

Wrath 801

Chapter 801:

Ever since she had returned to the Edwards family, she had never known this feeling. Family, to her, had always been an abstract concept—something that existed in name but never in spirit.

But here, with Stephen, she felt something real.

Leah, Glenn, and the others had stood by her, willing to sacrifice everything for her sake. Yet this was different.

An invisible thread tied her to Stephen—something unspoken, something unbreakable.

Perhaps this was the bond of blood.

And for Stephen, this moment was nothing short of extraordinary.

His sister was alive. He wasn't alone anymore.

Were their parents watching in heaven?

Janice was alive, and he would protect her with everything he had. He wouldn't let her get hurt.

Their long-overdue reunion cracked the floodgates between them. They unleashed words they had never spoken, feelings buried for too long.

And as they talked late into the night, Janice slowly pieced together the shattered years Stephen had endured—years of suffering, loss, and loneliness.

Though Stephen tried to downplay his suffering, not wanting to burden her with his pain, Janice could hear it—laced between his sentences, lingering in the pauses, woven into the way he exhaled.

Still, she kept her own burdens locked away.

Her past wasn't something that could be shared in passing conversation—it was a labyrinth of secrets, too tangled to unravel all at once. If she laid it all bare, she wasn't sure Stephen would be able to carry it.

So instead, she gave him a carefully chosen piece of her truth. With a soft smile, she told him about her love for learning—how the orphanage had been her library, and books had been her silent mentors, teaching her everything she knew.

“My sister is such a genius,” Stephen's lips curved into a doting smile, warmth flickering in his once-lifeless eyes. In that moment, the hollow spaces in his heart seemed to fill with light.

He had played many roles in films and TV dramas throughout his career—characters bound by family ties.

But acting was just that—an illusion. He had never truly understood what it meant to be an overprotective brother.

But now, he did.

Gazing at Janice, radiant and brilliant in front of him, he felt a fierce surge of protectiveness, an instinctive urge to shield her from the world.

If he could, he would carve out a universe just for her.

So this was what it felt like to be an overprotective brother.

If he were to step into such a role again, he was certain—no, he knew—he could win another Best Actor award.

“Stephen, tell me more about Wendy. What kind of person is she?” Janice frowned slightly, a flicker of doubt crossing her face. “With her current status, I don’t see how she could have protected you all these years.”

Just being a wealthy socialite wouldn’t be enough to escape the Welch family’s watch. There had to be more to it.

At the mention of Wendy, Stephen’s expression darkened, and a storm gathered behind his gaze. Wendy. That woman had left a scar on his soul—one he had tried and failed to erase.

Chapter 802:

Even now, with all the resolve he had mustered to confront her, the mere thought of her sent a ripple of fear through him.

He took a deep breath. “When the White family was destroyed, I was lost—so lost that I thought of ending it all right then and there. But Wendy appeared, and for the first time, I saw a sliver of light in the darkness.”

A bitter laugh escaped him. “You might not believe this, but at that moment, she felt like a guardian angel. She was like a savior, stepping out of the dark with an outstretched hand. And when you’re drowning, you don’t question the lifeline—you just grab on. But after she took me in, she showed her true colors.”

His body trembled, as if the ghosts of the past were crawling back to claim him. “She looked me in the eye and told me, from that moment on, she was my queen and I was her slave. She promised to keep me safe—but only if I obeyed her every command. From then on, I was always at her service.”

“I didn’t hate Wendy. I felt grateful, actually,” Stephen admitted, his tone layered with complexity. “Without her intervention, my fate was grim—either to fall at the hands of my adversaries or to perish with my family.”

Janice detected the subtle tension in Stephen's demeanor and the shadow of fear that still haunted his voice. It was as though dragging him back through those dark corridors of his past was subjecting him to that cruel suffering once more.

"Let's stop this conversation, Stephen."

Yet, Stephen shook his head, a weak smile tugging at the corners of his mouth. "Don't fret for me. I've weathered the stormiest days. What more could possibly shatter me now?"

His words, meant to be dismissive, instead pulled at Janice's heartstrings.

She extended her hand, her fingers intertwining with his, offering a silent reassurance.

