

Impulsive Vow to an Enigmatic Husband Chapter 1051 to 1100

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Chapter 1051

This phrase was like a magic potion. However, it invaded Marcus' heart like poison, leaving him speechless.

Cornelia looked at him, "What's up? Did Zavier upset you again?"

Marcus replied, "I not only ran into Zavier, but also Granger and Cameron. Granger definitely knows about your mom"

Cornelia said, "I've thought about it. But it's been over twenty years. No one can prove that this Clair is not the real Clair, and we can't prove that my mom exists. Trying to find evidence to convict fake Clair and the others is even harder."

Marcus said, "Granger might use the news that your mom is still alive to confuse you. Be careful to discern the truth"

Cornelia grabbed her cell phone from the bedside table and flipped to a message she had just received, "Before you got back, I received a message from Zavier. He told me my mom is still alive"

Marcus glanced at it and said sarcastically. "He sure is quick."

Cornelia said, "I know he's trying to deceive me. I won't fall for it."

Marcus said, "But we can't rule out the possibility that your mom is still alive."

Cornelia said. "The chances of my mom being alive are almost zero."

Marcus asked, "Why are you so certain?"

Cornelia explained, "Because fake Clair is ruthless. She didn't know who I was before, and when I contradicted her in the mall, she held a grudge and planned to frame me at G

ranger's birthday party to force me to leave Riverton. A woman so heartless, how could she let my mom live after taking over her identity?"

Cornelia and Marcus always thought alike.

Marcus knew Cornelia was very smart and could think clearly in any situation. Suddenly, he wasn't so worried. Before, she had lived just fine without him. In the future, without him, with her abilities so strong, she would probably still live well.

Cornelia asked, "What are you daydreaming about again? What's on your mind?"

Marcus said, "I was wondering if you're as sweet as you are talkative."

Cornelia said, "I'm talking serious stuff, and your brain is..."

Before Cornelia could finish, Marcus silenced her with a kiss. She was startled and quickly kicked him. Her period had just started tonight, and she couldn't allow

his recklessness

Marcus then let her go, "I know what to do. Go to sleep!"

Cornelia just stared at him, speechless.

He fell asleep quickly. She, on the other hand, couldn't sleep.

Not only because she had already had a nap, but more importantly because she had noticed Marcus' abnormalities these past few days. Just now, he actually asked her if she had ever thought about leaving Riverton to live somewhere else.

Riverton was his hometown, his birthplace, and the rise of the Hartley family.

Ordinarily, he should want her to stay in Riverton. But he asked her if she wanted to leave and live somewhere else. Cornelia felt that Marcus' unusual behavior must be related to Brennen.

Chapter 1052

Because Marcus started acting weird after he bumped into Brennen. Cornelia was dying to know what Brennen had said to him that day, but no matter how hard she probed, Marcus wouldn't spill the beans.

Cornelia reached out, gently touching his flawless face, "We're married, remember? We promised to tackle everything together. Why won't you tell me what's going on?"

Just as Cornelia was getting all confused, her phone buzzed twice, alerting her to a new message. Picking up her phone, Cornelia discovered a text from an unknown number: [Cornelia, it's me, Skyler"]

She had just mentioned Skyler, and now she got a message from her!

Cornelia quickly texted back [Skyler, how's life treating you?]

Skyler replied [Why aren't you asking where I am?]

Cornelia texted back: [I'm scared my phone's been tapped by Zavier again, so I didn't dare ask]

Skyler responded: [He could've tapped your phone once, but there's no way he could do it a second time. Your husband Marcus would protect you]

Cornelia replied [Can you tell me where you are then? I'm tom. I want to know where you are, but I'm afraid to know]

Skyler replied: [I'm in Riverton. If you're free tomorrow, we can have dinner together]

She was in Riverton! This news made Cornelia both happy and terrified:

[Skyler, when did you come back? How come you dared to come to Riverton, aren't you scared of Zavier finding you? Or do you just not care anymore?]

Skyler responded. [I've actually always been in Riverton]

Cornelia couldn't believe her eyes: [You've been in Riverton all this time? Since when?]

Skyler replied: [Ever since we split up in France, your husband Marcus helped me get back to Riverton. He said the most dangerous place is the safest. Sure enough, Xavier searched everywhere but Riverton.]

Comelia had to admire Marcus: [Marcus is really something. He thinks of everything]

Skyler texted [Cornelia, congrats!]

Cornelia replied: [Congrats for what all of a sudden?]

Skyler responded: [I just found out your husband is Marcus. Congrats for scoring such a gentle, considerate husband who respects you]

Cornelia replied, [I didn't mean to keep it from you guys, I didn't know he was my husband before.]

Skyler responded: I know. I never blamed you for keeping it from me.]

Cornelia texted. [Skyler, where have you been in Riverton these past few months?]

Skyler replied: [The Hartley Group]

Cornelia texted [What did you just say?]

Skyler

responded: [I got a job at the Hartley Group's finance department based on my own skills. I've been working there for several months. Because I spend more time with data than with coworkers, our chances of running into each other are even slimmer]

Cornelia replied: I don't know how to express my feelings now. You and I were working in the same company, and I had no idea.]

Skyler replied: [The Hartley Group has so many employees, and as the CEO's assistant, you're always running around busy with the CEO. It's normal you didn't

notice me

Comelia replied: || need to have a serious talk with you. You were so close to me, why didn't you ever come find me? Don't you miss me at all?]

Skyler responded [Who said I don't miss you? I miss you a lot, but I didn't dare to see you. I could only sneak peeks at you at work. Once, someone thought I was looking at Marcus and that I had a crush on him]

Cornelia replied If you want to see me, you can have your fill tomorrow night. It's late to night, go to bed.]

Skyler responded: [Alright]

Chapter 1053

Comelia was about to put down her phone when another message from Skyler popped up: [Comelia, there's something I'm not sure if I should tell you or not.

Comelia replied. [We're besties, right? What can't you tell me?]

After a while, Skyler sent another message: [I] overhead that Xavier seems to be planning something with Brennert, Granger and others to take down President Hartley]

How did you find out?] Comelia asked.

Skyler answered: I stumbled upon their conversation. They even mentioned using your mom to manipulate you, making it easier for them to go against President Hartley]

[Skyler, thank you for letting me know. I'll be careful not to fall into their trap] Cornelia replied.

Comelia knew she couldn't really help Marcus, but as long as she protected herself and didn't become a pawn for others to attack Marcus, that was helping enough

Skyler added [Comelia, I might quit and leave the Hartley Group tomorrow.]

[Why? Comelia asked.

I crave freedom. I'm tired of dealing with numbers all day. I don't like this monotonous life] Skyler replied.

[Whatever you decide to do, I'm on your side] Comelia responded

[Comelia] Skyler began.

[Skyler, just spit it out. Don't hold back] Cornelia replied.

[Let's call it a night and we can have a good chat after we meet tomorrow night] Skyler suggested.

[Sure] Comelia agreed.

After ending the chat with Skyler, Cornelia found it hard to fall asleep. She thought Marcus had hidden Skyler far away, yet Skyler was actually very close.

As the saying went, the most dangerous place was the safest place. If her mother was still alive, could she be somewhere close too? That thought made Cornelia's

heart race

She sent another message to Xavier [Mr. Rivera, is what you said true?]

After sending the message, Cornelia waited for a long time, but Xavier didn't reply. What she didn't know was that Xavier had already fallen asleep. And by Xavier's bed sat a woman holding Xavier's phone, staring blankly at the new message. This woman was Skyler

Skyler looked at Comelia's message, thought of many possible replies. But in the end she didn't respond. She

gently put Xavier's phone back.

She sat by Xavier's bed, quietly looking at him. She had known Xavier for many years. In the early years of their marriage, she had wanted to have a good life with Xavier. But ev

ery time she tried to make this marriage work, Xavier shattered her dreams. He never treated her as his wife

The more she was disappointed, the colder her heart became. But strangely, after she left, not only did Xavier spend a lot of effort looking for her, he also said he liked her, couldn't live without her

Was this the classic case of not knowing what they have until it was gone?

Skyler wasn't sure what Xavier truly felt, but his feelings weren't important to her. She came this time hoping Xavier would stop, not to fight with Marcus anymore. She knew that once she returned to Xavier's side, she might relive the hellish life.

Chapter 1054

Thinking back to the unbearable hardship she once lived through, Skyler had often thought about running away without letting Xavier know she had been there. However, whenever she thought of Comelia's affection for her and Marcus' help, she just couldn't let it go

Even if the future would be full of challenges, she would not back down. With all sorts of mental preparation, Skyler spent a long night.

As dawn broke, Xavier woke up to see her in front of him. She was staring at him, silently, without saying a word.

Xavier, thinking it was the aftermath of drinking, quickly shut his eyes and shook his head, "God, I must be seeing things."

Skyler just watched his reaction quietly

When Xavier opened his eyes again, the woman in front of him was still there "Am I dreaming?"

Skyler sat up straight, and whispered, "It's me."

Zavier asked, "Who are you?"

Skyler answered, "Skyler"

Zavier said, "Stop bullshitting! Before I lose my temper, you better tell me who asked you to pretend to be Skyler to get close to me. If I find out, you'll regret it."

Skyler scoffed, "Weren't you looking for me? Now that I'm right in front of you, you don't recognize me?"

It was not that Xavier didn't recognize her, he just couldn't believe his own eyes. He thought Skyler would never just come back to him after all the trouble she went through to escape. He must be dreaming.

Skyler remained silent.

Zavier carefully reached out his hand to pinch her face, squeezing hard, "It's not painful, I'm definitely dreaming."

Skyler said, "It's not painful for you, but it is for me."

Zavier had been too rough, and her face was swelling up from his pinch. An angry Skyler pinched Xavier hard in return.

She used a lot of strength, but Xavier didn't feel any pain.

He leaned back against the headboard, rubbing his eyes in disappointment. "I'm definitely still dreaming. You heartless woman, how could you possibly come back

to me?"

Skyler stood up and walked into the hall, returning with a fruit knife in her hand.

Without saying a word, she thrust the knife into Xavier's arm. She stabbed hard, the knife sinking deep into his skin, blood flowing out along the blade.

Zavier finally felt the pain, and looking at the blood flowing out of his body, he became strangely excited, "Skyler? Are you really Skyler? Really you?"

Skyler was much calmer than him, "If you still don't believe me, I don't mind stabbing you again."

Zavier rolled up his sleeve, showing her his bleeding arm, "Go ahead and stab! As long as you're happy, you can stab however you want."

Skyler looked at the man in front of her who seemed to have gone mad, "You're such a freak!"

Ignoring the wound on his arm, Xavier excitedly pulled Skyler into a tight hug. "Skyler you're finally back. Can you tell me, will you always be with me from now on, never leaving me again?"

Skyler stayed still, allowing him to hold her tightly, then said softly, "I'm back, can you stop fighting with Marcus now?"

Skyler instantly felt the strength of Xavier's hug weakening. In the end, it was almost as if he had pushed her away. His eyes were filled with red, looking at her as if she was a stranger, "Skyler, what did you just say?"

Chapter 1055

Skyler glanced at Xavier's bleeding arm, "Need a bandage?"

Zavier retorted, "Are you caring about me?"

Skyler shot back coolly, "I just don't want you bleeding out and causing a scene."

Zavier shrugged off her indifference, "Don't sweat it. This little scratch won't do me in. Now, what were you saying?"

He seemed less bothered about his wound than Skyler thought necessary. She said, "You teamed up with Brennen and Granger against Marcus because of me. Now that I'm back, are you still in cahoots with them?"

Hearing Skyler's explanation, Xavier burst into laughter, "So you didn't come back to me willingly, you're here for Marcus?"

Skyler scoffed, "What else? You think I wanted to come back to you?"

That remark made Xavier lose it, "So you fell for Marcus? You came back even for him? Was it his idea to bring you here last night? Did something happen between you two? Have you been seeing each other all along? Did you leave me for him?"

Skyler coldly eyed the man in front of her. So in his mind, she was just a promiscuous woman, ready to sleep with anyone. She just listened to his accusations in silence. Her heart didn't hurt, but it was cold.

I've hit the nail on the head, and you can't even deny it?" Xavier grabbed Skyler's shoulders, shaking her roughly, Skyler, you could at least deny it."

Skyler didn't say anything, and didn't argue with him. There was no need to lie to him. She had indeed accidentally found out that Xavier was teaming up with Brennen and others against Marcus because of her.

Marcus had helped her and she was grateful. She didn't want him to get hurt by Zaylor, so she decided to return to Xavier. She thought that if she returned to Xavier, he would stop being an enemy to Marcus. And Marcus would have one less powerful adversary.

This was the only way she could think of to help Marcus.

Skyler's silence was taken by Xavier as an admission of her relationship with Marcus. He grabbed her like a mad man and kissed her forcefully. He ignored her struggle and resistance, thrusting into her roughly.

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After he finished, he bit Skyler's earlobe, whispering in her ear like a devil, "Skyler, now that you're back, don't even think about leaving. We have plenty of time to rekindle our feelings."

Skyler sat up, calmly picking up her scattered clothes and putting them back on. However, as soon as she was dressed, Xavier ripped her clothes off again. This time he tore them to shreds, "You won't be needing clothes anymore."

Skyler was scared inside but kept a calm facade as she looked back at him, "Your skills seem a bit rusty. Compared to the men I've been with, you're way off mark"

Zavier shouted, "Shut up!"

He wouldn't let her voice her thoughts, but Skyler insisted, "You've lost your touch, can't I say it? I remember you once said, if you don't take others' opinions, you'll fall behind."

Her words made Xavier's face darken, after which Skyler let out a few cold laughs. When she stopped caring about anything, she stopped fearing anything.

Although Cornelia had gone to bed late the previous night, she was up bright and early.

Chapter 1056

Marcus was up even before she was, and breakfast was already ready. When she opened her eyes, Marcus put down his documents, walked over to her, and planted a soft kiss on her forehead, "Morning"

Waking up to his face first thing in the morning was pure bliss. Cornelia snuggled into his embrace, nuzzling him gently, "Morning."

Marcus reached out and gave her tummy a gentle rub through her pajamas, "Feeling any better? Need another day off?"

Cornelia shook her head. "I'm usually a bit under the weather on the first day of my period, but I'll feel better the next day. I don't need to take more time off."

Marcus suggested. "Then get up and get ready, we'll have breakfast together and then head to the office."

Cornelia clung onto him, unwilling to let go. "Skyler reached out to me last night. She filled me in on some stuff I didn't know: Wanna know what she said?"

Marcus seemed unfazed, "What did she tell you?"

Cornelia said, "She said Xavier, Brennen, Granger, and others are banding together against you. They're planning to control me first through my mom, and then come after you."

Marcus said, "I'm aware."

Cornelia asked, "Have you thought about how to deal with them?"

Marcus chuckled, "Even if they join forces, they're no match for me. Don't worry. Did she tell you anything else?"

Cornelia said, "Not much, just that she wants to have dinner with me after work tonight. She also said she's not happy with her job and might quit."

Marcus said, "If I'm not mistaken, she's probably gone back to Xavier."

Cornelia questioned, "What? She managed to break free from Xavier, why would she go back? Did someone find her and take her back?"

Marcus said, "She probably went back on her own."

Cornelia didn't believe it, "Skyler's no fool, why would she do that?"

She immediately dialed Skyler's number. After a few rings, the call was picked up.

"Hello, Ms Stewart. Oh, I should call you Mrs Hartley Xavier's sinister voice came from the phone."

Cornelia felt a wave of despair, and she could hardly breathe, "Is Skyler there? Haver a nswer the phone!"

Zavier handed the phone to Skyler, "Darling, it's your good friend, Mrs. Hartley."

Then, Skyler's calm voice came from the phone, "Cornelia, what's up?"

Cornelia had so many questions and so many things to say, but she couldn't utter a single word. Because she knew, no matter what she said, it might hurt Skyler. And the last person she wanted to hurt was Skyler.

Skyler chuckled, "You want to ask why I'm back with Zavier? He's still my husband. After months of wandering and facing some hardships, I suddenly wanted to return to my comfortable life, so I came back to him. Fortunately, he didn't resent me be accepted me, and forgave my previous caprice."

Cornelia knew this wasn't Skyler's real thoughts, but she couldn't offer any advice. They were all adults, everyone should be accountable for their own decisions

Skyler continued,

"Comelia, if there's nothing else, I'll hang up first. We had too much fun last night. I'm still a bit worn out."

Cornelia remained silent for a while, then managed to say. "So, are we still on for dinner tonight?"

Chapter 1057

Skyler's

phone was on speaker, so naturally, Zavier could hear Comelia's words. Upon hearing the question, Skyler instinctively glanced at him

Zavier, taking the phone with a smile, said, "Absolutely, we must meel. Drag Marc along and we can have a double date.

Skyler said to Comelia, "Alright, it's settled then"

"Okay." Comelia bit her lip, answering with difficulty. The other side had already hung up

She turned to Marcus and mumbled, "Do you think Skyler knows that Xavier teamed up with Brennen and the others to mess with you, so that's why she went back

to him?"

