

Wrath 731

Chapter 731:

"I do." Jorge gave a stiff nod. "If Orson recovers, there's a good chance he'll pass all his power to Mateo. Once that happens, Mateo will definitely come after you. And since I work for you, I'll be dragged into it too. We're in this together."

"That's right!" Harlan nodded. "That's why Orson cannot wake up."

Jorge grasped the weight of Harlan's words. Without hesitation, he drained his glass in one gulp and spoke with determination. "Whatever you need, just tell me. I'll give it everything I've got."

A pleased smile played on Harlan's lips. "Three days from now, when MO operates on Orson, I want you to take people and kill her."

"Kill MO?"

"What's wrong? Are you scared?"

"Not in the slightest." Jorge quickly shook his head. "MO may have helped me get revenge this time, but she also humiliated me. That's not something I can let slide. Even if you hadn't asked, I'd have found a way to settle the score myself."

"That's the fire I like to see. In three days, I'll have mercenaries from abroad reach out to you. Your job is to coordinate with them. If you pull this off, I'll make sure you become the head of the Lambert family."

"I appreciate it." Jorge rose and offered a respectful bow.

As he lowered his gaze, a cold realization settled over him. MO was far more dangerous than he had ever imagined. Maybe she had foreseen everything from the start, setting the stage for tonight's events.

In a suburban villa, Janice had just stepped inside when a message from Jorge popped up on her phone.

“Harlan’s not playing around. He’s bringing in foreign mercenaries to take us out.”

“Are you sure about this?” Aiden frowned with concern. “Jorge’s had issues with us before. Do you really think tonight’s events were enough to make him switch sides?”

Janice lounged back on the couch, a lazy smirk on her lips. “I dabbled in psychology when I was bored. People like Jorge don’t respond well to bribes or threats—it usually backfires. But emotions? That’s his weak spot. If it weren’t, he wouldn’t have gone head-to-head with Conley over a woman.”

Aiden dropped onto the couch beside her and shook his head with a sigh. “Seriously, Janice, is there anything you haven’t studied?”

Just then, Vernon stepped out of the kitchen, carrying a plate of fresh fruit. “Janice, have some fruit.”

Janice picked up an apple, taking a small bite. The burst of sweetness brought a rare warmth to her expression. “I’m not sure. When I was in the orphanage, I read everything I could get my hands on. I thought if I became smart enough, someone would adopt me. But no one ever did. I stayed there until I was twenty, and then, the Edwards family showed up.”

Aiden felt a slight ache in his heart as he looked at Janice with newfound tenderness.

In that moment, he understood. Someone as capable as Janice should never have tolerated the Edwards’ cruelty for so long. But she had, because deep down, she had always craved a family.

She had wanted a family so badly that she had swallowed her pride, bent over backward, and endured every humiliation. But in the end, all it got her was heartbreak and never the love she had hoped for.

“Janice...” Aiden began.

“Here, have an apple.” Janice quickly handed an apple to Aiden, cutting off his impending speech.

“You’re probably going to bring up the past, but honestly, I’m quite happy with how things are now. And let’s not forget, I still have my brother...”

Chapter 732:

When Stephen's name came up, a fierce determination sparked in Janice's eyes. "After we wrap things up here, I must work out a plan to extricate my brother from Wendy's grasp."

"How do you intend to do that?" Aiden asked curiously, removing the apple.

"I haven't pieced it together yet. I'll puzzle it out on our way back." At that moment, Vernon was looking at her eagerly.

"What's wrong?" Janice asked.

"I'm curious. Do you really have to save Orson?" Vernon questioned, his forehead wrinkling in doubt. "Considering your resentment towards the Welch family, wouldn't it be simpler to leave him be?"

During their time together, Vernon had learned a few things from Janice.

With unwavering resolve, Janice shook her head and responded, "Rescuing Orson is crucial. I need to ensure he survives long enough. Mateo's plan is for Orson to surrender his power once he's conscious. If Orson lives longer than they expect, he won't easily relinquish his authority. I suspect Orson's resistance is linked to the woman Jorge mentioned."

Puzzled, Aiden furrowed his brows. "Did this woman even exist? After all, following the downfall of the White family, it was only you and your brother who survived. There was no woman in the White family who could drive the Welch family to such madness."

