

Wrath 551

Chapter 551:

Janice's words hit like a blade, slicing through Delilah's carefully crafted facade. "You've been repeating that Daryl forced you into everything, but from where I'm standing, it looks like you enjoyed every moment of it. Tell me, do you even remember how you got your qualifications? Or should we ask the institutions you supposedly attended if you ever actually pursued further studies?"

With every sentence, Delilah's face grew paler and her confidence drained away. Her body began to tremble, and the mask of innocence and vulnerability she wore so well started to crack.

"Janice, stop being so harsh. Delilah is innocent, and she can prove it against your baseless accusations," Daniel blurted out, finally regaining his voice, though his defense sounded almost desperate. "I trust you, Delilah."

Delilah's pupils contracted as she turned to look at Daniel.

A moment ago, she thought Daniel could be an ally, but now she deeply regretted that assumption.

Janice had been right all along—this man's brain was clearly out of order. Instead of saving her, his words were dragging him straight toward a figurative cliff.

This time, Janice wasn't angry but rather amused.

How ironic that Delilah's so-called ally had turned into the very person shoving her closer to disaster. It was almost comical.

Meanwhile, online viewers began to wake up to the truth, Janice's sharp words cutting through the haze of Delilah's act.

"Janice is spot on. Even if Delilah's mother pressured her, plagiarism is inexcusable. Delilah had the Edwards family's resources—she could've succeeded on her own without resorting to theft."

“Wow, I was so close to falling for her act. Delilah’s just a manipulative snake, playing the victim for sympathy while scheming behind everyone’s back!”

“Does she really take us for idiots? Someone like her doesn’t deserve to be here. She should just pack up and leave already.”

Devin wiped his forehead nervously, watching as the tide of public opinion turned ruthlessly against Delilah.

This was Alissa’s doing, bringing in a liability like Delilah. Now, he found himself stuck in a dilemma. Should he kick Delilah out?

Doing so might risk offending Alissa, but letting her stay would tarnish the show’s reputation and invite a flood of backlash.

Alissa’s eyes narrowed into icy slits as she fixed a piercing glare on Delilah.

In her mind, Delilah was utterly useless, crumbling under a few sharp words from Janice. If Delilah couldn’t hold her ground, she would have no choice but to discard her as dead weight.

“Janice!” Delilah’s voice cracked, tears spilling down her cheeks in streaks of desperation. “I admit it! I’ve made terrible mistakes in the past. But I only did it because I wanted so badly to prove myself. I took shortcuts, and I know that was wrong. I see it clearly now. Please, just give me a chance to make things right.”

As she spoke, she dropped to her knees, gripping her hands together in a desperate plea.

Her sheer vulnerability hung heavy in the air, and the sight of her kneeling struck a deep chord with everyone present. It was painfully clear she was laying everything bare, willing to risk it all.

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Daniel couldn't help but pivot again, this time directing his attention toward Janice. "Look at her! She's genuinely sorry. Can't you find it in you to give her a chance? Everyone makes mistakes. If one slip-up could ruin someone forever, then we'd all be doomed, wouldn't we?"

"I get why you're angry," Alissa said as she stepped forward, her tone carefully measured. "Delilah took what was rightfully yours for years. Your resentment makes sense. But look at her now—she's already faced the consequences and truly regrets..."

Her actions. Refusing to give her a second chance would come across as cold, don't you think?"

Janice arched an eyebrow, recognizing their ploy. They were trying to shove her into a moral corner, forcing her to relent. "Do you think you can waltz into someone else's matters as if they're your own?"

"Excuse me? What are you trying to say?"

"You're sticking your nose where it doesn't belong," Janice retorted, a sharp laugh escaping her lips. "Let me put it this way—if I slapped you across the face right now and then apologized like I really meant it, would you just smile and say it's fine? If you haven't lived through the pain or injustice, you don't get to play judge here. Keep your hollow opinions to yourself."

Alissa's eyes narrowed, showing a clear sign of her rising anger in response to Janice's words. She was on the verge of snapping back, but Leonidas intervened just in time.

He gave her a look, his gaze cold and penetrating.

