

Bogus Billionaire by Shining Riviera (Caroline Evans)

Chapter 51

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“He’s in the lounge now. Would you like to meet him?” asked Simon.

“It’s only right for me to thank him in person. Can you show me the way?”

“Of course.”

Simon dropped what he was working on and ushered Caroline to the lounge.

On the way there, Caroline couldn’t hold back her racing heart. She was about to meet the mysterious business tycoon. In an attempt to

calm down, she rubbed her temples.

“We are here,” said Simon after a few minutes of walking. He then turned to Caroline and said, “I shall take my leave now.”

Caroline nodded. After Simon disappeared, she knocked on the door. She did it a few more times, but only silence answered her.

Meekly, Caroline uttered, “Hi there, Mr. Morrison. I’m Caroline. I invited you to dinner last time, but you couldn’t come. If it weren’t for your

help today. I...”

“What are you doing here?” A husky voice **from** behind made Caroline jump.

She turned around, flustered. “Why are you here?”

looked out of her reach.

As Kirk looked down, his eyes landed on Caroline’s slender collarbone. The urges he’d tried so hard to suppress flared up again, making him frown. “I’m here to help out. It’s my grandpa’s birthday. What about you?”

Kirk looked away. No more distractions.

“... I’m here to find Eddy’s second uncle, answered Caroline, visibly uncomfortable

“Oh?” Kirk lifted his eyebrows. “Are you into him?”*

Peeved by Kirk’s mocking tone, Caroline retorted, “I respect him a lot, so don’t talk about him like that.”

All of a sudden, Kirk closed the distance between them, He held Caroline’s waist in one hand and grabbed the door handle with another. As the panicking Caroline floundered in his embrace, his primal instincts kicked in.

“Stop.”

The mint-scented warning seized Caroline’s being. She rested her hands on Kirk’s chest and froze.

“S... Stop making fun of me, Kirk.” Caroline’s voice broke, as if it were a plea. No one was ever nice to her. All she wanted was a safe corner for herself.

Kirk was taken aback by Caroline’s reaction. “Are you crying?”

“No.” Caroline shook her head.

Kirk lifted Caroline’s face with his fingers. Under the glow of the light, her tears shone like pearls, adorning her beautiful features. Kirk scooped out one of the tears and asked, “What is this, then?”

Just like that, Caroline burst into small sobs. Tears overflowed her face. The tough front she’d put up crumbled like paper before Kirk, But who could blame her? She was so young—hardly 20 years old. She could face death bravely, but that didn’t mean she didn’t fear it.

Seeing a weeping Caroline, Kirk didn’t feel any better either. “Hey...”

Clumsily, he tried to wipe away the tears, but they wouldn’t stop appearing. He gave up, and instead, he leaned in and kissed Caroline. That did the trick. Caroline ceased crying.

Her big, round eyes stared up at him as she tried to protest, but to no avail in the face of Kirk’s greedy and unre

lenting kisses. Caroline was too powerless to resist his advance. All she could do was enjoy it.

Noticing his victory, Kirk gave a sly grin. He then twisted the door handle, but Caroline immediately stopped him in his tracks.

“Someone’s inside,” uttered Caroline. Eddy’s second uncle was inside.

“It’s unoccupied.” Kirk pushed the door open. He was right. There was no one inside; just a screen which showed the security footage c

the banquet.

Gently, he put Caroline on the couch and looked at her fondly. He whispered, not wanting to scare her, “Can I?”

Kirk hadn’t been able to stop thinking about Caroline since last night.

Caroline bit her lips. The current scene reminded her of the night Kirk had been drunk. He’d asked her the same question too. But this time, he’d asked it while sober.

Caroline gave a timid nod. She wasn’t going to be in this world for long anyway, so she might as well have some fun before she left. Thrilled by her **answer**, Kirk moved his fingers to the dress’s zipper. Caroline held her breath. Deep down, she longed for it.

Suddenly, they heard footsteps outside, followed by the rattling of the door handle.

“Uncle, are you there?”

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Kirk’s Adam’s apple bobbed slightly. “Oh?”

Eddy scratched his head. The more he looked at the tile, the more familiar it seemed. However, he just couldn’t recall where he’d seen it. He then sat down at the side and said, “Perhaps someone else wore the same one before.”

Kirk's tensed shoulders slumped down as he hummed in response nonchalantly.

