

Wrath 851

Chapter 851:

Many spectators, seeking to avoid injury, had moved to a safer distance.

Observing Kenneth's deceitful techniques against the bodyguards, onlookers began to reassess their views of him as the future head of the Delgado family.

In another corner, Braylen and Tricia were on the floor, engaged in Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

The onlookers were bewildered by the surrounding madness.

Janice and Aiden were the picture of tranquility, seated and enjoying coffee while they watched the unfolding drama with a sense of amusement.

Esther looked on with a grim expression.

The sight of Janice and Aiden, so calm and disconnected from the turmoil, intensified her anxiety.

The bodyguards struggled to contain Kenneth and were unable to disengage. The longer the conflict persisted, the more it seemed to disadvantage her.

Esther's gaze landed on a fruit knife set on the dessert table.

Resolved, she stealthily picked up the knife and moved towards Janice. "Janice, you bitch! How dare you degrade me publicly and expect the Mendoza family to grovel before you? What makes you think you have the right? Today, you must pay!" Esther seethed with venomous intent.

Kenneth opted for radical tactics, relying heavily on attacks.

Whenever his attacks faltered, Kenneth would amusingly dart around the table, managing to evade the exasperated bodyguards trapped by the cramped conditions.

Breathing heavily from the exertion, Kenneth realized his energy was depleting. He needed a strategy to end the standoff soon or risk capture. Such a defeat would be deeply embarrassing, particularly after his bold claim to Janice that he could outmaneuver the bodyguards by himself. Failing in front of Aiden was not an option.

Suddenly, Kenneth caught a glimpse of a figure moving stealthily towards Janice from the corner of his eye.

The reflection of a fruit knife flashed in her hand, altering his demeanor.

“Watch out!” he shouted.

“To hell with you!” Esther’s voice was cold as she lunged forward, aiming the knife at Janice.

Bang!

A loud bang echoed, and suddenly, all was still.

Disbelief gripped the room as all eyes fixed on Esther.

Frozen in her action of swinging the knife, Esther now bore a bullet hole in her forehead, her expression a mix of terror and bewilderment.

“Ah! Someone’s been killed!” A voice shattered the stunned silence. Chaos ensued again. The men blanched, and women’s screams filled the air.

Prior to this, the chaos had been limited to physical scuffles—fistfights and minor injuries at worst.

But the situation had escalated dramatically: a gunshot had been fired, and now the Mendoza family heiress lay dead. The room spiraled into panic.

“Silence!” A commanding voice cut through the uproar, halting everyone in their tracks.

Janice then stood, her presence imposing as she rose, her aura formidable, commanding the room like a towering presence.

Chapter 852:

Tricia wrestled free from Braylen’s hold, her gaze locked on Janice with intense scrutiny.

From the edge, she glimpsed Esther’s motionless form, her fear escalating.

“How dare you discharge a firearm in here? Do you see yourself as above the law?” Minnie’s voice sliced through the tension, sharp yet tinged with trepidation. Unsure of their recklessness, she pondered if her own status as a Payne might not protect her here.

Despite her apprehension, she held her position, compelled by the standing of her family, the Payne family.

Janice approached, her face unreadable, and addressed Tricia. “If you have any sense, reflect on Esther’s accusations and determine what was truth and what was fabrication.”

Tricia’s expression clouded with concern as she reconsidered Esther’s claims.

The more she thought about it, the more inconsistencies she discovered. She had acted impulsively earlier and failed to see the flaws, but now that Janice had pointed it out, it was clear that Esther’s story was full of loopholes.

“Did you claim that the Payne family would be reduced to groveling if we stepped foot in Efrery?” Tricia inquired, seeking clarity.

Janice gave a dismissive snort. "Is that what Esther convinced you of? You took her at her word?"

A blush tinged Tricia's cheeks as she acknowledged her gullibility. Esther's dramatic assertions seemed less credible now; a truly despotic Janice wouldn't bother with justifications.

"Who do you think was responsible for the gunshot?" Janice asked, her voice steady yet incisive.

"It wasn't you?" Tricia responded, taken aback.