Alissa drew in a deep, careful breath, hoping to calm her rising anger. She turned to Janice, speaking in a calm and steady tone. "Then, how do you propose we handle this? Remember, Delilah is innocent now. Even if she wronged you before, we've moved past that. You're not planning to beat her here, in front of everyone, are you?"

Janice's lips twisted into a suspicious smile. "Beat her? That's the last thing I'd want. Devin, you know, Love Lab aims to spread positivity and good vibes. Having someone with a controversial past as a guest might not be appropriate, don't you think?"

Devin, who had been silent, was startled when Janice addressed him, and he had no choice but to respond, “You’re right. Inviting Delilah was a misstep on my part. I’ve decided to let the audience vote on her participation. It seems the fairest solution.”

Janice’s face grew tense as she glanced at Alissa, who was now wearing a self-satisfied grin.

It was obvious that Alissa had anticipated this moment and was ready for it, which made Devin quickly redirect the decision to the audience. Aiden sensed the tension and exchanged a cautious look with Janice. She subtly shook her head, a signal to hold back. Curious about Alissa’s plans to keep Delilah on the show, she decided to wait and watch their strategy unfold.

The results of the online vote soon confirmed the viewers’ decision.

Delilah remained on the show with 60% of the online vote in her favor. Although they had doubts about Delilah, the audience, drawn to drama, was clearly more intrigued by the growing tension between her and Janice.

“Thank you all for giving me this chance. I will show you my sincerity with my actions and will not disappoint,” Delilah said to the camera, her head lowered in what appeared to be a gesture of humility. Her eyes were filled with tears that pulled at the hearts of those watching.

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Devin took the stage, announcing, “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m pleased to present today’s first challenge. This afternoon, you will engage in a swimming contest. You need to pair up, and the victorious duo will enjoy a romantic date tonight.”

“What? A swimming contest?”

“God, what’s happening to me? My thoughts have drifted back into the gutter.”

“Wow, am I actually going to see Stephen in swimwear? This is too thrilling! I can barely contain my excitement! I’m already blushing.” The thought of the swimming contest had viewers eagerly picturing the scene—both dashing men and stunning women in swimsuits.

The men, showcasing their muscular physiques, and the women, glowing with beauty, would create a stunning sight that promised an unforgettable performance.

“Before we kick off the swimming event, you have one hour to get ready. After that hour, please change into your swimsuits and assemble by the pool. In the meantime, we’ll take a brief break in the live broadcast. To keep you entertained, we will show the video clips from last night’s date between Janice and Aiden.”

This news sparked a wave of excitement among the viewers, who were eager for the live-stream to resume.

“I was just hoping to see clips of Janice and Aiden’s date, and it looks like the show has come through.”

“I can’t wait to watch their dating videos! They must be adorable.”

“Come on, hurry up! I’m eager to witness their tender moments together!”

The audience’s eager anticipation was met when the show began airing the video clips of Janice and Aiden’s date.

On-screen, beneath the glow of streetlights, a graceful figure emerged.

Janice was dressed in a long black dress, her sophisticated makeup enhancing her calm charm. Her movement and the flow of her dress lent her the air of a mysterious character from a fairy tale, dancing beneath the lights.

Suddenly, she looked up, her eyes twinkling with a spark, her lips forming an enchanting smile.

At that moment, the man she was meeting arrived.

He stood tall and collected, like a knight returning from battle, eager to meet his princess.

They stood together under the streetlight, locking eyes.

“Wow! This is absolutely stunning!!”

“Seriously, the show’s editor should get a raise; they’ve captured the mood perfectly.”

“Good editing helps, but it definitely requires Janice’s beauty and Aiden’s charm to create such a magical moment.”

Everyone was captivated by the scene.

Aiden, usually so serious, displayed a soft smile.

He turned slightly, extending his arm to Janice, who smiled warmly and gracefully accepted it.

They made their way down the street, their shadows stretching long in the gentle light. As they moved further, their graceful figures seemed to capture the timeless beauty of a classic painting.

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The scene shifted to a cozy dinner setting in a restaurant.

Bathed in warm, honeyed lighting, Janice and Aiden sat engaged in an animated conversation that seemed to make the world around them fade away.

Grace personified, Janice’s every movement was poetry in motion, while Aiden’s refined demeanor spoke of old-world charm. To the online viewers, it felt as though they had stumbled upon a modern fairytale, complete with their own prince and princess.

