

Wrath 991

Chapter 991:

Mateo's lips twisted into a sadistic smile as the video loaded.

"Ms. Edwards, or should I say, Ms. White? Please accept my gift."

Without warning, the massive screen flickered to life, seizing everyone's attention. Faces twisted in fury as the screen displayed the orphanage, flames licking hungrily at its fragile remains.

Janice's fists tightened, her knuckles turning white as bloodshot eyes locked onto the horrific scene.

Memories of the orphanage surged through her, the home she once cherished now reduced to a battlefield of flames and despair.

Glenn, Freddy...

Their familiar faces flickered through her mind, each one a stone sinking deeper into her chest.

The thought of them trapped inside, suffering in the blaze, was unbearable.

"Mateo, I swear—you'll pay for this!!"

Out of nowhere, masked figures clad in black closed in, surrounding the Welch family.

Janice pivoted sharply, her gaze ablaze with murderous fury, sending a chill down the spines of those around her.

In that instant, she was no longer human—she was a predator, a storm of raw, violent energy.

For a fleeting second, Mateo felt a jolt of unease under her glare, but he forced it down just as quickly.

“You look furious, but so helpless,” Mateo mocked. “You stormed into Cloverhill to flaunt your power, but did you ever stop to wonder what was happening back home? Look at yourself—pathetic, powerless. How ironic.”

The Welch family burst into arrogant laughter, as if their prior humiliation had been wiped away in an instant.

They sneered at Janice. “Weren’t you so high and mighty? Now that your childhood home is in flames, where’s that arrogance of yours?”

“Mateo, are you out of your mind? Arson and murder—do you even realize what you’ve done?” Kern stepped forward, his voice sharp with outrage. “This is a serious crime!”

“Mr. Haywood, you’re mistaken,” Mateo feigned innocence with a casual shrug. “I merely recorded a video for Ms. White. How could I possibly know what happened?”

“You...”

A shadow crossed Mateo’s eyes as he spoke in a low, measured tone. “I’d think twice before stepping into this deadly game. We wiped out the White family once before, and trust me—we can do it again. Don’t you dare forget how we crushed you back then.”

Kern’s expression hardened, the weight of past failures striking him like an unforgiving tide.

Guilt and shame crashed over him like relentless waves, eroding his resolve. But what choice did he have?

Though he held the title of Cloverhill’s governor, there were forces far greater than him pulling the strings.

He was nothing more than a figurehead, a puppet executing orders for the true power players.

Chapter 992:

“The Payne family will get to the bottom of this.” Minnie took a step forward, her eyes as cold as frost as she locked onto Mateo. “If it’s proven that the Welch family is behind this arson, the Payne family will take decisive action to make sure you face the consequences.”

“I appreciate your concern.” Janice suddenly shut her eyes, the fury in them dimming—only to be replaced by an eerie, unsettling calm. Even in her silence, an undeniable force radiated from her—icy and commanding, like a finely honed blade finally unsheathed.

Janice advanced towards Mateo, her loyal fighters flanking her.

Gasps rippled through the crowd, eyes widening in disbelief. Was she truly about to strike? With Kern, Minnie, and a host of powerful elites watching, any misstep could land Janice right where the Welch family wanted her—caught in their carefully laid trap.

“Janice...”

Stephen, sensing the rising tension, moved to step in, but Wendy caught his arm, stopping him.

“Wendy, this is a trap set by the Welch family. I can’t just stand by and watch Janice walk into it,” Stephen said, worry creeping into his voice.

“Stephen, don’t lose your head.” Wendy squinted at him, her voice dropping to a measured hush. “Janice isn’t as fragile as you think.”

Stephen glanced at Aiden, expecting some kind of reaction, but Aiden remained still, his expression eerily composed.

Did that mean Janice was still in control? That she wasn’t about to make a reckless move?

“Ms. White, are you really planning to exterminate my family now?” Mateo sneered, casting a disdainful glance at the approaching fighters. “Your men certainly have the presence of seasoned killers, but do you dare? In front of all these people? Touch me, and the White family will be reduced to ruins again. Just like before.”