The warmth from her touch seemed to anchor Stephen slightly.

"Back then, Wendy treated me like a servant, always devising new demands to satisfy her whims. However, the moment I turned sixteen, she lost all restraint and pushed me onto her bed."

Janice's heart raced as she felt his hand turn frigid within her grasp.

"At that moment, I realized a harsh reality: I was not merely Wendy's slave—I was her plaything. She confessed that the instant she saw me, she was wildly infatuated. She kept me close all this time, waiting for the day she could satisfy her desires. From then on, the only emotion I harbored towards her was hatred."

Janice inhaled sharply, pulling her brother into a tight embrace, her heart heavy with the weight of his torment.

"Stephen, it's all in the past now! Time will heal these wounds, and I will ensure Wendy faces justice for her actions."

“It’s alright, Janice. You don’t need to worry for me,” Stephen said, his voice tinged with bitterness as he forced a smile. “But seeking revenge isn’t what I want. Despite everything, she did save my life. Without her, we wouldn’t have had the opportunity to reunite. So, all her previous deeds... let’s chalk them up as a debt fully paid.”

“Stephen...”

“Janice, I realize you’re no ordinary person—you even have the strength to stand up to Wendy. But could you please let her go?” Stephen pleaded, his gaze locked intensely on Janice. “I’ve settled my differences with Wendy already.”

Janice was silent for a long stretch, mulling over his words, before she finally nodded her assent.

Chapter 803:

After their long-awaited reunion, the siblings found themselves with a myriad of topics to discuss, yet time was not on their side, and lingering in the company was not an option.

Given their current standing in the public eye, being spotted together could easily ignite speculation, serving as a perfect opportunity for those looking to exploit their situation for personal advantage.

Stephen was adamant about not reconciling with Wendy.

To safeguard him from any retaliatory moves by Wendy, Janice had arranged for him to take refuge in a secluded villa atop Mount Cloudridge.

She tasked Costello with the duty of staying close to Stephen, under strict instructions to shield him from any scheming adversaries.

“Stephen, I’m planning to hold a press conference tomorrow to officially declare your affiliation with White Whale Entertainment.”

“Is that wise?” Stephen questioned, a trace of concern in his voice. “I’m still technically signed with Wendy’s agency.”

“Don’t fret over that. I’ll take care of it. The press conference will also serve as a definitive signal to Wendy,” Janice assured him firmly.

“Janice, Wendy is crafty, filled with endless tricks. I’m genuinely concerned...”

Catching the worry flickering in Stephen’s eyes, Janice responded with a broad, reassuring grin. “Just sit back, Stephen, and prepare to be amazed. You’ll soon discover the true extent of your sister’s capabilities.”

Her absolute certainty and tranquil presence effectively stilled any retort Stephen could have considered.

Stepping out of the villa, Janice took a moment at the door, turning to cast a wistful glance at the grand structure, her heart swelling with unspoken plans.

“Stephen, one day you’ll realize that your sister isn’t just there to protect you. She’ll restore the White family’s name to glory in Cloverhill,” she murmured.

Then, Janice retrieved her phone and initiated a call. “Let’s arrange a meeting.”

Wendy was taken aback when she received Janice’s call.

But the moment she thought of Stephen’s betrayal, everything clicked—Stephen must have gone to Janice.

This call was a declaration: Janice was positioning herself as Stephen’s protector.

“Oh, the audacity of such a young novice—what does she think she can manage?” Wendy muttered, a smirk playing on her lips as she contemplated her young adversary. She accepted the meeting, fueled by a fierce desire to dominate.

Intent on making a statement, she selected a striking red gown—a symbol of power and dominance—before stepping out.

She arrived at Rouhines Restaurant and made her way to a private VIP room.

Inside, Janice was seated, sipping her coffee.

Despite her outward calm, a turbulent storm of anger brewed within her, poised to break at the slightest provocation.

Suddenly, a knock echoed through the room.

Janice placed the coffee cup on the table and called out, “Come in, please.”

The door swung open, and Wendy entered, her commanding presence and the bold color of her dress compelling everyone to instinctively step aside.

