

Wrath 931

Chapter 931:

That piercing gaze sent a shiver through Stephen's chest. In days gone by, Wendy's eyes had blazed with possessiveness and a hint of wildness—never this gentle glow.

If otherworldly powers existed in this realm, he might have wondered if Wendy had fallen under some enchantment.

"Wendy, I want the truth," Stephen said, his tone grave. "I'm not some kid you can pull the wool over."

Wendy's lips curved into a smile, still radiant with charm, lighting up her face like a sunrise. "To me, you'll always be my little one. I can still picture the day we met—you were so tiny, absolutely precious."

"Wendy!" Stephen's voice rasped, irritation bubbling up, though a faint flush crept across his cheeks.

"Alright, I won't tease you anymore." Wendy's eyes dimmed ever so slightly, her voice softening to a whisper. "Roger and I have never been intimate. Back then, to protect you, I needed a fake identity. Not only that, but I also wanted to provide you with a prosperous environment to grow up in. So, I chose the Chadwick family."

Wendy's words were gentle, but they whipped up a tempest in Stephen's heart. "Stephen, if I told you that you were my one and only, would you believe it?" Wendy's question knocked the wind out of Stephen, his face a canvas of disbelief. Yet her eyes burned with such raw honesty that it didn't feel like a tall tale. He didn't know how to respond for a time.

"I know it's hard to believe. But it's the truth." Wendy's smile turned bittersweet. "You're probably wondering—if you were my first, then where did Daniel and his sisters come from? From the day I struck that deal with Roger, I never let him touch me. To keep up appearances, though, I let him father children with other women. It was the only way to bury my real identity deep."

An icy spark flickered in Wendy's eyes as she spoke. "But Roger is still a man, isn't he? One night, he got bold and tried to cross a line with me. Too bad for him—he didn't know who he was dealing with. That night, I turned him into a man who would never trouble a woman again."

Stephen's eyes widened as the pieces clicked into place. All those years of whispers about Roger's impotence—it was Wendy's doing.

"Everything I've just laid bare is the truth." Wendy locked eyes with Stephen, a faint smile dancing on her lips. "So, are you still eaten up with jealousy?"

Stephen shut his eyes for a beat, then strode forward with a face like thunder, his hand closing around Wendy's throat.

Wendy tilted her head upward ever so slightly, a flicker of wildness dancing in her eyes, yet she seemed utterly unfazed by Stephen's rough handling. Stephen's gaze sharpened, his fingers tightening just a fraction around Wendy's throat. "Wendy, this is my answer."

With those words, he bent down and pressed his lips to hers. The kiss was fierce and consuming, as though he meant to claim every inch of the woman beneath him.

Word of Wendy's awakening soon drifted to Janice's ears.

Rather than dashing off to the hospital, she discussed their plan with Prescott and Leah.

"Janice, are we dead certain about this?" Leah asked, her brow creasing with concern. "We're rolling into Cloverhill in a week and throwing a big banquet?"

"No doubt about it," Janice replied, her lips curling into a self-assured smile that lit up her striking features with poise and certainty. "Things in Efrery are nearly tied up in a bow. Aside from a few loose ends that don't amount to much, we're in the clear. It's high time we threw down the gauntlet with the Welch family."

Chapter 932:

"I'm positively buzzing! It's like stepping back to those wild days when we launched JE Consortium with you," Prescott chimed in, his face glowing with enthusiasm. "How about I sneak into the Welch family's main business systems and rattle their cage a bit first?"

“Prescott, can you stop acting like a rebellious teenager?” Leah asked, exasperation lacing her tone. “We’re talking about the Welch family here—a dynasty of unparalleled influence, with a legion of brilliant minds at their beck and call. Aren’t you the least bit concerned that your bold antics might backfire?”

“Leah, haven’t you seen what I’m capable of by now?” Prescott puffed out his chest, radiating unshakable confidence. “Aside from Janice, who could possibly outshine me? And even if I stumble, I’ve got Janice in my corner to pick up the pieces, haven’t I?”

His gaze flickered with a mix of pride and reverence as he spoke. “Janice is Queen, after all—the unrivaled maestro of the hacking world.”

Leah rolled her eyes, unimpressed by his bravado. “I would wager even Janice wouldn’t throw her hat in the ring for this wild scheme of yours.”