Janice tilted her head slightly, regarding him with unsettling calm. “I expected more from a family with centuries of legacy. But it turns out, you’re only capable of underhanded tactics. How disappointing.”

Mateo scrunched his face. Just moments ago, Janice had been burning with fury, ready to rip him apart.

But now, that fire had vanished, replaced by something far more unsettling—a stillness that sent a chill down his spine.

Before he could respond, Janice reached into her pocket, pulled out her phone, and made a single call. “Wipe Prowess Corporation off the map. One hour.”

“Janice White, what the hell are you doing?”

Calvin lunged forward, but two fighters stepped into his path, blocking his way.

Prowess Corporation—the company he and Jensen had painstakingly built overseas, the foundation of the Welch family’s international empire. Years of resources, influence, and power had been funneled into it, and now it was all hanging by a thread.

Janice threatened to bring it all crashing down with just a single phone call.

Her gaze flicked towards him, her voice smooth, devoid of emotion. “Domestically, my hands are tied. But overseas? That’s my playground.”

“You bitch! I’ll kill you!” Calvin roared, struggling against the hands restraining him. Jensen didn’t waste time with words. His fist shot forward, aiming straight for Janice’s face.

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However, she didn't dodge or even bother to look at him. A fighter stepped in, intercepting the punch with his own.

A sickening crack shattered the air.

The crowd recoiled.

The impact should have sent the fighter reeling, yet he stood firm. His arm, grotesquely twisted, hung limp at his side—broken. But his eyes, sharp and unwavering, never left Jensen's.

Unnerved, Jensen instinctively took a step back. He'd faced countless opponents, but never someone like this—someone who ignored pain, stared death in the face, and dared it to come closer.

A slow, knowing smile curled on Wendy's lips. The cold glint in her eyes flickered like a blade catching the light.

She had spent years sharpening these men into weapons, waiting for the right moment to unleash them. Now, that moment had arrived.

"Tsk." Jensen clicked his tongue in irritation. Without hesitation, he charged again.

This time, however, three fighters moved to meet him.

"Jensen, come back!" Mateo could feel something ominous in the air, a sense of dread tightening around him. But his warning was too late. Jensen, hot-blooded and headstrong, was already charging ahead, fists swinging with reckless abandon.

His punch landed squarely on one fighter's chest—only for the man to take it without so much as a flinch.

Before he could react, two more opponents surged in from either side, seizing his arms in an iron grip.

Panic hit him like a punch to the gut. His breath hitched. He thrashed, desperate to shake them off.

But their hold was merciless.

A heartbeat later, Jensen's scream tore through the air.

Gasps rippled through the crowd as his arms fell limp at his sides—useless and broken.

“Holy hell! They actually snapped his arms!”

“They're like machines—no hesitation, no fear, just following orders.”

For the first time, the crowd truly grasped the ruthless precision of Janice's tactics.

She wasn't just dangerous—she was a strategist. Even after suffering a great tragedy, she had gathered herself with terrifying efficiency. Now, with Mateo's provocation hanging in the air, she remained utterly unmoved, watching her commands unfold with clinical detachment.

Kern frowned at the savage display, yet he said nothing. A grim satisfaction stirred within him.

Hadn't Mateo just told him to stay out of this mess? Fine, then. He would simply sit back and watch.

Minnie caught his gaze, and a subtle nod passed between them. They would let this play out.

The Welch family had basked in arrogance for too long. It was about time they tasted real loss. And if Janice wasn't given room to vent, with the power she wielded, Cloverhill would be in flames by sunrise.

“Jensen!” Mateo's voice cracked with anguish as he rushed forward, ordering his men to pull Jensen back.

Chapter 994:

The fighters didn't pursue. They merely stepped back into formation, their cold stares locked onto the Welch family.

And there, at the center of it all, stood Janice. Not just a woman—a commander. She had set the rules. And tonight, the villains would pay their dues.

Calvin's phone buzzed sharply, slicing through his grief and fury like a blade. "What? A group of unknown assailants attacked the company, and the losses are massive?"