"That's exactly why rescuing Orson is imperative," Janice asserted, eyes narrowing. "We might only uncover the whole truth about the past by engaging those directly involved."

Moreover, that strange feeling she had about Orson also bothered her. Even though there appeared to be no evident link, she was determined not to dismiss any potential clues when something felt amiss. News of Conley's defeat at White Goose Mountain had already filtered back to the patriarch of the Mendoza family, Bain Mendoza.

Upon Conley's arrival, Bain punished him by forcing him to kneel. "Conley, have you lost your mind?" Bain exclaimed, his face red with fury as he lashed Conley's back with a stick.

The household staff and Conley's mother remained silent, not daring to intervene. They understood Bain's temper was flaring, and intervening on Conley's behalf would only draw his wrath onto themselves.

"You enjoy racing, and that's fine. But you lost the race and even squandered the Eternity Building I had just gifted you. Are you trying to give me a heart attack with your recklessness? Do you even grasp the significance of the Eternity Building?"

Conley's head hung low, his fists clenched, yet he said nothing. His eyes reddened, overwhelmed with shame, and he felt an intense desire to disappear.

"Dad, please drink some water." Seizing a moment, Esther offered Bain a glass of water.

Bain shot a brief glance at her, accepted the glass, and took a sip before saying, "The Eternity Building was supposed to be a gift for Minnie. Winning her over could have allied our family with the Payne family, significantly strengthening our position. Now, you've not only lost the Eternity Building but you've also turned Minnie against you. You've disappointed me deeply."

Bain struggled for breath, his chest heaving.

Esther quickly thumped his back, trying to soothe him. "Dad, Conley realizes his mistake. It was all because of that masked woman today. She was so overbearing and rude."

Chapter 733:

"Shut up!" Bain exploded, causing Esther to flinch and withdraw to her mother's side. "Do you even know who that masked woman is? She's the esteemed surgeon, MO! Mateo invested heavily to bring her here for Orson's surgery. You claim she's arrogant and disrespectful? Well, she has the credentials to justify her attitude! If you were a celebrated surgeon, perhaps you could afford to be arrogant and disrespectful too."

Esther was struck dumb by the reprimand, though her bitterness only deepened. She was adamant that MO would face consequences for the indignity suffered by Conley today, regardless of her status as a distinguished surgeon. No slight against her family would go unpunished.

"Dear, I believe Conley realizes his error. We should let the matter rest," Conley's mother chimed in. "The incident has already occurred. Our priority should be on rectifying the fallout. Further scolding will only strain your health and increase his agony."

"Indeed." Bain sighed deeply, the worry clear on his face. "I suppose a personal visit to the Payne family is necessary tomorrow to offer our apologies."

"Dad, what is there to apologize for? Neither my brother nor I have done anything to justify that," Esther said. "Moreover, Minnie and I are best friends. She won't do anything to harm our family."

Bain gave her a sharp look. "Remember, you brought Minnie to White Goose Mountain, where she got hurt. Plus, your brother indirectly caused this incident. While Minnie might overlook these issues due to your friendship, her family might not be so forgiving. If we don't demonstrate genuine contrition now, I fear they might sever all ties with us."

Conley faltered heavily to his room, his body beaten from the punishment.

"Let me assist with your wounds, Conley," Esther said, approaching him with a medical kit in hand.

Reluctant at first, Conley ultimately accepted Esther's help. The number of blows he had endured left his back throbbing painfully. He doubted he could even sleep tonight without some medicinal aid.

Conley sat down, removed his shirt, and exposed his back to Esther. Despite the scars marring it, his well-defined muscles were unmistakable—a sight that momentarily captivated Esther. However, the severe lacerations crisscrossing his back soon drew her focused concern.

"Conley, does this hurt much?" As Esther carefully applied the medicine, she frowned. "Dad was really hard on you this time. But it wasn't even your fault. Those brats must have cheated to make you lose the race. They won't get away with this."

"Don't talk like that, Esther," Conley cautioned, casting a weary glance her way. "It's my lack of skill that caused my defeat."

Esther responded sharply, "That's not true! In my eyes, you're always the champion, Conley. There's no way you could lose fairly. They must have cheated."

Conley sighed and offered a bitter smile, knowing all too well Esther's unwavering idolization of him since childhood. To her, he was always the victor, the unbeatable hero. Yet, her blind adoration obscured the harsh truths of reality, making her believe that foul play was the only possible explanation for his loss.