“What?” Prescott spun towards Janice, his face alight with anticipation. “Is that true, Janice? You’re not on board with me rattling the Welch family’s cage first?”

Janice nodded in agreement. “I’ve just waved the flag of Queen’s authority to put the Welch family on notice. For the moment, they won’t dare cross me, which keeps my brother out of harm’s way. But if we poke the bear now, we might corner them—and a desperate beast is far more dangerous.”

The weight of her words sank in, and Prescott’s shoulders sagged in reluctant surrender. “Alright, fine. For Janice’s sake, I’ll let them off the hook—for now.”

“Don’t fret—your moment in the spotlight will come soon enough.” Janice gave his head a reassuring pat before turning to Leah. “For the banquet held in Cloverhill, I’ve got one simple wish: I want jaws to hit the floor.”

“Consider it done,” Leah’s grin sparkled with mischief. “Truth be told, even without your nudge, I reckon the crowd would be left gobsmacked anyway.”

“And why’s that?”

“Ever since the world learned you’re JE, those high-and-mighty nobles who’ve been chasing your shadow have come flocking like moths to a flame. If I weren’t running interference, you would be drowning in their pestering by now.”

Janice tapped her nose thoughtfully, a wry smile forming. That did ring true.

In her days of carving out her legend abroad, she had rubbed elbows with titans and blue-bloods alike. Figures like Lancelot and Nolan, giants in their own domains, had rolled out the red carpet for her, treating her as a guest of honor. She harbored no regrets about unveiling her identity, though.

Having chosen to step into the light, she intended to do so with flair and fearless resolve—only then could she make the Welch family truly feel the thunder of her presence.

Janice said abruptly, “Have you tracked down Leonidas yet?”

Prescott’s face clouded over, and he shook his head grimly. “That madman is likely holed up in some forsaken nook of the earth. Even with a little help from my pals in the top ten of the hacker elite, his trail’s gone cold.”

Janice didn’t flinch at the news—she’d half-expected as much. Yet, the specter of someone like Leonidas skulking in the darkness gnawed at her relentlessly—an ever-present thorn in her side. He was a phantom dagger, concealed in the gloom, poised to strike when she least expected it.

“Keep hunting. Even if he remains elusive, let us rattle his cage enough to keep him on his toes.”

“Got it,” Prescott replied with a firm nod, then perked up with a tidbit of news. “I did, however, manage to pin down Bart. He is holed up in Cloverhill as we speak. He has teamed up with Delilah to launch a company called Overden Group.”

Chapter 933:

“Overden Group?” Janice’s brow arched, a flicker of suspicion igniting before a chilling laugh escaped her lips. “They’ve set their sights on Aiden, haven’t they? To plant their flag so brazenly in Cloverhill, they must be leaning on the Welch family’s clout.”

With the Welch family pulling strings behind the scenes, getting Bart out of prison would’ve been a breeze—much like how Alissa had saved Delilah. A spark of anticipation flared in Janice’s chest. “I’m positively itching to set foot in Cloverhill now.”

At that moment, her phone trilled to life. It was Aiden.

Janice’s brow creased faintly. Wasn’t he supposed to be locked in a meeting at this hour? What could possibly prompt a call now? Curiosity piqued, she pressed the phone to her ear.

“Janice, have you caught wind of the latest?” Aiden’s voice carried an edge of urgency.

“What’s brewing?” Janice asked, thrown off balance for a heartbeat. Aiden’s tone hinted at something seismic.

“Roger and Wendy got a divorce.”

Janice’s eyes narrowed, her pupils sharpening as she shot a glance at Leah beside her.

Leah, quick on the uptake, whipped out her tablet to dig into the rumor mill.

“It’s legit, Janice! Their split’s already rocketed to the top of the trending charts!” Leah’s voice burst forth in a gasp of disbelief as her eyes locked onto the blazing headline crowning the trending list.

Janice’s forehead furrowed deeper, a puzzle taking shape in her mind. “Aiden, any idea what sparked this?”

“I’m downstairs at Freak Design.”

A smirk tugged at Janice's lips. "You read me like an open book, don't you?"

Rather than discussing it over the phone, it was better to visit Wendy at the hospital and get the full story.

Besides, she couldn't help but wonder about Stephen's role in this drama. Might this divorce be tangled up with him somehow?

Janice was settled in the passenger seat, her eyes intently fixed on the bustling entrance of Auburn Hospital.

