

# **Bogus Billionaire by Shining Riviera ( Caroline Evans )**

## **Chapter 41**

### Chapter 41

Caroline's eyes fluttered open to see Kirk smirking at her. "What are you doing?" he asked, amused.

Immediately, her face flushed red. "N—nothing!"

"But you closed your eyes just now—"

"I was... I just couldn't make myself look at the tie." In her haste, she told him the first excuse she could come up with. She looked around the spot she was standing in, trying to think of a way to get out of this predicament.

Suddenly, the painting he'd given her popped into her mind, and she mumbled, "I— I have to keep the painting somewhere... I'm going back to my room." With that, she darted out of the dining room and into her room, closing the door with a bang.

Kirk watched her the entire time. As he stared at the closed door of her bedroom, the smile in his eyes faded and was replaced with his usual icy look.

He'd almost lost control of himself... and he'd never done that in front of a woman before!

Maybe Sean was right. Maybe he did like Caroline a bit. But that didn't mean that it was love!

Caroline returned to her room and hid under her blanket. She hid, as if she could delude herself into thinking that her racing heart said nothing about what she'd felt back there.

She covered her face with her hands when she recalled what had happened and immediately felt the urge to dig a hole and bury herself in it. What the heck happened?

It was as if she'd been bewitched.

Right! Bewitched!

She'd definitely reacted like that because Kirk was too handsome! She definitely wasn't in **love** with him! Absolutely not!

Just then, her phone rang, making her jump out of her skin. She glanced at the screen. It was

Gwen.

She answered the call and started ranting. "You scared me! Why are you even calling me at this hour?"

Instantly, Gwen smelled something fishy.  
"Oh? Why can't I call you now? Don't tell me that you were doing something... naughty!"

Caroline's heart leaped into her mouth. Her mind replayed the scene where she was tying Kirk's

"Carol, you sound **very** guilty **now**."

"Nonsense. Say another **word**, and I'll head over to beat **your** a\*\*." Caroline buried herself deeper into the depths of her blankets. "Why are you calling?"

"Ehe! You're the one who knows me best!" Gwen started sounding suspicious. "Are you online?"

"Why?"

Gwen's unrestrained chortle came from the other end of the line. "When I switched on my phone today, I got thousands of messages and notifications about Brie!

"I thought that it was the Collins family trying to get positive publicity, but when I clicked the notifications, the news was all about Brie and her people cornering us at the auction house!"

Caroline remembered the journalists who had appeared out of nowhere at that time. "Weren't those reporters hired by her?"

"Who knows? It's strange, though. The journalist who reported this was professional enough. He blurred both our faces."

Caroline froze. Logically speaking, this would serve as a hot headline. Since the journalist exposed Brie's act, why didn't he expose both Caroline and Gwen too?

Was Eddy behind this? Was it because he wanted to spare himself from embarrassment? But Eddy would give anything to see Caroline humiliated.

Caroline immediately searched for the source of the news. The media agent who posted it first was owned by the Morrisons.

She sank into deep thought for a moment before dialing the number of the manager in charge of Morrison Corp's media department.

"Mr. Sander, I'd like to ask about the news regarding Ms. Collins today. Why did and my friend's face in the pictures?"

you blur my face...

"Oh. It was Mr. Eddy's second uncle," Mr. Sander answered. "He asked us to do that."

Caroline froze. It was Eddy's second uncle?

## Chapter 42

Caroline had heard a lot about Eddy's second uncle, but they'd never met before. Despite that, **why** was he so concerned about her?

"Um.. he didn't explain **why**, did he?"

"No, he didn't," replied Mr. Sander.,

"Alright, thanks." Caroline sounded slightly dejected because she'd been expecting more.

Upon hanging up, she opened her laptop and started scouring the internet for any information on Eddy's second uncle.

The man had spent most of his life overseas, so there was barely any news about him at home. A moment later, she realized that even his name wasn't mentioned anywhere.

Frustrated about her fruitless investigation, Caroline began brushing her hair. Then, she suddenly recalled what the journalists yelled the other day.

According to them, Eddy's second uncle attended the auction ...

Had he noticed Brie bullying her? Perhaps he'd decided to intervene personally because he wanted to protect his family's reputation?

Caroline massaged her throbbing temples.

Since it was so difficult to figure out the answer, why not just ask him directly?

She pulled out her phone and gave Jude a call. "Grandpa."

"Carrie!" The old man sounded like he was in a good mood today. "So **you** finally remembered to

give this old man a call."

"I'm sorry, Grandpa."

"Hahaha, I like your honesty. Now tell me, what brings you to Grandpa? Ah! I'm going to lose this

round..."

Halfway through his sentence, Jude began talking to himself. Confused, Caroline asked him, 'What are you doing right now, Grandpa?'

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"Haha, it's nothing. I'm playing chess with Eddy's second uncle at the moment. This kid's smart! We barely started, and he's already got me beat!"

His reply caught Caroline by surprise. So he was right next to Jude?

