

Wrath 941

Chapter 941:

She didn't finish the sentence, but the weight of her unspoken threat settled heavily in the air.

"I'm afraid I can't make that promise." Wendy shook her head as she locked eyes with Stephen.
"Stephen and I can't avoid hurting each other."

For a brief moment, Janice was taken aback. Then something clicked, and her expression darkened ever so slightly.

Aiden, watching the exchange, let out a dry chuckle and shook his head. Stephen and Wendy—a pair locked in a passionate, volatile cycle, caught between love and destruction.

"Let's not waste time." Wendy suddenly became serious. "What exactly is your relationship with Stephen? Given the circumstances, there's no point in hiding anything."

"There are ties between us, yes. But for now, I can't disclose them to you." Janice met her stare, unruffled.

Wendy frowned. Even now, after everything, she still hadn't earned Janice's trust? Was Janice always this guarded? "Then let me confirm one thing. Are you and Stephen...?"

"No." Janice didn't hesitate.

Wendy released a slow breath, tension easing from her shoulders. "Good. As long as you and Stephen aren't involved romantically, nothing else matters."

"Mrs. Chadwick—"

"Don't call me that. That title has sickened me for decades." Wendy's lips curled in distaste.

“Alright, then let me tell you something in advance. I intend to go up against the Welch family.”

Wendy’s frown deepened. “Are you insane? Do I need to remind you what the Welch family represents?”

“And how do you know I can’t handle it?” Janice’s lips curved into a smirk. “Do you really think I’m that dumb? I wouldn’t move without a plan.”

Wendy furrowed her brows, realizing that Janice was no ordinary woman. Strong, poised, and unyielding in the face of adversity, she also had Aiden by her side—perhaps that was what gave her the confidence to challenge the Welch family. Yet, what exactly was the relationship between Janice and Stephen, for her to go to such lengths for him?

“What do you plan to do?” Wendy asked, steadying her emotions.

Janice pressed her lips together, about to respond, when Aiden handed her a glass of water.

“Take a sip first,” he said with a soft smile, his tenderness so natural that Wendy couldn’t help but feel a twinge of envy.

Just as that thought crossed her mind, Stephen handed her a glass as well, his gaze filled with unspoken affection.

“Stephen, you really do know me,” Wendy said, her heart warming as she took a sip. Somehow, the water tasted sweeter today.

Watching Wendy, Janice let out a quiet sigh. Was this what it looked like to be cherished? Even someone as sharp and ruthless as Wendy was just a woman basking in the warmth of love in this moment.

Janice shook her head, regaining her composure. “I’ll make sure Stephen reclaims his place in Cloverhill as a White.”

The words were simple but so shocking that Wendy nearly choked on her drink.

Chapter 942:

“You’re insane!” Wendy coughed, dabbing at her lips as she stared at Janice in disbelief. “I get that you want to establish yourself in Cloverhill and take revenge on the Welch family, but using the White family’s name? That’s outright declaring war on them!”

“Why not?” Janice’s confidence was unwavering. “The Welch family has been untouchable for too long—it’s about time someone made them pay.”

Wendy let out a bitter laugh, though the movement aggravated her wound. “I don’t know whether to call you fearless or foolish. If you dare to go through with this, the Welch family won’t hesitate. Before you even secure a foothold, they’ll crush you.”

Her gaze shifted to Stephen, her expression hardening. “I’ve protected Stephen for years, shielding him from countless assassination attempts. I won’t let him throw his life away.”

“Wendy, I stand with Janice on this,” Stephen’s voice rang out, steady and resolute.

“Stephen, have you lost your mind too?” Wendy’s frustration boiled over. “Reclaiming your place as a White in Cloverhill? That’s a death wish!”

But Stephen’s eyes remained firm, his conviction unshaken. “I believe in her.” He glanced at Janice, a faint smile curving his lips. “I’ve been hiding for so many years. But I refuse to live like that any longer. Every night, revenge burns in my chest, but the Welch family’s power kept me caged. Now, finally, there’s a chance—I won’t let it slip away, no matter the cost. This isn’t just for me—it’s for the hundred-plus members of the White family who were slaughtered.”