Before Janice could reply, two figures dashed towards them. It was Minnie and Sheena.

"Esther!" Sheena exclaimed, her voice laden with grief upon discovering Esther motionless on the floor, her eyes starkly open. She fell to the floor next to Esther, her cries piercing the air. "Don't do this to me!"

She rocked Esther gently, hoping for a response, but Esther remained motionless.

"Who is responsible for this?" Anguish turned to anger as Sheena stared at Janice. "You did this, didn't you? You murdered my daughter!"

Janice faced the distraught mother, her expression shifting into a sly smirk.

"Mrs. Mendoza, do you have any proof that I committed the murder? Accusing me without any evidence makes me wonder if you are framing me. Besides, we are at your place. You couldn't even ensure safety here, and yet you dare to accuse me loudly?" Janice declared.

Upon hearing these words, the crowd began to connect the dots.

"If Janice were guilty, the crime would not have been executed so flawlessly."

"There is definitely something odd going on here."

“Whether it’s odd or not, it was Esther who attempted to murder Janice earlier. It was merely a case of Janice acting in self-defense. If anyone should be seeking justice, it’s Janice.”

The whispers among the crowd grew more intense. Overwhelmed by their murmuring, Sheena felt her anxiety rise.

She quickly turned to Minnie and urged her, “Minnie, you and Esther were best friends. You must defend her!”

Chapter 853:

By that time, Minnie had already been briefed on the situation by Tricia.

When she faced Janice, Minnie paused momentarily upon seeing her. It wasn’t Janice’s beauty that stunned her, but there was a strangely familiar aura about Janice.

“It’s nice to meet you, Ms. Edwards.” Minnie approached and greeted Janice.

“Miss Payne, it’s good to meet you as well,” Janice replied with a slight smile, her voice cool yet courteous.

Her serene composure took Minnie by surprise.

Minnie, brought up in the disciplined environment of a prestigious family, had a noble presence that made most people feel uncomfortable around her.

However, Janice seemed completely at ease, leaving Minnie feeling somewhat overshadowed.

“Miss Payne, do you also suspect that I am the murderer?” Janice asked.

Minnie shook her head, her expression neutral.

"I do not think you are responsible. Also, I owe you an apology. Earlier, my cousin was provoked into acting quite inappropriately towards you. I am truly sorry."

"Minnie..." Tricia murmured.

She recognized her mistake, yet the idea of being outmaneuvered by a man still bothered her.

However, a stern glance from Minnie quickly silenced her.

Minnie, typically so cheerful, now wore a distant look, her eyes sharp and authoritative. Her anger was evident.

"Ms. Edwards, the Payne family will extend a gesture of one hundred million to express our sincere apologies."

The audience was taken aback.

A hundred million! Such generosity from the Payne family was astounding.

Even though they were in the wrong, it was rare to see such magnanimity.

The Payne family, a major influence in Cloverhill and more significant than the Green family, was not exploiting their power to oppress others, which was truly commendable.

This left a favorable impression on Janice regarding the Payne family. While the Payne family held a status equal to that of the Welch family, they truly embodied the grace and dignity of a distinguished lineage. Minnie's firm commitment to integrity and duty not only maintained her family's good name but also earned the admiration of others.

“Miss Payne, I am okay with this arrangement,” Janice responded, then chuckled coldly as she turned her attention to Sheena. “However, since Mrs. Mendoza has her suspicions, we must still seek the truth.”

“Janice, I’ve caught the suspect.”

Aiden appeared, pulling a man along. The crowd was visibly stunned. Just seconds before, Aiden had been among them, and now he had captured the murderer.

“Okay.”

Janice gave a subtle nod, her gaze scanning the man.

Minnie’s eyes met Aiden’s, and her heart fluttered unexpectedly.

“It’s you!”

Chapter 854:

Aiden’s brow furrowed as he raised his head to meet Minnie’s gaze.

Minnie’s memories raced back to a night a few days earlier, when those very eyes had sparked something in her amidst the complete darkness.

“Miss Payne, what are you talking about?” Aiden gave a slight shrug. “I don’t know you. Besides...”