Eddy took another sip of the beer, having regained his composure. "Are you going out, Uncle Kirk?"

Sparing a glance at Caroline on the screen. Kirk rubbed the spot in between his brows. "Nah, it's more interesting to observe the situation secretly."

Eddy nodded. "Then I'll go out first."

His temples began to throb at the thought of having a meal with Caroline at the same table.

In the banquet hall, Caroline was chatting happily with Jude, and they appeared even closer than biological relatives.

When the other Morrisons saw that, they immediately came and flattered them. "Ms. Evans, you're so good at making Mr. Morrison Senior happy. He always has a long face whenever he's with us. He only smiles when you're around."

Although those were honeyed words, they were also true.

Caroline smiled and didn't say anything.

When Eddy came out and heard what they said, he suddenly thought of how protective Kirk was of Caroline as well, despite having only met her a few times. Eddy couldn't help but look at Caroline with a probing gaze.

"You're here. Eddy." Thomas said upon seeing him. "Take a seat beside Caroline."

It wasn't until he finished speaking that he remembered how Eddy's attitude had been toward Caroline in the past. Just as he wanted to say something to correct himself, his son had already taken a seat next to Caroline.

Thomas exchanged a meaningful glance with Jude.

They had noticed that Eddy was no longer averse to Caroline as of late. It was an optimistic sign that something good would be happening soon. Everyone else had the same thoughts too..

However, it didn't seem to be the same for Eddy. The moment he sat down, he suddenly felt a chilly wind brush past the back of his head.. When he turned around, there was nothing.

"Grandpa, when is Eddy's second uncle coming?" Caroline asked, ignoring Eddy.

The banquet was about to begin, but Kirk still hadn't shown up. Caroline was worried that she wouldn't be able to see him again today.

"He arrived a long time ago." Eddy snorted from the side.

Only then did Caroline turn to look at him. "Where is he?"

"Why should I tell you?" Eddy retorted, feeling uncomfortable.

Rendered speechless, Caroline moved her eyes back to Jude. "Grandpa, do you know?"

Jude chuckled. "I don't know either. It's better to ask Eddy." He was trying to encourage conversation between the two.

Caroline understood that, but she didn't want to talk to Eddy. Whenever she looked at him, she would think about the marriage announcement, and it repulsed her.

However, for the sake of meeting Eddy's second uncle, she endured her disdain and asked. "Because I want to know, and you happened to have the answer I need."

Eddy leaned in closer to her. "Aren't you good at pleasing others? Please me, and I'll tell you where my second uncle is."

people's eyes.

"Darling, look at how intimate Eddy and Carrie are!" Sarah was excited.

Dan saw it too and felt as if a weight had lifted off of him. "I told you that Eddy has feelings for Carrie. If she marries into his family, we will live a comfortable life in the future."

Meanwhile, Layla was on the verge of breaking the armrest of her wheelchair.

Chapter 53

"What a shameless bitch! How dare she seduce Eddy in front of so many people!" Layla cursed inwardly.

However, when she thought about how Caroline would soon die on the operating table, Layla gradually calmed herself down.

At the head table, Caroline withdrew her gaze and leaned slightly to the back. "Since you don't want to tell me, forget it, then."

She could just ask the staff here. Someone would definitely know where Kirk was.

Seeing how indifferent she was, Eddy felt triggered. Why couldn't she please him when she could do so for everyone else?

Just as Eddy was about to lose his cool he saw Brie coming over with a glass** of red wine. She shot him a smile and then looked toward Caroline.

All this time, Brie had been thinking of ways to regain the spotlight after being overshadowed by Caroline earlier at the entrance. She'd inquired about Caroline's present for Jude earlier and found that it was a painting worth one million dollars.

She'd immediately thought of how to humiliate Caroline and headed over to the main table.

Caroline was feeling uncomfortable being stared at. When she raised her eyes and saw the meaningful look on Brie's face, she knitted her brows.

Holding up the wine glass** in her hand, Brie said. "Mr. Morrison Senior, I'm here to wish you a happy birthday on my dad's behalf."

Jude smiled. "Thank you."

Brie took a sip of her wine and flitted her eyes back to Caroline again. "I heard that you're interested in antiques lately, Mr. Morrison Senior." she said calmly

"Yes. Old people love looking for something to keep them occupied."

"In that case, I believe you will definitely love my gift."

"Oh? What is it?"

Brie beckoned the staff member to present her gift to Jude.