“It’s absolutely mesmerizing! I’d give anything to capture this moment.”

“Shh, you’ll disturb our royal couple.”

“Now this is what I call reality TV romance done right!”

The enchanting scene held the audience spellbound, drawing them deeper into the moment.

What made the footage particularly striking was its simplicity—minimal effects, just a touch of music and subtle color enhancement. Yet the result was nothing short of magical, owing largely to the natural magnetism between Janice and Aiden.

Their connection was palpable. A mere glance between them spoke volumes, creating an atmosphere so intimate it felt almost intrusive to watch.

Heat crept into Janice’s cheeks as she reviewed the footage.

What had felt like an ordinary evening now seemed charged with unspoken meaning on screen, sparking viewers’ imaginations.

The moment their glasses clinked and their eyes met made her particularly self-conscious. Had they really looked at each other that way?

Meanwhile, Aiden watched with unconcealed delight, his eyes soft with affection. His only regret? Perhaps he could have been even more attentive—pulled out her chair just a fraction more, made her evening just a touch more perfect.

Kenneth’s grip threatened to shatter his phone as he watched, his expression cycling through a storm of emotions.

“Kenneth, maybe you should stop torturing yourself,” Maggie suggested, though she too found herself captivated by Janice and Aiden’s chemistry. Family loyalty demanded she take her brother’s side, but even she couldn’t deny what she was seeing. “I’m worried you’ll give yourself an aneurysm.”

“Hmm?” Kenneth snapped out of his trance, turning to face his sister. “You think I’m going to burst a blood vessel from anger?”

Maggie blinked at him. Though she didn’t say a word, her expression clearly seemed to ask, “Isn’t that true?”

Drawing a steadying breath, Kenneth pocketed his phone. “I’m not that petty. It’s all for show anyway, just entertainment. Besides, I might be the one dating Janice next time.”

“But I’m curious...” Maggie leaned closer to Kenneth, her voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper. “You’ve had a parade of women vying for your attention before, but you never gave them a second glance. Why are you so interested in Janice now?”

Kenneth froze, the question catching him off guard and plunging him into contemplative silence.

The realization struck him. He had always been indifferent to romantic pursuits. Try as he might, he couldn’t pinpoint the exact moment Janice had begun occupying his thoughts. Was it their chance encounter at the golf course? Or perhaps during her interview?

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She had somehow slipped into his consciousness, appearing unbidden in his mind at the most unexpected moments, leaving him both puzzled and intrigued.

“Kenneth?”

“Nothing,” Kenneth replied, a genuine smile softening his features. “Maybe those other women weren’t meant to catch my eye. Janice is special. It’s as if she possesses some enchanting quality that quietly carved a space in my heart before I even realized what was happening.”

“Wow!” Maggie gave an exaggerated shudder. “Who are you and what have you done with my brother? The brother I know would never say something so romantic.”

Kenneth shot her an irritated look. “People change, Maggie.”

“Even though Aiden and Janice look like they were made for each other, you’re still my brother, so I’ll do what I can to help.”

“I’ll speak to Dad about your situation,” Kenneth offered.

“Thanks, Kenneth.”

A glimmer of anticipation danced in Kenneth’s eyes.

In this game of hearts, he held a unique trump card—Maggie.

His sister’s close friendship with Janice could prove invaluable, potentially giving him the edge he needed. His thoughts drifted to tonight’s upcoming date, yearning for a chance to have Janice all to himself.

Just as Janice closed the live stream window, her phone lit up with Leah's incoming call.

"Janice, I just watched the footage. You and Aiden... there's undeniable chemistry there. Much as I hate to admit it, you two look like a real couple."

"Leah, please tell me you didn't call just to tease me about this. What's really on your mind?" Janice rolled her eyes, her voice tinged with playful exasperation.

Leah clicked her tongue knowingly. "You read me like a book. Truth is, we've got a situation at the company. I rushed back to the office yesterday to handle some issues and discovered someone's orchestrating a stealth campaign against us."

"Huh?" Janice's brow furrowed in concern. "This has Leonidas written all over it. Have you managed to trace these attackers back to their source?"