“Is that so? I heard he’s a tremendously talented businessman, but I’m surprised he’s equally good at chess. So when are you going to introduce him to me?”

**Jude laughed** heartily “**Are you** that keen on meeting **him**? Alright, **let** me ask **him about** it,” **he**

**replied as** he stole a glance at **Kirk**

**Kirk overheard** their conversation as he was moving **his** piece, causing his fingers **to** shake **ever-so**

-slightly.

Over **the phone**, Caroline held her breath nervously.

A moment

later, Jude’s voice came over the line. “He says no problem. You pick a time and place, and he’ll **meet you** there.”

“Alright,” said Caroline after letting out a long sigh of relief.

Finally, she was going to meet Eddy’s second uncle!

Overjoyed, she ran out into the living room, only to be greeted by **silence**. It appeared that Kirk had left without her knowing at some point.

She pumped her fist in the air triumphantly before darting back into her room to pick out an

outfit **for** her meeting.

Jude looked at Kirk as he passed his phone to the butler. “I’m surprised you’re willing to meet

Caroline.”

“We’re family after all,” Kirk answered earnestly.

The old man started

to frown. “I’m afraid that the bond between her and Eddy will come to an end.

soon.”

“What makes you say that?”

“It’s pointless to hide the truth from me. I’m old, but I’m far from senile.” He paused momentarily

as he got up from his seat.

“Although I wasn’t the one who raised Carrie, she’s been taking care of Eddy for so long since she

returned to the country that I started to regard her as my granddaughter-in-law. It’s a shame my

grandson refuses to be with her.”

“Uncle Jude…”

Jude waved his hand dismissively. “I heard she’s married. Is that true?”

Kirk hesitated for a moment before he nodded.

The old man sighed. “Then do you know who she’s married to?”

With a hint of annoyance in his eyes, Kirk shook his head.

**If** you’re clueless, then it means he’s no average Joe Jude stared at Kirk with a grave expression “I don’t know what will happen to Carrie and Eddy’s relationship, but you must help me find out

who that man is!”

A complex mix of emotions swirled in Kirk’s gaze when he replied, “Understood.”

Jude patted him on the shoulder and reminded him, “Before I forget, I just want to tell you that Carrie is a good girl. My time’s running out, and if Eddy doesn’t change his mind in the future, could you help me make sure she’s looked after?”

Kirk was about to nod in agreement when the old man emphasized, “As a family member.”

He froze up immediately, clueless as to whether he should nod or not.

Thankfully, they were interrupted by a message from Caroline. She'd picked a quiet little restaurant where they would meet at 8 pm.

She'd wanted to meet him on the very same day, and that just showed how much she was looking forward to meeting Eddy's second uncle.

Soon, she received a reply.

It was a simple "Okay," but she was so excited that she belly-flopped onto her bed. Finally! The opportunity had come for her to meet him!

Caroline began putting on her make-up at 4 pm. Had it been any other day, the time would have

flown by, but today, time seemed to flow at a snail's pace. By the time she was done, it was barely

6 pm.

After waiting for another grueling 30 minutes, she headed off to the restaurant. The moment she

reached, she excitedly asked the maitre'd, "Has the other guest for table 201 arrived?"

"I'm afraid not."

The maitre'd led a rather disappointed Caroline to her table. Sure enough, it was still empty. Eddy's second uncle had yet to arrive.

She took her seat and watched as the hour hand slowly made its way to 8 pm. She pricked her

ears to capture any movement outside.

It was already ten minutes past the time they'd agreed on, and yet no one came in.

With a pout, Caroline peered outside. There were customers, but none of them were heading for table 201 in the private room.

Feeling restless, Caroline returned to her seat, where she tried to convince herself that he was

probably just stuck in a traffic jam.

Just then, she heard three knocks on the door. It was polite and restrained.

Immediately, **the** glow returned to Caroline's eyes. She got up and pushed the door open.

"Hi..."

Caroline abruptly stopped in her tracks the moment she recognized the man standing at the door.

## **Score 9.9**

### **Chapter 43**

"K—Kirk? What are you doing here?"

Kirk calmly pointed at a private dining room nearby. "I was supposed to meet a business partner, but he wasn't able to come today. I saw you when you came in, so I figured I'd drop by and say hi.

Caroline let out a sigh of relief. For a second there, she'd actually thought that Kirk was Eddy's

second uncle! What a relief!

She'd barely regained her composure when her phone started ringing. She almost pounded on the

table to answer the call.

"Carrie." Jude's voice greeted her. "Your second uncle gave me a call just now. Something came up, and he won't be able to meet you today. He asked me to apologize to you on his behalf, but he

promised to buy you a meal later to make up for it.



Caroline quickly glanced at Kirk, who was standing outside the door. Compared to before, her gaze

Kad turned dull. Tightly gripping her phone, she forced a smile as she said, "It's alright. Thanks,

Grandpa!"

Then, she hung up the phone silently.

"Your date left you hanging?"