Marcus lifted his hand, gently ruffling Comelia's hair, "No matter why Skyler ended up with Xavier again, it's none of our business"

Comelia said, "Skyler is my friend. I can't forget how terrible it was when she had a miscarriage. I'm worried she won't value her own life again."

Marcus understood

Comelia's desire to help her friend, but he didn't want her to continue this way, "Comelia, you know if you help Skyler, you're gonna get some

flak, right?"

Comelia was puzzled, "What would they criticize me for? Who are they? I can't just abandon my friend because some people might judge me."

She didn't understand what the world had come to. Being kind was supposed to be a virtue, but now even being good to her friends could get her criticized. But no matter what others said about her, she still held onto her kindness and treated every important friend well.

Marcus said, "Not everyone in this world is rational. Some are self-righteous. These people believe that a marriage must be maintained, no matter how miserable the woman is post-marriage. They think that even if a woman is suffering after marriage, she should never

divorce. Friends should only encourage reconciliation, not divorce, and certainly not help the woman escape the situation.”

Cornelia sighed, “You’re right, there are still many people with such mentality. But let them criticize. I can’t hear them anyway. I won’t abandon my friend because of their doubts.”

Before he even tried to persuade her, Marcus knew he couldn’t change Cornelia, “Sure, only you can decide if you want to help her. No one else can make that decision for you. I just want to warn you, those people are scary. They haven’t seen the world, but they think they’re always right.”

“I know, don’t worry. Those insignificant people can’t hurt me. To Cornelia, these people knew nothing yet always went around badmouthing others to vent their dissatisfaction

Just last night, Hannah was venting to her about a similar issue. She had a TV show that was very popular, but some netizen criticized it as crappy

It was normal for some to like and some to dislike a show. But this netizen kept posting negative comments, dozens or even hundreds of them, criticizing her show as illogical. But this critic was just posting willy-nilly, without even watching the show seriously. The comments were all based on their subjective assumptions

They even attacked the two protagonists and claimed Hannah was nuts.

Hannah retorted, wasn’t the critic the one with the mental problem? If they didn’t like the show, they could just stop watching. But they kept posting abusive comments every day. Wasn’t that a sign of mental problems?

Cornelia advised her, “Hannah, you need to chill out. Internet critics don’t think like normal people. Maybe that critic is the one with a mental problem, receiving treatment in a hospital.”

Hearing Cornelia's words, Hannah cheered up, "Yeah, why should I argue with a critic who's nuts?"

"Exactly, don't bother with those boring people." To Cornelia, those internet critics were as annoying as rats in the sewer. They showcased their subjective assumptions in a full display, both stupid and nasty!

Chapter 1058

Marcus saw Cornelia spacing out and tenderly patted her head, "Did I scare you with my words?"

Comelia snapped back to reality, "I'm so sorry, Jeremy!"

Marcus asked, "Why are you apologizing all of a sudden?"

Comelia said, "You helped Skyler for my sake, and ended up pissing off your friend Xavier"

Marcus said, "I didn't do it for you, I did it for Xavier."

Comelia was puzzled, "Can you explain?"

Marcus explained, "Remember when you went to France to see Skyler and were taken away by Xavier when you left?"

Comelia nodded, "I remember."

Marcus went on, "Skyler realized she hadn't completely escaped Xavier's watchful eye and broke down. I was supposed to pick you up but didn't find you. Instead, I stumbled upon her trying to end her own life. If I hadn't saved her, she might be gone by now."

Cornelia had no idea about this. No wonder Marcus never thought of handing Skyler back to Xavier even after they became enemies. He had sacrificed a lot. He was doing a good deed, but was misunderstood.

Marcus continued, "Skyler had given up on life. I promised to help her escape from Xavier, and that's when she found the courage to live again. I helped her escape Xavier's surveillance, but I never hid her. She was free, and could go back to Xavier whenever she wanted"

Cornelia asked, "Why didn't you tell me this earlier?"

Marcus said, "I didn't want to worry you."

Cornelia wanted to say something, but Marcus cut her off, "She's an adult now. She knows what she's doing. Don't interfere with their business anymore."

Cornelia nodded, but the image of Skyler lying in a pool of blood last year trying to escape from Xavier by giving up her life kept flashing in her mind. If Skyler did something drastic again...

Cornelia didn't dare to think further.

Marcus said, "Go wash up and have breakfast."

"Okay" Cornelia put down her phone and headed for the bathroom.

When she came out, Marcus was no longer in the room, but her phone was vibrating non-stop on the bedside table. She picked up her phone and saw a message from Xavier: [Cornelia, Skyler is back with me. Please stop interfering in our affairs.]

"Okay" Cornelia initially wanted to reply simply.

But she was still a bit worried, so she sent a detailed message: [Mr. Rivera, Skyler is my friend. I hope she can be happy every day, and I hope you are the one who, can make her happy]

But in the end, Cornelia deleted the message because she was afraid of others' judgment, and didn't send the message.

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Comelia pocketed her phone and stepped into the restaurant.

Chapter 1059

Her favorite burger and cola were on the table. She could hardly believe her eyes, "Marcus, didn't you always say burgers are unhealthy? Why did you get one for me today?"

Marcus replied, "Burgers have meat and vegetables, how could they be unhealthy? Some unscrupulous merchants just slander other foods to sell their own. Don't let them fool you anymore, eat whatever you want, and don't let them control you."

Comelia praised Marcus, "Marcus, you're totally right. You really are my hero."

Marcus laughed. "Stop buttering me up and eat your food."

"I'm not buttering you up, you really are my hero." Comelia picked up the burger and took a big bite. The taste was so good it cured all her troubles, "I'll save one for Tahlia and bring it to her later. She's alone at my place, can't cook, and probably doesn't have anything for breakfast."

Marcus said, "Patricia already sent breakfast over."

Cornelia replied, "Marcus, you even think of such little things. You really are a good buy. Suddenly I want a friend like you."

Marcus said, "You don't need a friend like me, having a husband like me is enough."

Cornelia's phone suddenly vibrated twice. It was a message from Tahlia:

[I don't want people at the company to know I'm your sister, and I don't want to be accused of using our relationship to get into the Hartley Group. I'll take a cab to the office today and we have to act like strangers there]

Cornelia agreed with a smile and after putting her phone away, she said to Marcus, Almost forgot to tell you something.”

Marcus asked, “What is it?”

Cornelia said, “Tahlia applied to the Hartley Group. Her major is financial management and she applied for a finance–related position, but the HR put her, someone who knows nothing about secretarial work, into the CEO’s secretary office. I suspect there might be something fishy about the person who hired her”

Cornelia suspected that Brennen was up to his old tricks, stirring up the order within the Hartley Group. She considered many possibilities, but Marcus casually gave her an answer, “I arranged for your sister to go into the CEO’s secretary office.

Marcus was always fair and just, so his words surprised Cornelia, “Did you give Tahlia special treatment because of me?”

Marcus said, “No.”

Hearing it wasn’t because of her, Cornelia felt a bit better, “Then why?”

Marcus replied. “Tahlia is a finance graduate with excellent academic abilities. I saw her potential and wanted to develop it.”

It was rare for someone to receive Marcus’ praise. Tahlia receiving such compliments made Cornelia feel proud, “Yes, Tahlia really is an outstanding kid. She was controlled by the Reese family for so long that she completely forgot she’s an individual.”

Marcus said, “We should help her discover her strengths together in the future.”

Cornelia replied, “Sure.”

It had been a while since Cornelia last went to work, but her abilities were not affected in the slightest.

Chapter 1060

Once she clocked in at the office, her first order of business was to fetch Marcus his daily cup of joe. After delivering the coffee, she quietly left the CEO's office. Even though they were hitched, they kept things strictly professional at the office, with no private chitchat

Stepping out of the office. Cornelia noticed Yolanda introducing a new colleague, Tahlia, to the secretarial staff.

Yolanda was as warm and welcoming as ever, saying. "Our new face today is Tahlia, a new addition to our secretarial team. Let's give her a big hand"

Everyone joined in with enthusiastic applause

Their previous manager, Devon, got the boot for his illicit fling with a team member, Melissa. So, Yolanda, being the longest serving and most competent, naturally got promoted. Under her leadership, the work atmosphere improved noticeably. Without the constant suspicion among colleagues, better relationships also led to better productivity

Comelia lingered a bit too long and caught Yolanda's eye. She approached Comelia with Tahlia, introducing her as Ms. Stewart.

Tahlia was very respectful, greeting Comelia, "Hello, Ms Stewart! I look forward to learning from you!"

Comelia nodded. "When I first joined the Hartley Group, Yolanda showed me the ropes just like this. She's a good egg, you'll do well to learn from her."

Tahlia nodded, "Okay."

Yolanda seemed less hostile seeing Cornelia's friendly demeanor, "Tahlia, you're new, so you probably don't know that Ms. Stewart is pretty sharp. She's highly valued by President Hartley. If she's free and you're stuck with something, feel free to ask her. I'm sure she'll help."

That jab wasn't missed. But neither Comelia nor her sister took the bait.

Yolanda told Tahlia, "Tahlia, you can get back to work"

Tahlia nodded, "Okay, I'll get back to it."

Once Tahlia left, Cornelia smiled, "Anything you want to talk about privately?"

Yolanda asked, "About that video, don't you have anything to explain?"

Cornelia looked puzzled, "What video?"

Yolanda was pissed, "Cornelia, how could you forget such an important video?"

I really can't remember, could you be more specific?" Cornelia had been through a lot lately, her memory a bit fuzzy. She couldn't remember what video Yolanda was talking about.

Yolanda fumed, "I mean the video where you and President Hartley were getting cozy! I even showed it to you. You forgot?"

Cornelia suddenly remembered,

"Oh, that video. It's just as you saw, I don't have anything to explain."

Yolanda was taken aback. She felt like Cornelia was purposely trying to get her goat

Chapter 1061

Cornelia said, "I still have to prep some meeting materials. If you're not needing anything else, I'm gonna bounce" Yolanda, not wanting Cornelia to leave, quickly reached out to stop her, "Hold up, girl"

Cornelia asked, "What's up?"

Yolanda hesitated, then said cautiously. "I'm sorry"

Cornelia raised an eyebrow, "Why are you apologizing?"

With people often passing by, Yolanda didn't want their conversation overheard, "Can we talk in your office?"

Comelia said, "Follow me."

Once in the office, Yolanda finally said, "While you were out, I gave it some thought. You're not that kind of person, playing dirty. You and President Hartley, there might be reasons you don't wanna talk about. As long as you promise to keep your distance from President Hartley, not be the home-wrecker, I'll keep this secret. won't spill the beans to anyone else"

Yolanda never held bad intentions towards Comelia. Her previous doubts about Comelia were only because she saw her as a very talented, hardworking girl.

She knew better than anyone that Comelia became President Hartley's assistant because of her abilities, not because she was sleeping her way to the top. If rumors about Comelia and President Hartley were to get out, people would make a mockery of Comelia's hard work. Yolanda didn't want to hear people saying Comelia got where she was by selling herself.

Cornelia said, "Believe it or not, I've never been the other woman. I can't really explain the situation with President Hartley right now, but one day, you'll understand"

Yolanda said, "I believe you."

Comelia smiled, "Thanks."

Yolanda said, "Comelia, it's tough for us women to hold our own in the workplace. You've come a long way and you can't let anything make people think you got here because of special relationships"

Cornelia had thought about all this before and didn't want her colleagues to know about her relationship with Marcus. Hearing these words from a coworker, she felt touched, "Thanks for the heads-up"

Yolanda let out a sigh of relief and smiled, "To be honest, I was kinda jealous of you"

Cornelia said, "Everyone gets jealous, but few are as honest as you."

Yolanda said, "That might be one of my few good qualities."

"You have lots of good qualities." Comelia said, "Ever since you took charge, the secretarial office has been much more efficient. President Hartley even complimented you."

Yolanda was thrilled, "He really said that?"

Cornelia said, "Definitely, he sees how capable and dedicated you are."

Yolanda had been working at the Hartley Group for years, always diligent and responsible, never slacking off. She was indeed an excellent employee. Of course, aside from the hefty paycheck, President Hartley's recognition was also very important to her

Hearing this, her face lit up with joy, "With President Hartley's approval, I'll work even harder and lead everyone in the secretarial office to greater heights."

Cornelia said with a smile, "Let's do this together!"

Yolanda said, "Cornelia, can I hug you?"

Cornelia nodded before Yolanda threw her arms around her, "Comella, you have no idea how much I envy you, how much I'm jealous of your excellence. But I'm lucky, I didn't let my jealousy cloud my judgement. I hope we can continue to be good colleagues."

Cornelia said, "Sounds good."

"What are you two doing?" Ben, who had just arrived at the office, was taken aback to see the two women hugging tightly.

Chapter 1062

Yolanda quickly let go of Comelia, walking and talking at the same time, "I gotta bounce, work's calling"

Ben watched her leave, then turned to Comelia, "You two?"

Comelia replied, "What about us two?"

Ben said, "You two were hugging so lightly."

Comelia retorted, "What's the big deal if we want a hug?"

Ben said, "Hugging is fine, but I think Yolanda has a thing for you."

Comelia said, "When I first moved to headquarters, she was the one who stuck with me. She helped me get to know the company and the work, even when some old employees tried to bully me, she was there to back me up. She's like my hall mentor."

Ben said, "I see"

Comelia asked, "What?"

Ben said. "She got pissed when she saw you being all lovey-dovey with President Hartley in the office. I first thought she had a crush on President Hartley, but I quickly realized that wasn't the case. Then it hit me, she cares about you, not President Hartley"

Cornelia, cutting him off halfway through, asked, "When was I being lovey-dovey with President Hartley?"

Ben said, "Are you saying you weren't? Let me tell you, people in the office have already caught wind of your relationship with President Hartley. Your secret's gonna be out in the open soon"

Cornelia asked, "Who else knows, besides you?"

Ben said, "If my memory serves me right, there were a few times when President Hartley was screen mirroring his phone during a meeting, and your text messages to him were displayed"

Cornelia fell silent. She was truly embarrassed

Ben continued, "President Hartley is always very careful. If he doesn't want people to know something, they won't. The only possible reason he'd make such a mistake repeatedly in the meeting room is..."

Comelia asked, "What reason?"

Ben said "President Hartley did it on purpose!"

Comelia fell silent again. She couldn't rule out that possibility. Because Marcus wanted to make their relationship public, but she didn't. Although he agreed not to for now, it didn't mean he couldn't do things that could potentially reveal their relationship.

Ben thought he was quite the Sherlock, "Don't you think my reasoning is spot on?"

Cornelia didn't answer, but she knew she had to talk to Marcus about this tonight.

Ben said, "Mrs. Hartley, shouldn't you give me a little reward for this?"

"Mrs Hartley? Who's Mrs Hartley? Cornelia is Mrs. Hartley?" Yolanda returned to Comelia's office, having remembered something she wanted to tell Cornelia. She arrived at the door just in time to hear them discussing Mrs. Hartley.

Ben looked at Cornelia, "You handle this."

Yolanda also looked at Cornelia, her eyes filled with eager anticipation for the truth

Cornelia thought for a moment, then nodded seriously, "Yes"

Yolanda's eyes widened in surprise, then she fell silent. Finally, as if all her questions had been answered, she said, "So the Mrs. Hartley we've been wondering about has been right under our noses the whole time."

Chapter 1063

“Awesome! Just awesome.” Yolanda exclaimed in delight.

Her Instincts were spot on. Cornelia wasn’t that kind of shameless woman.

Ben said, “Comelia chose to keep her identity under wraps, make sure you don’t spill it to others.”

Yolanda wanted to ask why Cornelia would hide her identity, but before she could ask she understood.

She was well aware of Comelia’s capabilities, but when she saw Cornelia getting chummy with President Hartley, her first suspicion was that Cornelia had used some underhanded means to secure her position. If others knew about Cornelia’s real relationship with Marcus, they’d undoubtedly think that Cornelia’s promotion was due to shady reasons

Once everyone started thinking that, all of Comelia’s previous efforts would be brushed under the rug. She wouldn’t be the competent Ms. Stewart at the company. she’d just be President Hartley’s wife.

Despite the high-flying title, being President Hartley’s wife just meant being an accessory to him.

“Don’t sweat it, Ben, I won’t let the cat out of the bag. Whether to go public with her identity should be Cornelia’s call.” Yolanda assured.

“Thank you” Comelia expressed her gratitude.

“I didn’t do anything worth thanking, you silly goose.” Yolanda felt a lot lighter, “Cornelia, Ben, we’re having a department get-together this Friday, wanna tag along?” Cornelia wasn’t a big fan of mingling with coworkers or attending such events, but she agreed to Yolanda’s invitation, “Sure, why not.”

Ben chimed in. “I’m free on Friday evening, wouldn’t mind hitting up the party. But I reckon if Cornelia goes, President Hartley might show up too. If he’s there, folks might feel a

wkward, and the party wouldn't be as chill. Cornelia, for the sake of everyone's fun, you can't let President Hartley crash the party."

"Ben, that's not fair. Yolanda countered,

"Regardless of what others think, I'd love for President Hartley to swing by our department's party"

The employees at the secretary's office were mostly women, who wouldn't want to take a peek at Marcus' handsome mug, regardless of whatever else they thought

of him?