"Whoever it is, they're being incredibly cautious. I've already put Prescott on the case. But given the circumstances, Leonidas seems to be the prime suspect."

Janice stretched out on the sofa, her legs crossed comfortably as her eyes glinted with quiet determination.

Leonidas seemed to have gathered quite a bit of information about her. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to attack her company so recklessly.

"How's the progress on the task I assigned you?" Janice asked.

Leah replied, "Everything's running smoothly. Based on the scope of the attack, it looks like they're just trying to annoy us with small disruptions. They probably haven't figured out what you've asked me to do yet."

"Let him be. The more attention we give him, the more he'll push his luck," Janice said, her tone low but confident. "Also, that task? It's still confidential. Don't let anyone else find out."

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"Got it."

Just as Janice was about to hang up, Leah said, "Someone important from Cloverhill asked for your help to save someone."

"Who?"

"The person's identity is a mystery. They're trying to keep things quiet. To learn more, you'll probably have to agree to their request."

Someone who could slip past their investigation and was connected to Cloverhill had to be someone with substantial influence.

Janice was already investigating the White family massacre in Cloverhill, a tangled web of powerful factions.

"Let's hold off for now. We need to be certain there's no risk before we agree."

After hanging up, Janice turned her attention to the live stream on her screen.

The video clips of her and Aiden had progressed to their time at the concert.

In the footage from the concert, she and Aiden sat side by side.

While Janice had been engrossed in the performance, Aiden's gaze had never left her.

"How did I not notice Aiden watching me like that back then?" Janice froze for a moment, stunned.

Watching the video clips now, she noticed the intensity in Aiden's gaze. It was the first time she realized how closely he had always paid attention to her.

Eventually, the video clips of their date paused at that exact moment.

The image was beautiful, almost magical, capturing the perfect essence of the scene. Viewers flooded the comment section, exclaiming how sweet and perfect the moment seemed.

The production team only managed to secure these clips after negotiating with Nolan. Otherwise, the clips would have ended before their entrance to the concert.

They'd kept certain details, such as the unexpected incident that followed, out of the public eye to avoid stirring trouble.

Meanwhile, Alissa was enraged. The more breathtaking the video clips appeared, and the more frenzied the comments grew, the angrier she became.

"How dare Janice, a nobody, get to be with Aiden?" Alissa ground her teeth in frustration. "I will make sure you are humiliated and become a joke."

Just then, her phone buzzed with an incoming call.

She glanced at the caller ID and felt a pang of anxiety. She forced herself to calm down as panic threatened to rise.

“What’s up, Dad?”

“What are you doing, Alissa?”

A furious roar erupted through the receiver, nearly causing Alissa to drop her phone in shock.

Alissa managed a weak smile, desperately masking the panic swirling within her. “Dad, I wasn’t trying to do anything.”

“You think I’m blind?” Mateo Welch held back his fury, his deep, menacing voice sending a chill down Alissa’s spine.

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She had always been the dominant figure outside her family, doing whatever she pleased. But within the walls of the Welch family, she was merely a dutiful daughter desperate to gain her father’s approval.

“Dad, did you see it?”

“Sneaking off to join some dating show? Do you want to embarrass the Welch family?”

“Let me explain, Dad.” Alissa swallowed, trying to hide the panic creeping up her throat. “I joined the show because of Aiden. You always said Aiden’s a great talent. Now that he’s on the show, I joined to get nearer to him.”

“Aiden is talented, but he’s not worth you humbling yourself like this.” Although Mateo spoke with disdain, his tone grew noticeably softer. “If you can win Aiden over, I won’t hold you responsible for joining the show without permission.”

“Thanks, Dad.”

“Have you forgotten the task I assigned you?”

Alissa’s heart sank as her thoughts drifted to her trip to Efrery. Beyond her encounters with Aiden, her main mission was finding the renowned surgeon, MO, to perform a life-saving procedure on her grandfather.

Her grandfather’s heart was failing, and every doctor they consulted, both local and from abroad, had given up hope. Their only chance now lay with MO, who had recently performed a miracle surgery on another elderly patient at Auburn Hospital. The heart procedure was successful, and the patient made a full recovery.

Now, the weight of saving Orson’s life hung entirely on MO’s shoulders.