Wendy studied Stephen, her expression unreadable. The man standing before her had to be out of his mind. But when she looked at Janice and Aiden, both calm and composed, she felt that perhaps the seemingly invincible Welch family wasn’t so unbeatable after all.

"If you're all set on this path, then count me in on the madness too," she declared.

"Stephen..."

"Wendy, don't bother trying to talk me out of it," Wendy interjected, shaking her head, her eyes fierce with resolve. "You've made your choice. Do you really think I'd just walk away? Even if the road ahead is drenched in blood, I'll walk it with you. Besides, destruction is in my nature. I'm a weapon made for war."

Stephen's chest tightened, and without thinking, he pulled Wendy into his arms. "Maybe that's who you were before, but now, you're not just a weapon—you're my queen."

"Oh my goodness! Aiden, let's go!" Janice groaned, turning away, unable to stomach the two love-struck fools any longer.

Amused by her reaction, Aiden smirked. "We could flaunt our love too, and maybe even outshine them."

Janice shot him a sharp glare. Aiden immediately shut his mouth.

"Next stop, Cloverhill," she declared.

"Yes," Aiden said, a wicked glint in his eyes. "I can't wait to bring the Welch family to their knees and then finally confess to you."

Janice pinched the bridge of her nose. "Stephen is a hopeless romantic, and now you, too? I seriously need to reconsider whether I'll accept your confession when the time comes."

"Janice, do you have any idea what that would mean for me?"

"What?" Janice hesitated under Aiden's piercing gaze, the heat of his presence unsettling her.

Aiden stepped forward, caging her against the wall, his intensity burning hotter. “It means I’ll lose my mind! And when I do, I won’t just shake the Welch family—I’ll shake all of Cloverhill to its core!”

Chapter 943:

Janice’s heart pounded as realization struck her. Like Wendy and Stephen, Aiden was dangerously unhinged.

But maybe, in choosing Aiden, she was embracing her own madness.

The Payne family estate was a breathtaking throwback to yesteryear, a courtyard-style gem that oozed old-world charm.

With roots stretching back centuries, every brick and tile had morphed into a precious keepsake, turning the place into a living, breathing museum of history. In all of Cloverhill, only the Welch family’s estate could hold a candle to its rich legacy—nothing else came close to matching its depth and grandeur.

Right now, Minnie was lounging in the study, thumbing through a management book casually.

She wore a breezy blue dress that floated around her like a whisper, her long hair spilling over her left shoulder in a carefree cascade. Sunlight slipped through the window screen, bathing her rosy cheeks in a warm, golden glow. She was a knockout, plain and simple.

What really set her apart, though, was the polished vibe she carried, honed from years of rubbing elbows with the high and mighty. It wrapped her in an almost heavenly grace, like she had stepped out of a dream.

Just then, a gentle knock echoed from the door.

Minnie snapped her book shut and peeked over at the entrance. There, rolling in with a big, warm grin, was a man in a wheelchair.

He had short hair, a sharp, lean face, and eyes that sparkled with a quiet kindness. But the way he looked at Minnie was full of doting and concern.

This was Oliver Payne, Minnie's big brother.

"Oliver! What's up with the surprise visit?" Minnie's face lit up like a kid on Christmas as she hopped up and scooted over to wheel Oliver inside.

Oliver, comfy in his chair, flashed a small grin. "Just missed you, that's all. I hope I'm not disturbing you."

"No way!" Minnie laughed, shaking her head. "You showing up is the highlight of my day. You're welcome anytime, you know that."

"I'd love to swing by more, but..." Oliver's smile faded a bit as his gaze dropped to his legs, a hint of sourness creeping into his tone. "These darn legs don't exactly cooperate."

Minnie's study was perched on the second floor—a quick jaunt up the stairs for most folks. But for Oliver, it was a mountain he couldn't climb. He had to rely on the staff to haul him up, and his pride wasn't a fan of that plan.

Once upon a time, someone floated the idea of installing an elevator in the house.

But the head of the Payne family wasn't having it, saying they couldn't mess with the home's centuries-old charm just for convenience.