“Janice, why demand my presence at such a late hour?” The warm, courteous mask Wendy usually wore had slipped, revealing a fierce and defiant expression. “If this matter isn’t pressing, I might just lose my temper. And when that happens, rest assured, someone in this room will pay dearly.”

Chapter 804:

Janice faced Wendy’s aggressive stance with an air of serene detachment, as if Wendy wasn’t even worth considering a threat. Unbothered, she took a sip of her coffee without so much as acknowledging Wendy’s presence.

Wendy’s brows knitted together, her gaze sharpening like a blade. “Cat got your tongue?”

At last, Janice let a slow, knowing smile creep onto her lips. She lifted her gaze just enough to meet Wendy’s eyes, amusement flickering in her expression. “I have this little quirk—harsh words just don’t seem to register with me. So, remind me, what did you just say?”

Wendy's face darkened, her fists curling so tightly her knuckles turned white. She barely restrained the violent urge surging within her. Janice chuckled coolly, her voice dripping with mockery. "Relax. I didn't call you here just to watch you throw a tantrum."

"You haven't changed—still quick with the sharp tongue." Wendy exhaled slowly, forcing herself into the seat across from Janice. "But without Aiden, I wonder if you would still be so confident."

Her taunt landed with all the weight of a feather. Janice remained utterly unfazed, her composure as unshakable as ever.

The way Janice carried herself—calm, effortless, in control—made Wendy's biting words feel like shouting into an empty void. Frustrating. Pointless.

Janice placed her cup down with deliberate grace, finally locking eyes with Wendy. For just a split second, a cold glint flashed through her gaze.

Wendy saw it. And for the briefest moment, something inside her wavered.

Was she really intimidated? By Janice, of all people?

"My confidence has never depended on anyone," Janice said smoothly. "And the fact that I asked to meet you today should tell you exactly what kind of strength I have."

Wendy let out a sharp, mocking laugh. "Everyone knows you're the Edwards family's cast-off daughter. Sure, you've got JE in your corner, Leah pulling strings for you, and Aiden standing by your side. But strip all that away—who are you, really?"

The words had barely left her lips when her instincts screamed at her. Her body reacted before her mind could catch up—her head tilting just in time to dodge something slicing through the air.

A sharp sting bloomed on Wendy's cheek. Blinking, she reached up, her fingertips brushing against warm, wet skin. Blood. The faint, metallic scent hit her nose.

“You...” Wendy gawked at the crimson smear on her fingertips, disbelief flashing across her face. Slowly, her gaze lifted to Janice, who sat there, utterly composed, idly twirling a small fruit knife between her fingers as if nothing had happened.

A fruit platter sat innocently on the table, the knife’s rightful place among the neatly arranged slices. Yet now, it rested in Janice’s hand, as if it had always belonged there.

Wendy had no idea when Janice had grabbed the knife or when she had struck. If her instincts hadn’t kicked in at the last second, that blade might have found her throat instead of grazing her cheek.

“Wendy, you seem a little worked up. Maybe a drop of blood will help you calm down.” Janice twirled the knife between her fingers before casually tossing it back onto the table, her voice as cool as the steel itself.

Her tone was light, almost amused, but the message was crystal clear: keep pushing, and next time, the knife wouldn’t just leave a scratch. Wendy’s eyes narrowed as she studied Janice with newfound caution. She had underestimated Janice—badly. That single move was all it took to prove one undeniable truth: Janice was a real threat.

Chapter 805:

A woman with JE behind her, Leah in her corner, and Aiden by her side was already a force to be reckoned with. But Janice? She wasn’t just leaning on them—perhaps she had a strength entirely her own.

Janice poured herself another cup of coffee, her movements unhurried. This time, she poured one for Wendy as well, sliding it across the table without a word.

Wendy cast a fleeting glance at the cup before lifting her gaze to Janice. Her voice was steady, but there was an unmistakable edge to it. “You called me here because of Stephen, didn’t you?”

Janice didn’t dance around the subject. “That’s right. Stephen is mine now. I hope you...”