The place was besieged by a horde of reporters, each shoving for a better spot, eager to capture the latest scandal.

"Looks like the whole crowd is here because of your brother," Aiden, sitting in the driver's seat, absentmindedly twiddled with the bracelet encircling his wrist. "With your brother's fame, this scandal of him supposedly being the homewrecker undoubtedly sent shockwaves across the entire entertainment industry."

Social media had just erupted with a fresh buzz—"Actor Destroying A Family" was all anyone could talk about.

Although the posts were tactfully vague, the connections were not hard to make. With Wendy's recent split from the head of the Chadwick family, and persistent whispers about her involvement with Stephen, the dots were lining up against him.

"Do you want me to step in and deal with this, Janice?" Aiden glanced at her, waiting for her decision.

Janice sighed deeply, rubbing her temples as she weighed her options. "No. I have no doubt Wendy can manage this on her own."

Wendy had been a major player in Efrery's entertainment industry for a long time. If she couldn't handle something this simple, she might as well vanish from the industry altogether.

Chapter 934:

"Alright," Aiden nodded, restarting the engine. He maneuvered the car to enter the hospital through a side route, heading for the parking lot.

The scene outside Auburn Hospital was in utter disarray. If they dared to use the main entrance, Janice's presence would surely throw the hospital into further turmoil.

Ever since Janice had revealed her identity as JE, countless reporters had been vying for exclusive interviews. Leah and Aiden were her steadfast defenders against the incessant barrage of media attention. Without their unwavering support, the media frenzy could have easily overwhelmed her. They used a private elevator from the parking lot to the fourth floor.

The corridor was under strict surveillance, with security personnel stationed at strategic points. As they made their way forward, two imposing bodyguards stepped out, effectively blocking their path.

"Access to this area is restricted. No entry allowed," one of the guards declared, his voice resolute.

A playful smirk played on Janice's lips. "I'm Stephen's boss. Are you really telling me I can't see him?"

"Our boss has strictly forbidden entry to anyone," the guard countered, his stance unyielding, his eyes piercing, clearly oblivious to the stature of the woman he addressed.

In an instant, Aiden was at the guard's side, his hand clamping down on the man's shoulder with undeniable force.

With a sharp push, he unleashed a burst of power, and the guard's legs buckled, forcing him to kneel.

"What the hell do you think you're doing, talking to Janice like that? Do you have a death wish?"

Aiden's voice sliced through the air, cold and commanding. The guard looked up at him, his earlier confidence now fractured by shock and disbelief. The guard, a seasoned veteran renowned for his

expertise, now found himself utterly outmatched by the man before him. Despite this, his resolve didn't waver, and he bellowed with all the authority he could muster, "Intruder alert! We need reinforcements!"

At his call, a swarm of guards hurried to the scene, quickly encircling Aiden and Janice.

Aiden responded with a derisive snort, his neck twisting sharply as it emitted a series of ominous cracks. The predatory gleam in his eyes unnerved the guards, sending an icy shiver through them.

These guards, all rigorously trained and veterans of countless tense encounters, found themselves cowed by a mere look from Aiden—a disgrace none of them had ever imagined facing in their professional lives.

"Aiden, don't do anything crazy!" Janice caught his arm lightly, her touch a reminder of caution. "We don't know the whole story yet. Let's not sever ties we might need later."

"As you wish," Aiden said without hesitation, relaxing his stance.

"Hey, you! Get over here!" He fixed his gaze on a nearby guard, beckoning him closer with a lazy flick of his finger.

The guard froze for a second before instinctively stepping ahead. Aiden's commanding aura made defiance feel downright impossible.

"Head inside and let them know Aiden Green's here."

"What? Mr. Green?" The guard's voice cracked as the realization dawned on him, his legs shaking so much he nearly collapsed.

Chapter 935:

It made perfect sense why he was so intimidating—Aiden, the brutal force behind Green Group, stood before them.

“Watch yourself,” Aiden muttered, the corners of his mouth twitching into a sly, enigmatic smile as he steadied the guard with a firm hand on his shoulder. “We’re still expecting you to deliver the message.”

“Yes, right away, sir!” The guard nodded vigorously before scurrying off towards the VIP ward.

The surrounding guards, now keenly aware of the heavyweight presence among them, shot each other nervous glances, silently berating themselves for their earlier slip-ups.