"Let's not dwell on it any longer, Esther," Conley murmured, his voice weary. "We need to come to terms with the bet's results. At least MO didn't reduce me to her slave, which is a small mercy."

“What is it about MO that impresses you so much?” Esther asked, her tone dismissive. “She’s just a well-known doctor. Does she truly hold a candle to the Mendoza family?”

Conley’s concern grew at Esther’s naive remarks. MO might have been just a surgeon, but her stature had grown through solid connections with the powerful elite. Such influential figures valued her advice. Should they face health crises, it was MO’s expertise in the operating room they would seek.

Chapter 734:

Suddenly, Conley’s phone buzzed with an incoming message. His eyes widened in surprise as he recognized the sender’s name.

“Harlan? Why would he text me?”

“Harlan?” Esther leaned in, her curiosity piqued. “The Lambert family is aligned with the Welch family, while we’re with the Payne family. We’ve never been on good terms with the Welch family. What’s he reaching out to you for? Check his message.”

Conley opened the message, his expression turning grave as he read.

“Say yes to this, Conley!” Esther burst out, unable to contain her excitement. “It’s rare to get such a chance. Maybe it could bridge a connection between our family and the Welch family.”

“I’m not going to agree to this,” Conley responded firmly. “Just ignore it, okay?”

“But why, Conley? This could really benefit us,” Esther asked, clearly confused.

“I’d rather not get into it. Just trust me on this and let it go.”

Despite her frustration, Esther saw the resolve in Conley’s face and reluctantly nodded, agreeing to drop the matter.

Conley looked at the message once more. Harlan wanted him to get rid of MO. Though recently humiliated, Conley maintained a certain pride. He preferred to seek redemption through a fair race rather than resort to dirty tricks. His disdain for dirty tactics was clear.

Three days later, Orson was admitted to Andromache Hospital. Renowned for its excellence, Andromache Hospital boasted the finest medical team and facilities in Cloverhill. However, today's surgeon for Orson was not on the hospital staff. The staff, intrigued, tried to uncover who this enigmatic surgeon was but came up empty.

Tension mounted within the hospital as the director emphasized the importance of this operation, allocating extra resources to it. This unusual move sparked even more interest among the medical staff, who were left to wonder about the identity of the surgeon afforded such special treatment.

The director's strict confidentiality policy kept everyone guessing.

In a quiet suburb, two black sedans quietly approached a villa.

Inside one of the sedans, Jorge looked out with a grave expression. As the villa came into view, he took a deep breath and instructed, "In ten minutes, MO will head out to Andromache Hospital. We have just that window to execute our plan."

"Relax. We're fully in control." A menacing grin spread across the face of a man in the back seat. Built like a tank and clad in camouflage, with a sniper rifle in his grasp, he exuded a lethal aura.

"The moment MO steps into view, she's gone with one bullet."

Jorge, eyeing the sniper rifle warily, gave a nervous nod. "Make sure to secure this area, everyone. Just in case our plan doesn't go as expected."

"Ha, it's going to work. I'm the top sniper in Wolf." The sniper's laugh boomed with confidence, assured of his skills.

Jorge kept silent, his expression tight. The group, known as Wolf, was a famous mercenary outfit, internationally recognized for their effectiveness. Against such skilled operatives, even someone as tough as Janice stood little chance.

Soon, the vehicles stopped about a hundred meters from the villa. Doors opened, and several foreigners stepped out. They were well-armed and professional, swiftly taking up strategic positions for the ambush. The sniper climbed to a higher vantage point in a nearby building.

Using hand signals, the team confirmed each other's locations and relayed tactical updates.

Chapter 735:

Jorge stayed behind in the car, his gaze locked on the villa's entrance, steeling himself for the action to unfold.

Suddenly, the sound of an incoming text message made Jorge shiver. He hurriedly grabbed his phone.

It was a message from Harlan. "How's the situation?"

Jorge responded quickly, "We're set up, just waiting for her to show herself."

Shortly after Jorge's response, another text from Harlan arrived. "Excellent! Succeed, and you'll lead the Lambert family."

Jorge expressed his gratitude in a reply, then turned his attention back to the villa.

Minutes slowly passed. The time for Janice to leave was approaching.