When Jude opened the exquisite box, he saw a delicate perfume bottle that was made of emerald sitting inside. It had an artistic pattern on top, carrying auspicious symbolism.

"This is an antique perfume bottle." Seeing Jude pick it up, Brie knew he must have taken a liking to it. "I went to a lot of places in and out of the country to look for it."

"That's so kind of you. It must be expensive, right?" Jude asked.

Brie replied with a smile, "Not really. It's just 60 million dollars."

Despite her words, deep down, her heart ached for having spent a fortune. However, as long as she could please Jude and get married to Kirk, this amount was nothing. Most importantly, she could use this price to put Caroline's gift to shame.

"Since you've worked so hard, I must treat you kindly as well." Holding the bottle in his hand affectionately, he pondered for a while before continuing. "I agree to the matter you'd mentioned to me before."

Brie was overjoyed. Little did she expect Jude to let Kirk marry her so easily. "Thank you, Mr. Morrison Senior!"

When Caroline heard that, her heart sank. She could somehow guess that what Jude referred to was the marriage between Eddy's second uncle and Brie. At the thought that the business prodigy was going to get married to a woman like Brie, Caroline felt uneasy.

"Caroline!" Brie suddenly called.

Caroline looked at her.

Brie walked around Jude and approached Caroline, her gaze tinged with hostility. “Everyone in Osbury knows that Mr. Morrison Senior loves you the most. I wonder what you prepared for his birthday gift?”

Caroline’s expression changed slightly. She finally understood Brie’s reason for coming here.

Chapter 54

“Show it to us, then.” Brie signaled at the staff member,

The staff member didn’t move and looked at Jude

Jude waved his hand. “Go ahead. I’d like to see Carrie’s gift for me too.”

Only then did the staff member step away and bring the poster tube over.

Upon unfolding it, they found that it was a piece of art done by Zach Zimmer, who wasn’t well-known in the industry. If Brie hadn’t bid on

the painting out of spite, she wouldn’t have known about such an artist.

Seeing it at this moment, Brie curled her lips into a contemptuous smile. She pointed at the painting disdainfully and said, “Caroline, is this what you’ve prepared today? Look at its quality. It’s not even on par with Mr. Morrison Senior’s status. Don’t you feel bad when he’s

done nothing but dote on you?”

Hearing what she said, the others also started to whisper about it.

“So much for doting on her, but in the end she gifted him a painting that was done by a nobody.”

“No wonder Mr. Eddy doesn’t like her. She may talk sweetly, but her actions reveal her true character.”

“She sure comes from a family that has fallen from grace. Although she can pretend to be a wealthy lady, her petty-minded nature is still exposed when it comes to spending money.”

When Eddy had heard such discussions in the past, he would have been happy without a doubt. Yet this time, he didn't know why his

heart stung, as if there were needles stabbing it.

He glanced at Caroline.

Caroline stood up and went over to the painting. "A one-million-dollar gift, of course, may not mean anything to Grandpa. But it's all that I

have. I know he loves paintings of this kind, so I deliberately looked for this and managed to find this piece of work done by Zach Zimmer.

"Although this artist isn't famous, his works are exactly Grandpa's cup of tea. Grandpa might regret it if he passed up on this."

Brie glanced at Caroline scornfully. Just as she was about to say something, she saw Jude walk toward the painting with trembling hands.

"This is really Zimmer's work!" His aged hand shook, hovering over the painting. He wanted to put down his hand, but he seemed afraid of touching it.

Everyone was shocked. It was the first time they had seen Jude behaving like this.

Thomas immediately stepped forward and supported him. "Dad, what's wrong?"

Jude closed his eyes and waved his hand. It took him a while before he finally 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

“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.

“Yes.”

“Where is he?”

“He’s in the lounge now. Would you like to meet him?” asked Simon.

“It’s only right for me to thank him in person. Can you show me the way?”

“Of course.”

Simon dropped what he was working on and ushered Caroline to the lounge.

On the way there, Caroline couldn’t hold back her racing heart. She was about to meet the mysterious business tycoon. In an attempt to

calm down, she rubbed her temples.

“We are here,” said Simon after a few minutes of walking. He then turned to Caroline and said, “I shall take my leave now.”

Caroline nodded. After Simon disappeared, she knocked on the door. She did it a few more times, but only silence answered her.