Their attention subtly shifted to Janice, the breathtakingly beautiful woman at Aiden’s side. Could she indeed be the globally acclaimed entrepreneur, the mastermind behind JE Consortium?

The thought sent a chill through them, as they internally cursed their oversight.

How had they managed to antagonize not one, but two titans of industry?

Even Wendy’s formidable presence paled in comparison.

Just as they were digesting their mistake, the flustered guard returned, bowing deeply. “Mr. Green, Ms. Edwards, please come in.”

Aiden gently took Janice’s hand, and together they walked towards Wendy’s room.

Inside the ward, Wendy perched on the edge of the bed, savoring each bite of the fruit Stephen had meticulously peeled for her.

When Janice and Aiden stepped through the doorway, they froze at the sight of Stephen offering Wendy a tissue. For a fleeting moment, their eyes locked—a silent exchange that crackled with unspoken affection.

Janice blinked rapidly, disbelief washing over her features before she instinctively turned and delivered a sharp pinch to Aiden’s thigh.

“Janice, what are you doing?” Aiden yelled, rubbing the assaulted spot with indignation etched across his face.

Janice gave an awkward laugh. “I just wanted to check if I was dreaming. My brother being so nice to Wendy?”

Aiden stood dumbfounded. The logical thing would have been for her to pinch herself, not him. But then again, she was the woman he’d chosen—these peculiar habits were part of the package he’d willingly signed up for.

“Stephen, care to explain what’s going on here?” Janice inquired, her voice dripping with barely contained curiosity.

Stephen turned around, a flicker of discomfort crossing his features when he registered their presence. “Janice, you’re here.”

“I saw the trending topics about Wendy divorcing Roger and you being their home-wrecker. So I came to see what’s going on.” Janice’s eyes narrowed as she took in the unmistakable bruises marring Wendy’s face and neck—fresh marks, not old ones.

With growing bewilderment, she noticed similar marks on Stephen’s skin as well.

A cascade of peculiar scenarios flooded her imagination. Coupled with Stephen’s attentiveness and the way his eyes softened when they fell on Wendy, Janice felt herself arriving at a conclusion that left her utterly perplexed. The relationship unfolding before her eyes seemed to be veering into territory she couldn’t quite fathom.

“Wendy, you should rest. I’ll step out and talk to Janice for a bit,” Stephen said, noting the questions swimming in Janice’s expression. He offered Wendy a subtle, reassuring nod before ushering Janice and Aiden into the vacant hospital room next door.

Chapter 936:

Once inside the adjacent room, Janice planted herself firmly before Stephen, arms crossed tightly against her chest.

Aiden, ever the opportunist, had somehow procured an apple and now reclined on the edge of the bed, crunching thoughtfully as he watched the siblings square off.

“Stephen, are you serious about this?” Janice asked.

Stephen sighed, his face filled with bitterness. “Janice, I’m sorry. Even I can’t make sense of my relationship with Wendy right now.”

“Don’t you hate her?”

“I do. But...” A shadow of resignation flickered across Stephen’s eyes. “I also love her.”

The confession struck Janice like a physical blow. Her mind emptied completely, as though someone had pulled a plug and drained all coherent thought.

“Janice...”

“Wait!” Janice thrust her palm upward, cutting him off. “Give me a moment to process this. Your relationship with Wendy now is completely tangled and incomprehensible. You hate her, but you also love her? How is that even normal? Or has all the abuse she put you through over the years twisted your mind?”

Stephen offered no response. The only sound breaking the tense silence was Aiden’s teeth sinking into the crisp flesh of his apple.

Janice whipped around, shooting him a withering glare. Aiden responded with a sheepish smile, slowing his chewing to a nearly imperceptible movement.

Privately, Aiden marveled at the scene unfolding before him. Wow, what a complicated relationship. This was even more dramatic than those romance novels he'd read.

Aiden was almost certain now—Stephen displayed unmistakably submissive traits, while Wendy had assumed a position of dominance. Throughout years of psychological manipulation, Stephen had developed a complex emotional response that defied simple categorization.

He harbored a deep-seated resentment for Wendy's past actions, yet had simultaneously grown accustomed to the dynamic, finding a perverse satisfaction in it. This contradictory blend of emotions had sculpted him into the conflicted man standing before them.

Janice massaged her temples, the tension building behind her eyes. Though she prided herself on respecting Stephen's autonomy, this situation stretched the boundaries of what she could reasonably accept.