Calvin's gaze snapped to Janice, burning with fury. His hand clenched around his phone, his entire body shaking with barely contained rage.

Through the receiver, the chaos was deafening—agonized cries, relentless gunfire, and the distant boom of explosions. Guns and ammunition were tightly controlled here, but overseas? That was a different battlefield—one where power dictated the rules, and anything was possible.

The JE Consortium held the power to summon an army at will. With enough money, they could turn entire legions of mercenaries into their personal weapons.

Mateo clenched his jaw, his voice laced with venom. "Janice, did you really have to push it this far?"

Janice arched a brow, a chilling laugh escaping her lips. "Do you even hear yourself? Who torched the Generous Lives Orphanage? Who annihilated the White family in a single night? And now you dare talk about going too far? The audacity."

Mateo narrowed his eyes, drawing in a slow, deep breath, struggling to rein in the storm of rage brewing within him. "Looks like the White family and the Welch family are on a direct collision course. Are you certain you can handle the full fury of the Welch family? I'll give you credit—you hold sway overseas. But here? This is the Welch family's turf."

A slow, dangerous smile stretched across Janice's lips as she made a call. "Prescott, shut down every single one of the Welch family's online industries. I want them dead in the water."

Mateo's breath hitched, his pupils dilating in shock. Did she just say she was going to cripple all of the Welch family's online industries?

The Welch family's empire was rooted in traditional industries, but to stay ahead, they had ventured deep into the digital world. Their business secrets were locked behind a fortress of elite cybersecurity—one they had spent a fortune fortifying.

Hearing Janice's bold claim, Mateo burst into laughter, shaking his head in mock amusement. "Are you serious? You think a few words from you can bring down the Welch family's empire? Please. We have the best cybersecurity experts in the world. Not even the top hackers could touch us."

Janice didn't waste her breath. With a few swift taps on her phone, a dynamic data feed flickered to life on the massive screen.

Gasps echoed through the hall. The screen displayed the entire structure of the Welch family's industries, with multiple sectors highlighted in red—marked for attack.

"Nice try, but you won't fool us with a few flashy numbers." Even though the sight of such confidential data rattled him, Mateo held firm in his belief that his security team could hold the line.

Unmoved by his bravado, Janice simply gave the order. "Do it."

In the blink of an eye, the red-marked sectors on the screen went dark, a chilling confirmation that every targeted industry had been breached.

"No way! The Welch family's entire network just got taken down?"

"Cut all ties with their businesses—now! We can't afford to get caught in the crossfire!"

Chapter 995:

A wave of panic rippled through the room as businesses linked to the Welch family scrambled to sever connections. Without a second thought, they ordered their security teams to sever all digital ties with the Welch family. After all, in their bid to stay in the family's good graces, they had once intertwined their systems, forging a deep web of data exchange. Now, driven by self-preservation, they cast aside any fear of offending the Welch family and wasted no time in cutting all ties.

"No way! This has to be some kind of trick." Calvin gritted his teeth. "There's no way our cybersecurity team could..."

Before he could finish, the head of cybersecurity burst in, panic etched across his face. "It's bad! Our firewall has been breached! We can't hold them off—tons of confidential files have already been leaked!"

"What?" Mateo's face drained of color as he glared at Janice. "This can't be happening! Our cybersecurity team has over a hundred experts! How could they fail against a single hacker? Even the top ten hackers in the world wouldn't stand a chance against our defenses!"

"Who told you there was only one hacker?" Janice's voice was eerily calm. "You're right—one hacker alone wouldn't be enough to break your security. But what if I brought in all ten of the world's top hackers?"

"What?" Mateo's legs wobbled, and he nearly lost his balance.

A terrifying realization struck him—Queen, the top-ranked hacker, was closely aligned with JE. If she called, the entire hacker elite would answer.

He had gravely misjudged Janice. Her influence was far beyond anything he had anticipated.

One by one, the Welch family's businesses on the screen fell to the hackers. With no other option to contain the damage, they were forced to pull the plug on all internet connections.

But this decision came at a devastating cost—losses that would easily surpass ten billion, possibly far more. Beyond the financial devastation, a family rooted in Cloverhill for generations now faced an even graver blow—their authority had been brazenly defied.