His eyes shifted to Janice standing next to him, his voice becoming gentle and distinctly affectionate.

“Your statements could lead Janice to misunderstand.”

Janice's curiosity piqued as she looked from Minnie to Aiden. Perhaps Minnie had indeed recognized Aiden, even though he had been in disguise then. Recognizing him should not have been straightforward.

"Miss Payne, we should concentrate on discovering the actual murderer."

Minnie quickly refocused on the present and smiled apologetically.

"I jumped to conclusions there."

Aiden shrugged once more, then seized the man he had brought forward.

"Speak up. Who hired you?"

At that moment, two men hurried over, anxiety written all over their faces.

"What is happening here?" Bain asked, quickly surveying the scene.

"Mr. Mendoza, you look like you're quite busy. We have faced serious issues here, and you show up only now," Janice said, her tone icy and mocking.

Her cold look towards Bain and Conley made them shiver.

Bain and Conley were visibly annoyed but had no choice but to step up.

"Ms. Edwards, we truly regret this," Bain said, trying to smile despite the tension. "The banquet has attracted many guests and minor issues that we've had to address. We haven't managed everything as we should have, and for that, we are sorry. Rest assured, we will resolve this matter tonight and compensate you for that."

“Bain! Our daughter is dead! You must avenge her!” Sheena’s anguished wail shattered the air. That single cry was so raw and piercing that it sent a shudder through everyone present.

“What?” Bain’s face went rigid with shock. He shoved his way through the throng and saw Esther’s lifeless body in Sheena’s arms.

“Esther! Who did this?” Conley had just caught sight of the dreadful scene, and his blood ran hot with rage. His hands clenched into trembling fists, his teeth grinding audibly. “Who killed my sister?” His gaze swept the room in a frantic search and finally locked onto the man held captive by Aiden.

“It was you! You killed my sister! I’ll make you pay with your life!”

“No! Stop him!” Kenneth’s urgent shout rang out as he saw Conley reach for the handgun tucked in his pocket.

But it was too late. Before anyone could react, the shot rang out. The thunderous bang filled the room as a single, merciless bullet tore through the man’s forehead.

His eyes widened in horror at Conley. With an unceremonious thud, he collapsed lifelessly to the floor.

“Conley, you reckless fool!” Kenneth snarled, grabbing him by the collar. His face was a storm of anger. “It’s obvious someone orchestrated this! And now, thanks to you, we’ve lost our only lead! How are we supposed to uncover the truth now?”

A hollow, broken laugh left Conley’s lips. His voice wavered, thick with anguish. “I couldn’t stop myself. I was too angry.”

Chapter 855:

As he stood there, trembling from both rage and sorrow, Janice’s lips curled into a knowing smile. “Conley, I understand your fury. But your haste to silence him? It does raise some questions.”

His head snapped up. “What nonsense are you spewing? I was just too angry to control myself!”

But the flicker of panic in his eyes betrayed him.

Janice hummed, as if mulling it over. "Maybe it was rage. Or maybe it was something else."

Janice shrugged, choosing not to press further. After all, Esther was the one who had paid the price.

The room fell into uneasy murmurs. Eyes shifted towards Conley, their previous sympathy now laced with suspicion.

Suddenly, Conley dropped to his knees with a loud, hollow thud. "My dearest sister is gone! I only wanted justice! Blood for blood!" His tormented cries softened the suspicion in some.

After all, it was no secret how deeply he had cherished Esther. His loss of control seemed almost inevitable, and his heartbreak seemed real.

"Conley, get up." Bain's voice cut through the tension, cold and firm. "Something isn't right. We must uncover the truth and bring real justice for Esther."

Then he turned to Sheena, placed a firm hand on her trembling shoulder, and urged her to take their daughter's body away.

"Ms. Edwards, Mr. Green, I must extend my apologies." He exhaled afterwards, as if weighed down. "My daughter had ill intentions toward you. Yet, she met such a tragic fate. Perhaps, in light of this, we could put this matter to rest?"