“Impossible!” Wendy’s hand slammed onto the table, her voice laced with fury. “Stephen belongs to me! No one can take him away!”

Janice's gaze darkened, her voice turning icy. "And what if I insist?"

"Then it's a fight to the death." Wendy's answer came without hesitation, her obsession bleeding into every word. "I'll admit, Janice, you've got some skills. But Stephen? I won't let him go. Even if I have to crawl out of my grave as a vengeful spirit, I will take him back."

For the first time, Janice felt a flicker of unease. Wendy's obsession wasn't just strong—it was unhinged. It wasn't something that could be reasoned with, bargained with, or even threatened away.

This level of obsession was on par with, if not more extreme than, Leonidas' unyielding resolve.

Janice remained silent, sipping her coffee as she mulled over her next move.

Without warning, Wendy grabbed the cup in front of her and hurled it to the floor. It shattered instantly, shards of porcelain scattering across the room.

"I have no interest in drinking this." With those cold words, Wendy turned on her heel and strode to the door. "The moment I step outside, this fight begins."

Janice frowned as she watched Wendy disappear through the door, a sigh of frustration slipping past her lips.

She had hoped that they could settle things with some kind of compromise. But Wendy's madness had just made one thing painfully clear: there would be no peaceful resolution.

Not that Janice feared her. In truth, she despised Wendy, loathed her with every fiber of her being.

But she had made a promise to Stephen to spare Wendy's life. If not for that, tonight's meeting wouldn't have ended with just a conversation.

The door burst open with a loud crash as a group of burly men stormed in.

They were monstrous, their muscles nearly ripping through their tight shirts, each man brandishing a menacing weapon.

Amid the chaos, Janice brought the cup to her lips, sipping leisurely, her demeanor effortlessly composed. "You want a fight? Fine, let's do this!"

"You're going down, bitch!" the lead thug bellowed, his face twisted in rage as he lunged forward with his machete raised high.

The others advanced, their massive forms casting looming shadows over Janice, who appeared fragile and unassuming in her calm repose. However, as they neared, a blur of motion swept in from the doorway. In an instant, the intruders were hurtling through the air, their bodies crashing against the walls with a series of bone-jarring thuds.

Janice looked up, her eyes twinkling with mischief at the newcomer. "So, you came after all."

Chapter 806:

"Janice, what the hell is happening?" Aiden stepped into the room, his brow furrowed with worry.

He had been swamped with work, drowning in a sea of paperwork at the office, when Braylen burst in with news that Stephen had not only met with Janice but had also moved into her villa on Mount Cloudridge. Learning that she was at Rouhines Restaurant meeting Wendy, Aiden had abandoned his tasks and rushed to her side, driven by an unsettling feeling he couldn't shake off.

As soon as he entered, he caught sight of the group of thugs bursting into the private room. Without a moment's pause, he moved decisively, subduing them with rapid, practiced movements.

"I've declared war on Wendy," she announced.

"What?" Aiden froze for a second, his expression a mix of shock and disbelief. "We just came back from Cloverhill, Janice, and you're already making a move on Wendy? I get that you're not tired, but I'm over here, worried sick about you."

"It's really no big deal," Janice assured him, her smile calm and reassuring. She gracefully filled a cup with coffee, the rich aroma filling the air, and handed it to Aiden. "Here, take this—drink some coffee and relax a bit."

Aiden's brows furrowed in concern, but he accepted the cup and took a tentative sip, the warmth of the coffee slightly easing his nerves. "Now, tell me—what the hell happened?"

Janice saw no reason to withhold anything from Aiden, so she shared the night's events in sweeping, vivid detail.

"Stephen truly outdid himself. To keep you out of harm's way, he pretended not to remember a thing. Yet, it was evident he was cornered, left with no other choice but to confront Wendy head-on."

Aiden exhaled deeply, his sigh a mixture of relief and resignation. Stephen's methods were anything but cautious, yet there was something admirable about his unwavering resolve to handle the situation on his own.

"I spent sleepless nights trying to devise a plan to pull my brother out of this mess, but he's managed it on his own. Well, that's one less headache for me to deal with. The only thing left to worry about—Wendy's definitely going to lose her damn mind."