“This is only the beginning.” Janice took a slow step forward, her gaze locking onto Mateo’s with chilling intensity. “Piece by piece, I’ll tear down the Welch family, leaving nothing behind—not a shred of what you hold dear.”

Mateo’s face went deathly pale. He couldn’t even meet Janice’s gaze as a terrifying thought slithered into his mind.

Just what kind of monster had the Welch family provoked?

“Starting today, the White family will establish itself in Cloverhill. The Welch family is our sworn enemy. Wherever they set their sights, we will be right there, locking horns with them.” Janice’s sharp gaze traveled across the hall, sizing up everyone in attendance. “Allies are welcome, but those tied to the Welch family? Consider yourselves adversaries.”

Her words struck like a thunderclap, leaving the entire hall in stunned silence.

Many had long-standing ties with the Welch family, but now, the weight of Janice’s words forced them to rethink their allegiances.

Janice’s show of dominance was both ruthless and commanding, cutting off any chance for the Welch family to regain their footing. The White family might have been newcomers to Cloverhill, but their roots stretched back two decades. And with Janice’s formidable reputation, they now cast a longer shadow than even the Welch family.

The JE Consortium’s base was overseas, but wealth like theirs knew no borders. With their immense wealth, the White family had free rein in Cloverhill, unhindered in any venture that required money. When it came to competing with the Welch family for resources, hesitation was never an option.

Chapter 996:

“On behalf of the Payne family, I declare our full allegiance to the White family,” Minnie stated, her gaze unwavering. “The Welch family is now our sworn enemy, and this war will not end until one side is destroyed.”

Gasps and murmurs rippled through the crowd, shattering the tense silence. No one had anticipated Minnie to openly wage war against the Welch family with such bold conviction.

The Payne and Welch families had been at odds for years, but until now, their rivalry had always been confined to the shadows. But with the Payne family’s open declaration, the conflict had reached a point of no return. A final reckoning was now unavoidable.

“The royal family of Aerith stands with the White family as well.”

“Cherriton pledges its support too, backing the White family with a billion-dollar partnership.”

With Lancelot and the Cherriton envoy voicing their support, Janice’s influence surged to an unprecedented level.

Kenneth hesitated, uncertainty flickering in his eyes. For the first time, he felt like an outsider in a game far bigger than himself. The urge to claim his rightful position as head of the Delgado family burned hotter—only then could he stand beside Janice without hesitation.

Seeing the tide shift, the wavering parties made their choice. With two powerful factions against one, the Welch family was now the lone underdog in a battle they might not survive.

“Welch, leave. Now.” Janice didn’t bother with pleasantries as she gave the Welch family their marching orders. “Oh, and when I say leave, I mean get out of the Eternity Building. A family like yours has no right to hold a celebration here.”

Mateo’s face drained of color. Since taking control of the Welch family, he had never suffered such humiliation. The idea of being thrown out like this had never even crossed his mind.

"If you want compensation, I'll pay double." Janice's tone was ice-cold, indifferent. Yet, to the Welch family, her words cut deeper than any insult.

"We're leaving!" Mateo ground his teeth, unable to stomach the disgrace a second longer. He stormed out, the rest of the Welch family trailing behind him. The onlookers watched in stunned silence as the once-mighty Welch family slunk away in disgrace. It felt surreal.

The Welch family had long ruled Cloverhill with unchecked arrogance, openly enabling Alissa's reckless behavior and stirring other families into displays of dominance. But now, the tables had turned. They were the ones left scrambling.

"Stephen, take care of things. I need some time alone," Janice's exhaustion was plain to see, her gaze vacant. She had held her ground with unwavering resolve, but now, with the Welch family out of sight, the weight of sorrow bore down on her.

"Got it. Leave everything to me." Stephen rested a reassuring hand on her shoulder, his gaze filled with quiet concern.

His eyes flicked to Alden. If anyone could reach Janice in this moment, it was him.

Stephen led Wendy to mingle with the guests. They quickly noticed how those who once sneered at the White family now wore forced smiles, their attitudes shifting into eager flattery in the presence of overwhelming power.