"Mr. Mendoza, don't you think that's a bit unreasonable?" Janice let out a cold laugh. Her sharp gaze bore into Bain. "Are you suggesting that because your daughter died, I should simply ignore the fact that she tried to kill me? Surely, you're not implying that I orchestrated her assassination?"

"No, no, that's not what I meant!" Beads of sweat formed on Bain's forehead. He had hoped Esther's tragic end would soften Janice's stance, perhaps even earn some mercy for his family, but instead, it had only hardened her resolve. "I will make amends."

Janice folded her arms, amusement flickering in her eyes. “Are you just making amends? I seem to recall you have something rather important to announce today.”

Bain froze for a second. It was clear Janice wasn’t going to let them off the hook so easily.

“Yes. But before that, I need to handle my daughter’s death first.”

“Fine.” Janice raised an eyebrow, but didn’t press further. “I trust you won’t disappoint me, Mr. Mendoza. You know how I handle disappointment.”

“I won’t,” Bain said, forcing a smile as he flicked a glance at Conley.

Then, regaining his composure, he turned to the room to address the guests. “Ladies and gentlemen, I deeply regret the unfortunate incident that just occurred. However, since you’ve all taken time from your busy schedules to attend the banquet, we will not allow this tragedy to ruin the evening.”

A beat of silence, then he continued, “The banquet will proceed as planned. Furthermore, as a token of appreciation, we will be offering several of our most prized...”

The collectibles would be given away as lottery prizes tonight.” With that, Bain strode out of the hall with Conley, leaving the crowd to process what had just happened.

Chapter 856:

Whispers spread like wildfire.

Esther had been shot dead. The killer had been executed on the spot by her own brother. Yet the banquet carried on, as though none of it had happened. It was unsettling—baffling, even.

But then again, this was the Mendoza family. In a place like Efrery, reputation was everything. Canceling the banquet would risk offending the elite families in attendance, leaving the Mendozas exposed to scrutiny, speculation, and perhaps worse.

"I wonder what kind of collectibles they're giving away," someone mused. "For a family like theirs, anything they call a collectible must be incredibly valuable."

"I heard they acquired several items worth over a hundred million each. Could it be those? If so, they're being absurdly generous."

It was sheer extravagance to give away such treasures.

And just like that, the promise of wealth shifted the conversation. The deaths, shocking as they were, faded into the background.

Janice's eyes sparkled mysteriously.

"What do you suppose Bain and Conley are planning?" Aiden asked.

"Well, they wanted to manipulate me. However, they've messed up their scheme and made clowns of themselves now," Janice said as she took a seat, her legs gracefully crossed.

Beside her, Aiden settled in, offering her one of the two glasses of water he had grabbed.

At that moment, Kenneth joined them, positioning himself next to Janice.

"Is there something you need, Mr. Delgado?" Aiden asked, his voice cold, clearly unhappy with Kenneth's presence.

Ignoring Aiden's sharp gaze, Kenneth greeted Janice with a warm smile. "Lucky I got here early, or I would have missed this amusing show."

Aiden arched an eyebrow and said sarcastically, "We owe you thanks for delivering such a circus performance. Dodging the bodyguards and darting around the table—it was quite the sight, you resembled a clown indeed."

The remark visibly upset Kenneth, his demeanor souring. "There's no need for you to comment."

Aiden gave a casual shrug. "Apologies, but I'm not one to stay silent; I prefer to say what I think. Why? Is the truth too much for you to confront?"

As Aiden continued, Kenneth's face took on a darker, more somber expression.

He found himself pondering when Aiden had developed such a sharp tongue. Previously more subdued, Aiden now had the knack for leaving others speechless with merely a few words. It was almost unsettling.

Could love really change someone so much?

Or was this the true Aiden, revealed at last?

"I'm here to discuss something crucial with Janice. I can't afford to spend time arguing with you," Kenneth said, inhaling deeply to contain his rising anger.

"What is it that you consider important?" Janice asked with curiosity after taking a sip of water.

"The matter concerns the Welch family and Stephen."

At this, Janice's demeanor changed, her finger rushing to her lips in a silencing motion.