The sight of Caroline's reaction made Kirk feel uncomfortable.

"Yeah." She looked completely defeated. The anticipation that had been building up the whole

afternoon gave way to nothing. "It looks like we're victims of the same crime."

Kirk took a step forward. "You seem... quite excited to meet that person?"

A subtle smile appeared on Caroline's face at the mention of Eddy's second uncle. "Out of all the

people I know—wait, I don't even know him. But yeah, he's the smartest person that I know of."

Kirk's fist tightened when he saw the admiration in her eyes.

"He might not be what you imagine him to be..."

Caroline turned to face him. He covered his mouth and coughed. "What I meant to say is that there's always more than meets the eye when it comes to knowing a person."

"You're not wrong, but he really is incredible," replied Caroline smilingly.

After he'd taken over the company, Eddy's second uncle had been able to turn it into the largest group of companies in Sarcozia. If that wasn't amazing, she didn't know what was.

Caroline wasn't asking for much. She just wanted to learn a thing or two from him so that she

Kirk's brows furrowed Caroline was clearly praising him, but for some reason, he felt uncomfortable about it

“Let’s order”

“Sure.”

Time flew by, and Jude’s birthday drew nearer.

Unable to stand the boredom that filled her days, Caroline invited Gwen to go get their nails done

together.

The manicurist was trimming her nails when

Gwen asked, “Babe, I heard Brie is getting engaged to Eddy’s second uncle. But isn’t th at guy working abroad right now?”

Caroline frowned. She remembered Jude telling her that her second uncle had returned in secret

and to tell no one about it.

She hadn’t even told Gwen about it.

“Where did you hear that?”

“You haven’t heard about it?”

“I…” Caroline had just spoken when she was interrupted by her phone ringing.

A nearby staff member answered the call for her and put it on speaker.

“Carrie! Something bad happened! Come home now!” It was Dan, and he sounded like he was panicking.

Caroline leaned forward from her seat. “What happened?”

“I’ll tell you when you get here.”

## Chapter 44

Caroline couldn’t be bothered to finish doing her nails. After letting Gwen know, she **left**.

By the time Gwen went out after her, Caroline was long gone.

Nervous, Caroline sped home. However, when she reached home, she found everyone sitting quietly in the living room. It looked as though there was nothing amiss at all.

“Didn’t you say something happened?”

“If you didn’t come home, something would have happened for sure.” Sarah raised her head.

Only then did Caroline notice the bottles in front of Sarah. They **were** black, so she couldn’t tell what was inside.

“It’s a pesticide.”

Sarah seemed to know what Caroline was thinking. She answered Caroline’s question before she -Could ask it.

Caroline was shocked. “What did you say?”

Sarah picked up one of the bottles and walked unsteadily before Caroline. She dropped to her knees in front of her daughter.

“Carrie, I’m begging you. Get a divorce, please?”

“Mom, didn’t I already say I wouldn’t divorce him? Besides, the company has money now. With

this money...”

“I

“Carrie!” Sarah cut her off. “Are you really that naive? How long can 50 million dollars last? The

company is bleeding money. **It** can only keep going if you marry Eddy!”

Caroline was absolutely confused.

“If it’s losing money, why are we still keeping it operating?”—

Sarah looked at Caroline dotingly. “**You** sweet, innocent child. It’s only because we still have the company that our family has the chance to rise again. Without the Evans Group, we will never

regain the glory we had before.”

“But even if we get the Morrison family’s help, whatever money they give us will be wasted if we don’t have a good operations strategy!”

“Enough!” Dan suddenly stood up and cried. “Caroline, Mr. Morrison Senior’s birthday is coming up in a few days. I want you to announce your marriage with Eddy at the banquet!”

“Dad, why are you still considering this marriage? Does Eddy know that you want me to announce it at the banquet? What if he doesn’t comply? I’ll become a joke!”

Don’t you worry Dan was confident As long as you make the announcement, anything will play

along with you”

“I won’t do it,” Caroline said I’ve always done as you asked since I was a kid How, I want to live for

myself!”

“Alright then!” Dan pointed at Caroline in rage. “You’re a grown woman now! You have your

independence!”

After he said this, he snatched up the bottle on the table and twisted its cap open “If you don’t

agree to it, I’ll drink every drop of this pesticide!”

“Me too” Sarah opened a bottle too. She looked at Caroline with tears in her eyes “Caroline, do you

really want to watch your parents die?”

Caroline felt thunderstruck. She stumbled backward in response.

Her parents were actually threatening her with suicide to get her to marry Eddy!

“You really want me to die, don’t you?” Her eyes filled with tears, but she kept her head held

high, not willing to relent.

“Caroline, why would you die? You’re just marrying into the Morrison family! You’ll be living a

luxurious life! Do you know how many people want to take your place? You have to hold onto this

opportunity!”

Caroline felt like her heart was breaking. She threw her head back and laughed. “Alright. If you

want me to marry Eddy so badly, then I will!”

She would think of it as repayment for her parents raising her for more than 20 years,

But after that...