She had anticipated Stephen might forgive Wendy out of gratitude for raising him. But this—this twisted codependence—had blindsided her completely.

"Did Wendy divorce Roger because of you?" Janice asked, her breath escaping in a weary sigh as she faced her brother.

"Yes," Stephen confirmed without a moment's hesitation, his voice eerily composed. "Janice, I know this is hard for you to believe, but it's the truth. Wendy has become so deeply ingrained in my existence that imagining life without her feels like contemplating a void. I hate what she's done to me in the past, but I also love her."

"Stephen, are you listening to yourself? How can one hate and love the same person at the same time?"

"Janice, I think I understand where your brother is coming from," Aiden interrupted, rising to his feet while casually tossing his half-eaten apple from one hand to the other. "Love and hate often intertwine, feeding off each other in ways that are hard to untangle. When love runs deep, it can turn into hate. And when hate reaches its peak, it can circle back to love."

Chapter 937:

Aiden paused, a knowing smirk playing across his lips. "Imagine when you were a child, unable to comprehend why your parents disciplined you. The confusion might breed resentment, leaving you questioning their methods and motives. Yet that same child never stops yearning for their parents' affection."

"Aiden, is that comparison even appropriate?" Janice's brow furrowed as she gazed at him with a mixture of frustration and resignation.

"Does it matter if it's appropriate?" Aiden chuckled, reaching out to ruffle Janice's hair with casual tenderness. "What matters is whether your brother regrets his choice."

"I don't regret it," Stephen said firmly. "It took me a long time to come to terms with this, but I've made my decision. I don't know what the future holds, but for now, I can't leave her."

Stephen's words deeply shook Janice.

She sensed the unwavering determination in his voice, as if he were prepared to push forward, no matter how treacherous the path ahead might be. She exhaled a long, weary sigh and walked towards Stephen. "If this is what you've decided, then I respect it. You're the only family I have left in this world. Right or wrong, I'll always stand by you and have your back."

Stephen's heart quivered, and his eyes turned red. It had been ages since he'd felt this kind of familial protection.

It stirred memories of years ago, when his parents were still alive, and he had grown up surrounded by their love and care. "Thank you, Janice."

"No need to thank me. We're family." Aiden walked over and slung an arm around Stephen's shoulder. His teasing tone might have eased the tension between Janice and Stephen.

"And who said you're family?" Janice rolled her eyes, swatting his hand away. "I don't recall agreeing to that."

"It's only a matter of time before it happens, right?" Aiden said, his grin widening. Janice blinked, momentarily caught off guard by the rare warmth in his expression.

"Bring Stephen out here right now!"

A sudden commotion erupted outside, ruining the moment.

Janice arched a brow and glanced at Stephen. "Seems like trouble's found you." Stephen's expression darkened. He recognized that voice all too well.

"Let's go find out what's happening."

Two women stood in the hallway with an air of superiority, facing off against two bodyguards.

"Ladies, please don't make this difficult," one of the guards said coldly. "No one is allowed to enter."

"Open your eyes, you idiot! I am Yana Chadwick. How dare you stand in my way? Do you have a death wish?" Dressed in a sharp business suit, Yana carried herself confidently, radiating authority and dominance.

Another woman stood beside her, exuding a more demure demeanor, her flowing blue dress accentuating her elegance. She was Leda Chadwick, Roger's second daughter.

Just as Yana attempted to push past the bodyguards, one of them pushed her back, sending her stumbling to the floor.

"Yana, are you all right?" Leda rushed to her side, her voice laced with concern.

"How dare you!" Yana hissed through clenched teeth as she struggled to her feet. She then shot a furious glare at the bodyguards. "How dare you lay a hand on me? You're fired! Effective immediately!"

Chapter 938:

The bodyguard remained stoic. "We don't work for you. You have no authority here."

Yana's face twisted with fury. "This is absurd! Absolutely outrageous!" In the past, a mere flick of her wrist would have been enough to bring someone to their knees. And now? Even a bodyguard dared to defy her.

"Mom! Are you hearing this? It's me, Yana! They're bullying me!" she yelled.

At that moment, the door opened, and Stephen stepped out. His expression was indifferent as he stared at both women. "The patient needs rest. Please lower your voices."

"Stephen, you shameless home-wrecker! Stay out of our family!" Yana instantly redirected her fury towards him. "Back then, I didn't care when my mom got close to you. I thought she was just playing around. But now, you dare to tear our family apart?"