Minnie got it—Oliver's frustration, his feeling of being stuck. She dropped to her knees, resting her hands softly on his legs. "Hey, don't sweat it, Oliver. I've pulled out all the stops to get Master MO here to fix you up. With her magic touch, I bet you'll be back on your feet in no time."

Oliver nodded, a flicker of a smile breaking through. "Minnie, you're the best. Oh, and..."

He reached over and pulled out a little box of goodies, handing it to her. "I had someone buy your favorite mango pudding from that fancy dessert spot. Give it a try!"

“No way, really?” Minnie’s eyes practically danced as she snatched the box like it was treasure. “Oliver, you’re spoiling me rotten! Hang on, I’m gonna brew some coffee to go with it.”

Chapter 944:

“Awesome! It’s been forever since I last sipped on your coffee.” Oliver chuckled, his eyes glowing with fondness as he watched her bounce around. Sure, Minnie was the Payne family’s golden child, but right now, she was just a girl with a sweet tooth.

Before long, Minnie waltzed back in with her prized coffee, like she was unveiling a hidden treasure.

Oliver watched her with a quiet glow in his eyes, totally soaking in the moment. In the glitzy world of high society, Minnie wasn’t just a pretty face—her coffee brewing game was the stuff of legends.

People practically tripped over themselves for a chance to sip her coffee, but she didn’t dish it out to just anyone.

Even family members had to get lucky to score a taste.

Oliver couldn’t help but feel like he had hit the jackpot, savoring coffee Minnie had whipped up just for him.

“Minnie, how did you track down Master MO so fast this time?” Oliver asked, leaning in a little. “Word is, the Welch family hunted high and low for ages before she finally popped up out of the blue.”

At that, Minnie’s hands froze for a split second mid-pour, but she brushed it off with a quick, easy smile. “Dumb luck, honestly. I had just rolled into Efrery and figured I would swing by the Mendoza family’s banquet. Turns out, they picked that exact moment to swear their undying loyalty to Master MO. Talk about perfect timing—I got to meet her on the spot.”

“No kidding?” Oliver’s brow shot up. “After all the dirt the Mendoza family pulled on Master MO, it’s wild that she let bygones be bygones and even took them under her wing. That’s a curveball if I ever saw one. But what’s MO’s angle? From everything I’ve heard, she’s an enigma—always playing her cards close to the chest, never getting too cozy with any group. Now the Mendoza family is trailing after her like loyal pups. Doesn’t that throw her whole lone-wolf vibe out the window?”

Minnie slid a steaming cup of coffee his way before answering. "Master MO's a puzzle wrapped in a mystery. Whatever she's up to, I'm sure she's got her reasons."

Oliver took a slow sip of his coffee, and his face softened like he had just tasted heaven. "This coffee? Out of this world. Minnie, your coffee-brewing skills are as remarkable as ever."

"Glad you're into it! Drink up some more," Minnie said with a grin, already pouring Oliver a refill.

Oliver shut his eyes for a sec, letting the aroma wash over him like a warm hug. Then, out of nowhere, his eyes popped open again, and his voice dropped to a serious note. "I heard the Mendoza family's plotting a comeback to Cloverhill. What is your take on that, Minnie?"

Minnie remained silent, letting the warmth of the coffee roll over her tongue as she took a slow, contemplative sip.

Out of nowhere, a memory surfaced—her visit to the Green family's place, where she had once tasted Nina's brewed coffee. It struck her then—there was a distinct gap between her own coffee and Nina's.

"Minnie?" Oliver frowned, noticing how she had drifted off into her own thoughts.

"Sorry, spaced out for a second. What were you saying, Oliver?"

"The Mendoza family once served under us. When Master MO became a threat, they cut ties and ran off to Efrery—I get why they did it. But now, after swearing loyalty to Master MO, they're planning to return to Cloverhill? That's a slap in the face to our family." Oliver's expression hardened, his voice carrying a sharp edge. "I respect Master MO, but that doesn't mean the Mendoza family can just waltz back in without consequences."

Chapter 945:

"Oliver, Master MO has already agreed to treat your legs. Picking a fight now would be reckless, especially when we're so close to a solution."

“Minnie...”

“Let’s drop this, Oliver.” Minnie placed her cup down, a rare sternness settling over her features. Oliver was unusually chatty today. “Your recovery is the priority, nothing else. Once you’re back on your feet, you can return to the military—everything else can wait.”