Aiden cast a worried glance at Janice, noticing her apparent indifference towards the looming threat of Wendy. With a furrowed brow, he couldn't resist cautioning her. "Wendy isn't as straightforward as she seems."

He then shared his findings with Janice.

"Wendy has woven her schemes deep into Efrery, practically holding sway over half the elite here. From what I've heard, she's got a squad of fiercely loyal fighters who wouldn't hesitate to die carrying out her commands."

Janice, her fingers tapping thoughtfully on the table, absorbed the news with a solemn nod. "I had my suspicions she wasn't just anyone, but I didn't realize just how dangerous she really is."

The revelation hung heavy in the air; a woman of such exceptional cunning and reach, secretly dominating Efrery's influential circles, was a ticking time bomb.

"I'm betting she's been targeting you for some time, Janice. Why else would she maneuver Edwards Group into her chess game?"

Aiden's detailed explanation was a passionate plea to Janice, urging her to recognize the threat Wendy posed and not to underestimate her capabilities.

Despite Janice's considerable resources, JE Consortium was headquartered overseas. Although Freak Design provided a strong local presence, it barely scratched the surface of her expansive influence.

Chapter 807:

Going up against Wendy on her own ground was like playing a rigged game—Janice never stood a chance.

Yet, despite Aiden's fervent words, Janice appeared utterly unfazed, savoring her coffee. Her serene demeanor only heightened Aiden's restlessness.

"Janice, are you even listening to me?"

She blinked, then offered a half-smile. "Of course, I'm listening. You're saying Wendy is a formidable enemy, one not to be underestimated."

"Then why do you remain so calm?" Aiden pinched her cheek, his frustration evident in the forceful gesture. "If you could align with a local ally who has significant influence, you wouldn't need to worry about her anymore."

He laid it out as plainly as he could, hoping she would understand now. That ally, powerful and local, was him!

However, Janice seemed to overlook his insinuation, veering off topic. “Who do you think is behind Wendy?”

“Janice!” Aiden’s voice cracked with exasperation. For someone who usually exhibited such sharp acumen and strategic foresight, she could be remarkably oblivious at times.

“Alright, alright, I understand!” Janice chuckled, lightening the mood as she gently cradled Aiden’s face between her hands. “The reason I’m so calm is because I have you, right? You wouldn’t just stand by and let Wendy come after me, would you?”

Her words resonated deeply with Aiden, calming the storm of his frustration.

“No doubt about it. With me here, she wouldn’t dare touch you.”

“So, who do you think is behind Wendy?”

“Someone behind her?”

Aiden paused, considering her question carefully.

The fact that Wendy got Stephen out of Cloverhill and managed to keep him hidden from the Welch family for so long? That wasn’t just luck—it was downright suspicious.

Wendy couldn’t have orchestrated this by herself. There had to be a stronger force behind her, someone with the power and influence to keep everything under control.

Shadows crept across Wendy’s private villa as she returned home.

The courtyard lay cloaked in darkness, where silent figures stood like sentinels. Their faces were carved from ice, hands clasped behind their backs in military precision. Not a muscle twitched as they awaited Wendy’s command.

At first glance, one might have mistaken them for masterfully crafted mannequins. Only the subtle rise and fall of their chests betrayed their humanity, a rhythmic reminder that blood still coursed through their veins.

Their eyes were vacant pools, faces masks of emptiness, as if their very souls had been stripped away during their training.

These were Wendy's prized creations: assassins molded by her own hands over the years.

Her gaze slithered over them, cold as winter's bite and deadly as a viper's venom. "From this moment forward, you will not rest until Janice draws her final breath."

"Yes, madam!"

Their unified response thundered through the courtyard, a chorus of deadly intent.

A twisted pleasure danced across Wendy's features as their voices echoed into the night.

Her lips curled like a cat toying with its prey, eyes narrowing to predatory slits as she envisioned Janice's inevitable downfall. Even with supernatural abilities, Janice would crumble beneath the relentless assault of so many trained killers.

Chapter 808:

And Aiden? His protection would prove worthless. Against these warriors who had surrendered their very souls to their mission, even the mighty man would fall.