Leda stepped forward, her expression full of despair as she pleaded, "Stephen, please, I'm begging you. Please bring our mother back to us. We can't lose our family like this."

Stephen could withstand Yana's aggression with a cold demeanor, but Leda's tearful display left him momentarily unsettled.

"Hah! Cut the act." Janice stepped out of the room, instantly seeing through Leda's ruse. It was obvious she was feigning fragility to gain sympathy. "Wendy's decision to file for divorce is hers. What does that have to do with Stephen? If you want to play the victim, go cry to your mother. Don't humiliate yourselves here."

Leda's brows furrowed as she met Janice's icy gaze, and her heart skipped a beat. "Who are you? Are you Janice? Stephen's new boss?"

Realizing this, Leda quickly adjusted her tone. "Stephen, now that you have Ms. Edwards, there's no reason to hold on to my mother anymore, right? Our family is stable and thriving. We can't afford to fall apart now. If it's money you want, I'll give it to you. Whatever it is, just leave my mother alone."

Stephen was about to respond, but Janice cut him off. “Don’t bother wasting your words on her.” Janice shouted at Wendy’s ward, “Wendy, if you don’t come out now, I’ll take Stephen and leave immediately.” As soon as she finished speaking, the door swung open.

The moment Wendy stepped outside the room, Stephen darted to her side, offering a steadying arm. “You look like a ghost. You ought to be tucked up in bed, not dragging yourself out here.”

Wendy cast a weary glance at Janice, her voice tinged with surrender. “If I didn’t come out, we’d be forced apart. This whole storm brewed because of me, so it’s only fitting I put out the fire.”

“Wendy, you don’t have to—”

“It’s fine,” Wendy cut in. “Leave it in my hands from here on out.”

Her icy stare landed on Yana and Leda, stripped of any trace of maternal warmth.

“Mom, you’re finally up!” Yana rushed forward, only to be halted by the firm grip of two bodyguards. “Mom, look at this! They’re blocking me! You’ve got to give them the boot!”

Leda, meanwhile, held her tongue, sensing the frosty edge in Wendy’s gaze. It was as though they weren’t even her daughters anymore—just strangers in her eyes.

A shiver of dread rippled through Leda. She knew full well that the Chadwick family’s lofty status rested squarely on Wendy’s shoulders. Without her, their future dangled by a thread. Their father? A spineless washout who had never amounted to a hill of beans.

Chapter 939:

“Mom, I know you don’t like Dad,” Leda said, her lip trembling as tears glistened in her eyes. “But Yana and I are your daughters. I’m all for you cutting ties with Dad, but please, don’t turn your back on us.”

“Leda, have you lost your marbles?” Yana gaped at her sister, floored by the betrayal. “We had a plan, remember? We were supposed to talk Mom out of this divorce nonsense!”

“Yana, open your eyes.” Leda shot back, her voice breaking with anguish. “Mom’s found her love, and who are we to stand in her way?”

She turned to Wendy, a fragile, bittersweet smile tugging at her lips. “To me, Mom’s happiness trumps everything else.”

Yana’s jaw dropped, her mind spinning like a top. They had hashed out a strategy to keep their parents together, but Leda’s about-face had thrown a wrench into the works.

“Finished with your little performance?” Wendy’s face stayed as cool as a winter’s dawn, untouched by Leda’s woebegone expression. She casually fiddled with her nails, twirling them.

With an air of nonchalance, Wendy stood, her presence commanding despite the slight neglect of her bedridden days. Those subtle imperfections carried an unexpected, almost enchanting allure.

“Mom, you won’t cast us aside, will you?” Leda inched closer, reaching for Wendy’s arm in a desperate bid for connection.

But Wendy’s hand shot up, delivering a stinging slap across Leda’s cheek. The sharp crack reverberated through the air, leaving everyone slack-jawed. No one had seen that coming.

“Mom, what has gotten into you?” Leda clutched her smarting cheek, staring at Wendy in stunned disbelief. “It’s me—Leda! Your daughter! You’ve never laid a hand on me before!”

“That’s because I never saw the point. Did you really think I was in the dark?” A wicked glint danced in Wendy’s eyes as she sneered. “Those trending stories painting Stephen as a home-wrecker were your doing, weren’t they?” Yana and Leda froze, their guilty faces giving them away.