Caroline abruptly realized that she would have no future after marrying Eddy,

She ducked her head. Her tears were flowing freely down her face now. She shot a look at her

parents, who seemed unmoved, before stumbling out of the house.

If she didn’t leave, she thought she might lose it and commit suicide herself,

Sarah and Dan gave each other a look.

“Darling, in taking this step, did we ...”

Sarah stood up and looked outside. “Isn’t the whole point of her life to marry Eddy?”

Even if she died, she would have to die as Eddy’s wife.

Dan let out a heavy sigh. He could say nothing to deny it.

## Score 9.9

### Chapter 45

Caroline felt like she was having an out-of-body experience. She drifted through the streets aimlessly.

In the past, her parents had said many hurtful things. Each time, she'd felt a stinging pain from it.

This time, though, she felt nothing. In fact, she felt a little numb.

It was as if they were behaving like their true selves now.

The affection they'd shown her in the past had only been due to her status as the future Mrs. Eddy Morrison. It was all because of the

Morrison family.

It wasn't because they were a family.

"Hey." Sean suddenly said to Kirk. He was resting in the back seat. "Isn't that your wife?"

Kirk immediately opened his eyes and looked out the window.

There was a young woman there. She looked dejected as she walked down the street alone. She seemed pitiful and helpless.

"Stop the car."

Sean muffled a laugh and stopped the car.

"Hey, Ms. Evans!"

Caroline whipped her head up. She quickly saw Kirk sitting at the back of the car. Her icy limbs immediately warmed and regained some feeling.

Kirk opened the door and got out. "What are you doing here?"

As soon as he'd said that, Kirk recalled that Caroline's parents lived in this neighborhood. When he looked at her pale, bloodless face, he

frowned.

"What happened?" He took Caroline's hand. He wanted to take her to see Sarah and Dan.

Caroline tugged at the edge of his shirt to stop him. She looked like a lost child. "Cold."

It was then that Kirk realized Caroline's hands were freezing.

He warmed her hands in his. "Get in the car. It's warm in there."

Caroline lowered her head, tears streaming down her face.  
"Kirk, I – I don't have a home anymore."

Her tears fell on the back of Kirk's hand. Though they were cold, they burned.

Kirk's heart burned with a raging flame. He pulled Caroline into his embrace and comforted her, saying, "I'm here. You will always have a home."

Caroline looked up. "Really?"

Her gaze was filled with devotion.

Kirk squeezed her hand. It was as if he wanted to channel his own strength to her. "Yes."

Caroline suddenly laughed. "Thank you."

They were people who would soon part ways. Although she knew that Kirk was lying, she was still very grateful. Kirk always gave her hope when she was in despair.

"Hey, how much longer do you want to chat on the street?" Sean poked his head out of the door after putting down his phone. "The middleman is there."

Caroline finally noticed that someone else was there. She wiped her tears and looked properly. To her surprise, it was Sean.

"How do you know Dr. Yates?"

\*\*\*\*\*

Sean shrugged. He wouldn't contradict his own friend.

\*Then you guys came here today to "

Caroline was trying her best to find a topic of conversation. She didn't want to reflect on anything that had **happened** today.

"Buy a house," Sean answered as he started the car.

"Who's buying a house? Is it you, Dr. Yates? But I remember the nurse saying you work in a hospital abroad. Are you planning to return to

the country for good?”

Sean grinned. He felt happy to see the good-looking couple in the back seat.

That was why he decided...

“No, Kirk wants to buy a house. He said he wants to give you a home.”

Kirk shot an icy glare at the back of Sean’s head.

Sean ignored it. He continued. “This is the first time he’s said he wants to give a woman a home. You’re really special to him, Ms. Evans.”

Chapter 46

Caroline raised an eyebrow and chuckled. “Didn’t you just meet Kirk, Dr. Yates?”

Neither Sean nor Kirk had a response to that.

After a beat, Sean regained his ability to speak. “What I mean is It means something special when a man says he wants to give a

woman a home-”

“Shut up!” Kirk warned, his expression stern.

Sean promptly closed his mouth.

“Ignore him. He likes talking nonsense.”

Caroline shook her head. “It’s fine. Dr. Yates is a good conversationalist. But based on the way you interact, it doesn’t seem like you two just met. You seem like old friends.”

Sean was stunned. He’d never expected someone as innocent as Caroline to be so observant. Hence, he didn’t dare to say anything else during the ride.

Soon, they arrived at their destination and got out of the car.

The middleman had already arrived.

When he saw them, he walked up. He said enthusiastically, “This way, please.”

The three of them followed the middleman into the villa.

The villa was three stories tall. It was bigger than the Evanses’ villa, and there was even a pool on the roof.



Caroline tugged at the edge of Kirk's shirt. When the middleman wasn't paying attention, she whispered, "Let's just go."

Kirk answered. "Alright."

Caroline was surprised by Kirk's unquestioning behavior. "Aren't you going to ask me why?"