"I don't want President Hartley to show up, it'd feel like work with him around. You can't speak for everyone, and neither can I Ben argued back

"In that case, Yolanda, why don't you go ask around? If everyone's cool with President Hartley coming. I'll try to bring him along. If they're not, I won't Cornelia proposed.

Roger that, Mrs. Hartley!" Yolanda dashed off, stopping at the door to flash a grin at Cornelia, "Mrs. Hartley, I'll go ask around right away, should have an answer for you in no time."

Cornelia was speechless

"Yolanda's a bit odd "Ben commented.

"What's so odd about her?" Cornelia asked.

"Isn't she supposed to be green with envy? Why does she seem so genuinely happy Ben asked.

"Why should she be jealous of me? Can't she just be happy for me?" Cornelia said.

"Don't girls often get caught up in jealousy and complicated stuff?" Ben asked.

"Who says girls have to have complicated relationships? Whether it's boys or girls, there are good friends and bad enemies. I believe, friendships between girls can be very pure and beautiful. Don't be sexist!" Cornelia said.

Realizing his mistake, Ben quickly corrected himself, "I thought she'd be jealous and angry because she'd been pretty upset with you, and I thought learning about your relationship with President Hartley would worsen it."

Cornelia responded, "Yolanda's a sweet girl, she always sees the best in people, genuinely appreciates those better than her and tries to learn from them. She's always been nice to me. Her discontent was because she thought I had an illicit relationship with President Hartley. In reality, she apologized to me for the misunderstanding even before she knew the truth about me and President Hartley."

"I see now, there's none of the drama I imagined between you two. She's genuinely happy for you, and you stick up for her." Ben admitted.

Chapter 1064

Comelia said, "Let's cut the chit-chat. The meeting is about to start"

In a panic, Ben blurted out, "Oh shoot, my meeting materials are not ready yet. Cornelio, President Hartley definitely won't be mad at you, could you cover for me in the meeting ..."

Before Ben could finish, Comelia flatly refused, "No way!"

As Ben scrambled to prepare his materials, he complained to Cornelia, "You're so nice to Yolanda, why can't you be a little nicer to me? We've been working together for so long, there's gotta be some feelings there, right?"

Comelia chuckled, "Feelings? Between you and me?"

Ben insisted, "Of course! We actually get along really well

Suddenly, Cornelia exclaimed, "President Hartley, when did you get here?"

"President Hartley, ah, no, Cornelia and I don't have a personal relationship." Ben began to apologize before even seeing President Hartley. But when he looked up, he found Marcus wasn't there.

Realizing he'd been fooled, he glared at Cornelia, "Cornelia, do you believe that I could punch you?"

Cornelia replied. "I don't believe you!"

Ben retorted, "You don't believe me? I tell you, even with President Hartley protecting you, I could still lay a punch on you. I could hit you so hard you wouldn't even recognize yourself."

Cornelia said again, "President Hartley, you're really here this time!"

Ben said, "If I'm fooled again, I'm not Ben anymore."

"What would you prefer to be called then if not Ben? And who do you want to punch? Marcus' deep voice echoed from the office entrance.

Ben didn't dare to look back, "President Hartley"

Usually, Marcus would just call them, why would he personally come to their office today? And he heard him "punching Cornelia.

Ben felt his career might be over. Or maybe, his life was coming to an end.

Cornelia asked, "President Hartley, what brings you here?"

Marcus' gaze shifted to Cornelia, instantly becoming much softer, "Can you arrange for Yolanda to personally guide Tahlia, to ensure she quickly becomes familiar

with the work?"

Cornelia felt a bit uneasy, but as Marcus' assistant, she didn't ask further, just replied, "Yes, I'll arrange it right away."

After Cornelia left, Ben cautiously looked at Marcus, "President Hartley, I was just joking with Cornelia, I didn't really punch her"

Marcus replied, "Do I look like I can't tell you're joking?"

Ben was at a loss for words. If Marcus knew he was joking, why did he still look at him with such intimidating eyes?

4

Marcus was silent, just staring at Ben, giving him the chills.

Chapter 1065

"President Hartley." Ben said, "If you have something to say to me, just spit it out."

It felt like ages before Marcus slowly said,

'From now on, important company documents can't be seen by Cornelia'

"What? President Hartley, what are you talking about?" Ben felt like he misheard, awkwardly rubbing his ear, "President Hartley, I must have heard wrong. Cornelia is not only your secretary but also your wife. Don't you trust her?"

A flood of thoughts rushed through Ben's mind. Marcus had always trusted Cornelia, even when she first started working for him, he never kept important documents from her. Today, he specifically asked Cornelia to leave and told him not to let her see confidential company files. This was a clear sign of distrust towards Cornelia.

Or maybe it was not distrust, but because Cornelia was now President Hartley's wife, and half of his earnings should belong to Cornelia.

The relationship between husband and wife was like a roller coaster. One day he was on good terms, the next day he was at each other's throats. Maybe Marcus was playing it safe, if things went south with Cornelia, she couldn't take his assets.

Having thought about it, Ben felt this was the most plausible explanation. But then, Marcus said, "I've never distrusted her."

Taken aback by Marcus' words, Ben asked, "Then why can't she handle the company's confidential files in the future?"

Marcus gave Ben a look, then turned around and left. That look filled Ben with doubt, but he dared not ask any more questions.

Today's meeting was mainly about The Hartley Group investing in a project in a remote area in the West Region.

The project site was not only remote but also lacked any worthwhile natural scenery. However, many impoverished families still lived there and many of whom had never left their mountainous homes to see the outside world.

Simply because the roads to the outside world were not accessible. If they wanted to go to town, they had to walk a long path.

Many profit-driven businesses wouldn't dream of developing there, because if they did, they would have to build accessible roads to the outside world. The complex terrain made road construction very difficult and costly. To connect to the outside world, a lot of capital would be required.

All in all, if this project was invested in, it would be years, if not decades, before it could start making money. This project was essentially a charity.

Although it was a non-profit charitable project, all the meeting participants were very enthusiastic, providing their best suggestions for the project.

After the meeting, Cornelia was particularly happy. People who could easily sign projects worth tens of millions of dollars were also so passionate about charity work. It showed that they really wanted to contribute to poverty alleviation.

Ben and Cornelia followed Marcus back to his office. After handing over the report for the day, Ben said, "You two probably have some private matters to discuss.

I'll leave first"

Marcus retorted, "Did I tell you to leave?"

Ben asked, "Président Hartley, is there anything else you need to discuss with me?"

Marcus replied, "Today's report from Cornelia, you will finish it."

If it weren't for what happened earlier, Ben would surely think Marcus was retaliating against him. Now, he didn't know what to think.

Cornelia intervened, "No need. I can handle my own business."

Marcus reminded her, "We're at work."

So what he was saying was that she needed to separate her personal and professional life. He was the boss, his word was law, and Cornelia had to comply.

Marcus told Ben, "You can leave now"

Ben left

immediately, regardless of his curiosity about what had happened, he dared not stick around to eavesdrop.

Comelia said, "I gotta bounce."

Marcus replied, "Hold up."

Chapter 1066

*Comelia asked, "President Hanley, anything else you wanna spill?**

It had been a while since Comelia formally addressed him as President Hartley, Marcus found it a bit odd, "I got something personal to tell you"

Comelia let out a sarcastic laugh. Just a moment ago he was all about professional boundaries, and now he was talking personal? Did he think he could just do whatever the hell he wanted?

Marcus said. "Come closer."

Cornelia obediently moved towards him, but kept a distance.

Marcus asked, "Do I look like I'm gonna hurt you?"

Comelia replied, "At work, it's better to keep a distance."

Marcus said, "Ride home with me after work."

Comelia agreed, "Okay."

Marcus again said, "Come closer."

Cornelia asked with confusion. "What are you up to?"

Marcus replied, "I haven't hugged you all day, I wanna hug you."

Cornelia immediately pushed him away and sprinted towards the office exit, "President Hartley, it was you who said we need to keep things professional."

Watching her escape, the warmth in Marcus' eyes disappeared, replaced with coldness

In the evening, they had dinner with Zavier and Skyler. The place was chosen by Zavier, one of his properties in Riverton.

Marcus and Comelia had been there before. It was a place that looked shabby outside but was quite luxurious inside. Last time Cornelia was there, she found it gloomy. Even with Marcus' company this time, the eerie feeling didn't lessen.

The staff greeted Cornelia and Marcus at the usual spot, "President Hartley, Mrs. Hartley, right this way!"

Marcus held Cornelia's hand, "Why's your hand so cold?"

Cornelia's hand was usually as warm as a heater even in winter, but today in this hot weather, her hand was icy cold.

Cornelia said, "I don't know why, but I'm feeling jittery."

Marcus snaked his arm around her waist and pulled her closer, "I'm here, don't be scared."

Cornelia leaned against him, feeling his warmth and heartbeat, her anxiety eased a bit

Just as they were walking, a good-

looking woman blocked their way. "President Hartley, welcome! Please, this way!"

Marcus, hand in hand with Cornelia, was about to follow the woman when she said, "President Hartley, Mr. Rivera said, you're to follow me alone. Mrs. Hartley will go with that handsome gentleman over there"

"Mrs. Hartley, allow me to be at your service tonight." A handsome man approached. But to Cornelia, no guy could hold a candle to Marcus.

Marcus pulled Cornelia behind him, glaring coldly at the two, "Outta my way!"

"President Hartley, we're just trying to treat you well, why so hostile?" The woman raised her hand, lightly patting towards Marcus' chest.

Chapter 1067

Marcus dodged sideways, avoiding the hand that the woman was reaching out to him.

The woman missed him and smiled even more enchantingly, "President Hartley, what are you dodging? You think I'd hurt you?"

Marcus' look suddenly turned cold. "Cut it out!"

The woman said, "President Hartley, then what do you want? You want to hook up with me? Fine, I'm game."

Cornelia sneered. Did this woman think she was invisible? Boldly flirting with her husband right in front of her

Cornelia stepped forward, standing in front of Marcus, coldly staring down the woman.

The woman didn't back down. She sized up Cornelia, 'Mrs. Hartley, my colleague is quite handsome, and he gives great service, aren't you tempted?"

Cornelia completely ignored the woman's provocation, and yelled into the room, "Zavier, get out here!"

"President Hartley and Mrs. Hartley do not require your services. All of you leave." With the familiar male voice, Zavier slowly emerged from the shadows.

The woman and the man heard the command, answered simultaneously and quietly backed off.

Cornelia instinctively looked behind Zavier, searching for Skyler

Zavier laughed, "No need to look. Skyler's bent, still asleep

Cornelia remained silent.

Zavier turned to Marcus, a challenging look on his face, "Marcus, fancy a drink with me tonight?"

Cornelia said, "His stomach doesn't agree with alcohol."

Zavier said, "Marcus, can you rein in your wife? When men are talking, can she keep her yap shut? See, Skyler does it just right, never butts in when we're talking. Women should take a leaf out of Skyler's book."

Cornelia was rendered speechless. It was the 21st century and this man still held such outdated views. No wonder Skyler chose death over staying with him.

Marcus finally spoke. In a low voice he said, "My wife is an independent individual. What she says or does is her prerogative"

Zavier said, "One day she'll bleed you dry."

Marcus said, "I'm loaded. If she can bankrupt me, it just proves her capabilities."

Zavier said. "Is that so?"

Marcus said, "We've been standing for a while, don't you want to offer us a seat?"

Zavier said, "To be honest, not really."

Marcus took Cornelia's hand, "We'll take our leave then."

Zavier said, "Alright, I can't win against you two. I just want to know if you could have a few drinks with me tonight."

Marcus said, "Sure"

Cornelia wanted to protest, but she figured Marcus knew what he was doing, so she let him go.

Zavier was very generous, preparing a table full of lavish dishes with all sorts of delicacies

Zavier invited Marcus and Cornelia to sit first, then he got up to walk towards the inner court, "You guys start eating. I'll go check if Skyler's awake"

Cornelia was famished, she didn't want to hold back. She picked up the fork and knife ready to dig in and fill her stomach. But as she picked up the utensils, Marcus stopped her, "Don't rush to eat"

He told her not to rush, but he himself started sampling some dishes.

Chapter 1068

After he finished his meal, he began to serve food onto her plate, "If there's something you want to eat, let me know I'll get it for you"

Comelia realized something. "Are you tasting my food for me? Are you worried that Xavier might poison it?"

Xavier was a madman. He could do anything without shocking anyone. Marcus wasn't afraid of him, but he didn't want Cornelia in danger.

Marcus handed Comelia more food, "Eat up, don't overthink."

Cornelia lost her appetite. She looked at him, her eyes welling up with tears, "If he really did poison the food and you ate it, have you thought about what would happen to you?"

Marcus replied, "Aren't I fine right now?"

Comelia said, "Jeremy, you can't do this anymore."

Marcus patted her head, "Alright."

Maybe there was no future for him and her anymore. In the future, even getting a glimpse of her might be a luxury.

Comelia said, "When Xavier asks you for a drink later, be careful. Don't drink too much, it's bad for your stomach."

Marcus replied, "Sure."

"Comelia." Skyler's clear and loud voice came from behind Cornelia..

Comelia immediately turned around and saw Skyler, whom she hadn't seen in a long time. She immediately ran to Skyler and hugged her tightly, "Skyler, I'm so glad to see you again!"

Skyler hugged Comelia back tightly, smelling her neck, "It feels so good to hug you again!"

Cornelia said, "Me too."

Skyler let go of Cornelia and looked at her up and down, "Comelia, you look thinner than the last time I saw you. Your complexion is not good either. Has President Hartley been treating you badly?"

Cornelia said, "President Hartley has been good to me. Something happened at home

Skyler asked, "What happened? Can I help?"

Skyler was an important friend to Comelia so she didn't want to hide anything from her, "My grandmother passed away recently. Also, I found my biological sister."

Skyler asked, "You found your biological sister?"

Cornelia said, "Yes, my biological sister. My mother had to leave my father when she was pregnant with her. My father didn't know my mother was pregnant, so no one in my family knew about her."

Skyler said, "Well, that's good news."

Cornelia replied, "Yes."

Skyler wanted to say more, but Xavier suddenly pulled Skyler into his arms, "Babe, I've told you, you can't hug anyone other than me."

Skyler's eyes dimmed quickly, but she forced a smile, "Cornelia, let's eat first."

Cornelia noticed the sadness in Skyler's eyes but didn't say anything.

Zavier, holding Skyler, sat down. He either intentionally or unintentionally took off the scarf around Skyler's neck.

Cornelia glanced up and saw numerous red marks on Skyler's neck, which shocked and scared her. To avoid embarrassing Skyler, Cornelia quickly looked away, pretending she didn't see anything

Skyler quickly put the scarf back on, only for Zavier to pull it back off. He turned to Marcus, 'Marc, my wife and I are finally reunited. Do you have anything to say to

Us?–

Marcus replied, "What would you like me to say?"

Zavier retorted, "Can't you say something to please me on your own?"

Marcus served more food onto Cornelia's plate, Just focus on your meal. Don't mind the m."

After saying this, he felt as if his heart was struck.

He didn't understand why, but ever since he entered this courtyard, his heart fell unusually heavy, as if something was slowly corroding him.

Chapter 1069

Zavier noticed Marcus was too busy passing food to Cornelia to respond to him, which ticked him off. He said, "Marc, I'm talking to you and you're ignoring me, I'm seriously pissed off."

Marcus tried to suppress his discomfort, reaching out to grab Cornelia, wanting to say something but afraid he might spit out blood if he opened his mouth. Cornelia seemed to sense Marcus was feeling off. She leaned in and asked in a soft voice, "Are you okay? Are you feeling unwell?"

Marcus shook his head, subconsciously gripping Cornelia's hand tighter.

Zavier saw them whispering to each other and his wife fully intent on avoiding him. The stark contrast filled him with jealousy,

“Cornelia, do you know where your real mother is?”

If they were going to ruin his meal, he sure as hell wouldn't let them eat in peace. As expected, Cornelia's attention was immediately drawn to him, “If you're willing to tell me, I'll listen. If you don't want to, I won't force you.”

Zavier laughed, “Beg me. If you beg me, I might tell you everything”

Comelia said, “Alright, I beg you. Please tell me about my mother.”

Zavier was surprised that Comelia would beg him so directly. But he had no intention of satisfying Cornelia's request, ‘If you're begging me, you need to do it sincerely’

Comelia asked, “What do you want me to do? Do you want me to kneel and beg?”

Zavier laughed, “That's not out of the question.”

Comelia said, “I can kneel and beg you, but how do I know you really know about my mother? If you're lying to me, wouldn't I have knelt for nothing?”

Zavier retorted, “The decision is mine to make, and my word is law. Kneel and beg me, or you'll never find out about your mother.”

Before Cornelia could respond, Skyler got angry first, “Zavier, don't push it too far.”

Seeing Skyler protecting Cornelia filled Xavier with rage, but he calmly put more food onto Skyler's plate, “Eat up, darling.”

Skyler glanced at the food on her plate, and despite feeling nauseated, she obediently ate. She knew if she didn't, Xavier wouldn't let her off the hook and it would create an awkward situation for everyone.