Chapter 857:

Kenneth's brow arched in surprise, but he held back further words, realizing from Janice's urgent gesture that the situation was even graver than he had thought.

"We'll continue this conversation after the banquet," Janice said.

“Okay.”

At the same time, Minnie was seated at a nearby table, observing Janice and Aiden with keen interest.

Observing this, Tricia couldn't resist asking, “Minnie, what has you so captivated by those two? Granted, Janice is breathtaking and Aiden is certainly attractive, but it's unusual for you to devote so much attention to anyone.”

Shaken from her thoughts, Minnie replied, “They seem familiar, yet I can't place where I've seen them.”

Tricia's eyes widened in surprise, and she playfully touched Minnie's forehead with her hand.

“What are you doing?” Minnie ducked away from Tricia's hand, frowning.

“Just checking if you're running a fever. You aren't seeing things, right?” Tricia teased. “Those two are from Efrery, and you've always stayed in Cloverhill. There's no chance you've met them before.”

Minnie sighed to herself. “Well, that's true...” She felt slightly foolish, yet the feeling of familiarity was so intense that she couldn't dismiss it.

“Minnie, by the way, aren't you worried about what happened to Esther?” Tricia shifted the topic. “She got shot right before your eyes. You were close friends with her. Doesn't that make you sad?”

As Minnie sipped from her glass, her expression was one of detachment. “Initially, I befriended Esther solely to get a closer look at our peers' social dynamics. It didn't take long to realize her acquaintances were not worth my time.”

Tricia rolled her eyes. “You're quite something, Minnie. You entered Esther's circle solely to collect intelligence and even became her so-called best friend. It's no surprise that my dad believes you're meant for extraordinary things.”

With a light laugh, Minnie responded, “Know both your rivals and yourself, and you’re bound to succeed. Moreover, these connections will be advantageous for my future career.”

“So, Esther was merely a stepping stone to you, labeled as a ‘best friend’?” Tricia asked, her eyes wide with astonishment.

“Exactly!” Minnie acknowledged. Given her destined role as the head of the Payne family, her methods of managing affairs naturally differed from the norm.

Tricia suddenly felt a bit intimidated by her cousin. She found herself wondering—if a terrible event befell her, would Minnie respond with the same nonchalance?

“Tricia, ask Reece to investigate how the Mendoza family is connected to Janice,” Minnie said, her eyes sparking with a sharp gleam. “I believe there’s some sort of secret agreement between them.”

“Okay, understood!” Tricia nodded in agreement and sent a message to Reece.

In Efrery, Reece stood as their top bodyguard, someone who generally stepped in only when matters were a question of life or death.

Alissa and Liliana sat together at a separate table.

Alissa frowned, a sense of unease settling in. The Mendoza family was being oddly accommodating toward Janice.

Esther had been gunned down, yet Bain—her own father—hadn’t demanded justice. Instead, he’d gone as far as promising Janice compensation.

That didn’t align with the head of the Mendoza family she knew.

Chapter 858:

After mulling it over, Alissa figured it was best to inform her brothers. Jensen and Calvin sat in silence as their subordinates detailed the shifting power dynamics in Efrery. Their primary objective was clear—to track down and eliminate the last surviving member of the White family. At the same time, they sought to analyze the local landscape, searching for any weaknesses they could turn to their advantage.

Though Efrery's political web was intricate, only two families truly mattered:

The Green family and the Delgado family.

The rest were insignificant. In fact, the only real threat was the Green family.

"Alissa just texted me," Calvin said, adjusting his glasses and scanning the message, his expression turning grim.

"What's she saying?" Jensen asked, impatience creeping into his tone.

"Looks like the Green family is more intriguing than we gave them credit for," Calvin said, a cold smirk playing on his lips. "They've completely subdued the Mendoza family."

Even in their decline, the Mendoza family should still hold some weight. Yet the Green family has them so tightly under their thumb that they won't even protest their own daughter's murder. Now, that's amusing."

"Think we should pay the Green family a visit?" Jensen asked, his brow creased with slight concern. "We're here for business—no need to step on toes."