"I forgot your parents live near here too." When he'd gotten the information about the villa, he'd only thought that the name sounded familiar. "I won't forget next time."

Caroline was stunned. "You think I don't want to keep looking because my parents stay in the area?"

Kirk hummed in agreement.

Caroline's heart filled with warmth. So this was what it was like to have someone remember things about her.

"Of course that's not it." After all, Kirk was the one buying the house, so it was up to him where the property was located. "This house isn't cheap. We should go somewhere else if you want to buy one."

Kirk tilted his head. He met Caroline's gaze. "Do you like it here?"

Caroline didn't understand. She looked around the villa.

The place was spacious and beautiful. Plus, it was in the city center, so transportation was great. The only drawback was that it was too expensive.

"I like it."

"Then I'm buying it."

Caroline watched as Kirk walked toward the middleman. She rushed over to stop him. "Are you mad?"

This villa had to cost at least 100 million dollars! There was no way Kirk could afford it, even if he worked his whole life.

Kirk looked down at Caroline's slender fingers on his wrist. He smiled as he asked. "But don't you like it?"

"If I said I liked the moon, would you get it for me?"

Caroline cut him off. "I wasn't joking."

Kirk smirked. "I'm being serious as well."

Caroline's heart started racing. Nervous, she looked away.

Kirk, on the other hand, leaned in closer. He tilted Caroline's head up.

Caroline's breaths became rushed. She wanted to avoid him but couldn't. All she could smell was the light mint scent Kirk gave off.

"Even though we're in a fake marriage, I want to do my best to give you a home."

Each word he said danced in Caroline's heart.

Yet when she thought of what she'd promised her parents, her heart started aching again.

Today's Bonus Offer

Chapter 47

Caroline pushed Kirk away and turned her back on him. "Don't treat me so well."

She would

Caroline's thoughts went wild. She couldn't help but feel a trace of hope in this world again,

Kirk's eyes narrowed, and he clasped Caroline's shoulder. "What's with you today? Did someone wrong you while you were out?"

Caroline seemed to be acting really differently today.

She looked to one side and pushed herself to stop crying. She bit her lip forcefully. "We'll have to divorce at some point. I don't want there to be too much fuss when the time comes."

The day she announced her marriage to Eddy would be the same day she divorced Kirk.

Then, Kirk would be able to find the owner of that lipstick. As for her, she would leave this world with no more attachments.

After all, no one wanted her.

Kirk's brows were tightly furrowed. There was a ball of rage in his chest. He stared after Caroline, his gaze nearly piercing through her.

Sean noticed their exchange and walked over. "What are you two-"

Before he could finish speaking, Kirk glared at him. Then, he strode out of the villa.

Sean was stunned.

What was going on? Why was Kirk angry at him?

Caroline gave a weak smile. "Dr. Yates, I have something to attend to. I'll be leaving now."

That said, she walked out through the back door.

Seeing this, Sean could only go after Kirk.

When he got outside, he saw Kirk sitting in the car's back seat. He had a cigar between his fingers. Smoke surrounded him, nearly obscuring him from sight.

Sean went over and asked, "Did you two fight?"

"No," Kirk answered dully.

Sean was confused.

He could see the annoyance written all over Kirk's face. Why was Kirk insisting they hadn't fought?

"Did you say something wrong? You have to coax her back. Everything will be fine then."  
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Kirk glared at Sean. "Why do I **have** to coax her?"

Sean gave him a thumbs up. "You're an inspiration!" He wished he could be as staunch when it was his turn to pursue his own wife.

Kirk stubbed out his cigar in annoyance and opened the window for some air. After a while, he couldn't stand it anymore. He asked coldly. "Where is she?"

"She went out the back door."

"F\*\*\*," Kirk cursed. He hopped out of the car and cut through the villa. Through the back door was another street. He couldn't find Caroline or even a car there.

In a huff, he loosened his tie. He went back to the car. "Get in."

Sean obeyed and got into the car.

Kirk drove over to the street the back door led to. Even though he was driving very slowly, he couldn't find Caroline anywhere.

He frowned.

Today's Bonus Offer

chapter 48

Gwen was sharp enough to notice there was something wrong with her best friend. She held Caroline's hand and said. "Of course that's fine. You can stay as long as you want. Let's go then."

Caroline and Gwen got into the car.

Gwen drove slowly and kept shooting glances at Caroline.

Meanwhile, Caroline stared out the window vacantly. She looked like a broken porcelain doll,

Gwen felt her heart ache as she looked at Caroline. "Carol, why did your dad want you home so urgently? What happened?"

Caroline looked over and smiled softly. "They want me to marry Eddy."

Gwen was stupefied. "Why do they insist on having you marry that douchebag?"

"Because they want the Morrison family's help in taking the Evans family back to the top. Caroline's voice was neutral, as if she were

talking about someone else's affairs.

The way she behaved made Gwen even more pained. "You didn't agree, did you?"

"I did."

Gwen abruptly braked. "Carol are you nuts?"