Despite Skyler eating, Xavier was still not satisfied. He knew Skyler didn't want to eat his food.

Even if she didn't want to, she still ate the food he served, because the two people sitting opposite her were the ones she really cared about.

In her eyes, he was just a nobody.

This realization infuriated Xavier more

He redirected his anger at Cornelia, "So Cornelia, are you going to kneel or not?"

Before Cornelia could respond, Skyler whispered something in Xavier's ear only audible to the two of them. "I'm back, what are you still doing?"

Xavier

grabbed Skyler by the chin, bent down and bit her lip hard. Only after tasting her blood did he let her go, "You're back, but your heart isn't."

Skyler chuckled. "Do you still want my heart?"

She had already given him her heart once. But he didn't cherish it.

He brutally trampled on her sincerity.

He made her heart grow cold, even dead. And now he still wanted her heart.

What a load of bull!

Chapter 1070

Xavier said, "No, your heart has always been mine and it must stay that way."

Facing Xavier's domineering and strong attitude, Skyler didn't refute. She just silently kept eating.

Xavier wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her towards him, ignoring her resistance. He then turned to Cornelia and Marcus, "Marcus, your wife is about to kneel before me. Anything you wanna say?"

Marcus casually put down his cutlery, "I've got nothing to say."

He stood up, pulling Comelia with him, "We're leaving"

Zavier grabbed a

plate and smashed it on the floor, "Look at all the food, we've barely started eating and you're already leaving? Marcus, Cornelia, finish your meal before leaving, or I'll smash all the food"

Skyler held him back, "Zavier, have you lost your mind? Is this how you treat guests?"

Zavier replied, "Guests? Are there any guests here?"

Skyler had no words.

Zavier continued.

"Marcus, if you don't finish this meal today, it's a sign of disrespect towards me. The moment you step out of this yard, our friendship is over"

Marcus glanced at Zavier, didn't say a word, and walked away with Cornelia.

Comelia looked back at Skyler, and

Skyler was also looking at her. They both had so much to say, but in the end, no words were spoken.

Watching Cornelia leave, it felt like Skyler's last bit of strength was being sucked out of her

Zavier said, "Can't bear to see them leave? Want to leave with them? Skyler, don't expect them to help you anymore. My stance today is clear, this meal symbolizes the severing of ties. The next time I see them, we'll be strangers."

Skyler retorted, "Zavier, do you even know what you're doing?"

Zavier replied, "Of course I do. Without them, you can't escape. You'll stay by my side obediently, unable to go anywhere. It's all because of their interference. If they hadn't helped you escape, you wouldn't have been gone from my world for so long"

Hearing these words, Skyler wanted to laugh. She never knew that this man was still clueless about what went wrong between them. He blamed everything on others.

Skyler said sarcastically, "Zavier, do you remember the day we went to the hot springs at Northern Resort? After I secretly aborted your child, I was bleeding so much I almost died. It was Comelia and Marcus who saved me. If it wasn't for them would have died that day. Wanting to escape from you, leaving that suffocating home, was a decision I made after careful consideration. The decision—maker has always been me, and it has nothing to do with them. They are the people who saved my life, more than once. Actually, I'm really angry at them, why did they save me? If they had let me die earlier, I wouldn't have to endure these painful days."

These words deeply touched Zavier's sensitive nerves.

"Skyler, if you really want to die, then I'll satisfy you." He approached Skyler, once again ignoring Skyler's will, pushed Skyler onto the dining table and fucked her

Although it was painful, Skyler didn't feel any pain. Despair and suffocation were slowly devouring her.

Chapter 1071

With each step. Comelia kept glancing back, "Jeremy, I reckon Zavier's lost his marbles. With Skyler alone with him, will he hurt her?"

"Get in the car, I'll ring Zavier Marcus whipped out his mobile and dialed Zavier's number. After two rings, the call was cut off. He dialed again, only to get an automated message that the phone was switched off.

Comelia said, "Zavier's not only ignoring your calls but has his phone turned off? What's up with that?"

Marcus shared Comelia's concern. He feared that Zavier might do something rash and regret it later, "Cornelia, wait here. I'll go back and check"

Comelia said, I'm coming with you."

"Alright." Marcus took Comelia's hand and turned to go back, only to be blocked by a sudden appearance of a bodyguard.

The bodyguard, a stern expression on his face, said, "President Hartley, you've stepped out of this compound. Without Mr. Rivera's permission, we cannot let you in. Please understand"

Marcus stared coldly at the guard in front, "And what if I insist on going in?"

Comelia quickly held Marcus back and politely said to the guard, "We mean no harm, we just want to speak with Skyler again."

The guard replied, "Mr. Rivera has already made it clear that once you leave this compound, you're no longer his friend. If you're not his friends, it's going to be tough getting in. If you want to talk to Skyler please contact her. She can come out to meet you"

Since Skyler returned to Zavier, her phone was controlled by him. Cornelia couldn't get through to her, or else she wouldn't have bothered with this.

"President Hartley and Mrs. Hartley want to see someone, who are you to stop them! Like a ghost, Ayden suddenly appeared at Marcus' side, glaring fiercely at the bodyguard blocking Marcus and Cornelia.

Ayden's towering figure was intimidating, even without making a move. The bodyguard, although losing in terms of aura, showed no sign of backing down, still blocking the entrance and said, "President Hartley, you may get past me, but you won't be able to get through that door. And even if you do, the security system inside isn't easy to deal with. You may not be afraid of getting hurt, but what about your wife?"

Ayden stepped forward, "President Hartley, let me clear the way for you."

The bodyguard stood in front of Ayden, "This is Riverton, the Hartley Group's territory. If you try to force your way in, we can't stop you. But are you sure you want to do that? Frankly speaking, you're no longer friends with Mr. Rivera. Whatever happens between him and his wife has nothing to do with you. They're married, they're family, and to them, you're outsiders. Skyler is Mr. Rivera's wife. Even if Mr. Rivera tortures her to death, it's their family business. What can outsiders do?"

Cornelia couldn't stand his words, "I dare you to say that again"

The bodyguard replied, "No matter how many times you ask me to repeat it, the answer is the same. Although Skyler is known as Mr. Rivera's wife, in reality, she's just Mr. Rivera's pet. She's completely dependent on him. If he says go east, she can go west. If he orders her to laugh, she must oblige. She's been like this for years. I don't know why she suddenly grew a pair, even aborted Mr. Rivera's child and tried to escape. Since she ran away, she should have run far and never come back. I guess she ran out of money or wanted more benefits from Mr. Rivera, so she shamelessly came back."

Upon hearing the bodyguard's words, Cornelia was furious and more determined to find Skyler, "Out of my way!"

The guard continued, "You're going to force your way in? Do you want to see how Mr. Rivera torments Skyler?"

Cornelia was left speechless. After a moment of silence, she grabbed Marcus' hand, "Let's go."

Marcus was taken aback, "You're not going to find Skyler?"

Cornelia shook her head, "That's their business, I shouldn't be nosy."

Even though she desperately wanted to help Skyler, Cornelia didn't dare to take the risk. If Xavier was indeed doing something to Skyler, their impulsive intrusion would only make things more awkward for her.

Chapter 1072

Comella cared the world for Skyler. There was no way she would do anything to embarrass her. Marcus saw through her, "Comelia, don't sweat what other people think Just go with your gut." Comelia chuckled a bit, "But opinions matter. We're in a world where few can really do as they please."

Could others do it or not? Comelia didn't know. All she knew was that she couldn't.

And she guessed Skyler probably couldn't either.

Marcus said, "Let's roll."

"Sure" Cornelia glanced at Ayden.

Ayden had been with Marcus for way longer than she knew him. Because Marcus had always shown her respect, Ayden had treated her the same way

On the other hand, Dr. Dawson, despite being with Marcus for years, got fired for disrespecting him.

Zavier's bodyguard dared belittle Skyler, disrespect Skyler, which only meant Xavier had never shown Skyler the respect she deserved in front of his subordinates.

At this moment, Cornelia was both heartbroken for Skyler and felt helpless. She wanted to help Skyler, but didn't know how. Because Xavier was Skyler's husband, many people

e saw whatever harm he did to Skyler as their private business, none other's beeswax. Just like when many victims of domestic violence sought help, people would say it was a family matter, and outsiders shouldn't poke their noses into it.

Cornelia's helplessness stemmed from this environment.

They didn't eat much at dinner, feeling down in the dumps.

On their way home, Marcus asked Cornelia, "You still up for some grub?"

Cornelia had been thinking about Skyler and didn't have much appetite. But she knew she couldn't go on like this, so she said, "I've got a hankering for Buffalo wings There's a joint near our place."

Marcus said, "You navigate, Ill drive."

Cornelia, "Sure."

4

Before long, they reached their destination. Marcus parked the car on the side of the road, then went to the restaurant with Cornelia.

It was past the dinner rush, and the restaurant was about to close. Cornelia quickly ordered two dishes, her favorite Buffalo wings and grilled lobster.

The lobster was not spicy, specially chosen for Marcus. But Marcus barely touched it Feeling a bit awkward, Cornelia said, "You pick the place next time. I'm not fussy, I can chow down on anything"

Marcus said, "I'm just not hungry today. It's not about the food."

Cornelia looked at Marcus seriously, "You've been looking off-color all night. How about we have Dr. Lester check you out later?"

Chapter 1073

Marcus said, "I'm fine."

Marcus said he was okay, but Cornelia didn't buy it.

She wolfed down her food,

'Regardless, I want Dr. Lester to check you out, just so can breathe easy'

Marcus grabbed Comelia's hand, holding it tightly, "Comella, I suddenly fancy a movie, would you join me?"

Comelia pulled out her phone. "Let me call Dr. Lester first. Once he gives you the green light, I'd watch a million movies with you."

Marcus knew Comelia was as stubborn as a mule, so he just nodded in agreement.

When they got home, Dr. Lester showed up in no time. Throughout the check up, Cornelia stood by Marcus' side, her eyes filled with worry.

Marcus gave Dr. Lester a look and he immediately caught on, turning to Cornelia, "Comelia, Marc's just got some minor issues. As long as he eats right and stays off the booze, he'll be just fine."

Comelia said. "That's reassuring"

Dr. Lester asked, "Could you fetch him a glass of water?"

Comelia said. "Right away"

As soon as

Cornelia left, Dr. Lester's face fell He gripped Marcus' wrist anxiously, "Marc, what on earth is wrong with you? Why is your pulse suddenly so slow?"

In all his years of practice, Dr. Lester had never seen anything like it. He freaked out

Marcus said, "I'll fill you in later. For now, we have to keep Comelia in the dark."

Dr. Lester said, "Marc, your life is what matters most. Everything else is secondary"

Marcus scoffed, "You think I don't want to live? But from the moment I was born, there's been someone who wished I hadn't made it into this world."

Dr Lester got the hint, "What did Brennen do to you when you were little?"

Marcus didn't say anything, which was as good as a yes.

Dr. Lester cursed, "Bastard! He really is a bastard! If he didn't want you, he should've kept it in his pants. Now he has you and your sister, and he doesn't even like you guys. Why doesn't that bastard drop dead?"

Marcus said, "Zip it! Comelia's coming"

Just as he said that, Cornelia walked in, "Dr. Lester, who were you swearing at? I heard it from outside."

Dr. Lester was pretty chill, so if he was cussing someone out, they must've done something real nasty. He was fuming, "I'm talking about those bastards who can't control themselves"

Cornelia fell silent.

Marcus said, "If you want to swear, do it at home. I'm fine here. You can go"

Dr. Lester wanted to say more, but Marcus told him to keep it from Cornelia, so he left. "I'm going. Remember what you said, or else I..."

Marcus gave him a cold look, "Or else what?"

Dr. Lester felt a chill, didn't dare to say another word, and left with his medical bag.

Cornelia took Dr. Lester's word for it. If he said Marcus was okay, she felt a bit more at ease. She handed Marcus a glass of water, "Here, have some water. After you finish, we can start the movie. Any favorites?"

Marcus didn't really care about the movie. He cared more about who he was watching it with, "Anything's fine"

Cornelia said, "I'll set up the projector, and then we can pick a movie together"

Chapter 1074

Marcus dropped some serious dough on a big house in Lakeview Estates. It didn't get a dedicated movie room like the Blueshell Mansion or Celestial Chateau, but he still splurged on some top-notch projection gear.

At his joint, they got a movie experience that was a cut above the rest, way better than the run-of-the-mill home projectors.

Marcus said, "I don't wanna watch a flick at home, I wanna hit the theater with you!"

Comelia responded, "It's almost eleven, and we've got work tomorrow. Let's catch a movie tomorrow night. You rest up tonight"

Marcus gently patted her head, "Tonight, we stick to the plan"

Time wasn't on his side, it was their first cinema date, and might be their last too.

Comelia didn't quite get why Marcus was so hell-bent, but if he wanted it, she would accompany him.

The nearest cinema was just outside their residential area, it was walking distance.

Hand in hand, they strolled to the cinema. Cornelia had never hit the cinema alone with a guy before, so she was kinda excited. "Let's see what's playing"

Summer blockbusters were in full swing, plenty of flicks to choose from. A rom-com would be a safe pick for a date night, but the one available had crap reviews.

In the end, Cornelia went for a war movie, "Whatcha think about this one?"

Marcus said, "It's a solid flick."

Cornelia said, "I'll grab the tickets. Front row or back row, what's your poison?"

Marcus answered, "I'm treating you to the movies, I'll get the tickets. How 'bout the last row?"

Cornelia said, "Sounds good."

Marcus not only grabbed the tickets, but also went for Coke and popcorn.

Cornelia stopped him, "I just wolfed down a ton of buffalo wings. I'm stuffed."

Marcus said, "We don't necessarily have to eat 'em. It's just what girls usually get, you should have them too."

Cornelia quipped, "Other girls have a young boyfriend, should I have one too?"

Before, if Cornelia made a joke like that, he'd huffily tell her that he was the only man in her life.

But today, after a moment's contemplation, Marcus seriously told her, "You can check out other guys; if you fancy someone, let me know."

Cornelia stared at him in disbelief, "Are you the same Jeremy I know?"

Marcus was never the romantic type, but today he not only asked her out, but also said some scary stuff. Cornelia couldn't help but question if this was really the Marcus she knew

Marcus took her hand, "You can joke with me, can't I joke with you?"

Cornelia clutched her chest. "You scared the bejeezus out of me."

Marcus wasn't the type to joke before, so his sudden joke really rattled her.

Marcus wrapped his arms around her, "The movie's about to start. Let's get our tickets checked."

Cornelia took the popcorn while Marcus handled the tickets.

They were both stunning, the ticket checker blushed upon seeing them.

As Cornelia and Marcus walked off, they heard whispers, "Did you see those two? Si go od-looking and classy! Are they some lesser-known celebs? If so, I bet they'll be hot stuff soon."

Chapter 1075

Marcus was no stranger to receiving compliments and they didn't really faze him anymore.

Cornelia was a beauty with brains, the kind of kid parents would brag about. But since she lost her parents at a young age, some people labeled her as bad luck, giving her the cold shoulder wherever she went. So, compliments weren't really something she was used to. When she heard words of praise now, it would get her all worked up.

She looked up at Marcus with a smile, "Did you hear that, President Harley? They're singing our praises. Not just you, they're complimenting me as well."

Marcus lightly touched her hair, "Even if they didn't, you're pretty amazing"

Cornelia beamed at this, clutching onto Marcus' arm, "How could I match up to someone as amazing as you if I weren't? Don't you think?"

Marcus pulled her into his arms, "You're the best version of you. You should live for yourself, not to match up to anyone."

Cornelia rolled her eyes at him, "You're such a buzzkill. I'm trying to be romantic, and you're giving me a lecture."

Marcus stayed silent

Cornelia changed the subject, "Let's go watch a movie."

It was a war film. Every time she watched something like this, Cornelia would cry like a faucet. And today was no different.

Not too long after the movie started, Cornelia was already holding back tears. She didn't want Marcus to see her cry, so she tried to look up. But the next thing she knew, Marcus was handing her a tissue, "Here."

Cornelia took it, "How'd you know I was crying? Were you watching me instead of the movie?"

She was just saying it casually, but she hit the nail on the head.

Marcus was slightly taken aback. "I just happened to see"

Cornelia wiped her tears and focused back on the movie, but the tears started to fall again soon after.

Every time she cried, Marcus would wipe her tears. For about a third of the 150-minute film, Marcus was wiping her tears. By the end of the movie, Cornelia's eyes were red and swollen, making her look both pitiful and funny,

Marcus asked, "Do you always cry during movies?"

Cornelia sniffed, "No, just war films. I cry when I see team unity and sacrifices. I'm just a softy when it comes to these kinds of movies. Not with others."

Marcus said, "Try to avoid these films when I'm not around."

Before Cornelia could respond, Ayden rushed up to them, "President Hartley."

Marcus said, "Just spit it out, no need to beat around the bush."

Ayden said, "Could you come with me? I need to discuss something personal."

Marcus said to Cornelia, "Wait here for me."

Cornelia figured Ayden wasn't here for personal matters, but she didn't press further watching Marcus follow Ayden a few steps away.