Oliver parted his lips to protest, but the unwavering calm in Minnie’s eyes silenced him. “Fine, you win. You’re the future head of the Payne family, after all. You see the bigger picture—I was just overthinking things.”

With that, he tipped back his cup, finishing the coffee in one swift gulp before wheeling himself out of the room.

Minnie watched him go but didn’t call him back. Instead, she took another sip of coffee and ate the mango pudding. Yet despite the rich sweetness, the pudding couldn’t quite bring back the smile that had slipped from her lips.

Just then, her phone buzzed, slicing through the quiet.

A quick glance at the caller ID made her brow arch slightly before she picked up.

“Tricia, any news?”

Tricia’s voice filtered through the speaker. “Minnie, I just got word—Master MO is already en route to Cloverhill.”

Minnie gave a firm nod. “This time, you’ll be the one to receive Master MO. Make sure everything is done to the highest standard—no room for errors.”

Tricia’s voice held a note of confusion. “Minnie, isn’t this a bit much? Master MO is important, sure, but I’m still a direct Payne. Sending the butler should be more than enough!”

“Tricia, we’re the ones seeking Master MO’s help. If we don’t show the proper respect, how can we prove the Payne family’s sincerity? If circumstances allowed, I’d be at the airport myself.”

“What?” Tricia froze, momentarily caught off guard. She already found her own presence excessive, but the thought that Minnie had considered going herself was simply unfathomable.

“Tricia, can I count on you for this?”

Tricia shook off her surprise and sighed inwardly. Minnie had given her this responsibility—there was no choice but to do it right. “Don’t worry. I’ll handle it flawlessly.”

Pleased with Tricia’s response, Minnie ended the call and took another slow bite of her mango pudding. At last, a faint smile curved her lips.

A blend of anticipation and unease settled in her chest.

She now knew that Janice wasn’t just Master MO—she was also JE. That revelation alone was enough to send shockwaves through Cloverhill’s elite circles.

She was certain that once the Welch family uncovered Janice’s dual identities, they would think twice before daring to challenge someone of such formidable stature.

But none of that mattered as much as one question—would Aiden be there? She had already uncovered the truth: the man she once knew as Peter had been Aiden all along.

The enigmatic figure who had saved her on White Goose Mountain had been Aiden in disguise.

Recalling Aiden’s demeanor and appearance brought a slight smile to Minnie’s lips, her gaze growing warmer.

Chapter 946:

At Cloverhill Airport, Tricia stood poised in the arrivals hall, her entourage flanking her as she cast occasional glances towards the exit.

The terminal buzzed with movement, a gathering of wealth and influence. But as eyes landed on Tricia, whispers spread—some recognized her, their astonishment clear.

“Isn’t that Tricia Payne? A direct heir of the Payne family? What’s she doing here? Who could be important enough to warrant her presence?”

“Whoever they are, their status must be exceptional to draw this level of attention. Could it be a high-ranking figure from another city?”

Murmurs rippled through the crowd, curiosity growing with every passing second.

Anyone commanding such deference from the Payne family had to be a figure of formidable stature. Intrigue crackled through the crowd, and many lingered, eager to steal a glance at the enigmatic guest.

Just then, a group stepped through the domestic arrivals gate.

Tricia’s eyes sharpened as she instantly recognized the leading figures—Sierra and Nellie, flanked by a team of bodyguards.

“Sierra, Nellie, welcome.” Tricia stepped forward, her smile polished, though she kept her hands at her sides.

“Tricia, we truly appreciate the effort you’ve made to pick us up,” Nellie said, reaching out for a handshake.

But Tricia barely acknowledged the gesture, her eyes drifting past Nellie and Sierra, searching. “Where is Janice?”

“Janice didn’t come with us.” Nellie narrowed her eyes slightly and pulled back her hand smoothly, a fleeting glint flashing across her gaze. “By now, she’s probably already at the Paynes’.”

“What?” Tricia gasped in disbelief. “Are you telling me she is already heading to the Paynes’?”