Janice withdrew to a dimly lit room, curling into herself as faint tremors racked her body. She fought to keep her sorrow at bay, but in the stillness, it crashed over her like a relentless tide.

Glenn, Freddy, and every child from the orphanage filled her mind—smiling faces from the past, bright yet unbearably heavy, pressing down on her chest like a weight she couldn't lift.

Chapter 997:

"Janice." Aiden stepped closer, taking in the sight of her frail silhouette before letting out a quiet sigh. "I'm sorry."

Janice was slightly startled, turning to look at Aiden. “Why are you apologizing?”

“I couldn’t save the orphanage.” Aiden knelt beside her, wrapping her in a gentle embrace. “It all happened so fast; all I could do was make sure the children were safe.”

“What did you just say?” Janice froze, her eyes widening in disbelief. “You saved the children?”

Aiden gave a small smile, pulling out his phone. A voice crackled through the speaker. “Janice? Is that you?”

That familiar voice washed over Janice, easing the pain lodged deep within her heart. “Glenn!”

Ten minutes ago, flames roared to life, clawing at the sky and casting an eerie crimson glow over the darkness.

Gilmore stood watching, his gaze devoid of sympathy—only icy indifference and merciless intent remained.

“Those White family bastards must be reeling from this surprise,” he mused, a smirk playing on his lips.

Suddenly, Gilmore’s brows knitted together, confusion flashing across his face. “Why the silence?”

The driver hesitated for a split second before signaling the men ahead to investigate.

The fire had only been raging for a few minutes, yet the desperate screams inside had fallen silent far too quickly, as if snuffed out by something unseen. Ever the cautious man, Gilmore gestured for someone to check the situation, making sure nothing had gone wrong.

At that moment, the man who had gone in to investigate was hurled out, slamming into a wall with bone-crunching force.

“Drive! Now!” Gilmore didn’t waste a second. “Step on it!”

The driver, his most trusted man, grasped the urgency and floored the gas, speeding away without a second thought.

The moment Gilmore’s car vanished into the night, a group of figures slipped out of the orphanage, closing in on the arsonists like hunters circling prey.

“Who the hell are you? Do you have any idea who you’re messing with?” one of the arsonists bellowed, hoping to scare off the enemies. The only answer he got was the cold gleam of a knife catching the dim light.

A wet, sickening sound filled the air. The arsonist’s hand flew to his throat, but no amount of pressure could stop the crimson flood. He crumpled to the ground, twitching.

The remaining arsonists stood frozen, horror widening their eyes. They had expected resistance, but this was outright slaughter.

A figure strode forward, backlit by the flames, her silhouette sharp and deadly. The mastermind was no hulking brute but a woman—lean, poised, and terrifying. Long black hair pulled into a high ponytail, clad in a fitted leather jacket, she carried herself with an authority that sent a chill through their bones. But it was her eyes—dark, merciless—that made their stomachs twist in fear.

“Leave no one breathing.”

“Understood!”

At her word, her subordinates moved like shadows, swift and merciless. The arsonists barely had time to register what was happening before their throats were slit, silencing them forever.

Chapter 998:

Her gaze followed the path Gilmore had escaped, a cold glint flashing in her eyes. Without hesitation, she pulled out her phone and fired off a message to Aiden.

As soon as Aiden saw the message, a wave of relief washed over him. Even when the Welch family pulled their outrageous stunt, Aiden had kept his cool. But he wasn't reckless—he had taken precautions, just in case. At first, it had been a hasty decision, an extra layer of security he hadn't expected to need.

He never imagined they would stoop so low as to target the orphanage. Now, he was beyond grateful for that foresight. Without it, he might have carried the weight of this disaster on his conscience forever.

"Janice, the kids and I are safe." Glenn's voice crackled through the phone, weathered with age yet comforting, like a familiar lullaby that instantly put her heart at ease.

"Glenn, what happened?" Janice's voice was tight with emotion.