"No need," Calvin cut in, his gaze sharp with certainty. "Aiden may hold some sway in Cloverhill, but at the end of the day, he's just a small-town player. Compared to the Welch family, he's nothing. Our focus is on eliminating that White bastard. It's unlikely we'll cross paths with Aiden. Giving him too much credit just because they beat down the Mendoza family? That would be beneath us."

Jensen arched a brow, a cold chuckle escaping him. "You're right. The Green family isn't even worth a second glance."

"I've already instructed Alissa to stir up trouble. The Mendoza family was once a close ally of the Payne family. Even after fleeing Cloverhill, their connection still lingers. If Alissa causes trouble at their party, it'll only serve to elevate the Welch family's reputation."

"Calvin, I have to admit, you're looking more like a true family head every day." Jensen gave Calvin a firm clap on the shoulder, laughing heartily. "When the time comes, the position of family head will be yours without question. When that day arrives, I'll be right there with you, strengthening the Welch family until every other power is forced to kneel before us. If you take out that White bastard this time, the house in the heart of Cloverhill is yours. That estate isn't just property—it's the ultimate symbol of status, the mark of the Welch family's next head."

Calvin's eyes sparkled with anticipation as he envisioned himself moving into the house, steering the family toward even greater power and influence.

As the party kicked off, the hall buzzed with guests, nearly every table occupied. Yet, the hosts—the Mendoza family—were conspicuously absent. But the guests didn't mind. Given their daughter's tragic death, it was only natural the Mendoza family would need a moment to collect themselves.

"Janice."

At the sound of her name, Janice stopped sipping her water. Turning, she found herself facing a man with a face worn by time.

"And you are?"

His expression held a trace of awkwardness, but he forced a smile nonetheless. "I'm Lowell."

"Lowell?" Janice's brows lifted in surprise. The man she remembered had never been striking, but he carried himself with dignity. Now, standing before her, he looked drained—his hair streaked with white, his face unshaven, and years seemingly piled onto him overnight.

Chapter 859:

“The Edwards family has been through a lot. I’ve shouldered it all alone, and it’s taken its toll.” Lowell shook his head, exhaling a weary sigh. “No wonder you barely recognize me.”

“What do you want?” Janice’s eyes hardened, her voice devoid of warmth.

The iciness in her voice stung, but Lowell pressed on. “Janice, we’ve wronged you in ways I can’t even count. But I finally see that now. I won’t ask for forgiveness—only a chance to make things right.”

“Make things right?” A faint smile tugged at Janice’s lips. “And how exactly do you intend to do that?”

“I’ll transfer fifty percent of Edwards Group’s shares to you,” Lowell declared, his tone resolute. “It may not mean much to you, but it’s the most genuine offer I have.”

Janice’s smile remained, yet she offered no response.

Her silence gnawed at him, but he pushed forward. “Janice, I truly regret everything. Without you, I never would have reached those heights. I was blind to what truly mattered. If you hate me, if you want to curse me—I’ll take it all. But please, give me a chance to make things right.”

“Lowell, don’t you think your own words are utterly ridiculous?” Aiden interrupted their discussion.

Lowell turned to Aiden, confusion evident on his face. “Mr. Green, what exactly are you implying?”

“You claim to seek Janice’s forgiveness, yet you’re only willing to part with 50% of Edwards Group’s shares. If your sincerity were genuine, why not relinquish all of them?” Under Aiden’s sharp gaze, Lowell felt an overwhelming sense of unease. He couldn’t meet Aiden’s eyes, convinced the man could see straight through his facade.

“The truth is, those shares are just bait. What you truly want is to cling to Janice now that she holds more power than you ever did,” Aiden continued.

“No, you misunderstand me,” Lowell stammered, eager to explain, but Aiden cut him off before he could.

“Edwards Group acquired the western suburbs development project, huh?”

Lowell’s face changed dramatically, his eyes widening in stunned disbelief as he stared at Aiden. “How do you know about that?”