“I remember, Dad,” Alissa replied with a forced smile. “Immediately after I arrived in Efrery, I had my people gather information. But MO is extremely secretive. It’ll take some time.”

“Let me clarify this, Alissa. You’ve got three days. If you can’t find MO by then, you can forget about ever being my daughter.”

“Dad!”

Alissa’s startled gasp was cut short as the call abruptly ended.

Her face hardened as she gripped her phone, her eyes cold and piercing. The Welch family was rich and influential, filled with many offspring, all competing for recognition.

Were it not for her mother’s sharp mind and manipulative tactics, Alissa wouldn’t have been her father’s most valued child. But now, to secure her place, she needed to find MO.

Gripping her phone with renewed urgency, Alissa dialed her contact.

“You have three days to find MO, or you’re gone.”

As Alissa massaged her temples in frustration, a voice interrupted her from behind.

“Alissa, you seem a little stressed.”

“What are you doing here?” Alissa demanded, spinning around to face Leonidas as he stepped through the door.

Being the new guest, Alissa had been relegated to a room on the first floor. By chance, Leonidas’ room was next door, making his visits convenient.

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“I’m here to ease your burden,” Leonidas said with a sly smirk, lounging comfortably on the sofa opposite her. “We’re partners now, after all. It’s only right I prove my value, don’t you think?”

Alissa arched an eyebrow, her gaze sharp as she eyed him. “Do you know where to find MO?”

“MO?” Leonidas faltered for a moment, caught off guard, but then nodded. “Yes, I know where she is.”

Alissa’s eyes gleamed with interest as she leaned forward, eager for more. “Tell me everything.”

Leonidas raised a finger, his smile taking on a more calculated edge. “If I assist you, what’s in it for me?”

Alissa’s eyes narrowed, her voice dripping with disdain. “What exactly do you want?”

“I want a position,” Leonidas replied casually, his gaze fixed intently on her. “A position that lets me carve out a name for myself in Cloverhill.”

Alissa's brow furrowed as she studied him. "You want to make a name for yourself in Cloverhill? Quite ambitious, I see."

Leonidas gave a casual shrug. "It's only natural for a man to have goals. This shouldn't be too hard for you, though."

"It's really not a big deal." Alissa figured agreeing to Leonidas' request wouldn't be too much trouble. "I'll agree, but first, I need to track down MO. If you can't find her, then we're back to square one."

"Generous Lives Orphanage," Leonidas said, carefully pronouncing each syllable.

"Generous Lives Orphanage?" Alissa asked, a puzzled look crossing her face. "Can I find MO there?"

"Yep!" Leonidas nodded. "The last time MO did a surgery at Auburn Hospital, the patient was Glenn Haynes, the director of Generous Lives Orphanage. Find him, and you'll find MO."

"Got it." Alissa stood up, signaling for Leonidas to leave. "You can go now."

Leonidas shook his head with a sigh. "You're truly heartless. We could've had a break together."

"Do you really think you deserve that?"

Leonidas narrowed his eyes, giving Alissa an intense, knowing look, then smiled mysteriously before walking out.

As Leonidas left, Alissa quickly sent a message to her subordinates, instructing them to look into Generous Lives Orphanage.

She decided it would be best to visit after the show ended.

This time, she had to find MO—her status within the Welch family depended on it.

Break time was over, and the Love Lab live stream was back on air.

Many viewers had watched Janice and Aiden's video clips over and over—they were simply that captivating.

They were excited to see what would happen between the couple in the upcoming swimming challenge.

"Where is this? Is this the villa's pool?"

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"No wonder it's a high-end villa. Just look at this massive, luxurious pool. It must've cost a fortune."

As online viewers flooded into the stream, they were met with the sight of a gigantic swimming pool.

Surrounded by lush greenery and offering all the luxury amenities, it could easily be mistaken for an upscale swimming club. But in reality, it was just one of the villa's standard facilities, now taken over by the show's production team. Janice had bought the villa specifically for the well-equipped pool, offering the perfect getaway for a swim when she needed it.

"Dear guests, please change into your swimwear and meet at the pool when you hear the announcement," Devin's voice echoed over the loudspeaker, reminding the guests. The reason he hadn't called them together earlier was to make sure each of them could make their entrance individually.

"Who do you think will come out first?"