Ayden said, "President Hartley, I just received news that Skyler died."

Marcus' voice rose slightly, "What?"

Ayden said, "Skyler committed suicide by poison. I was worried Cornelia wouldn't take the news well, so I wanted to tell you first. Do you think we should let her know?"

The news sent a chill down Marcus' spine. He didn't even want to imagine how Cornelia would react

Chapter 1076

After a brief pause, Ayden continued, "Rumor has it, Skyler was found under Xavier, spitting blood. Now, Xavier's completely lost it, clinging onto her lifeless body" Marcus once warned Xavier not to do something he'd regret, but Xavier didn't listen, hence the tragedy, "You better leave now"

Ayden replied, "Alright"

After Ayden left, Cornelia moved closer to Marcus, "It's getting late, let's head home"

She didn't ask what Ayden and Marcus were talking about if he could discuss it, Marcus would surely tell her.

Cornelia

took the initiative to hold Marcus' hand, gripping it tightly as if she could feel his heartbeat, "The moon is so round tonight. Is it almost full?"

Marcus replied. "It was full last night."

Comelia said, "Okay"

Their hands intertwined, they slowly walked home. After a while, Marcus stopped, "Comelia, something happened to Skyler"

Comelia felt a pang in her heart, "What happened?"

Marcus replied, "Skyler committed suicide by poisoning"

Comelia was stunned for a while, her mind went blank. Just a few hours ago, Skyler was able to smile at her. She could hold Skyler, and feel Skyler's warmth.

How much time had passed?

She just went home, then went out to watch a movie, and now they were telling her Skyler was dead.

Comelia shook her head, "I can't believe Skyler would commit suicide. She told me she wanted to live. She loved life so much, how could she choose death?"

Marcus pulled Cornelia, "Cornelia, don't panic. Let's go check it out, maybe Ayden got it wrong"

Cornelia said, "Okay, let's go right away."

Marcus drove quickly, taking Cornelia to the previous courtyard.

The courtyard looked no different from usual. As they arrived, someone appeared at the entrance. It was the same bodyguard, but this time, he didn't stop Marcus and Comelia, instead pleading with them, "President Hartley, Mrs. Hartley, please go see Mr. Rivera."

Marcus said, "Lead the way."

The bodyguard hurriedly led the way, "Follow me"

Marcus asked, "Did he call a doctor?"

The

bodyguard replied, "He did, but it was too late. By the time the doctor arrived, Skyler, no, Mrs. Rivera had stopped breathing. Now Mr. Rivera is muttering to himself holding a corpse. No one dares to approach him. Only you can help."

He had driven Marcus away before, but now he was pleading with him. If it were someone else, they would probably punish him. But Marcus was magnanimous and let it pass.

Once they entered the inner courtyard, Marcus felt uneasy again. That strange feeling was back, making it hard for him to breathe. But he had no time to think; not wasting a second, he and Cornelia followed the bodyguard to where Xavier was.

As they entered the room, they saw a naked man and woman.

The man was shouting wildly, shaking the woman in his arms, "Skyler, I told you, you're mine alive, and you're mine dead. I didn't give you permission to die, yet you dared to. I'll make your family join you!"

However, no matter how he yelled or shook her, the woman in his arms never opened her eyes.

Marcus stood in front of Cornelia like a mountain, trying to block her view, "Cornelia, don't look."

But Comelia had seen it all. Skyler was covered in scars of various sizes, some red, some purple Each one a silent testament to Xavier's cruelty.

That bastard'

Sharp pangs of pain searing through Comelia's nerves, she was on the verge of collapsing

But she managed to stagger past Marcus, picked up the scattered clothes, and wobbled towards Skyler,

'Let me put some clothes on Skyler first' She said to the unhinged Xavier.

Hearing Comelia's voice, Xavier jerked his head up. "You? You dare show up?"

His eyes were filled with intense killing intent, as if he wanted to tear Cornelia to shreds.

Cornelia repeated, "Let me put some clothes on Skyler first"

Suddenly, Xavier reached out and grabbed Cornelia by the throat. "What magic have you cast on Skyler you witch? Why would she rather die than stay with me?"

Like a bolt of lightning. Marcus rushed up and rescued Comelia from Xavier's grasp, his voice chillingly terrifying, "Xavier, are you asking for a death wish?"

Pushed away forcefully, Xavier began to laugh maniacally, "Yes, I want to die! What's the point of living if Skyler is dead? Marcus, kill me. Let me join her."

"If you really want to die, then fine" Marcus turned his worried gaze to Cornelia, "Are you okay?"

Comelia shook her head

Seeing Cornelia was okay, the murderous intent in Marcus' eyes slowly faded. He stared coldly at Xavier, "I've told you many times, if you truly love Skyler, you should treat her well. Look at what you've done!"

Cornelia coughed twice, then took over, "You claim to love Skyler, yet you hurt her. Is that love? That's just sick possessiveness."

She walked back towards Skyler, ignoring her own safety, and draped the clothes over Skyler's battered body, trying to give her some dignity.

Zavier claimed he loved Skyler. Now that seemed more ridiculous than a joke. He was just using love as an excuse to harm a girl who was weaker than him in every

respect

It was like those stories where the male lead sexually assaults the female lead upon their first meeting, saying "I'll take responsibility" or "I'll marry you. Just because he said it beforehand, did it stop being assault?"

And those stories where the male lead treated the female lead like dirt, yet she fell for him. Those were just stories!

Skyler was a real person, a living, thinking individual with a solid understanding of what was right and wrong. A man professed his love to her every day, yet kept her locked up, torturing her, forcing her to do things she didn't want to do. She knew this wasn't love.

It was sick control!

The more Cornelia thought about it, the angrier and guiltier she felt. She had sensed that Skyler was in danger. She could have saved her again. But she listened to the bodyguard's advice, believed it was a marital issue, thought she, as an outsider, shouldn't interfere. So, she chose not to intervene.

If she hadn't listened to those negative comments, if she were mentally stronger, could she have ignored the criticism?

Could she have saved Skyler again? But there were no ifs.

Chapter 1078

She bought into the voices that doubted her She became fearful, shrinking back, unable to save Skyler once more

Skyler was no longer able to see the goodness in the world

Zavier smirked, "My feelings for her aren't love? I only have a sick obsession with her? How long have you known Skyler? What gives you the right to judge me?"

Comelia didn't want to argue anymore, "You should put Skyler down It's causing her pain"

Zavier blocked out everything else. All he could hear were Comelia's accusations. "There are plenty of women who'd want to sleep with me, I could have any number of women every day, but I don't. It has always been just Skyler for me. In the months she's been gone, I've had physical needs and handled it myself, never been with another woman. If this isn't love, then tell me, what is it?"

Comelia replied coldly, "You think because you haven't slept with other women, that means you love Skyler? Zavier, stop fooling yourself. If Skyler could feel your love, would she rather die than be with you? Skyler is dead, died in your arms, died while you were raping her"

Those words, they stung Zavier deeply. But he still refused to admit that Skyler's death had anything to do with him.

He swung at Cornelia, so swift that she couldn't dodge. Fortunately, Marcus was always cautious. He caught Zavier's fist in time, forcefully pushing it away and dragged Comelia up. "Let's go!"

Zavier laid Skyler's body on the ground, slowly stood up, "Marc, your wife is here, don't let her leave. She was close with Skyler. Let her keep Skyler company. Then my wife is dead, yours too, and we can still be friends, right?"

Just as Xavier finished speaking, the lights in the courtyard flickered erratically, going bright then dark, accompanied by eerie music.

"Cornelia, don't be scared, and don't listen to the music." Marcus quickly covered Cornelia's ears.

Cornelia didn't know what was happening, but she too covered his ears immediately. Seeing her instinctual reaction helped Marcus feel a little better. He smiled and gently touched her forehead. Though he said nothing. Cornelia could see the meaning in his eyes.

This scene hurt Xavier deeply.

He didn't understand why Cornelia and Marcus were so close, why Skyler was so repelled by him? But it didn't matter now.

Soon, Marcus would lose Cornelia, just like him, a man who lost his wife.

With a wave of Xavier's hand, someone nervously stepped forward, "Mr. Rivera."

Zavier said, "Speak."

The man stuttered, "Our security system has been compromised. The assassins we've hidden here have all been controlled."

Zavier looked at Marcus, "Marc, I underestimated you"

Marcus said, "I never had any intention of confronting you, nor of hurting you, but I've always stayed vigilant."

Zavier said, "I can't kill Cornelia today, but I have plenty of opportunities."

A bodyguard received a message, his face turned pale and hurriedly said, "Mr. Rivera, I just got word from the Capital, Old Duran wants to adopt Cornelia as his granddaughter"

Zavier asked, "Which Old Duran?"

Chapter 1079

In the Capital, the only one referred to as Old Duran, other than Augustine Duran of the Duran family, didn't exist. That was what Xavier knew, but he just didn't

wanna believe it.

The bodyguard muttered, "Mr. Rivera, it's the Dumn family The most powerful in the Capital

The Duran family was way more than just that Generally speaking, the influence of the Duran family was something ordinary businessmen couldn't touch.

Thinking of Old Duran, even a nutcase like Xavier felt a chill down his spine, "How could this be? Could there be a mix-up?"

The bodyguard replied. "The message came from your grandfather There's no mistake"

Zavier turned to Comelia, his eyes filled with disbelief and shock, "Cornelia, what's your secret? You've actually gotten in touch with Augustine!"

Comelia didn't know what her secret was. She didn't even know when she was acknowledged as Old Duran's granddaughter.

However, Marcus knew how exceptional Comelia was, and why Augustine wanted to acknowledge her as his granddaughter

Before Comelia could ask, he had already given her the answer, "After our last meal, Old Duran was really impressed with you. He mentioned in private that he wants to acknowledge you as his granddaughter. I haven't had the chance to tell you yet."

Zavier said, "I see. She's just a small assistant from a small city. How could she have such influence? So, you've been pulling all the strings behind the scenes. Are you worried that after you leave, she won't have anyone to protect her, so you got her connected with the Duran family for backup?"

Cornelia caught the most crucial word in Xavier's sentence, "Leaving?"

Marcus responded quickly. "We should go."

Zavier said, "Your husband is leaving."

Cornelia immediately pushed Marcus away. She couldn't leave before she figured out what Xavier meant, "Zavier, explain yourself."

But Marcus suddenly leaned into Cornelia. Cornelia, caught off guard, held Marcus back, "What's wrong?"

Marcus held his chest, whispering. "The scent here makes it difficult for me to breathe."

Cornelia immediately supported Marcus, "Okay, let's get out of here."

They wanted to go, but Xavier wasn't about to let them, "Marcus, I said I would make your wife die. How can I let her leave alive?"

Marcus, who had been staggering, suddenly stood tall, shielding Cornelia, "You want to hurt Cornelia? You're not capable of it"

With that, Marcus led Cornelia away.

Zavier yelled, "Stop them. They can't leave until they hand over Skyler"

However, Xavier didn't expect that Ayden had already surrounded all his men. He couldn't stop anyone. He could only watch as Marcus took Cornelia away.

After walking a few steps, Marcus turned back, "The only thing you can do now is to give Skyler a proper burial. You didn't respect her when she was alive. Now that she's gone, I hope you can give her the dignity she deserves."

"Dignity?" Xavier laughed like a madman, "That woman was sent to my family when she was a teenager. Everything she had was given by me. From the moment the Blue family sent her over, she became my pet. She's just a pet, and what dignity can she expect?"

Cornelia thought Xavier had truly gone mad. She wanted to say more, but Marcus forcibly took her away.

After they left, Xavier walked towards Skyler while laughing, picked up Skyler from the ground, and kissed her cold, colorless lips. "Skyler, they say I'm mad. Do you think I'm mad?"

Chapter 1080

Zavier said, "Back in the day, everyone thought I was a nutcase, but you were the only one who didn't. You even told me, everyone was scared of me, but not you. You'd stick with me no matter what. Were you just sweet talking me, huh? Skyler, snap out of it! Tell me, when did you first plan to ditch me? Have you gone deaf, or are you dumb? I'm asking you a question, why the hell aren't you answering me? Skyler, you think just because you won't talk, I can't do anything to you?"

As he was saying this, Xavier bent down and kissed Skyler's cold lips. After who knew how long, he finally let her go, then shook her, "Skyler, you little bitch, you think you can just leave me by dying?"

He gently stroked her face, as if he was handling a delicate piece of porcelain, "Skyler, I've told you, even if you die you're still mine. Even in death, don't you dare think about leaving me"

He held her icy body close, hugging her tightly. "Skyler, do you think I should bury you at our home?"

Or should I burn you to ashes and swallow you bit by bit? Or maybe I should dry you out, hang you by my bed, and keep you with me forever?"

Just hearing this was enough to scare the hell out of the bodyguards nearby. They all held their breath, scared that Xavier might turn his attention to them and they'd be the ones getting the short end of the stick.

Meanwhile

Marcus had already left the yard with Cornelia. Once they were out of the yard, the strange smell disappeared, and Marcus could breathe much easier. But soon, he started feeling dizzy and his steps became unsteady. If it weren't for Cornelia supporting him, he would have fallen.

Cornelia asked, "Were you just putting on an act earlier, or are you really not feeling well?"

Marcus asked, "Did you smell a strange scent in the yard?"

Cornelia nodded, "Yes. It was really unpleasant."

**Marcus stroked her head. "That smell must have been targeted at me, which is why I had such a strong reaction. But I'm fine now that we're out."*

Cornelia asked, "What did Xavier mean by what he said earlier?"

Marcus replied, "He wants me dead. But does he think just anyone can take my life?"

Cornelia asked, half-believing. "Really?"

Marcus didn't want to talk about it anymore. He opened his arms and hugged Cornelia, "Cornelia, I believe every couple gets married with the intention of spending their lives together. But no one can predict what happens after marriage. There are many couples who end up parting ways. Not all can grow old together."

Cornelia asked, "Are you trying to tell me something about our future?"

Marcus was taken aback. He had underestimated Cornelia's intelligence. He had thought he was just spouting off about Xavier and Skyler, but Cornelia quickly saw through him..

Cornelia knew, ever since Marcus had met with Brennen in Rosenberg, he had changed . She tried many times to find out what Brennen and Marcus had talked about, but Marcus always refused to tell her.

The more he kept silent, the more she believed it must be something significant.

Chapter 1081

Marcus' silence pretty much screamed that he was hiding something from her.

Comelia continued, "Jeremy, if you genuinely care about me, if you truly see me as your wife and want to share a lifetime with me, then I hope that no matter when or what happens, you'll let me in. We share the burden together. You can't keep me in the dark"

To Comelia, being his wife meant standing by his side through thick and thin, not just the good times.

Marcus suddenly blurted out. "What if Brennen's right? What if Marcus is Marcus and Jeremy's Jeremy?"

Comelia was startled, "What are you babbling about?"

Marcus chuckled and tousled her hair, "I'm just saying, if Brennen's right, what would you do?"

Comelia responded firmly. "There's no 'if'! Marcus is Jeremy and Jeremy is Marcus. That's a fact. Don't ever bring this up again!"

Marcus said, "I was just teasing you. Didn't know you'd take it seriously."

Comelia sternly said, "Is this something to joke about?"

Marcus said, "Alright, I won't joke about it again. Let's head home now."

Comelia peered back into the courtyard, still feeling uneasy. "What about Skyler? In Xavier's current state of madness, I'm afraid he wouldn't even spare Skyler's corpse. Shouldn't we arrange a funeral for Skyler?"

Marcus said, "Skyler was your friend, and we owe it to her to help. But there are things that we can't do. I've already notified her parents. They should be on their way."

Just then, Comelia's phone buzzed, signaling a new email.

Comelia's inbox was primarily for work, so any incoming email was usually crucial. Whenever, whenever, she would check it immediately. She hurriedly fished out her phone and opened her email app, only to find the new message was from Skyler.

It was

a long letter that read: [Cornelia, by the time you read this, I'll probably be long gone. I haven't really done anything good or bad in my life, so I reckon I'm headed for heaven. If it's heaven, it's got to be better than here. So, don't mourn for me, alright?

Once upon a time, I was in love with Xavier. He was young and full of life, a magnet for the ladies. And I was lucky. I didn't have to chase him like the others. I had a front row seat because our families had arranged our marriage. I was his fiancée. Back then, like many young girls, I was too shy to confess my feelings. I would steal glances at him, write about him in my diary. I wrote in my diary every day, recording what he did, who he met, who he talked to. Every little thing about him seemed important. I documented it all.

I wasn't sure if he liked me back then, but I thought it didn't matter. Because I believed that one day he would marry me. But I later realized that him liking me mattered a lot. I remember once when I was writing in my diary, he barged into my room and snatched it from my hands.]

Chapter 1082

(After reading my diary, he smirked, "Skyler, you've got a thing for me?"

My feelings towards him were suddenly exposed and I was caught off guard I was blushing so hard and didn't know what to say. I couldn't admit that I liked him, nor could I deny it.

He flipped through my diary from start to finish, then laughed, "I thought you were different from other girls. But it turns out you're just like them, all drawn to my charm"

I'll never forget that moment. His words stung, and they've stuck with me. I'll never forget!