Caroline chuckled. "If I hadn't agreed, was I supposed to watch them drink pesticide?"

Gwen thumped her fist on the steering wheel. “How dare they threaten you with suicide! What the fuck! What kind of shit is this? I’m really wondering if they’re even your actual parents!”

Caroline stared at the powder blue sky. It was strange. After she’d accepted her fate, she no longer felt upset at all.

“Gwen, don’t be mad. This is my life. Growing up, my family always told me I’d been born to marry Eddy. When I accepted that everyone

loved me and doted on me. Those days weren’t too bad.”

Her voice was filled with despair.

Gwen was heartbroken. “But if you marry Eddy, you’ll have to donate your kidney to Layla. F\*\*\*, it’s so awful! It’s bad enough that she taunted you so openly, but now she wants your organs! I can’t stand it!”

Caroline watched Gwen’s enraged antics peacefully. She etched Gwen’s face deeply into her mind. Then, she let out a soft laugh. “I asked a doctor. Having only one kidney won’t affect my life at all”

Gwen didn’t know the truth about how Layla wanted Caroline dead after she gave her kidney up for the marriage. Caroline didn’t want to

tell Gwen that she would die once she got married to Eddy.

If she could, she wanted to hide it from Gwen forever.

Gwen was the only person in this world that she would miss..

Gwen clutched Caroline’s hand tightly. She kept swallowing and wasn’t able to say a word.

The two sat in silence. After a while, Gwen thumped her foot in rage. “F\*\*\*. Why can’t I be filthy rich? If I were, I would be able to take care

of you. Then you wouldn’t have to suffer at that a\*\*hole’s hands.”

Warmth filled Caroline’s heart. She hugged Gwen with all her might. “Gwen, I still want to be your best friend in our next life!”

Gwen agreed. She said, almost crying. “Yes, we’ll be best friends in our next life as well!”

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The days Caroline spent at Gwen’s were peaceful and fulfilling.

During this time, it was as if Kirk had disappeared from the face of the earth. He didn’t even call once.

Caroline didn’t mind it at all. Besides, she wouldn’t know what to say if they met, either.

7

The four prominent families of Osbury were all invited to the birthday banquet. Because of Caroline, Sarah and Dan had been invited as

well.

Before the banquet started, luxurious cars and splendidly dressed guests appeared outside of the hotel. The place was lit up brightly.

Amidst the **throng**, a diamond–encrusted Rolls–Royce sped through. It attracted the gaze of everyone present.

“F\*\*\*, who’s that? What a lavish entrancel”

The light from the diamonds was really hard to ignore.

In the car, Brie watched as everyone **looked** over. She raised her head, her gaze filled with viciousness.

Tonight, she would avenge herself for what happened at the auction. She would stomp that bitch Caroline beneath her feet without mercy!

## Chapter 49

Brie stepped out of the car in her high heels as the crowd watched in anticipation.

She wore a black evening gown. It was cut close to her body, showing off her curvaceous figure. As she walked, her fair feet flitted in and

out of sight at the slit of her dress. She looked elegant and proper.

Someone couldn't help but comment in a low voice. "My God, is this the same nouveau riche young lady I remember?"

"How well Brie is showing off her a\*\*ets! And what a figure she has!"

"When did her taste in fashion become so good?"

When Brie heard these comments and more, she smiled in satisfaction.

This was the exact reaction she'd been aiming for.

For the past few days, she'd been practicing her posture every day. She'd picked out this dress and make-up to let everyone know that

she was even more proper and sophisticated than Caroline!

She happily picked up the pen. Just as she was about to sign her name in the guest book, there was a huge commotion behind her.

Brie frowned. When she turned back to look, she was completely shocked.

A woman came out of a plain and ordinary car.

She was wearing a long black dress. It showed off the woman's beautiful shoulder lines. A pearl-colored belt cinched her slim waist. She wore red high heels and showed off her slender neck. She was gorgeous.

When she turned around, she flaunted stunning collarbones.

When everyone realized that it was the usually proper and elegant Caroline, they were even more shocked.

It was clear just how beautiful Caroline was. However, no one had ever expected that she could look so seductive. She was so captivating it made the crowd's jaw drop.

Brie's expression turned dark.

She thought that she could beat Caroline by dressing more properly and stylishly than her. Yet she'd never expected that Caroline would go in the opposite direction and dress so sexily. Worse, she looked even better now—even more attractive!

Caroline didn't take notice of the stunned gazes of those around her.

She hadn't wanted to dress up so much to attend the banquet. However, on second thought, she'd changed her mind.

She'd always lived according to her parents' expectations. They wanted her to be proper and refined, so she became that for them. She'd never tried living for herself. At the thought of that, Caroline let herself go and designed this dress with its cut-outs. After all, this was the last time she could do it.

In a second, she was next to Brie.

Brie was standing right at the entrance. Politely, Caroline said, "Please excuse me."