"Earlier today, Aiden asked me to take the kids and staff to the west suburb. He mentioned plans to build a dream playground for them, so I brought them along. Later, Gerda had to return to grab some documents to finalize the new orphanage location. That's when the fire broke out. If Aiden hadn't sent us here, I don't even want to imagine what could've happened. We owe him everything this time."

Janice turned to Aiden, gratitude shimmering in her gaze. He simply smiled, taking her hands in his, offering silent but steadfast reassurance.

"Glenn, this is my fault. If it weren't for me, the orphanage wouldn't have been targeted." Guilt gnawed at Janice, her heart heavy.

"Janice, don't say that. You've done more for the orphanage than anyone. This fire was the enemy's doing, not yours. The kids and I are safe, so don't worry about us. Focus on what needs to be done. Those bastards won't walk away unpunished."

"I understand." Janice drew in a deep breath, steadying herself. The fire in her eyes burned bright, a quiet storm of resolve.

Aiden could see it—Janice was back in control. And if the Welch family thought they could walk away unscathed, they were gravely mistaken. Janice spoke briefly with Glenn before ending the call, her mind already racing ahead.

Her gaze settled on Aiden, layered with emotions too tangled to name. The intensity of it made him shift slightly, a rare moment of unease creeping in.

“Janice, what’s with that look?” Aiden muttered, a nervous chuckle escaping him.

And then, without warning, she closed the distance and kissed him.

Her lips, soft and cool, sent a jolt through him. His breath hitched, his body going rigid. Yet the fire in her kiss melted away his hesitation, pulling him under. In the dim glow of the room, they lost themselves in each other.

It was a long moment before they finally pulled apart, breathless.

Janice met Aiden’s gaze, her eyes shimmering with unshed tears. “Thank you. Without you, I might have lost myself.”

“I told you—I’ll always be your strongest support.” Aiden cupped her face, his thumb grazing her cheek. “The only regret is the orphanage. If I had been more careful, maybe...”

Janice shook her head firmly. “No, Aiden. You did more than enough. Buildings can be rebuilt. But if even one of them had died... no power in the world could bring them back.”

“How did you see that coming?” Janice asked, curiosity flickering in her eyes. “I was always cautious of the Welch family, but they never touched the orphanage before. I let my guard down.”

“Because I can’t stand seeing you hurt,” Aiden murmured, pressing her hand against his cheek, his gaze heavy with affection. “So I make sure to eliminate any risk, no matter how small.”

Chapter 999:

A tightness formed in Janice's throat, her heart swelling at the depth of his consideration. The man who once stood distant, ruled by logic, now wrapped her in warmth, making her feel truly seen and protected. She had chosen the right man.

"So, shall we return the favor?" Aiden smirked, a dark glint in his eyes, promising retribution.

Janice blinked, then gave a slow, resolute nod. "Absolutely. They had the audacity to come after the people I love. Now, they'll earn what it means to cross me."

What had happened so far was nothing more than a prelude. The true reckoning was yet to come.

Meanwhile, the air was thick with tension as the Welch family's key figures assembled. Their faces were dark with fury, the weight of humiliation pressing down on them.

"How's Jensen?" Mateo asked, his sharp gaze shifting to Calvin.

"He's asleep now. But his hands will need three months to fully recover. No strenuous movement until then."

"Unbelievable!" A fist slammed against the table. "The Whites! How dare they disgrace us like this?"

"Enough, Marcelo. Control yourself." A raspy chuckle followed as an elderly, bald man leaned forward. "The problem here isn't the White family. It's Mateo—his recklessness has cost this family dearly. And now, someone has to answer for it."

His gaze swept over Mateo with thinly veiled contempt. "Honestly, I question whether this family can thrive under your leadership."

"What are you implying, Mr. Dury? We were attacked. Shouldn't we be standing together against outsiders instead of tearing each other apart?" Calvin shot the old man a seething glare.

Mateo lifted a hand, silencing Calvin before shifting his focus to Hughes Dury. “Mr. Dury, you stood beside my father for years. And now, when the family takes a hit, you turn on me? Is that truly fair?” Mateo’s voice was calm, but his gaze darkened. “Or perhaps you’d rather see our family collapse from the inside?”