He suddenly moved closer, whispering in my ear, "We're both adults now, and our parents have arranged our engagement. Come to my room tonight, and let me officially make you mine."

I didn't want to go, I didn't want to sleep with him under these circumstances, but I felt powerless to refuse. Because I knew that I was just a pawn in my family's game. The moment I was sent as a "gift" to the Rivera family, I lost my right to say "no."

That night, I went to Xavier's room and we had sex. From then on, he demanded that I visit his room every night. Every night! Even when I was on my period, or feeling unwell, if he wanted me, I had to go.

Whenever he had worn me out, he always asked the same questions. What kind of person did I think he was?

Was he crazy? Did I love him? Would I stay with him forever? At first, I answered honestly. He didn't

want to hear the truth. Whenever I told him the truth, he would torture me even more. I thought I might die under him many times.

Later, I learned to say I loved him, that he wasn't crazy, that I would stay with him forever. I thought he must

know that I was only saying these things to avoid his torture, but he loved to hear them.

For a while, he demanded that I tell him every day. Whatever he wanted to hear, I would say, repeating it over and over

Later, when the Blue family's business was going downhill and the Rivera family wanted to break off our engagement, I thought, finally, I can escape from this man. Finally, I can be free. But that crazy man refused to end our engagement. He wouldn't let me leave. He said I was his pet, always would be, and pets are supposed to die by their master's side, not leave them. So, against the objections of the entire Rivera family, he stubbornly dragged me off to get a marriage certificate. We became legally married.

After becoming his wife, we appeared to be a loving couple to the outside world. Everyone thought I was living a glamorous life, and they all envied me for marrying Xavier. But no one knew what I had to do when we got home. Xavier would make me kneel on the floor to serve him and come up with all sorts of ways to humiliate me. Those things not only tortured my body but also my soul. Many times, I felt like an animal, with no human dignity left]

Chapter 1083

[During that time, I was just a zombie, trying to adjust my mentality and think of myself as a pet with no dignity, not allowing myself to think too much. But I was sober, and I knew I was a human being I wanted basic respect and wanted to live with dignity So, from then on, I had the idea of running away from him in my

heart.

I talked to my mom about this, and she said, "The Rivera family is now powerful, they can help the Blue family get back on their feet. Xavier is willing to marry you even during the downfall of our family. You should be grateful."

I responded, "I didn't want to marry him."

My mother said again, "You're already married to him. You're husband and wife. You have to follow Xavier once you marry him, and no matter how hard life gets after marriage, you just have to suck it up."

My mother asked me to bear with it. I tried to bear with it too. But it wasn't once or twice that he abused me, it was countless times. I remember once, because I didn't feel well and wasn't enthusiastic enough, Xavier thought I was distracted, must be thinking about other men. So he took a knife and slashed a few wounds on my leg, tortured me for a whole day. I nearly lost my life that time.

I wanted to bear with it, but how long could I endure this life that drained me physically and mentally? After that incident, I started planning to leave him. I thought that with my efforts, I should be able to successfully leave him. To leave Xavier, I had to completely cut off all troubles. So I always took contraceptives, absolutely not letting myself bear his child.

But as time went on, there were always times when I slipped up. Just once, I didn't take the contraceptive, and I got pregnant. A child conceived after taking so many drugs would definitely not be healthy, I didn't want that child to come into this world to suffer, so I was always looking for a chance to abort. I looked for countless opportunities, but no one was willing to help me. Everyone thought we were husband and wife. Quarrels between husband and wife would always calm down. Everyone advised me to live a good life with Xavier, but I really couldn't go on, every second with him was torture for me.

I don't know who made the rule that you can only persuade a couple to reconcile and not to divorce.

Out of desperation, I placed my hopes on you whom I had just met. I invited you to the hot springs,

I knew Xavier would come, so I put on a big show when you were all there. I thought I was so pitiful, there should be someone among you who could help me, get me away from Xavier, give me a breather.

I wasn't wrong. It was indeed you who saved me. You brought me to Riverton, trying to I

et me relax, and I left at that moment. Xavier couldn't find me, so he blamed everything on you. He didn't know that it was his actions that made me want to escape from that suffocating place. He didn't know that I actually used you.

Cornelia, I'm deeply sorry! I took advantage of your sympathy without you knowing.]

Reading this, Cornelia was already in tears, as if she could personally experience the suffocation and despair that Skyler felt.

"Skyler, you don't have to apologize! Helping you was my choice. I was influenced by the outside world and couldn't save you again. Otherwise you wouldn't have..." Cornelia whispered

Marcus quickly hugged Cornelia, "Cornelia, try to calm down first, continue reading later."

Chapter 1084

Cornelia was adamant about reading the letter Skyler had written for her, "I need to finish this letter. Maybe Skyler needed my help, and this time, I'll be there for her no matter what"

With Cornelia firm on her decision, Marcus had no choice but to agree. He quietly accompanied her, drying her tears.

Skyler's letter continued:

[Then, in France, when I found out how quickly Xavier had found me, I was in despair, and I wanted to end my life. But it wasn't my time to die then, Marcus, your

husband, saved me again.

He asked me why I wanted to end my life?

I answered, who would choose death if it were possible to keep living. As long as you're alive, there's endless hope, but I couldn't see the future.

Once caught by Xavier, I would have to continue living a life without dignity. If I'm to continue this undignified life, I'd rather choose death. But I believe life is precious, we only get one shot at it, and there's no do-

overs. A strong will to survive prompted me to beg Marcus for help. I asked him to save me. I knew he had the power to help me completely escape from Xavier, so I begged him to help me escape from Xavier, to give me a chance to survive.

Perhaps because of you, he agreed to help. I knew Marcus and Xavier were friends, I was scared that he would reveal my whereabouts to Xavier. At that time, in order to escape from Xavier, I did something terrible. I told him that if he revealed my whereabouts to Xavier, you would be cursed. I knew Marcus cared for you, so I used this as leverage.

Because Marcus cared enough about you, and perhaps because he made a promise to me, he never revealed my whereabouts no matter what Xavier did to him. But I'm still in Riverton, and I know Xavier is causing you trouble. I know that if I go back to Xavier, I'll surely die.

After much consideration, I decided to come back. Because you helped me, and I can't selfishly hide and let you bear everything for me. Cornelia, if there's a next life, I hope I won't meet Xavier again. I hope I can still meet you and be your lifelong friend.

Lastly, I want to say thank you! Only you, did not refuse to help me because Xavier and I were married or considered our issues as a private matter between a husband and wife, and that outsiders should not interfere. You gave me warmth, and you gave me hope to live. Even though it was short-lived, it was worth coming to this world once.]

Just as Cornelia finished reading Skyler's email, she heard someone shouting, "Fire! Fire!"

“It seems like the place where Xavier and Skyler are is on fire. Cornelia, dial the fire department, I’ll go check it out” Marcus said, rushing towards the yard.

“Jeremy, be careful!” Cornelia did not impulsively follow him, but first dialed the fire department, and only entered the yard to help after confirming it was safe.

When Cornelia arrived at the scene of the fire, Marcus and the bodyguard were trying to restrain a hysterical Xavier.

Zavier was frantically trying to rush into the yard, “Let me go, Skyler is still inside, I need to save her!”

Chapter 1085

The fire was raging, and even from a distance, Cornelia could feel the waves of heat hitting her

At this point, it was impossible for anyone to dash in Even if they tossed steel into it, it would probably melt in a blink of an eye. If Xavier rushed into the fire now, it would be nothing short of suicide Naturally, Marcus and the bodyguards wouldn’t allow him to do so.

The weather was scorching, and all the buildings in the yard were made of wood, so the fire was spreading like it was fueled by oil, incredibly fast. As the fire was about to reach them, everyone was in danger if they didn’t evacuate.

Panicked, Cornelia said, “Knock him out and drag him away.”

Upon hearing this, Marcus swiftly struck Xavier on the back of his neck. The emotionally unstable Xavier passed out instantly, hanging onto them.

“Ayden” Marcus commanded. Ayden immediately stepped forward. Marcus said, “Get Xavier to a safe place right now. You and Dr. Lester keep an eye on him. If he freaks out again when he wakes up, sedate him”

“Roger” Ayden picked up Xavier and left.

With Xavier down, his men were leaderless and turned to Marcus, “President Hartley, what should we do now?”

Marcus said. “The fire is beyond our control. Have everyone who’s trying to put it out retreat to a safe area and wait for the firefighters.”

The bodyguard said, “Roger”

Marcus said, “You, come tell me how this fire started”

The bodyguard said, “Alright”

Marcus took a couple of steps and then realized Cornelia was still standing there. He came back and quickly took her hand, “Cornelia, the fire is about to reach us. It’s dangerous here, go to a safe area and wait for me.”

Cornelia said, “Okay. Be careful, I wait for you outside” With the fire being so massive, Cornelia knew she couldn’t be of any help. If she insisted on staying, she would only distract Marcus. By obediently going to the safe area and waiting for the firefighters, she was already doing a big favor by not causing trouble for

Marcus.

Marcus ruffled her hair, “I know, go on.”

With a nod, Cornelia left

After she left, Marcus looked at the bodyguard. The bodyguard truthfully recounted the events, “President Hartley, after you left, Mr. Rivera was acting like a madman, kissing and biting Skyler’s body. He even said he wanted to keep Skyler

with him in a special way. Then he took Skyler back to the room, and when he came out to prepare the tools, there was suddenly a fire in the room.”

Listening, Marcus felt something was off but didn't voice his suspicion.

Seeing Marcus' expression, the bodyguard cautiously said, “President Hartley, as you know, Mr. Rivera is a lunatic. We don't know what he will do when he wakes up. His grandfather can't control him either, so we'll have to rely on you in the future.”

Marcus coldly glanced at the bodyguard, “Was it you who said once I left the yard, I would be cut off from him?”

The bodyguard wiped the sweat from his forehead nervously, “I misspoke. You're so forgiving, please don't hold a grudge over this little thing”

Marcus had no plans to hold a grudge, “Regardless of whether the Rivera family can persuade him, you should inform them to come over as soon as possible. Even if you look down on Skyler, she's still Xavier's wife, Mrs. Rivera.”

The bodyguard said, “Roger”

At this moment, the sound of the fire alarms echoed from the distance. The firefighters had arrived.

Marcus, along with the bodyguards and others, worked hard to assist the firefighters in extinguishing the fire.

Chapter 1086

Cornelia wasn't slacking off either. The fire was a real blaze, not something she could put out in a jiffy. By the time the fire was out, everyone who had been fighting it would probably be beat.

She found a nearby convenience store, buying a bunch of water and stuff like chocolates and bread that could perk them up pretty quick. She couldn't directly fight the fire so she decided to do the grunt work

The fire was massive and didn't die down until the wee hours of the morning.

Everyone who'd been fighting the fire was wiped out. Cornelia handed out water and food to everyone, helping them get their strength back. Once everything was sorted, Cornelia grabbed a bottle of water and a couple of chocolates, and started looking for Marcus in the crowd.

She did a lap but couldn't find Marcus. Cornelia was a bit on edge and asked a guy near her, "Have you seen Marcus?"

He replied, "You looking for President Hartley?"

He pointed to the left, "He should be over there."

"Thanks" After thanking him, Cornelia went in the direction he pointed.

After wading through the crowd, Cornelia finally found Marcus at the ruins, covered in dust.

Marcus was usually a clean freak, always immaculate. This was the first time Cornelia saw him looking like a dust bunny. She walked up to him right away, giving

him the water and chocolates, "Drink some water first, then chow down on these chocolates to get your energy back."

She pulled out a wet wipe from her pocket, wanting to help him clean his face, "Your face is all dirty. Let me clean it up for you."

But Marcus suddenly rubbed his face against hers, really going for it.

He was rubbing pretty hard, making Cornelia's face hurt but she didn't dodge, "Jeremy, what are you doing?"

Marcus let go of her, looking at the dust on her face, and said seriously, "You wanted to clean my face, didn't you?"

Annoyed, Cornelia said, "Is this how I wanted to clean your face? Are you only going to be happy when I'm as dirty as you?"

Marcus said, "Yes"

Cornelia was speechless.

He actually dared to answer?

She balled up her fist, wanting to give him a punch, but she let it go, tears welling up in her eyes.

Seeing her on the brink of tears, Marcus felt bad, "Cornelia, I'm sorry. I didn't know you were afraid of getting dirty. I won't play pranks on you anymore."

"I'm not upset because you got my face dirty, I don't need your apology!" Cornelia threw herself into his arms, holding onto him tightly.

Marcus stroked her head, "What's wrong then? Did someone upset you?"

Cornelia said, "Just shut up, let me hold you, let me know you're still here."

Marcus wasn't sure if Cornelia knew something, he was a bit confused but didn't let it show, "Where else would I be?"

Cornelia sniffled, her eyes red, "When I couldn't find you just now, I got really scared. I know nothing will happen to you but I was still scared. I was really scared you'd be gone."

Chapter 1087

Marcus felt a heavy weight on his heart. "That's just life, innit? No one can stick with us forever, we meet different people at every stage of life"

7 don't give a damn what others do" Comelia replied, "You told me we'd grow old together, so you gotta stick with me, can't abandon me. If you do, I'll hate you forever, and never forgive you"

Yeah, Marcus had made such a promise. But back then, he had no clue about his health condition. Now, he knew his health was going downhill, and he wasn't sure how long he could be with her. So, he dared not make any promises to Cornelia anymore.

Marcus tried to change the subject, "Comelia, I'm parched, can I get a drink of water?"

Comelia immediately let go of him, "Get yourself hydrated and grab a bite. You've been fighting the fire for hours, must be dead on your feet. I reckon I should postpone this morning's meeting, you should head back and rest."

Marcus replied, "No need, I can hang on."

Comelia insisted, "Nothing's more important than your health. I'll sort it out, you have to go home and get some shut eye."

Faced with Cornelia's firm stand, Marcus had to comply, "Alright then."

Comelia looked up at the ruins, the spot where Skyler had been, the origin of the fire, also the most devastated area, "Is Skyler...?"

Marcus answered, "Burnt to a crisp, not even bones left. We can't tell which are her ashes and which are the woods."

Comelia felt a pang in her heart, "How did the fire start? Did Skyler have to be turned to ashes to finally escape from Xavier?"

Tears fell from her eyes, "I've been orphaned since childhood, cursed by neighbors for bringing bad luck, later framed and couldn't return home. So I always thought I was the most miserable person in the world. But compared to Skyler, at least I've got Granny Rebecca who loves me, Abby and Zack who stay by my side, and now you. But Skyler, she's always been alone, doesn't even have a friend to confide in. She wanted to escape Xavier, but people around her always advised her to bear with it, never to divorce. Nobody k

new Skyler's inner pain, so she couldn't escape the man she feared the most and had to resort to such an extreme way to end her life."

Marcus also looked at the spot, "Don't beat yourself up. It might be a relief for her to choose this way."

After the fire, Marcus and firefighters went to Skyler's location. Generally, a fire wouldn't burn a person to nothing but ashes, but Skyler was just that, reduced to a pile of ashes that might not even be hers.

Cornelia felt guilty, "I could have saved Skyler. If I had insisted a bit longer last night, maybe I could have stopped her suicide."

Marcus cut her off, "Cornelia, you gotta understand, Skyler's an adult. She knew what she was doing, and she had to take responsibility for her actions. You're her friend, it's great if you can help her. But if you couldn't save her, don't blame yourself, got it?"

Cornelia got his point, but just couldn't stop feeling bad.

Marcus gently patted her head, then said. "The Rivera and Blue families should be here soon, let them handle the situation here, we should head back."

"Alright." Cornelia looked at Skyler's spot, bowed deeply, "Skyler, like you said in the letter, if there's a next life, we'll meet again in spring"

Marcus said, "If you wish, you'll meet again."

Cornelia replied, "Yes, we surely will."

Just then, Ayden came over to report, "President Hartley, Xavier's awake"

Marcus asked, "Is he still out of control?"

Ayden replied, "He's been lying there quietly since he woke up, hasn't done anything. But his hair's turned all gray in just a few hours."

Marcus took Cornelia's hand and said, "Let's go see him."

Chapter 1088

Comelia said, "You go see him, I'll wait here"

Marcus knew Cornelia had a bone to pick with Xavier because of Skyler. She didn't want to set foot near Xavier and Marcus didn't push her. "Alright then"

A bit later.

Marcus saw Xavier, his hair had turned gray This guy, not even thirty, seemed to have aged overnight. He was lying in bed, staring blankly at the ceiling, not uttering

a word

When Marcus walked in, he didn't react

Marcus sat at his bedside, "Xavier"

Xavier didn't move, didn't respond

Marcus continued, "Skyler's been burnt to a crisp."

At the mention of Skyler's name, two tears rolled down Xavier's face and then he chuckled, "Here to rub salt in my wounds, are ya?"

Marcus asked. "You really think I'd do that?"

Xavier said, "Does it really matter to me?"

Marcus said, "I'm here to talk about Skyler"

Every time he heard Skyler's name, Xavier's heart ached as if stabbed, but he wouldn't admit it, "Don't bring up that heartless woman in front of me."