"Something isn't right!" Suddenly, an urgent voice came over Jorge's intercom. "The villa's too quiet. They should be getting ready to depart. What's going on?"

Jorge's heart sank. The assassins were about to discover the truth. "Move! Let's storm in together!" Jorge called out as he leaped from the car and dashed towards the villa. "They might be escaping out the back!"

The mercenaries wasted no time, surging after Jorge into the villa. However, when they breached the interior, it was eerily empty, no one in sight.

"What's going on here? We've been tricked!"

"K, scan the area."

As the mercenaries scoured the villa, Jorge quietly secured the main door behind them.

The mercenaries' expressions turned grave. It dawned on them that they had been deceived. Jorge, the contact they trusted, was actually a double agent. Instantly, they aimed their guns.

Jorge let out a terrified yell and dropped to the floor, covering his head. Shots rang out.

Overwhelmed with fear, Jorge trembled uncontrollably.

Miraculously, he was unharmed.

Jorge opened his eyes in relief to see bodyguards suddenly appearing and shooting the mercenaries before they could react.

"Damn it!" cursed the sniper from his lookout, witnessing the unexpected turn of events. Without hesitating, he abandoned his post and fled.

As he escaped, he called Harlan. "Mr. Welch, the contact you gave us betrayed us! You've led us into a trap! Expect retaliation from Wolf," he warned before tossing his phone aside and continuing his frantic escape.

“Mr. Lambert, are you okay?”

“I’m unharmed,” Jorge replied, standing and surveying the scene of fallen attackers, his expression one of determined calm. “What happened to the sniper?”

“Don’t worry. MO had everything planned. None of them will escape.” At that moment, distant gunfire signaled the end of the conflict. Jorge’s eyebrow lifted as he recognized the sounds meant the mercenaries had been dealt with.

Just then, Harlan’s call appeared on his phone. When Jorge saw the call, his eyes darkened. He then picked it up.

“Jorge, you traitor!” Harlan’s voice roared through the phone as soon as the line connected. The fury in his tone was evident.

Jorge pulled the phone slightly away from his ear, concerned that Harlan’s volume might cause hearing damage. “I’m sorry, but I’m with MO.”

“Really, Jorge? You’re just her pawn now! Remember, she’s merely a doctor. What could she possibly give you?”

Chapter 736:

With a stern gaze, Jorge replied, “She delivered justice for me.”

“Is that all?” Harlan questioned, clearly skeptical. “I could have sought vengeance for you as well.”

“No. No one else could have done that, not even myself,” Jorge explained, hinting at his previous inaction. He shook his head firmly and said, “That’s precisely why I chose to stand by her.”

“Jorge, do you comprehend what this betrayal means for you?” Harlan’s voice was laced with threats. “The complete downfall of the Lambert family is now certain.”

“Mr. Welch, it might be wise to consider your own situation,” Jorge answered steadily. “If MO’s operation succeeds and Orson recovers, Mateo will take his place. He will not discard an alliance with the Lambert family so easily.”

A laugh, tinged with madness, escaped from Harlan. “MO is quite the strategist, isn’t she? I may have underestimated her; despite being a surgeon, she’s deviously clever. But...”

Harlan’s voice then turned cold, sending shivers through Jorge. “Do you genuinely believe that I would trust you?”

“What exactly are you suggesting?”

“I’ve always seen through you, Jorge.” There was a trace of mockery in Harlan’s voice. “You’re a pampered brat and a coward. How did you suddenly become so bold? I smashed your head with a bottle, and you stayed calm. There was a time when you would have been a quivering mess.”

Jorge felt a sinking feeling as he realized that his disguise was flawed. “If you hadn’t shown your true colors today, you could still be of use to me. But now, you’ve proven yourself unworthy.”

“Harlan, what have you done?”

“Nothing too drastic. Just a backup plan. By this time, the secondary team I arranged should already be confronting MO and her crew.” With a sense of dread, Jorge terminated the call and immediately tried to reach Janice.

His call returned only a busy signal, confirming the grim reality Harlan had just described.

“MO, be careful out there.” Jorge, riddled with concern, quickly rallied his security team to follow after Janice.

Ten minutes earlier, Janice and her team had departed from the villa. By misleading Harlan about their departure time, they had skillfully dodged the assassins.