“Yes!” Nellie confirmed with a smile. “If you have other commitments, don’t worry about us. My sister and I can take care of the accommodations ourselves.”

Tricia’s brows knitted, irritation creeping in.

Was Janice deliberately keeping her distance?

She, a distinguished member of the Payne family, had taken the time to personally welcome them at the airport. Yet Janice had completely ignored her, choosing to go to the Paynes’ alone while leaving Nellie and Sierra to entertain her. How arrogant!

“Hold on, I need to make a call.” Tricia moved aside and quickly dialed Minnie to report what had happened.

Minnie’s response was simple—she instructed Tricia to extend proper hospitality to Nellie and Sierra.

“Minnie, what’s going on here?” Tricia grumbled. “We’ve shown her every courtesy, yet she couldn’t care less.”

Minnie’s voice remained calm. “Looks like I unknowingly offended Janice.”

“What?”

“I should have gone to the airport myself.”

“Minnie, is that really necessary? You’re the Payne family’s future leader, while Janice is just a surgeon. No matter how talented she is, she doesn’t warrant such an honor.”

Minnie smirked, lazily swirling the cup in her hand. “Janice isn’t just MO—she’s also JE, founder of the JE Consortium.”

Chapter 947:

“What?” Tricia stood frozen, completely dumbfounded.

She had certainly heard of JE’s legendary status—someone who built a vast business empire in their twenties and wielded substantial influence on a global scale. But it had never crossed her mind that Janice and JE were the same person.

With both identities—MO and JE—Janice had the power to exert serious influence over Cloverhill.

“Do you still think Janice isn’t worthy?” Minnie sighed, shaking her head. “This was my mistake. I assumed she’d need the Payne family’s support in Cloverhill, so I placed myself above her and sent you in my place.”

In the end, Janice hadn’t even deemed the Payne family worthy of her notice. After all, it was the Payne family that sought Janice’s expertise to treat Oliver’s legs in the first place.

The Payne family had already upset Janice the moment she arrived in Cloverhill. If they kept this up, any hope of future collaboration could slip through their fingers.

“Tricia, ensure that Sierra and Nellie are treated with the utmost hospitality. Even if Janice isn’t here in person, they must still receive the same level of respect.”

Tricia cast a glance at Nellie and Sierra, her reluctance evident.

The two women were merely from the now-defunct Ramirez family. Their current prestige stemmed solely from their ties to Janice, so why did they deserve such special treatment?

“Tricia, did you hear what I said?”

“Alright.”

Noticing Tricia’s hesitation, Minnie spoke firmly. “This isn’t just about courtesy—it’s about whether the Payne family can secure a partnership with Janice. You cannot afford to mess this up.”

Left with no choice under Minnie’s firm stance, Tricia sighed in resignation and agreed to extend proper hospitality to Nellie and Sierra.

Meanwhile, Nellie and Sierra were engaged in quiet conversation.

“Nellie, why do you think Janice sent us to meet with the Paynes?” Sierra asked, curiosity sparked by the unusual circumstances.

Having encountered many different types of people, Nellie quickly grasped the underlying dynamics. “Janice foresaw that the Payne family might underestimate her, so she sent us to rein in their arrogance.”

“Huh? But they seem polite,” Sierra said, blinking in confusion. To her, Tricia’s presence alone felt like a gesture of respect.

Remembering how Tricia had blatantly ignored her handshake earlier, Nellie smirked coldly. “The Paynes are shrewd players. Had Janice met Tricia, the Payne family would have taken the...”

The upper hand, believing themselves to be above her in status. That would have given them leverage to dictate the terms of the negotiations.

Sierra’s eyes lit up in sudden realization. “Janice is incredibly smart.”

Nellie tousled Sierra's hair with a fond smile. "How else do you think Janice built JE Consortium from the ground up?"

A flicker of admiration passed through her eyes. She remembered a time when she had foolishly believed she could rival Janice—what naive arrogance. Janice had probably never even viewed her as competition.

"Tricia is back." Sierra was about to say something to her sister when she noticed Tricia approaching after finishing her call.

Chapter 948:

"I'll be personally overseeing your itinerary. If you need anything or require assistance, don't hesitate to ask," Tricia assured.

"Actually, there are two matters where we could use your help," Nellie stated.