Marcus looked at his gray hair and the tears in his eyes, shaking his head in frustration, "Look at the state you're in, still playing tough. Don't you get why she had to leave?"

Xavier said, "I don't know, do you?"

Marcus said, "You once told me you liked her, but did you ever tell her? Did you ever show her in your day-to-day life?"

Zavier said, "You've only been hitched a hot minute, don't pretend to be a love guru."

Marcus said, "I'm no expert, but I know the first rule of liking someone is to respect them."

Zavier laughed, then cried,

"She's been with me since she was a teenager. She's an integral part of my life. So she's seen my worst side. I thought she understood me, and I never hid my emotions from her. I wore my heart on my sleeve. The Blue family needed money. I knew they didn't have the chops to run a company, and that my investment might go down the drain. But because they were her family, her support, I still forked over some cash to the Blues. But how did they repay me? How did she treat me? She actually aborted our child, thinking about leaving me. She actually thought about leaving me!

I loved her so much, why did she want to leave me? Marc, you tell me! I'm begging you, tell me why."

Chapter 1089

Marcus snorted in derision, "Wasn't I clear enough before? If you can't even respect a person, what right do you have to say you love her?"

Zavier was speechless.

Marcus continued, "Before Skyler left, she left Cornelia a long letter. Cornelia and I glanced over the general content. I'll ask Cornelia if she's willing to let you read it. If Cornelia agrees, I'll send you the letter, in the hopes you'll understand

how hard Skyler had it while she was with you, why she'd rather die than stay by your side."

Zavier looked at Marcus, "Does it even matter anymore? Even if I know now, can she come back to me?"

Marcus fell silent

Zavier went on, "Marc, be honest with me. Are you mocking me? Do you think I deserve to be in this state? Do you think I shouldn't be bothering you, pestering you every day to bring Skyler back to me?"

Marcus, "Zavier, you've changed."

"I've changed? Or have you changed?" Zavier laughed, "You've changed. You used to never let a woman distract you, look at yourself now."

Marcus said, "After a man has a family, shouldn't he put more thoughts into his family?"

Zavier was stunned for a moment, suddenly realizing where he fell short compared to Marcus, "No wonder Skyler always wanted to leave me, and Cornelia is so loyal to you. It's because I never considered her and me as a family"

Marcus didn't know what to say, he just listened quietly without saying a word.

Zavier continued, "We're about the same age, and I've been involved with women much longer than you, yet I'm not as smart as you"

Marcus said, 'Skyler is gone. Don't be too upset."

Zavier said, "You can go. I want to be alone for a while."

"Alright Marcus didn't say much else and turned to leave.

Outside the lounge, Zavier's bodyguard rushed over, "President Hartley."

Marcus said. "The calmer Mr. Rivera is now, the more worried you should be. Keep a close eye on him, don't let him do anything rash."

Bodyguard said, "Yes, we'll keep an eye on him. Are you leaving now?"

Marcus didn't answer, he just walked away

Cornelia was waiting for him at the elevator. When she saw him coming out, she wanted to say something, but couldn't.

Marcus reached out and ruffled her hair, "What do you want to say?"

Cornelia asked, "Is Zavier okay?"

Marcus answered, "He's still alive"

He was still alive! But he was living like a walking corpse, better off dead!

Listening to this, Cornelia felt terrible, but she scolded him. "Serves him right!"

Marcus said, "Steven and Lucas are also on the plane, they should be arriving soon. Let's go home and change clothes, we still have things to do."

"Okay." Cornelia took the initiative to hold his hand, "Why are your hands so cold again?"

In this kind of heat, stepping out of an air-conditioned room for a short while would make him sweat. But his hands were still as cold as ice, definitely not normal. Cornelia said, "You should go to the hospital for a full body check-up."

Marcus smiled and said, "The air conditioning in Zavier's room was set very low, I'm a bit cold, but I should be fine in a while."

Cornelia insisted, "You have to see a doctor."

Marcus shook off her hand, he walked ahead and said, "I know my own body better than you do, if I need to see a doctor I will. You don't need to keep nagging me to go to the doctor, I'm not sick yet."

Cornelia had no reply.

What a pain in the ass!

He did it on purpose to piss her off!

Chapter 1090

On the way back, Ayden was the driver

Comelia and Marcus sat in the backseat

Because of the argument just now, they each leaned on their side of the car after they got in, leaving a big gap in the middle, neither seemed to be in the mood to talk to the other

Soon enough, Marcus dozed off in his seat. He had pulled all-nighters before. Last year in Paris dealing with some issues, Cornelia even stayed up with him a few times, but he didn't seem this tired back then.

She guessed his old condition might be acting up again. Even though Cornelia was still angry, she immediately sent a message to Dr. Lester, asking Dr. Lester to come and check on Marcus again. Then, she gently turned Marcus' head, hoping he could rest more comfortably on her shoulder.

However, the moment she touched Marcus, he suddenly opened his eyes, a fierce killing intent in his eyes. When he saw it was her, the killing intent disappeared instantly

Comelia said, "It's me."

Marcus buried his head in her arms and said, "I know it's you"

Cornelia gently patted his back, saying, "Go to sleep. I won't bother you anymore."

Marcus said, "Comelia."

Cornelia asked. "What?"

Marcus said. "In one night, Xavier's hair went all gray. If one's partner dies, will the other be this heartbroken?"

The image of Xavier's hair turning gray, aging a decade overnight, was all he could think about. He couldn't bear to imagine if he were to die one day, would Cornelia's hair turn all gray overnight, would she age a decade overnight?

Marcus didn't want to think about it, but he had to face this question. He didn't want Cornelia to endure the same pain as Xavier, didn't want Cornelia to have her hair turn all gray overnight, to age a decade overnight.

Cornelia said, "It probably depends on the relationship between the couple. After all, not every couple would react this way?"

Marcus held her hand and said, "If one day..."

Before he could finish, Cornelia seriously interrupted him, "Don't say such weird things. There are no 'ifs, we'll be together forever."

Marcus asked, "What if one day I fell in love with another woman?"

Cornelia felt a pang in her heart when she heard this, but she answered calmly, "If you fall in love with another woman, you should tell me. Don't let me find out on my own. Don't do things that would hurt me"

She paused, then asked, "Would you fall in love with another woman?"

Marcus could assure her that he wouldn't, absolutely wouldn't! But he chuckled and said, "People's hearts can change. I wouldn't now, but who knows about the future?"

Hearing this answer, Cornelia was very uncomfortable, but she didn't say much, just stubbornly turned her head to look out the car window, refusing to even glance

at him.

Marcus knew she might be angry, bearing the pain in his heart, he didn't try to soothe her, just continued to keep his eyes closed to sleep.

After a while, as they were about to reach home, Cornelia suddenly turned her head, angrily shouting. "Jeremy, come here!"

Her voice was so loud it even startled Ayden, who was driving in front. But Marcus remained motionless, his eyes closed.

Cornelia was even more furious, "You liar! I should never have believed you! You were the one who said we'll live a good life together, but now you're telling me you might fall for other women. Your actions are unacceptable."

Chapter 1091

Marcus slowly opened his eyes, seeing Cornelia with her eyes all red and teary. Even her nose was red. He instinctively reached out to touch her face.

However, just as his hand was about to touch her, he quickly withdrew it. "You need to learn to tell who's blowing hot air and who's not."

Cornelia shot back, "Well then, tell me which of your words are full of baloney and which ones are not?"

Marcus replied. "Maybe everything I say is baloney"

Cornelia shouted, "Jeremy"

Marcus said. "Call me Marcus from now on, don't call me Jeremy anymore. I don't like that name. To be more precise, I don't like the identity of Jeremy because it

can't be made public"

Cornelia fell silent. When they got married, he was under the name Jeremy, and now he was telling her he hated the name

and the identity. He was a smart cookie, he must have known how much this would hurt her. But he said it anyway, without giving a damn about her feelings.

Comelia looked at him, holding back her tears, "My husband's name is Jeremy, and that's the only identity I recognize."

Marcus asked, "Do you believe Brennen's words?"

Comelia fell silent again.

Suddenly, Ayden interrupted their conversation, "President Hartley, we're here!"

Marcus replied. "Alright"

Comelia gave him a look, got out of the car first, and stormed off

Meanwhile

Zavier returned to the place where Skyler was last seen. Upon hearing that Skyler was reduced to ashes, he didn't say a word. He just sat next to the ashes, silently staring at them, sitting in silence.

He sat for a long time, no one dared to disturb him.

About an hour later, it was already broad daylight. Their friends and family started to arrive. The first to arrive were Skyler's parents.

The bodyguard asked, "Mr. Rivera, Skyler's parents are here, shall we let them in?"

Zavier asked, "Skyler, do you want your parents to come in and see you?"

Skyler wasn't there anymore, unable to answer him. But he insisted on waiting for an answer, "Skyler, tell me. If you don't speak, how do I know whether to let them in to see you or not?"

He knew very well he wouldn't get an answer, but he kept talking to himself, "Skyler, I've told you before. As long as you behave, I can give you anything you want. But now you're being disobedient again. Since you're not answering me, then I'll get someone to invit

e them for some coffee and wait for a while. Whenever you answer me, I'll let them come see you."

The bodyguard was scared stiff hearing all this, not daring to remind him of anything.

Zavier kept talking to himself, "Skyler, I just thought about it, we've been together for so many years, and it seems like you've never mentioned your parents to me. What's your relationship with them like? Did you not mention them because you hate me, then does it mean you have a good relationship with them?"

Why don't you answer me? Hurry up and answer me. If you don't answer me, I'll get mad. And you know the consequences can be severe when I'm mad. Skyler, don't test my patience time and time again, I don't have all day to waste on you"

Chapter 1092

Zavier continued, "Skyler, if you keep playing the silent game, I swear I'll shut you up for good, you believe me? You still don't wanna talk? You think I won't do it? Who the hell gave you this much guts to stand up to me now? Is it Comelia? What's Comelia? She's just a woman from a small town. Besides a pretty face, what else does she have? She doesn't know any big shots, and she's broke. Are you out of your mind to ask someone useless like her for help?"

Or maybe, it's not Comelia, it's Marcus. You got Marcus to help you, smart move. But you think just because you've got Marcus, I can't find you? Skyler, Marcus won't live for long. As soon as he kicks the bucket, the Hartley Group will split in no time, and only I can protect you then. Why can't you understand?"

Skyler, don't ignore me, I beg you, don't ignore me. If you'd just talk to me, if you'd just come back, I'll leave you alone from now on. You can do whatever you want, okay? Skyler, come back. Come back to me. Skyler, if you don't come back, fil

bankrupt the Blue family, you believe that? You don't? Well, let's wait and see. Let's see if I can make your family homeless in a day."

Zavier was still muttering to himself, showing no signs of stopping.

The bodyguard was sweating bullets, starting to doubt if Mr. Rivera had lost his marbles . After god knew how long of rambling, Zavier suddenly shouted, "Someone!"

The bodyguard hurried over, "Mr. Rivera, what can I do for you?"

Zavier said, "Bring Skyler's parents here now, I want them to teach their daughter a lesson. Their daughter is 'getting too bold, not responding to me for so long."

Bodyguard, "Yes, sir."

With the green light, the bodyguard brought Skyler's parents into the yard.

As soon as Barbara entered the yard, she burst into tears, "Mr. Rivera, why has your hair turned gray? It's all Skyler's fault, she didn't cherish her life and just had to commit suicide"

Her words were off.

Zavier turned around and silently stared at Barbara Blue.

Barbara continued. "Mr. Rivera, it's okay if Skyler is dead. The Blue family has other girls more beautiful than Skyler. We've brought them all here. Whichever girl you fancy can be your woman. We just beg you not to stop funding the Blue family."

Zavier suddenly cooled down, coldly looking at the woman in front of him, "What did you say?"

Barbara said, "The Blue family has many girls prettier than Skyler. We brought them all here today. If you want, we can bring them to you now. Whichever girl you like, just take her. If you like all of them, they're all yours."

Upon hearing the news of their daughter's death, their first reaction was not grief, but the fear of losing Skyler and thus Xavier's financial support for the Blue family. In their hearts, money had always been more important than Skyler.

At this moment, Xavier truly understood why Skyler never mentioned her parents in front of him all these years. Maybe, all these years, they never gave her any love. They just wanted to take advantage of her.

These people were shameless! They were even more shameless than him!

They were more hateful than him!

Zavier took a deep breath and asked, "What are you saying?"

Chapter 1093

He couldn't believe that these words actually came from Skyler's own mother. They had handed their daughter over to him and now there wasn't even a body left of Skyler

Shouldn't they be asking him questions? They didn't! It was as if Skyler was never their child in the first place.

Barbara thought Xavier hadn't heard clearly, so she repeated what she'd said.

Then, she added. "Mr. Rivera, we know that Skyler has been a handful these years, causing you a lot of troubles. We really appreciate your patience. Now that she's gone, it might be for the better. We'll find some sensible girls to take care of you in the future. You won't have to worry about a thing"

At this point, Xavier finally understood Skyler's place in their hearts. He chuckled, "Did you give birth to Skyler?"

Barbara answered, "Yes, she was my firstborn. We didn't know much about raising kids then, so her personality was a bit off. But rest assured, we've done a better job with her sisters. They're nothing like Skyler. They won't trouble you at all."

"You're already troubling me." Xavier glared at the woman in front of him. Skyler bore some resemblance to her, but he couldn't see any trace of Skyler in her eyes. This woman's eyes were filled with greed and schemes.

Barbara replied with a smile,

"Mr. Rivera, how have I troubled you? You need to tell me. You can't keep it bottled up. It'll only make you upset."

Barbara's husband, Bernard, chimed in, "Exactly, Mr. Rivera, we're all family here. Just tell us what's bothering you."

Zavier was furious, "I'm not family with disgusting people like you. Get lost! Stay away from me, I don't ever want to see you again!"

Zavier was the only one the Blue family could rely on now. Without his financial support, they would be bankrupt in no time. The Blues knew they were barely hanging on, and maybe going bankrupt would be a better option, but they couldn't stand the thought of being poor and living like one.

They believed that as long as they didn't declare bankruptcy, they still had a chance to restore the Blue family's glory and stay in the upper class. They didn't want, to lose their status, and they didn't want to be detached from the upper class, so they would never leave Zavier.

Barbara fell to her knees, "Mr. Rivera, if Skyler had done anything wrong, tell me. I'll apologize on her behalf. We truly see you as family, you can't just leave us."

Bernard put on a show,

"Sweetheart, don't worry. Mr. Rivera is just talking. He won't really cut ties with us, nor will he abandon the Blue family."

Zavier said, "If you don't leave, you can forget about getting any more money from me in the future."

Bernard asked, "If we leave, will you still wire us money regularly?"

This man was shameless, still trying to squeeze money out of him. They could forget about getting anything from him. From now on, they would never get a single

dime from him.

Zavier sneered, "If you want money, I can give it to you. As long as you can bring Skyler back to me, I'll continue to invest in the Blues."

Upon hearing this, Barbara immediately shouted, "You, come over here."

As soon as Barbara finished speaking, a tall, slender, young, and beautiful woman came out from behind them.

When he first laid eyes on her, Xavier's eyes lit up. "Skyler?"

Was Skyler still alive?

As the girl slowly approached, Xavier got a clear view of her face, and he knew, she couldn't possibly be Skyler. Despite her face being almost identical to Skyler's, she looked too young, just as youthful as Skyler was when he first met her

There were no signs of age on her face, no calm demeanor like Skyler's, and certainly none of the determination and resolve in Skyler's eyes.

The girl stepped forward and said gently, "Mr. Rivera, my name is Iris."

Zavier reached out, wanting to touch that familiar face, yet hesitated. His hand hung in midair, unsure.

Seeing this, Barbara and Bernard quietly left together. Only Xavier and Iris remained.

Zavier stared at that familiar face for a good while, and in the end, he couldn't control the desire in his heart. Even though he knew she wasn't Skyler, he still wanted to keep her by his side. He uttered a sentence with difficulty, "Come closer"

Iris obediently walked over and stopped two steps away from him.

Zavier said, "Give me your right hand"

He remembered, Skyler had a mole in the center of her right palm, particularly conspicuous. When he was in a good mood, he loved to kiss that mole in her palm.

Iris did as she was told. She seemed calm, but when she stretched out her hand, it trembled slightly.

Zavier looked at her outstretched hand, there was no mole he was hoping to see. He picked up a piece of charcoal from the ground and made a mole in her palm just like Skyler's

Ins felt itchiness in the palm of her hand and instinctively wanted to pull her hand back, but Xavier held it tight, "What are you nervous about? Don't you want to?"

Every nerve in Iris' body was tense, yet she had to act nonchalant, "To be favoured by you is my luck, why would I refuse? I'm nervous because you're like a noble king, and I'm a slave at your feet. How can I not be nervous?"

His ego was inflated by her words while she sank into the mire. These were definitely not the words of a normal person with modern thinking.

Zavier was pleased

with the mole on her palm, and he kept looking at it, "Who taught you to say these things?"

Iris knew her sister had a mole in the palm of her right hand. She often heard family members discussing that the mole meant Skyler would bring bad luck to her husband. They were worried that Skyler might accidentally cause Xavier's death and the Blue family would have nothing to rely on. They all wanted to gain benefits from Xavier through Skyler, but no one ever cared about Skyler's situation.