“I’m demanding accountability for the sake of this family’s stability,” Hughes said icily, drumming his fingers against the table. “Since taking over, you’ve indeed brought benefits to this family, but you’ve caused even greater damage. Frankly, I doubt your leadership. That’s why I intend to initiate an impeachment, using my control over a quarter of the family’s power.”

Gasps rippled through the room. No one had expected Hughes to push for impeachment now.

No one saw it coming—Hughes choosing this moment to push for Mateo’s impeachment. If it went through, Mateo wouldn’t just face humiliation; he’d be stripped of his position as the head of the Welch family.

“You’ve got some nerve,” Mateo sneered, eyes narrowing. “But I doubt anyone here is foolish enough to stand with you.”

“I stand with Mr. Dury,” an elder declared, breaking the silence. “Count me in, too.”

Mateo’s eyes darkened, locking onto the two elders who had sided with Hughes. Betrayal burned in his gaze.

Those three elders collectively held three-quarters of the family’s power—a strategic decision by Orson to maintain balance. But now, they had turned that balance into leverage, using it to force him out.

“Mr. Dury, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Lopez, what is this?” A voice rang out. “We have external threats pressing in! This is when we should be standing together, not turning on each other.”

Chapter 1000:

“That’s right! The White family isn’t playing games—they’ve returned stronger than ever. If we don’t stand as one, they’ll crush us!”

But Hughes, Randall Nixon, and Cason Lopez didn't so much as flinch.

"I know exactly what kind of crisis we're in," Hughes said, his voice icy. "And that's why we need a new leader. If we keep following him, he'll drag the entire Welch family into destruction."

"Exactly! The White family has made it clear—Mateo is their target. Replacing him might be the only way to de-escalate things," Randall added. Uncertainty flickered in the eyes of the gathered family members.

With three-quarters of the family's power in their hands, Hughes, Randall, and Cason had the numbers. Mateo was outmatched. If they pushed forward, he might have no choice but to step down.

Just then, Mateo's phone lit up with an incoming video call.

Mateo glanced at his phone, an amused smirk tugging at his lips.

"Mr. Dury, you may hold the majority, but my father made one thing clear—you need Gilmore's approval to lead this family. Maybe you should hear what he has to say."

Hughes' expression darkened. Orson had granted Gilmore special authority to keep his sons in check. Without Gilmore's endorsement, seizing the position of family head was impossible. If they wanted to remove Mateo, they had no choice but to secure Gilmore's support. Without it, their influence meant nothing.

Mateo's smirk deepened as he leaned back, exuding confidence. "Let's hear the good news from Gilmore, shall we?"

They all knew Gilmore had gone to Efrery to stir up trouble for Janice. They expected this call to confirm their victory.

Mateo cast the video onto the big screen for all to witness.

But the moment Gilmore appeared on screen, everyone's brows furrowed.

"What the..."

Gilmore appeared shaken, his usual composure replaced with raw panic. The way he moved screamed one thing—he was on the run.

"Gilmore, what the hell is going on?"

"The plan was compromised. The fire only took out the building," Gilmore admitted grimly. "Mateo, get me out of here—fast."

Bang!

A gunshot cracked through the call, sending a jolt through everyone in the room.

"Gilmore, are you being hunted? How is this possible?" Mateo's face twisted in disbelief. "We covered our tracks. How did they find out?"

"Janice was more prepared than we thought," Gilmore admitted, his voice tight. That gunshot had rattled him.

Back in Cloverhill, the Welch family ruled. But here in Efrery, against Janice and Aiden's power, Gilmore was just another vulnerable target. He had believed his retreat was swift enough to ensure his safety, but assassins had already closed in from all directions. If not for his driver's razor-sharp reflexes, he would have been dead by now.

"Calvin, get out there and back up your uncle—now!"

"On it!" Calvin bolted from his seat and dashed outside.

At the same time, Mateo barked orders, demanding their contacts in Efrery move to protect Gilmore.

But Efrery wasn't Cloverhill. Every call they made went ignored—none of the local power players were willing to lift a finger for Mateo.