“Harlan is probably seething by now,” Vernon said with a hint of pride. “He hadn’t anticipated Jorge switching sides.”

“Indeed, Jorge has proven himself reliable. Despite Harlan’s treatment, he’s stayed true to our cause. I’ll certainly support him moving forward.” Janice gazed out the car window, contemplating the scenery.

She sat back, her thoughts wandering to the White family’s massacre years ago. The pieces of the puzzle were still incomplete. The clearest path to the truth involved confronting Orson about it. Her intuition told her that while the Welch family played a role in the White family’s downfall, there were additional layers yet uncovered.

Aiden observed Janice quietly, sensing her reflective mood and opting to remain silent beside her.

“Has there been any word on how Mateo is doing?” Janice inquired, breaking the silence as they reached the main road.

“Let me check on him,” Vernon said as he pulled out his phone, but his brow soon furrowed. “Why is there no signal here?”

“What did you just say?” Janice’s expression changed.

Chapter 737:

“We’ve suddenly lost all cell reception. Yet, we’re close to the city center; this shouldn’t be happening.”

“Something’s wrong,” Janice replied. “Vernon, drive faster. We’re being tailed.”

Aiden rolled down his window, scanning the area. His eyes narrowed as he spotted four vehicles closing in from every direction. “There are four cars encircling us, and we’ve lost all service. They’re likely using a jammer to cut off our communication with Mateo.”

“Could Jorge have turned on us?” Vernon gasped in disbelief, pushing the accelerator to the floor. The four pursuing vehicles made their aggressive intentions clear, rapidly narrowing the distance to Janice’s car.

"It's unlikely Jorge has betrayed us. It's more probable that Harlan figured out his disguise and made other plans," Janice commented gravely. "I've perhaps underestimated Harlan's prudence. We need to devise an escape. There's a typically congested area about a kilometer from here. It will be tough to get through."

At that moment, a black sedan abruptly cut in, aiming to collide with them.

A resounding crash echoed. The impact caused their vehicle to jerk violently, threatening to veer off course.

Vernon clenched his jaw, wrestling with the steering wheel to stabilize the vehicle. He then surged forward, trying to create distance from their assailants. Yet, the car in front continuously blocked them, mirroring their every move.

"They're coming! This time, it's two cars—one on each side!" Aiden observed with a grimace as he watched the black sedans maneuver into position.

"Let's take them on!" Vernon shouted, his voice laced with urgency as he floored the accelerator. "Everyone, hold on tight!"

Aiden wrapped his arms protectively around Janice, ensuring she was shielded.

The thunderous crash reverberated through the air. Janice's vehicle plowed into the black sedan, the collision sending shockwaves through both cars. The black sedan spun wildly, carving an unexpected path through the chaos. Vernon seized his chance, gunning the engine and threading their car through the narrow gap.

"We made it! Impressive driving skills, huh?" Vernon's triumph blazed across his face. But his celebration died in his throat at the distinctive whisper of suppressed gunfire.

"They wouldn't dare! Are they really opening fire here?"

Vernon glanced in the rearview mirror and saw several men hanging from the vehicles, their silenced weapons spitting death towards their car. This was madness incarnate! In Cloverhill, of all places!

Harlan's desperation to halt Orson's surgery had driven him beyond reason. Discovery of this assassination attempt would spell doom, even for a Welch family member. The consequences would be devastating. Yet Harlan had planned meticulously. Communications were dead, phones rendered useless by sophisticated jamming equipment. If the hit failed, someone would take the fall. But who would that scapegoat be?

Just then, an explosion tore through their concentration. Horror painted itself across three faces as rubber and metal surrendered to a well-aimed bullet. Their tire was gone. The car lurched violently, becoming a beast they could barely control as it veered towards the unforgiving barrier.

"Vernon, counter-steer! Now!" Aiden's voice cut through the chaos. Muscles straining, Vernon wrenched the wheel. Their vehicle fishtailed before slamming sideways into the barrier. The impact triggered a domino effect of collisions as surrounding drivers panicked, their vehicles dancing an uncontrolled waltz of destruction.

Chapter 738:

Janice watched as chaos consumed the road. With their escape route now sealed by wreckage, they were trapped in the assassins' killing field.

"Janice, are you okay?" Worry etched deep lines on Aiden's face as he rose to check on her.