Brie looked at the exquisite face before her and wanted to tear it up. She stepped closer. Gritting her teeth, she said, "Are you dressed so sluttily because you know you can't win Eddy's heart? Now you're going to seduce his uncle, aren't you?"

Kirk would be here today as well.

Caroline frowned and said coldly. "You're still in the way."

"You-!"

Seeing that Brie and Caroline were about to get into a fight, the staff quickly interjected, saying, "Ms. Collins, the banquet is about to start. There are a lot of people in the queue. Please don't delay things for others."

Brie bit her lip in frustration. Then, she scoffed.

you'll be able to marry him just because you're on Mr. Morrison Senior's good side.

"Only someone like me, with a background like mine, deserves him! You should give up on that dream right now



Caroline refused to waste her time on Brie. She turned her head without responding. Brie thought that Caroline was backing down. She happily signed her name in the quest book

After she did. Caroline signed her own name and went into the banquet hall.

The hall was huge. It was decorated lavishly, but there were only about ten tables.

Only close friends and family could enter this banquet hall. In the past, Brie had always been in another hall.

Since Brie was able to be here tonight, it meant that the rumors were true. It seemed Eddy's uncle was really going to marry her.

Then, Caroline remembered how Eddy's uncle had been absent before. She wondered if she would be able to meet him now.

If she could, then she would have no other regrets.

"Caroline

Sarah stood up and cried enthusiastically **from** the last table. She kept waving at Caroline. When she saw how seductively Caroline was dressed, she smiled **even** brighter.

"That's the way you do it! Look at how pretty you are. You can beat all those other rich ladies in a second. Eddy will be so taken with you."

Dan nodded in agreement. "Carrie, you've finally grown up."

Caroline didn't want to chat with them so much. She said, "I'm going to Grandpa's table."

Jude had always doted on her. In the past, he would always leave her a spot at the head table, but Caroline used to worry that it would displease Eddy. Hence, she'd declined Jude's kind gesture every year to avoid a scene.

This year, she didn't care about what Eddy thought. She only wanted herself to be happy.

**Caroline** walked toward the head table. Many important figures from the Morrison family were seated there. When they spotted Caroline, their eyes shone. They all got up and greeted her.

Caroline **nodded** slightly before taking a seat gracefully.

Just as she'd sat down, Jude called out brightly, "Carrie!"

Caroline got up and looked toward Jude as he walked over with his cane. Jude was wearing a bright red suit. He looked so lively in it that he seemed more than a decade younger.

Caroline smiled. "Happy birthday, Grandpa."

Thinking about how this would be her last birthday with Jude, Caroline felt a deep ache in her heart.

"Are you finally willing to sit with **me** this year?" Jude's smile widened. "That's perfect. You're Mrs. Morrison. You should be sitting with me."

Caroline smiled slightly. She was about to say something when someone cried out behind Jude, "Grandpa."

Everyone looked over; their expressions were all different.

Behind Jude were Layla in her wheelchair and Eddy.

Layla's condition seemed to be worse now. Her face was pale, and she looked fragile. Eddy stood by her. He occasionally looked down at Layla in worry. From afar, they looked deeply in love.

The crowd looked at Caroline with interest. Caroline's expression was bland. It was as if she wasn't involved at all.

She only met Eddy's gaze for a moment when he looked up. Then, she looked away.

Eddy was completely stunned.

This Caroline had lost her old propriety. She looked mature and seductive, like a vixen. She was so beautiful that he could hardly believe it

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Caroline ignored Eddy's **gaze**. She smiled. "Mr. Morrison, you have such a poor memory. Grandpa has always saved me a seat at this table.

Calling Eddy Mr. Morrison pulled the distance between them even further.

Eddy pressed a hand to his forehead. He hated Caroline calling him that. In his memory, she'd always called him Eddy.

Layla coughed a few times. This attracted Eddy's gaze. "What is it? Are you unwell? Should I send you home first?"

Layla shook her head with difficulty. A malicious light flashed in her eyes. She was showing off that Eddy was worried about her.

Caroline had long become immune to her actions. She was about to leave when Layla said, "Today is Grandpa's birthday. I'd like to stay. Caroline, you won't make me leave, right?"

Caroline turned her head. Before she could say anything. Jude said without mercy. "I never invited you."

Eddy stood before Layla, "Grandpa, Layla means well. How could you talk to her like that?"

When Caroline saw this, she remembered the first time Kirk had shielded her behind him.

She wondered where Kirk was now.

What would he think if he knew she was going to marry Eddy soon?

collected himself.

"More than 50 years ago, someone else also gave me a painting by Zach Zimmer for my birthday." With tears seeping in from the corners of his eyes, he grabbed Caroline's hand. "Thank you, Carrie."

He stared at her deeply, hesitating to say anything more.

Caroline felt like he was looking at another person through her.

“Grandpa...”

“I’m fine.” Jude took a handkerchief out and wiped his tears. “Carrie, I’m very happy with this gift. Let me reward you. Tell me, is there anything you want?”