"Of course. What do you need?"

Nellie handed a list to Tricia. "We need these items procured immediately. Cost is irrelevant—speed is what matters most."

Tricia's eyes widened as she scanned the list. "You..."

"We're moving into Cloverhill, and we're serious about this. But if this is too much to ask..."

"Not a problem at all." Tricia flashed a confident smile and passed the list to an aide. "Get everything on this list. No errors."

"Understood!"

"Tricia, we truly appreciate it. Shall we proceed to the house in the city center now?"

Tricia's lips curled slightly as she remembered Janice had taken possession of this house from the Welch family.

At the time, news of it had sent shockwaves through Cloverhill's elite circles.

For years, the Welch family had remained undefeated, yet now they had not only faced a crushing loss but had also been forced to surrender such a significant house to their opponent. It was, without a doubt, the most humiliating blow they had ever suffered.

A Rolls-Royce glided smoothly down the bustling avenue.

Janice scrolled through her phone, typing a response to Nellie. She had already been updated on the airport situation.

"Minnie sure doesn't waste time."

"Janice, can we really trust Minnie?" Aiden asked, a trace of concern in his voice. "She's definitely more than she lets on."

Janice tucked her phone away and gave a teasing smile. "Aiden, you almost sound like you know her personally."

Aiden blinked, then tapped Janice's forehead lightly. "I'm serious here."

"Just messing with you." Janice rubbed her forehead before her expression turned cold. "If Minnie lacked real ability, do you think she could have taken down the Welch family like she did?"

"Do you think she could singlehandedly run the entire Payne family?" Aiden asked, his suspicion growing. "While rumors suggest that she is merely the Payne family's future leader, Prescott's investigation uncovered that Minnie has already seized control of the majority of the family's power. To put it plainly, she's the one calling the shots now."

Aiden arched a brow, his suspicion deepening—Minnie was anything but ordinary. “The Payne family sure doesn’t follow the usual playbook. Most families pass the position of head to a man, yet they’ve handed it over to a woman. If there were no men in the Payne family, it would make sense. But Minnie has an older brother. Though he was in an accident years ago that left him confined to a wheelchair, his mind remains as sharp as ever.”

“Hold on a second!” Janice lifted a hand, cutting Aiden off. “Why does this whole situation feel oddly familiar?” She shot Aiden a playful look, mischief twinkling in her eyes.

Aiden exhaled dramatically and rolled his eyes. “Are you seriously comparing this to what I went through these past three years?”

Janice gave an affirming nod.

Chapter 949:

“Are you implying that Oliver is faking his disability?” Aiden furrowed his brows. “From what I’ve heard, Oliver and Minnie are close—some even claim he’s fiercely protective of her. When I faked being disabled, my goal was to draw out hidden enemies. But if Oliver’s doing the same, what exactly is he trying to uncover?”

The Payne family was known for its unity, with little to no internal conflict, and Minnie was well-loved by all. The notion that Oliver would fake his disability just to seize power didn’t quite add up.

“Real or not, we’ll know soon enough,” said Janice.

Aiden nodded. With Janice—an expert surgeon—on the case, the truth wouldn’t stay hidden for long.

“Liliana, how much time until we get there?” Janice asked.

This time, Liliana was the one accompanying Janice, taking the wheel herself. Initially, Braylen or Costello was meant to drive, but with other responsibilities keeping them busy, Liliana took over.

“Just five more minutes.”

“Got it.” Janice pulled out her phone, tapping out a message to Minnie. Minnie’s eyes narrowed the moment she saw the message. Wasting no time, she dialed her parents with urgency.

“Minnie? What’s the matter?”

“Dad, you and Mom must return home within five minutes.”

“What?” Walter Payne raised a brow, surprised. There was an unusual urgency in Minnie’s voice.

Ever since Minnie took charge of the family’s affairs, she had rarely shown such emotion. The shift in her tone put him on edge. “In five minutes, Master MO will be at our estate.”

“I thought this was urgent. Can’t you just handle Master MO’s arrival as usual?” Walter saw no issue—no matter how important Master MO was, Minnie’s presence as host should have been enough.