"Destruction isn't enough for you. I'll annihilate everything you hold dear. Leah, Prescott, Costello... Every single person who dares call you friend will perish! Oh, and that orphanage..." A dangerous flame ignited in Wendy's eyes as her blood-red lips twisted into something inhuman. "I'll take down the orphanage."

Buzz!

The sharp ring of a phone sliced through the courtyard's heavy atmosphere.

Wendy's expression shattered like glass. With trembling fingers, she retrieved her phone from her bag.

It was just a standard ringtone, yet the sound squeezed her heart in an iron grip.

Horror bloomed in her widening eyes. The maniacal confidence of moments ago evaporated, leaving her face a ghostly canvas.

"How is this possible?"

She stared at the caller ID—a number she'd believed would remain forever silent.

An otherworldly stillness descended upon the courtyard, broken only by the phone's persistent buzz and Wendy's ragged breathing.

With gritted teeth, she accepted the call.

"Wen."

The deep voice resonated through her very being.

It was him.

It really was him.

There was no mistaking it. No one else in the world would call her that way.

“Master, you’re awake?”

“It’s been a long time since I last heard your voice. Yet after all this time, why does fear still grip you when we speak?”

Wendy stood frozen, terror rendering her mute as tremors wracked her frame.

“Wen, do you miss me?”

“I-I do.”

The words tumbled from Wendy’s lips as she forced a brittle smile.

Gone was the cold, maniacal presence that had dominated the courtyard moments ago. Raw fear had stripped away her mask of power.

“Do you?” The voice crystallized into ice. “You’ve been wishing I’d just be gone, haven’t you?”

“No! That’s not true!”

“Wen, your past loyalty earns you forgiveness. But from this moment forward, Janice and Stephen are under your protection. Whatever grievances you harbor against them end here. Tonight.”

Wendy’s pupils constricted to pinpoints. Her grip on the phone tightened, her eyes flickering with a mix of defiance and fury.

“Do you have a problem with that?”

“N-no.”

Blood seeped from Wendy's gums as she clenched her jaw, yet still she painted on a smile.

"Tomorrow, you will seek Janice's forgiveness. Should she deny you absolution, consider it your death sentence."

Chapter 809:

The line went dead, leaving Wendy's response to echo in the void.

"Ah!"

A primal scream tore from her throat as she hurled the phone against the ground.

In the villa's ghostly light, her gaze cut like a blade, promising annihilation to all who dared meet her eyes.

Though Stephen had finally slipped free from Wendy's iron grasp, he'd braced himself for nights haunted by terrors, expecting sleep to become his enemy.

Contrary to his expectations, the embrace of Mount Cloudridge's villa welcomed him into a deep slumber that lasted well past dawn, until the morning sun climbed high at nine.

Sleep had been his elusive companion for years, his nights a battlefield of restlessness. Only the artificial peace of sleeping pills had offered him any respite.

Now, perched on the edge of his bed, Stephen's unfocused gaze softened as his lips curved into a smile that held the innocence of childhood.

"So this is what freedom feels like? To sleep in perfect peace, unchained and untouched, without someone claiming pieces of your soul as their own..." he murmured.

His phone's screen illuminated with a message. Reading it, Stephen's face blossomed into a gentle smile as warmth spread through his chest like morning sunlight.

It was Janice.

“Stephen, are you awake? I’ve arranged breakfast to be delivered to you. Since I wasn’t sure about your preferences, I ordered a variety of dishes. Costello will escort you to the office after you’ve eaten. From now on, he’s assigned as your personal bodyguard.”

Stephen’s fingers danced across the screen.

“Janice, anything you choose would make me happy. But Costello is your bodyguard. Let him stay with you.”

“I don’t place my trust easily. Just let me decide, will you?”

A soft laugh escaped Stephen’s lips as he read her words. He could perfectly envision Janice’s expression—that endearing mix of playfulness and stubbornness as she typed.

The gift of having a sister filled his heart with unprecedented joy.