She nodded, her voice steady with resolve. "I'm fine. But we're dead if we don't find an exit strategy."

"I have an idea," Aiden announced, his eyes gleaming with calculated determination as he surveyed the scene ahead. With swift precision, he kicked the mangled door open. "Vernon, stay put in the car. They're hunting Janice. Once we're clear, you'll be safe."

"What are you doing?" Vernon asked in disbelief.

A ghost of a smile played across Aiden's lips as he exchanged a meaningful glance with Janice. "Let's just say there's this movie scene I've been itching to recreate. Timing couldn't be better."

In a heartbeat, Aiden was out of the car with Janice, their movements synchronized like dancers in a deadly ballet. They weaved through the chaos in perfect tandem, making themselves impossible targets for the assassins' crosshairs.

Even in their desperation, the gunmen held back from spraying bullets wildly, knowing it would only escalate the pandemonium. Like a predator spotting prey, Aiden's eyes locked onto a black motorcycle gleaming ahead.

"Hey, what do you think..." The rider's protest died as Aiden smoothly displaced him from his seat. "We need your motorcycle, now!"

Aiden mounted the bike with practiced ease, Janice instinctively sliding behind him.

"Ring any bells about that movie scene?" Aiden called over his shoulder.

"I think I've caught on." Janice wound her arms securely around his waist. "Perhaps I should take point on this one? My riding expertise might come in handy."

"You might be extraordinary in every way, but today, let me be your shield."

Vroom!

The motorcycle's engine awakened with a primal roar. Aiden released the clutch, and the motorcycle leaped forward like a bullet from a gun.

The assassins froze, their carefully laid plans shattered by this unexpected escape route.

"Quick. Catch them!"

Ice coursed through the assassins' veins. Failure wasn't an option—their lives and livelihoods hung by a thread.

“Who’s the maniac that hit my car?” Vernon erupted from the vehicle, his face contorted with feigned rage. “You! And you! You’re all paying for this damage!”

He shoved through the crowd, deliberately stoking the flames of chaos. The bystanders, already on edge from the pileup, snapped at Vernon’s provocations. Their tempers exploded like dry kindling catching fire.

“Are you insane? You smashed into the barrier yourself! Now you’re trying to pin this on me?”

“Your reckless driving made me swerve! If anyone’s paying damages, it’s coming from your pocket!”

The scene dissolved into a perfect storm of fury and confusion. The assassins found themselves trapped in a sea of angry civilians, their targets slipping further away.

Watching the mayhem unfold behind them, Janice’s lips curved into a smile. “Vernon has quite the tactical mind.”

Chapter 739:

“Janice, hold on tight.”

“Why?”

“Our getaway is just getting started.”

Aiden’s eyes narrowed as he twisted the throttle to its maximum. The motorcycle responded with a feral growl, launching them forward with renewed fury.

Through her peripheral vision, Janice spotted multiple motorcycles materializing from the traffic, converging on their position like wolves closing in for the kill.

Harlan was seriously hunting for blood!

At Andromache Hospital, the pre-surgery preparations were complete. The operating room stood as a sterile sanctuary, waiting for its conductor. All depended on MO's arrival to begin the delicate balance between life and death.

But time had passed well beyond the appointed hour, and there was no sign of MO. Mateo's composure cracked like thin ice, anxiety seeping through the cracks.

His eyes darted to the clock for the hundredth time, each tick pounding another nail into his coffin of uncertainty.

"Mateo, could it be that MO has backed out at the last minute?" The words slithered from Harlan's lips as he lounged on a nearby bench. His face wore a mask of false concern, barely concealing the triumph dancing in his eyes. "Father's surgery is urgent. If MO doesn't show up in time, I'm afraid—"

"Shut up!" Mateo's words sliced through the air like a scalpel. "Just hold your tongue."

"I'm merely looking out for your interests," Harlan said, adjusting his glasses with practiced nonchalance. Behind that scholarly facade, his thoughts curled into a satisfied smirk. MO's absence was the first act in his carefully orchestrated play. This was a game he had already won.

Rising with deliberate grace, Harlan closed the distance between them. "Mateo, our father lies vulnerable on that operating table, his life hanging by a thread. Every passing moment tips the scales toward tragedy. If he draws his last breath there, you'll be the one who personally sent Father to his death. Tell me, does such a man deserve to stand at the helm of our family?"