"I bet it's that slimy guy, Daniel."

"Ugh, really? Are we starting with such an annoying guy?"

A lot of online viewers were making guesses about who would be the first guest to show up.

They were hoping for attractive men and women, not someone like Daniel.

“Hey!” A playful voice rang out suddenly, breaking through the chatter in the air. Although the newcomer was still out of sight, the mere sound of him was enough to make the crowd wince.

A figure came sprinting into view.

Dressed in sunglasses and baggy shorts, his chiseled physique gave off the vibe of a fitness model. He should have looked like a total heartthrob, but his over-the-top, cringe-worthy behavior was enough to make stomachs churn.

“Oh no, you totally jinxed it! It really is Daniel.”

“Ugh, my eyes! I’m into muscular guys, but Daniel is just way too much.”

“Someone, get me out of here!”

The online viewers were genuinely stunned from the beginning.

It wasn’t that they had anything against muscular men—it was just that Daniel’s physique was a bit too much.

His baggy shorts did nothing to hide every muscle and imperfection.

Daniel, however, seemed utterly satisfied with his physique, as if nothing about it was even slightly off. Striking one exaggerated bodybuilding pose after another, he had even gone as far as to coat himself in bronze oil to highlight his muscles. He was, without a doubt, the epitome of an awkward and overdone display.

Daniel lifted his hands in a wave, addressing the camera. “As a true fitness fanatic, I must tell you—swimming is the ultimate exercise. If you can’t swim, watch and learn. I’ll show you what it takes to be the king of the water.”

“Ugh, disgusting!”

“Oh no! I want to switch channels, but this is live!”

“Just end me now! I can’t take this level of disgust.”

The online viewers groaned in frustration, but Daniel, oblivious, carried on flaunting his physique without a care.

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“Daniel, can you quit being so gross?” Just then, Maggie strode over, hands planted on her hips. Her fresh and lively presence instantly brought relief to the viewers.

“Ah, finally! Much better.”

“Daniel’s antics had me cringing hard, but Maggie’s arrival feels like a breath of fresh air for my soul.”

“Focus on her, camera crew!”

It was clear even the camera crew had had enough of Daniel, as they immediately fixed the lens on Maggie the moment she stepped into view. With her hair styled into two playful buns and a pink floral bikini, Maggie’s charm was elevated to an entirely new level of cuteness.

She was the very picture of youthful energy and vibrancy.

“Daniel, can’t you tell your muscles look terrible? You’ve clearly gone overboard with supplements—they’re completely misshapen.” Maggie’s straightforward remark made Daniel’s face cloud over.

“What supplements? This is one hundred percent natural, all self-trained.”

“Ha, if that’s what training gets you, then...” Maggie trailed off, shaking her head in a way that only seemed to irritate Daniel more.

“You must be into me, saying all this just to grab my attention,” Daniel said through gritted teeth. “Maggie, you’re way too young to try playing hard to get with me.”

Maggie’s eyes widened in sheer disbelief at Daniel’s words.

His comment left her completely speechless.

Was this guy even serious right now?

“Maggie, don’t waste your time on him.”

A calm, steady voice cut in, redirecting everyone’s focus.

As a tall figure with a perfectly balanced physique stepped into view, online viewers felt an immense sense of relief, as though their eyes, sullied by Daniel, had finally been refreshed.

“Wow, Kenneth’s body is incredible. Those pecs, those abs—perfectly defined without being overdone. This is the kind of physique I dream about.”

“Kenneth is the perfect example of looking sleek in clothes but powerfully built underneath.”

“Uh, is it just me, or is anyone else focused on his shorts? I’d love to trade places with them right now!”

Kenneth wore nothing but plain black boxer briefs, yet his impeccably toned and sculpted physique made him an undeniable sight to behold.

Daniel gave Kenneth a quick glance, sneering to himself. Seriously? Kenneth thought he could compete with him?

In Daniel's mind, only Maggie would think Kenneth's physique was impressive. Once the other women joined, they'd undoubtedly shower him with praise instead. "I can't wait to see Stephen make his entrance now."

"In Stephen's past movies, he wore swim trunks. But now I'm even more excited for Aiden to show up—Efrery's top CEO shirtless? Talk about droolworthy!"