“I’m also aware that you landed the deal through Wendy.” Aiden’s voice dripped with mockery as he fixed his gaze on Lowell. “You’ve already secured Wendy’s backing, and now you’re dangling 50% of Edwards Group’s shares in front of Janice. Isn’t this just another calculated move to serve your own interests? If Janice takes your offer, it’ll tie our hands. Even if we uncover the full truth, we won’t be able to act against you. On top of that, the influence backing her will become your shield, granting you even greater support. Edwards Group will stage an impressive resurgence, stronger than ever before. Isn’t that your real plan?”

Aiden’s words tore through Lowell’s pretenses, leaving him visibly shaken—his face pale, sweat forming at his brow.

“Aiden, why didn’t you tell me about this?” Janice frowned, a trace of reproach in her gaze as she looked at him.

“I didn’t want you to be bothered by the Edwards family any longer, so I chose to keep it from you,” Aiden responded with a gentle smile, his eyes soft as he met Janice’s gaze. “But I never expected Lowell to be this shameless, trying to guilt-trip you like this.”

“I don’t care about the Edwards family anymore. From now on, don’t keep anything about them from me.”

“Alright, I’ll respect your wishes.”

Chapter 860:

The effortless way they spoke reflected a young couple perfectly in sync, their bond undeniable. Watching them, Kenneth felt a surge of jealousy. A dull ache settled in his chest, yet he found himself unable to step in.

“Janice, listen, I only came here to make things right with you. Please, believe me,” Lowell blurted out, scrambling to justify himself.

“Fine! Then hand over every last share,” Janice replied, a sly smirk playing at her lips as she fixed her gaze on Lowell.

That one statement was enough to strip Lowell of his pretense. “Edwards Group is my life’s work. I’ve sacrificed everything to bring it back from the brink. I can’t hand it all over.”

“Then get out of my sight!” Janice’s gaze hardened. “Do you honestly believe I need Edwards Group’s shares? To me, they hold no value whatsoever.”

Her words were sharp, striking with such force that Lowell was rendered speechless.

Lowell was well aware of Janice’s true background. He knew the sheer power backing her—rivaling even the Green family’s influence. “Lowell, whatever we had is long over. Get out before I lose my patience. And as for the woman pulling your strings—tell her not to try anything foolish, or else... She’ll learn exactly what happens when she crosses me.”

“Well, well, Janice, you certainly know how to make an impression.” Just then, a woman, widely disliked, made her way over.

The instant Janice spotted her, she frowned. “Seems attending this banquet was a mistake—far too many pests buzzing around.”

“Who are you calling a pest?” Alissa snapped, her brows knitting together in irritation. “I approached you out of courtesy, and this is how you return the favor?”

“I don’t waste my respect on those who spew nonsense.”

Hearing those words, Alissa was momentarily struck speechless. Minnie had once said something similar. It was clear both women possessed the same razor-sharp wit.

Alissa inhaled deeply, plastering on a forced smile. “Janice, given that we were once on the same show, I merely wanted to greet you. Is that so wrong?”

“Of course, it is,” Janice replied. “Do you recall what I told you on the show?”

Alissa hesitated before asking, “What was that?”

“I told you—I’m allergic to you!”

As Janice delivered her remark, Aiden rose to his feet, stepping in front of her. “For Janice’s safety, Ms. Welch, I suggest you keep your distance.”

Alissa fumed, seething.

Alissa fumed with frustration. Why had she been foolish enough to provoke Janice? Not only had she failed, but she had also humiliated herself in the process.

The surrounding guests had picked up on the tension, their curiosity piqued as murmurs spread through the crowd.

“Janice claims she’s allergic to Alissa? What’s the backstory there?”

“You must have missed the buzz about the hit reality show Love Lab. Both Janice and Alissa appeared as guests. In one episode, Alissa tried to provoke Janice, but Janice shut her down with just one sentence—‘I’m allergic to you.’”

“Intriguing. I’ll have to check that out after this banquet.”

As the whispers of past conflicts reached her ears, Alissa's expression darkened like a brewing storm. She quickly darted a glance at Liliana.

"Janice, I want to challenge you!" Liliana stepped forward boldly, her gaze steady and intense as it met Janice's.