Just as Caroline was about to say something, Brie interrupted her. In a displeased tone, Brie said. “But Mr. Morrison Senior, this is only worth one million dollars...”

Jude’s face fell at once. “Brie, you can’t measure the value of a gift by its price! Although this painting is no match for the perfume bottle in terms of price, to me, it’s the most precious gift. Only upstarts will measure gifts by their prices!”

Hearing that, Brie became hot under the collar. The guests around them began to laugh at her too. Just as she turned around to leave, she almost bumped into a staff member who’d rushed over.

Stunned, Caroline looked at the staff member carefully. She hadn’t prepared any second gifts.

“Oh? Quick, show it to me.” Jude laughed. “Carrie, how many surprises are you planning to give me today?”

Before Caroline could say anything, another staff member arrived with a wooden box.

The box was delicately crafted with complex patterns, and its surface was polished to perfection. Clearly, it wasn’t something cheap. The staff member put the box on the table and slowly opened it.

Everyone there, including Caroline, held their breaths.

The moment the box was opened, a beautiful piece of antique ceramic vase came into view.

The banquet hall was filled with individuals who were knowledgeable about antiques. As soon as they caught sight of the ceramic, they couldn't help but gasp in amazement.

Those well-versed in antique collections knew that these ceramics had been made for the royal family centuries ago and were rare to come across.

Considering how old it was, encountering such a treasure was a rarity, let alone having the opportunity to own it as a collectible.

Everyone looked at Caroline in shock. This wasn't just a matter of money; only those with strong connections could have the chance of acquiring it.

As expected of the daughter of the Evans family. Although they had fallen from grace, their power was still impressive.

It took a while for Jude to come to his senses. "Carrie, how did you get this?"

That was what she wanted to know, too. At first, she'd suspected that someone wanted to set her up with an additional gift. Little did she expect it to be such a priceless treasure!

Eddy stared at the vase, his eyes narrowing.

He'd come here with Kirk. When Kirk had written his signature in the guest book earlier, he'd also written that his gift was two ceramic wares—a vase and a wash basin.

The antique vase here was one of those two ceramic wares.

Eddy spared a glance in the direction of the lounge, wondering why Kirk had done this.

If Kirk wanted to save Caroline from embarrassment, he could have used the wash basin, which cost a hundred times less than the vase. That would have been more than enough.

Eddy just couldn't figure it out.

Meanwhile, Kirk was watching Caroline on the screen with a smile on his face.

Looking at how flustered she was in the hall, Kirk couldn't help feeling delighted. "You've done a great job," he said.

The butler immediately replied. "It's all thanks to you, Mr. Kirk. Ms. Collins was clearly planning to cause trouble for Ms. Evans. Your idea has not only saved Ms. Evans from embarrassment but also salvaged the Morrisons' reputation."

Kirk pursed his lips. The Morrison family's reputation had nothing to do with him. He just couldn't stand Caroline being bullied by others, especially when it involved **money**.

"Go out and help her explain it," Kirk said, waving his hand.

The butler nodded and went away.

Now that Kirk was back alone, he could finally let his eyes roam freely over Caroline's sexy and delicate back. Narrowing his eyes slightly, he felt his chest burning up.

By this time, the butler had already walked over to Caroline's side, interrupting Kirk from enjoying the beautiful view.

Frowning in frustration, Kirk lit up the cigar on the table. As the swirling smoke surrounded him, his gaze grew deeply intense, and desire burned within him.

## Chapter 55

The butler approached Jude discreetly. "Mr. Morrison Senior, seeing that the antique vase is rare and precious, should we send it home

for safekeeping purposes?

It was a sound suggestion, so Jude complied. "Have someone send it back at once."

Jude didn't press further. Caroline let out a sigh of relief and looked at the butler gratefully. The butler merely nodded at her before

returning to the task at hand.

Meanwhile, the others jumped on the occasion to coddle Jude.

“What a fine addition to your collection, Mr. Morrison Senior.”

“How thoughtful of Ms. Evans.”

“I know, right? Mr. Morrison Senior is so lucky to have a future daughter-in-law like her.”

Jude was overjoyed to hear these compliments.

Brie, **who'd** been eager to make a toast to Jude, was pushed out of the way by the crowd.

Her face was twitching because everyone flocked toward Caroline. She admitted that Caroline was more beautiful than her, but how was

Caroline wealthier than her too? How dare she?

Brie took another glance at the vase, now in the careful hands of a staff member. It didn't sit right with her. There was no way Caroline

could afford such an expensive item. There must be more to it than meets the eye.

As the crowd slowly dissipated, Caroline had a moment of respite. She left the banquet hall quietly. In the main lobby, the butler was

already waiting for her.

“Mr. Simon Zellen.” Caroline called out to the butler, who had served Jude for more than five decades.

“Yes, Ms. Evans?”

“The antique vase....”

Simon knew what Caroline was about to ask. He smiled. “Mr. Eddy's second uncle told me to do that.”

“Eddy's second uncle?” Something within Caroline stirred.