When they heard about Skyler's accident in the middle of the night, their first reaction was not to check on her, but to figure out how to appease Xavier and not let him sever ties with the Blue family. So they brought their daughters here, seemingly willing to offer all their daughters to Xavier as his new lovers.

It was downright appalling!

She couldn't change any of this and had to follow their arrangements, saying things that contradicted her true feelings, "Nobody taught me. This is just how I think."

Chapter 1095

Zavier eyed her, "Really?"

Iris didn't know Xavier

well, just heard he was a nutcase who'd dare to do anything. Regardless of whether the

rumors were true, keeping her distance from him and minimizing conversation was undoubtedly the smart move, "Mr. Rivera, may I see my sister?"

"You remember you have a sister?" That was rare, someone in the Blue family actually remembered Skyler, and remembered they were here for Skyler, "Too bad, your sister is now ashes."

He pointed to a pile of ash in front, a grim smile on his face, "This pile of ash is your sister. Your sister has become ash. Do you see it?"

Iris looked on, heartbroken She wanted to act nonchalant, but tears escaped her eyes.

Zavier watched her. She didn't seem to be putting on an act. Look at me." Zavier said.

Iris did as told. There was not an ounce of light in this young girl's eyes. Apart from their faces, she shared no similarities with Skyler.

Still, he said, "You stay.

Iris said, "Okay"

Hearing Zavier ask the girl to stay from a distance, Barbara and Bernard both wore relieved smiles.

Bernard said, "So Zavier really does like girls like Skyler"

Barbara was somewhat worried,

"Iris is like Skyler Quiet on the surface, but with a lot of thoughts in her head. I worry she'll be as hard to control as her sister was."

Bernard said, "What's the problem with being hard to control? Do we have a better choice? Zavier likes this type, and chose her, can we make him change his mind?" Barbara said, "Skyler was really a piece of work. I've told her so many times to take good care of Zavier, not to have other ideas. She didn't listen, and ran off. I thought she came back this time to care for Zavier, instead she died."

Bernard said, "At least Xavier didn't get angry at us because of her actions."

Barbara said, "It's not that Xavier didn't get angry with us, but we made sufficient preparations, showed him the benefits. Otherwise, who knows what he would've done to us."

Bernard said, "As long as he continues to fund us, it's fine."

A bodyguard suddenly appeared behind them, "You may leave now!"

Bernard and Barbara said, "Okay, we'll leave right away."

They didn't dare hope that Xavier would invite them to stay for lunch.

After all these years, Xavier had never once invited them for a meal. He didn't even want to see them.

But what did that matter? As long as Xavier was willing to shell out money, help keep their company afloat, and ensure they could still move in high society, it was all good.

Before leaving, they took one last look at Xavier and Iris deep in the courtyard. Xavier seemed to be still talking, but they couldn't hear anymore.

Xavier was indeed still talking to Iris, "How old are you?"

Iris said, "I'll be seventeen on the tenth of next month."

She was still a minor, once again being offered up by the Blue family like a gift. Just like Skyler.

Xavier remembered, when Skyler was sent to the Rivera family, she was even younger than this girl. But Skyler's eyes were very bright, full of vitality, always curious about things around her.

Xavier remembered, not long after Skyler came to the Rivera family, one day it was just the two of them at home. He was bored, so decided to water the plants. She happened to be there too, so he called her over

He thought being a rich girl, she wouldn't do such things, but she was very adept, as if she did it often. His prank didn't work out, and he even lost interest in watering the flowers.

Chapter 1096

He kicked back, lazily watching her buzzing around the garden. There was this incredibly intriguing flower in the garden. Spotting it, she lit up, "Zavi, what's this flower? I've never seen it before, can you tell me?"

Botany really wasn't his forte, so he was clueless about what flower it was. He didn't answer, and didn't plan on doing so.

Looking into her bright eyes, he let out a harsh line, "Who told you to call me Zavi?"

"Is there a problem with me calling you Zavi?" She looked at him, her dewy eyes filled with confusion.

Her voice was such a melody, especially when the word Zavi was on her lips, soft and tender, like a gentle strum on his heartstrings.

But he coldly snuffed out the light in her eyes. "You're not qualified to call me that."

She never spoke of him in that way after that. He used every trick in the book to get her to call him that

again, even after they got married and when they were having the most private moments in bed. She would make concessions on anything, but never on his name.

He knew she held grudges.

#

One day, he asked her why she was watering the plants. She said she liked doing it, and she used to do it all the time at home. He bought it, hook, line, and sinker

After they got married, he had the yard filled with all sorts of plants and flowers for her.

With all those plants, he didn't bother hiring a gardener. He thought she enjoyed taking care of plants, so he left her to tend to the whole garden on her own.

Before, he didn't realize how much work it was to maintain so many plants. Whenever he was home, he hardly ever saw her caring for the plants. She would always take care of them when he wasn't home.

Until one time, he came back from a business trip two days early and saw her slaving away in the garden, weeding and watering, her back aching, complaining.

"Is Xavier out of his mind? He's into plants, fills the yard with them but doesn't hire a gardener. He doesn't take care of them himself, dumps all the hard work on me. Does he think I'm his maid?"

He had the yard filled with flowers because he heard she liked watering plants, so she'd have something to do when he wasn't around and she wouldn't be so bored. He didn't get why she was so pissed.

He asked her, "Are you tired?"

She said, "I'm fine."

He asked, "Didn't you say you like watering plants?"

She shot back, "I like watering plants? News to me"

At that point, he even wondered if he remembered it wrong. But now he realizes, it wasn't a memory slip, it was just that she grew up in a certain kind of family, where she had to learn certain things. There were things she didn't like doing, but she had to go against her own wishes and say she liked it

She had learned to mask her true feelings from a young age, so despite being together for years, he never really knew what she was thinking. He always thought she was very submissive, very easy to control. It wasn't until she blew up that he realized

she had her own mind, and once she made up her mind, nothing could change her decision.

Chapter 1097

Zavier blurted out, "Did I really mess up? Even if I did, she shouldn't have left me like that"

Iris had

no clue what Xavier was talking about. She didn't dare to respond, just stood there silently, wondering if her life would end up like her sister's.

Gone so young? She didn't know if she could change her destiny through hard work.

Just as she was confused about her future, Xavier suddenly turned to her, his eyes sharp as if he was going to eat her alive, "Tim asking you, are you deaf or just

mute?"

Ins was scared by

his anger, but she found the courage to fight back, "Did you treat my sister the same way?"

Her words hit Xavier where it hurt the most. He looked at Iris, "You also want to die?"

Ins said. "Why do you always threaten people? Did you really kill my sister? She didn't commit suicide?"

Zavier walked towards Ins, grabbing her throat, "Were you just pretending to be submissive? Is the Blite family playing me again? If you want to know if your sister killed herself, I can let you ask her yourself"

With his strong grip, Ins started to turn red and struggle for breath "Just because you look like Skyler, doesn't mean you can talk to me any way you want. Your sister never dared to talk to me like this. You're asking for trouble!" Xavier said.

Ins throat was being choked. She couldn't breathe, let alone speak. As her face turned from red to purple, then from purple to white, her struggling got weaker, and Xavier finally let her go, "Got a taste of death, did you?"

Lack of oxygen made Ins' mind foggy, she couldn't think at all, but she could still feel Xavier's terror. More accurately, she just realized how terrifying Xavier really was She had heard about it before, but she never believed it until she saw it with her own eyes.

After a while, Iris finally came back from the brink of death, and she stared at Xavier with fear in her eyes.

This look pained Xavier. It was like the look Skyler gave him.

When was that? He couldn't remember

Why would his wife look at him with fear? He couldn't remember, but the dead memories started to attack him. As if reminding him that he was a villain.

Was he a villain?

Every time he was unhappy, he took it out on people around him, if not a villain then what? He laughed again, "Did you piss me off on purpose? Want to join your sister?"

Iris said nothing

Zavier yelled, "Speak!"

Iris said fearfully. "Who would want to die if they could live? I didn't mean to piss you off. I just wanted to know how my sister died."

She paused, watching Xavier's reaction, then continued, "My mother once told me that my sister was a fool, that she'd rather die than live with you. My parents knew she was miserable

with you, but they still sent me over. I'm afraid I'll end up like my sister I want to change my future, but I'm not sure I can."

Zavier asked, "You want to change your future? How do you plan to do that?"

Ins answered, "I'm not sure."

Zavier asked again, "Didn't your family send you to school?"

Iris answered, "I was supposed to go to college next year"

Zavier asked, "You still wanna hit the hooks?"

Chapter 1098

Iris couldn't catch his drift, just kept a poker face, afraid of voicing out her thoughts.

She feared he'd be like her family, prying into her real feelings, then mercilessly crushing her dreams, trying to mold her into a mere tool

She didn't respond, but Zavier had already read between the lines, "You wanna go back to your folks?"

Iris shook her head, very firmly, "No way!"

She knew that if Zavier sent her back, she wouldn't only be unable to keep schooling, but her parents would write her off as useless, and God knew what future they'd set up for her if she wanted to dodge that bullet, she had to run away from that family first

Zavier looked at her, "I can tell, you don't wanna. You don't wanna go home, you don't wanna live with me, then what the hell do you wanna do?"

Ins wanted to pull the wool over his eyes, but Zavier cut her off before she could even spit it out, "Don't even try to con me. I can see through your little schemes.

Since she couldn't fool him, she had to spill the beans.

Ins gritted her teeth, and honestly confessed, "I want to go to school, I don't want to be controlled by them anymore, and I don't want to be raised into a woman who only knows how to cater to men"

Zavier smirked, "Well, you do have something in common with your sister. Marcell

The bodyguard came over, "Mr Rivera, your orders?"

Zavier asked. "Did you get the urn?"

Marcel answered, "The urn is on the way, it'll be here any minute.

Zavier continued, "When it arrives, bring it to me. I want to take Skyler home with me."

Marcel responded, "Yes, sir."

Zavier glanced at Iris again, "Take her back to the Capital, get her into the best school, and let her continue her studies."

Marcel replied, "Yes, sir."

Iris couldn't believe her ears. "Are you really gonna send me to school?"

Zavier said, "I'm not a good guy, just in a good mood and willing to let you off. Cherish this chance. Get out of here before I change my mind, I don't want to see you again"

Marcel said, "Ins, follow me."

Iris followed the bodyguard a few steps, then looked back at Zavier, "Mr. Rivera, thank you!"

Zavier chuckled.

This little girl knew how to play her cards right, even better than Skyler.

In a short while, Marcel came back, "Mr. Rivera, the urn has arrived. President Dixon and Lucas are here too, you want to see them?"

Zavier took the urn, squatted down, and started to gather the ashes into the box, "Who invited them? What are they doing here at this time? Are they here to laugh at me?"

Marcel asked, "So, do you want to see them?"

Zavier responded, "No! Send them away"

Marcel answered, "Yes, sir."

After Marcel left, Zavier continued to carefully gather the ashes, "Skyler, I'm taking you home now. Be a good girl when you get home, don't go anywhere else ever again"

While doing this, he paused. A few seconds later, he threw the urn away and started to laugh like a madman,

"Skyler, you really wanted to help Marcus that much? What's so good about Marcus compared to me?"

No one answered.

He pulled out his phone, and dialed a number, "I accept your invitation. I'll join you guys to fight Marcus with everything I've got! If he doesn't die, then I will!"

Chapter 1099

As if Zavier had got some kind of telepathic connection with him, right after Zavier hung up the phone, Marcus, who had just finished showering, sneezed.

Even though Cornelia was still angry with him, she was concerned that he might catch a cold. So she quickly grabbed a dry towel and said, "Sit down, let me dry

your hair"

Marcus had a habit of not drying his hair after showering, and every time he came out of the bathroom, his hair would still be dripping with water. But Cornelia had to admit that Marcus looked really appealing when he came out of the bathroom.

Every time she saw him, she couldn't help but sneak a few more glances. She even wanted to look at him forever.

Marcus asked, "Aren't you mad at me anymore?"

Comelia glared at him in anger and said, "I'll be mad at you after I dry your hair"

Marcus was amused by her adorable appearance. He lifted her up and leaned her against the wall. "You wanted to have a baby before, right? Shall we have a child?"

Comelia was startled by his sudden action and instinctively held him tightly, looking like a koala clinging to him.

Marcus lowered his head and rubbed his forehead against hers, "Cornelia, tell me, do you still want to have a baby?"

Every time he called her name, she found it incredibly pleasing. His voice was both sexy and husky, making her cheeks flush.

She did want to have a baby, she had always wanted to have several children, but the timing wasn't right now. "I'm on my period. Let's have a baby after it's over." Comelia said

Marcus called her, "Cornelia."

Cornelia answered, "What?"

Marcus made a move and gently kissed her.

After a while, the slightly dazed Comelia heard him say, "Besides you, how could I possibly like any other woman?"

Cornelia wasn't sure if she misheard, so she wanted him to say it again. But suddenly, the phone rang, interrupting her thoughts.

Marcus seemed completely unaffected by the phone ringing and continued kissing her.

Comelia pushed him gently, "It's the phone"

Marcus said, "I'm not answering"

The phone rang and stopped, stopped and rang again. It rang many times, before Marcus, satisfied, let go of her. He walked to the side and picked up the continuously ringing phone, answering, "If I didn't answer your call, it means I'm busy. Can't you see that?"

Steven said, "Did I interrupt the two of you?"

Marcus replied. "What do you think?"

Steven said, "Zavier refused to see us, so you come and meet us."

Marcus said, "Wait there, I'll be right over."

Steven said, "Okay"

Marcus hung up the phone and told Cornelia, "Steven and Lucas have arrived. I'm going out to meet them."

Cornelia asked, "Did Hannah and Rosie come too? If they're there, I'll go with you."

Marcus said, "Steven doesn't like it when you and Hannah are too close. You didn't sleep last night, you should rest at home and not make him unhappy."

Cornelia replied, "If he doesn't want me to be close to Hannah, should I avoid her? Hannah is an independent individual too, she's not his accessory. Does she not even have the freedom to make friends?"

If Skyler's incident hadn't happened, Cornelia might have avoided seeing Hannah for this reason, but now she wouldn't. Even if everyone scolded her for meddling, she still wanted to see Hannah

Marcus looked at her and said, "Your lips are swollen."

Comelia was speechless

Chapter 1100

Even though Marcus knew they had to leave, he still kissed her lips till they swelled.

“Are we still going?” Marcus asked

With her face flushed, Comelia firmly said, “Yes! Dr. Lester is already here. Let him give you a quick check-up first. We can leave afterwards”

“I’ve told you, there’s no need for that Stop arranging doctors for me” Marcus said

“You’re the one who knows your body best. You’re an adult, not a kid. See a doctor when needed, take your meds and rest. Stop saying you’re fine” Cornelia replied.

“Exactly, I know my body best. Mind your own business from now on Marcus said.

Comelia was speechless. He always had a way to piss her off again!

Half an hour later, Comelia and Marcus arrived again at Xavier’s burnt down yard.

Steven, Lucas and their wives who were waiting there had different expressions upon seeing the couple. Some were happy, others not so much.

Hannah and Rosie were obviously thrilled, “Cornelia”

Comelia, equally excited, replied, “Hannah! Rosie”

Rosie rushed towards Cornelia and gave her a warm hug.

Hannah lifted her foot to run towards Comelia but was pulled back by Steven after only one step, “Darling, remember what I told you. Don’t get too close to Cornelia”

Hannah struggled but couldn’t break free. Steven’s grip was so strong that it hurt. She looked at Steven’s hand tightly gripping her wrist, “Steven, what are you so afraid of? Are you afraid that I, the substitute, will also disappear suddenly?”

Steven’s face darkened, “Hannah!”

Steven was kind on the surface but ruthless inside. Those who crossed him never ended well.

Hannah, having been with him for many years, knew him better than anyone. Some things could be mentioned once. If she kept bringing them up, the only one who got hurt in the end was her. "I understand my place. I know what I should and shouldn't do." Hannah said.

Satisfied with her answer, Steven let go, "Go."

Hannah walked towards Cornelia.

Cornelia held her hand, "How long have you been here? You must be tired standing. Shall we find a place to sit?"

Hannah wanted to go, but she couldn't decide. "Let's see what they say."

Rosie said, "No matter what they say, I have lots of questions about Skyler for Cornelia. Let's go to a coffee shop first."

Cornelia knew Hannah had many things she felt helpless about, "Rosie, wait a moment."

Rosie turned to Lucas, "Have you decided where to go?"

"Today, you're all here for me. Although my yard has been reduced to ashes, I should still host you properly. Suddenly, Xavier's voice echoed in the yard, and everyone noticed he was already standing at the entrance.

"Xavier? Is that you?" Steven could hardly believe the man in front of him was Xavier, but his voice was unmistakably familiar.

His hair had turned completely gray, his face extremely tired, like a man close to fifty, not a vibrant young man in his thirties.

Xavier smiled and said. "Don't you recognize me?"

He turned to look at Marcus, his smile turning more eerie, "Marcus, are you satisfied with my new look?"