everyone. "Don't you dare lay a finger on her!"

"You dare hit me?" Carman stumbled back, clutching his stinging cheek, his shock quickly morphing into a seething rage.

Laurie, wide-eyed and trembling, turned to Daryl, her voice shaking. "Why, Daryl? Why would you defend someone like her?"

"Because she's Delilah's mother," Janice replied. Each word hit like a hammer, splintering whatever remained of the Edwards family's fragile unity.

"What did you just say?"

The Edwards family froze, their wide eyes fixed on Janice. Janice stepped forward, her lips curving into a sardonic smile as her gaze settled on Laurie.

“Back then, you and Daryl gave birth at the same time. To secure her daughter a life of luxury, she swapped the babies. And I’m the one she left at the orphanage.”

The revelation hit Laurie like a thunderbolt. It struck her so hard it left her lips pale and trembling.

“No, that’s impossible!” Her head whipped to Daryl, searching for denial. “Tell me it’s not true! Tell me you and Delilah aren’t mother and daughter!”

Daryl’s lips curled into a slow, chilling smile. The honesty that had once defined her gaze was gone, replaced by a glint of cunning and cold deceit.

Laurie staggered, her heart sinking. The silence spoke louder than any denial. That was the harsh truth.

“This can’t be happening.” Laurie’s face grew increasingly pale, and she nearly collapsed to the floor.

Connor stepped in to steady her just in time. “Calm down. Janice is trying to tear our family apart! That’s what she always wants!”

“Oh, please. You’re still deceiving yourselves even now.” It was Delilah.

Her laughter was venomous, disdain dripping from every note.

“You’re nothing but a pack of brainless fools. Not only did you raise me—an outsider—but you doted on me, showered me with love, while discarding your own flesh and blood like garbage. Tell me, if the Edwards family doesn’t deserve to crumble, who does?”

“Delilah, how dare you speak like that?” Daryl snapped with feigned rage. “They may have been foolish, but they raised you, gave you food, clothes, and everything you needed. Show some gratitude!”

“Of course, Mom!”

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That single phrase made Daryl's face light up with pride, but Laurie's heart shattered into a thousand jagged pieces.

She never expected that Daryl, the devoted servant, would betray them in such a cruel and unforgivable way.

"Why, Daryl?" Laurie's voice cracked as she turned her tearful gaze to Daryl. "Why would you do this to me and my daughter? We treated you like family. How could you betray us like this?"

Daryl looked away, unapologetic. "Why? Because I couldn't stomach watching your family bask in wealth and privilege while I scraped by as your servant. I couldn't change my fate, but I could give my daughter a better one."

"But you always acted so loyal, so hardworking." Laurie shook her head, clinging to the hope that this was all some elaborate scheme by Janice.

"Of course I did. It was my daughter's home. Naturally, I had to make sure it thrived." Daryl's eyes glinted with triumph as she glanced at Delilah beside her. "You fools worked yourselves to the bone and built a legacy—it's all my daughter's now."

Those words crushed the last flicker of hope in Laurie's heart. It left her in utter despair.

"Daryl, you monster!" Connor growled, his voice shaking with fury. "How did we let a viper like you into our home?"

Daryl shot Janice a cutting look and smirked. "Blind and fools—just like your own daughter said."

Those words stung, and it left the Edwards family enraged to the core.

"You arrogant snake!" Carman's face twisted with fury as he lunged forward, Dotson right behind him. "I'll kill you!"

But Daryl didn't flinch. With a swift motion, she raised her hands and struck them both across the face.

Years of managing the household had made her stronger than most men, and these two pampered young heirs were no match for her.

"You still want to fight me?" Daryl stared them down coldly. "Don't forget—I fed you, changed your diapers, and raised you like a second mother. If you want to hit me, remember who you're hitting—your mother!"

Carman and Dotson went blank. What could they possibly say to that?

In their younger years, Laurie had often been too busy to care for them, so Daryl had stepped in as their nanny. They'd respected her, even admired her over the years. But now, that respect felt like a cruel joke. How could the woman they once trusted exchange her own daughter for their sister?

"The Edwards family is finished. You mean nothing to me anymore." Daryl addressed them with a chilling calm, taking Delilah's hand in hers. "Delilah and I will take what we've earned from you over the years, and live life on our own terms."

"Mom, I'll make sure your dream of being a wealthy lady comes true," Delilah said with a sweet smile, the kind that once charmed the Edwards family. Now, it only made them sick.

"All these years of suffering and humiliation was worth it, for you." Daryl felt so touched. She knew she would never have been able to endure it all without her daughter's quiet encouragement.

"Yes." Delilah squeezed her hand. "We'll live a good life."

"A good life, huh?" Janice curled her lips into a mocking smile as she stared at the cold mother-and-daughter pair. "How do you think you'll get away without facing any consequences?"

"Trying to intimidate me, Janice?" Delilah replied coolly. "The Edwards family wronged you, not me. All I did was plagiarize your work, and that was ages ago. Don't think you can drag up the past."

Janice shook her head. "You call the Edwards family foolish, but you're not much smarter yourself."

"What are you getting at?" Delilah frowned, unease creeping in.