“Mom, we were just caught off guard and ran our mouths a bit. The reporters must’ve caught wind of it,” Yana mumbled, her excuse as flimsy as tissue paper.

Wendy's hand rose once more, delivering a fierce slap across Yana's face. Yana and Leda gawked at Wendy, eyes wide with dread. Their bond with her had always been a cool, distant thread—polite but never warm.

They had clung to the belief that they still occupied some quiet corner of her heart, but Wendy's actions now smashed that fragile hope to smithereens.

"I see right through your little game. If you'd had the sense to step aside and let me tie up this divorce in peace, I might've tossed you a bone—thanked you for the Chadwick family's years of shielding me. Pity, though." Wendy drew a slow, deliberate breath, her eyes glinting with a frigid menace. "You chose to poke the bear rather than beg for mercy. I could've overlooked your meddling in my affairs, but crossing Stephen? That's where you crossed the line."

With a flick of her hand, she summoned a bodyguard forward. "Issue the command to wipe the Chadwick family off Efrery's social map."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Mom, no—please!" Yana and Leda dropped to their knees in a frantic heap, apologies tumbling from their lips as they pleaded for mercy. "We're sorry! We'll scrub every trace of Stephen from those trending stories this instant. We swear we'll never trouble you again!"

Wendy's aura was a storm of unrelenting steel—her words laced with a chilling conviction that promised more than mere bluster.

Chapter 940:

Janice and Aiden swapped a quick glance, both floored by the sheer force of Wendy's resolve. She wasn't just cutting ties—she was set on torching the Chadwick name to ashes.

And high on her list of reasons burned a fierce vow: to avenge Stephen.

“Janice, there’s more to this than meets the eye. Otherwise, Wendy wouldn’t be this ruthless,” Aiden whispered.

Janice nodded, casting a quick glance at Stephen. His face was frozen in shock, his disbelief mirroring hers as they watched Wendy’s merciless display.

“Mom, please, spare the Chadwick family! Let us go!”

“Stephen, it’s my fault! Please, beg my mom to let us go!”

The Chadwick sisters, once dripping with arrogance, crumbled into desperation, pleading with Stephen—the very man they had scorned, labeling him a homewrecker not long ago.

Stephen’s frown deepened. He cast Wendy a questioning glance.

“Stay out of this, Stephen,” Wendy said smoothly, slipping her hand into his. A slow, confident smile curved her lips. “You’re under my protection. Anyone who dares cross you will wish they’d never been born.”

Stephen tightened his grip around her fingers. “Alright.”

Janice blinked, watching the exchange with a mix of disbelief and resignation. One thought crossed her mind at that moment—Stephen was head over heels in love.

Yana and Leda were dragged out.

Within hours, trending headlines about the incident vanished. Journalists who dared dig deeper received ominous warnings, silencing even the most persistent.

Janice could only take it all between sighs. The sheer speed with which Wendy had crushed the whispers online made one thing abundantly clear—her influence was far greater than anyone had imagined.

“Wendy now controls half of Efrery’s elite circles. In some respects, we’re no match for her,” said Aiden.

“Agreed.” Janice folded her arms. “But if she’s not our enemy, she could be our most valuable ally.”

As for Wendy and Stephen, Janice had no intention of interfering. Stephen had made his choice, and she had to respect it.

Through his explanation, Janice finally pieced together Wendy’s years within the Chadwick family. She had never truly belonged to them—she had merely been hiding, evading the Welch family’s relentless pursuit.

During the earlier commotion, Wendy’s wound had reopened, and blood was seeping through the bandage. Stephen had to call for the doctor.

Once the doctor finished tending to her, Wendy leaned back against the pillows, her expression composed despite the lingering pain. Her gaze settled on Janice and Aiden. “So? Did you come here to say something, or just to blame me?”

“Feeling pretty satisfied with yourself, aren’t you?” Janice crossed her arms, one leg draped over the other as she studied Wendy’s composed demeanor. “Do you think that just because Stephen is here, I wouldn’t dare lay a hand on you?”

“Janice, you’ve got it all wrong.” Wendy let out a soft chuckle, shaking her head. “I’m just saying—I already have everything I want. Whatever you decide to do next, I’ll accept it willingly.”

Janice frowned, her gaze narrowing in thought. “You’re quite a character. For Stephen’s sake, I can overlook certain things. But if I find out you’re hurting him again...”