They had initially arranged to welcome Master MO today, allowing her to get accustomed to the city’s surroundings before scheduling Oliver’s consultation for the following day. However, her unexpected arrival at their family estate ahead of time came across as rather discourteous.

“Dad, this isn’t playing out as I expected,” Minnie said, her voice steady. “Master MO has likely seen through our plans, which explains the sudden visit. If we don’t show absolute sincerity, we might lose the chance to negotiate future cooperation.”

A Rolls-Royce glided to a stop outside the Payne family’s estate.

Janice cast a quick glance at Aiden and offered a charming smile. “Stay put for now. I’ll give you the signal when it’s time.”

“What kind of scheme are you plotting now?” Aiden grumbled, a trace of irritation in his voice. Yet, despite his complaint, he stayed in the car as instructed.

As she stepped out, Janice took in the sight of the estate.

Its weathered elegance held a timeless allure, its sprawling courtyard whispering stories of the past.

The worn-out marks and slight damages didn't diminish its grandeur; rather, they added layers of history, making it feel like stepping through a portal to the past.

"Welcome, Janice."

A smooth, pleasant voice snapped Janice out of her thoughts.

The massive doors swung open, revealing Minnie, draped in an elegant black retro gown, exuding an almost ethereal grace.

Chapter 950:

Janice arched an eyebrow, instantly noting Minnie's carefully chosen attire. Clearly, she had dressed to impress, projecting both sincerity and a newfound maturity.

"Minnie, how gracious of you," Janice said with a cool smile. "You greeting me in person is quite the honor.

There was no need—you could have simply sent someone in your place." The tension in the air was palpable from the outset.

Minnie remained poised, her demeanor unwavering. "Janice, the honor is mine. I had other obligations earlier, so I asked Tricia to meet you at the airport in my stead.

I hadn't anticipated you would come straight here. It seems we failed to welcome you appropriately, and for that, I sincerely apologize." She offered a slight bow.

Janice was genuinely taken aback by her composure. With the Payne family's prestige, arrogance would have been expected. But Minnie's humility and composure set her apart—qualities befitting the next leader of the Payne legacy.

"Minnie, you flatter me," Janice said with a slight smile, her tone easing. "If anything, my sudden visit is what's impolite. I only just arrived in Cloverhill, and with so much to handle, I thought it best to come straight here and help you sort out your concerns."

"That's quite thoughtful of you, Janice." Minnie hesitated briefly before asking, "By the way, did you come here alone?"

Janice arched a brow, easily catching the hidden meaning in Minnie's words. However, before she could answer, several figures emerged from within the estate.

"Minnie, why are you lingering out here? Quickly, bring Master MO inside." Walter walked out with his wife, Jayleen Payne. Even in his fifties, his square-jawed features and commanding presence radiated energy. "Master MO is our esteemed guest. Your brother's chances of walking again rest solely in her hands, so we must show her the utmost respect."

"You're absolutely right, Dad! Master MO deserves our gratitude, so I've prepared a small token of appreciation," Minnie declared, clapping her hands.

At her cue, the butler stepped forward, carrying a box.

Janice eyed the box with mild surprise—Minnie's swiftness and decisiveness were commendable. Aware of her earlier displeasure, Minnie had deftly arranged this welcome, involving her parents and offering a gift, making her feel slightly abashed.

"Master MO, have a look. I hope it pleases you," Walter said.

Without overthinking, Janice accepted the box, flipping it open to reveal a solid gold scalpel, her name elegantly engraved on its surface. This wasn't a hastily put-together offering—it had been carefully prepared in advance.

"I love it," Janice said with an approving glance at Minnie, accepting the gift without hesitation.

Minnie and Walter shared a knowing glance—Janice's acceptance meant she had let go of their past slight.

"Master MO, do come inside," Walter said, motioning toward the entrance.

"Of course." Janice turned slightly and called out, "Aiden, come join us." At her cue, Aiden pushed open the car door and stepped out, his tall frame emanating an air of quiet authority.

The instant Minnie laid eyes on Aiden, her heart skipped a beat, eyes gleaming with intrigue.

Was this the second time her heart had betrayed her like this?

The first had been at White Goose Mountain—when Aiden had come to her rescue.