“For my sister, I have to work harder. From now on, every cent I earn will go to her.” Stephen’s heart, once lost in the shadows, was slowly finding its way back to the light. That newfound warmth spread through him, wrapping around his soul like a gentle embrace, melting away the cold that had once taken root.

Sitting in Aiden’s car, Janice glanced at Stephen’s text message, and before she knew it, a soft, genuine smile bloomed on her lips. She had never dared to imagine having conversations like this before. But with Stephen, her brother, it all felt so effortless, so natural, as if things had always been this way.

Aiden, ever the observant one, caught sight of her expression and felt an unexpected pang of jealousy. “I know you’re just texting your brother, but I still can’t help feeling a little envious.”

Janice turned to him with an amused look, slipping her phone into her lap. “Jealousy, huh? Who would’ve thought the mighty head of the Green family would be this easy to ruffle?”

“What can I say? Ever since I met you, I’ve been stuck in this state.” Aiden sighed dramatically as if resigning himself to fate. “I’ve already accepted that I’ll be jealous at least a dozen times a day.”

Chapter 810:

Janice narrowed her eyes at him. Aiden’s shamelessness had grown to new heights. He didn’t even try to dodge her teasing anymore—he met it head-on and somehow turned the tables on her every time.

“You do realize I haven’t even agreed to be with you yet, right? And you’re already this possessive? What’s next? You turning into some brooding, jealous husband?”

“Hmm?” Aiden’s sharp eyes gleamed with interest. “Janice, say that again.”

Janice knitted her brows, perplexed by his sudden enthusiasm. “I said I haven’t even agreed to your pursuit yet, and you’re already acting like this. In the future...”

She trailed off, suddenly aware of how suggestive her words sounded.

“Janice, once words leave your lips, you can’t take them back.” Aiden seized the opportunity, grinning like a cat that got the cream. “You haven’t agreed yet, but you will eventually.”

“In your dreams!” Janice shot him a sharp glare, unwilling to waste energy arguing with him.

“My dreams are quite sweet at the moment,” Aiden mused, his usual icy demeanor melting into something far gentler in Janice’s presence.

“Aiden, let’s make a promise.”

“Hmm?” Aiden eased his foot off the gas, curiosity flickering in his eyes.

Beyond the windshield, the city pulsed with life—cars weaving through traffic, neon lights flickering like fireflies. But inside the car, it was as if time had momentarily slowed, wrapping the two of them in an unusual hush.

Janice gazed out the window, her voice soft yet resolute. “Once I’ve settled the White family’s affairs, I’ll accept your pursuit.”

“That’s sudden...” Aiden should have been elated—ecstatic, even. But instead, an inexplicable unease settled in his chest. “Janice, don’t scare me. The way you’re talking—it’s making me nervous.”

Janice turned back to Aiden, amusement flickering in her eyes. Lifting a hand, she gave him a light tap on the forehead. “Unbelievable. When I rejected you, you were shamelessly persistent. Now that I’m finally throwing you a bone, you don’t know how to handle it? Are you for real?”

Aiden felt heat rise to his face, embarrassment coloring his usually cool composure. “Actually, I know what’s on your mind. After everything that happened with the Edwards family, you’ve grown cautious. The more you care, the more afraid you are of losing it. I understand. I can wait.”

He pulled the car to a stop and turned to face Janice fully. His gaze held hers—steady, unwavering. “I’ll wait until you’re truly ready.”

Janice lifted her finger and gently pressed it against Aiden’s lips. “Thank you for understanding. This promise isn’t just for you—it’s also for me. I won’t make you wait forever. That wouldn’t be fair to either of us.”

Aiden chuckled, wrapping his fingers around hers. A boyish smile played on his lips. “Alright. Once you’ve avenged the White family, I’ll make my move and confess my feelings for you.”

Meanwhile, Nina was pulling out all the stops for Janice’s visit. Every ingredient in the kitchen was the finest money could buy—some flown in at the crack of dawn to ensure peak freshness.

She had even hired a top-tier chef to oversee the cooking, unwilling to leave anything to chance.

On top of that, she had the household staff working double-time, scrubbing every inch of the house until it gleamed. Perfection wasn't just the goal—it was the bare minimum.