Mateo's pupils shrank to pinpoints, raw fury blazing in his eyes as he fixed Harlan with a glare that could shatter glass. "Alissa, call MO now!" he demanded.

"Dad, I've been trying, but I can't get through."

“What?” Mateo froze for a moment. His head snapped toward Harlan, accusation written in every line of his body. “Is this your doing?”

“Come now.” Harlan raised his hands in a gesture of mock innocence, his lips curving into a practiced smile. “I’ve been right here in plain sight. Gilmore can vouch for my whereabouts.”

His gaze slid meaningfully toward Gilmore, who had maintained his silence throughout the unfolding drama.

The taciturn man offered a slight nod, wordlessly confirming Harlan’s alibi.

A change rippled across Mateo’s features, followed by a laugh that lacked any warmth. “I should’ve known that you two were working together.”

“Mateo, what exactly are you implying?” Harlan replied smoothly. “Everyone knows Gilmore’s reputation for neutrality; even Father himself acknowledged it. The man simply doesn’t take sides.” Harlan exuded the quiet confidence of someone holding all the cards.

The smugness rolling off his brother made Mateo’s blood boil, rage coursing through his veins like liquid fire. His fingers itched with the primal urge to wrap around Harlan’s throat.

Chapter 740:

“Mateo, there is still one way out of this.”

Mateo’s eyes narrowed to deadly slits, fixing Harlan with a gaze that could freeze hell itself. “So this is what you’ve been waiting for, watching me dance to your tune.”

Harlan didn’t bother with words. His smirk said everything as he snapped his fingers, summoning two bodyguards who entered with a woman in tow.

The sight of her turned Mateo’s blood to ice—Tess.

“Dr. Newman is now Father’s only hope,” Harlan declared, malicious satisfaction dripping from every word. “Are you really prepared to watch Father draw his last breath on that table, Mateo?”

“Harlan, I won’t let you have your way,” Mateo snarled through clenched teeth. “I believe MO will show up.”

“Ha! Then by all means, keep clinging to that fantasy.” Harlan settled back, crossing his legs with a theatrical flourish, the very picture of smug certainty. “When Father dies, the elders will see you for what you are—a failure and a disgrace. You had the chance to save Father, yet you stood idle, watching the sand run out. Tell me, how long do you think you’ll keep your crown once that happens?”

Shadows crept across Mateo’s features as silence claimed him. The cruel clarity of Harlan’s machinations crystallized in his mind. This was Harlan’s symphony of sabotage, ensuring MO’s absence, orchestrating these delays with surgical precision.

And there lay Orson, already prepped for surgery, his weakened body balanced on a knife’s edge. Time was a luxury they couldn’t afford.

“Dad, what do we do now?” Alissa asked, fully aware of the dire situation. Either they surrendered to Tess’ hands and handed Harlan his victory, or they gambled with time while waiting for MO. Both paths led into darkness.

Choosing Tess meant giving Harlan ammunition—a deadly card he could play at will.

But refusing her services while Orson’s life ebbed away would paint Mateo as a heartless son.

Harlan’s trap was a masterpiece of manipulation.

“Deploy our men. Scour every inch of this city for MO,” Mateo commanded, his voice firm and filled with steel resolve. “I want her here in ten minutes.”

“Understood!” Alissa immediately sprang into action, disappearing down the corridor with a team of guards following closely behind her.

A sneer of contempt twisted Harlan's features. He had spared no expense in weaving this web—Jorge's band of traitors wasn't his only card. Two additional teams of mercenaries were on standby, turning the city into a deadly maze for MO.

Against such overwhelming odds, she was like a butterfly caught in a spider's web.

Mateo glanced at Gilmore, who remained seated, silent and observant. Then, he retreated to a corner, pulling out his phone.

"I need you to ensure MO's safety," he murmured into the device. "Succeed, and I'll open the gates of Cloverhill for you—your ticket into the upper echelons of society."

"Mr. Welch, I've been waiting for those exact words."

The voice on the other end slithered through the speaker, dripping with dark amusement.

"I had intended to use your daughter's connections to get into Cloverhill, but now that you're offering me the chance, things will be much simpler. It seems my attempts to escape and contact you weren't useless after all," said the man on the other end of the line.