Meekly, Caroline uttered, “Hi there, Mr. Morrison. I’m Caroline. I invited you to dinner last time, but you couldn’t come. If it weren’t for your

help today. I...”

“What are you doing here?” A husky voice **from** behind made Caroline jump.

She turned around, flustered. “Why are you here?”

looked out of her reach.

As Kirk looked down, his eyes landed on Caroline’s slender collarbone. The urge he’d tried so hard to suppress flared up again, making him frown. “I’m here to help out. It’s my grandpa’s birthday. What about you?”

Kirk looked away. No more distractions.

“... I’m here to find Eddy’s second uncle, answered Caroline, visibly uncomfortable

“Oh?” Kirk lifted his eyebrows. “Are you into him?*

Peeved by Kirk's mocking tone, Caroline retorted, "I respect him a lot, so don't talk about him like that."

All of a sudden, Kirk closed the distance between them, He held Caroline's waist in one hand and grabbed the door handle with another. As the panicking Caroline floundered in his embrace, his primal instincts kicked in.

"Stop."

The mint-scented warning seized Caroline's being. She rested her hands on Kirk's chest and froze.

"S... Stop making fun of me, Kirk." Caroline's voice broke, as if it were a plea. No one was ever nice to her. All she wanted was a safe corner for herself.

Kirk was taken aback by Caroline's reaction. "Are you crying?"

"No." Caroline shook her head.

Kirk lifted Caroline's face with his fingers. Under the glow of the light, her tears shone like pearls, adorning her beautiful features. Kirk scooped out one of the tears and asked, "What is this, then?"

Just like that, Caroline burst into small sobs. Tears overflowed her face. The tough front she'd put up crumbled like paper before Kirk, But who could blame her? She was so young—hardly 20 years old. She could face death bravely, but that didn't mean she didn't fear it.

Seeing a weeping Caroline, Kirk didn't feel any better either. "Hey..."

Clumsily, he tried to wipe away the tears, but they wouldn't stop appearing. He gave up, and instead, he leaned in and kissed Caroline. That did the trick. Caroline ceased crying.

Her big, round eyes stared up at him as she tried to protest, but to no avail in the face of Kirk's greedy and unremitting kisses. Caroline was too powerless to resist his advance. All she could do was enjoy it.

Noticing his victory, Kirk gave a

Score 9.9

Chapter 56

Caroline held onto Kirk's collar. Her eyes were still misty.

Kirk was annoyed by Eddy's interruption. However, he had no choice but to suppress his anger. He got up, tidied his shirt, and went out.

Caroline couldn't hear what he said to Eddy, but after a short while, she could hear footsteps leaving.

She got the hint right away. Kirk was buying her time so that she could leave. Hastily, she made herself presentable. She opened the door slightly to make sure no one was in the corridor. Then, she made a beeline to the bathroom.

Inside the toilet cubicle, Caroline took out her mirror to fix her makeup. From her reflection, she saw a woman with a rosy cheek and hazy eyes, blossoming like a rose. The heat returned to Caroline's cheeks, and she could feel Kirk's tantalizing breath on her ears.

Caroline took a deep breath to calm herself. Just as she was about to get out of the cubicle and check on Kirk, she heard her mother's voice.

"Thank you so much for that idea, Layla. Once Caroline marries Eddy, I won't forget you."

"You're welcome, Aunt Sarah."

Layla's sickeningly sweet voice stabbed Caroline's heart. She had to clench her fists to stop making any noise.

"I'll ask Caroline to hurry up and announce the wedding soon. Come back once you fix your makeup. Don't miss out, continued Sarah.

"Okay."

Silence fell over the bathroom. Except for the screeching of a wheelchair. Caroline's hands

trembled with fury. She couldn't hold it any longer. She pushed open the cubicle door and saw Layla, whose face turned white.

"Caroline ..."

slap!

Caroline had slapped Layla. Layla's face swelled up almost immediately.

"Caroline, you crazy bitch!" Layla stood up from her wheelchair and waved her arms around hysterically.

Not one to back down easily, Caroline shoved Layla. The force of which was so great that it sent Layla and her wheelchair tumbling.

Lying on the floor, Layla held a hand over the bruise on her forehead. She turned to Caroline, saying, "Caroline, you're *crazy*. Is this how a daughter of the Evans family behaves?"

"I'm crazy because of you." Caroline's eyes turned red. "I tolerated you, but you took it for granted. Tell me—my parents threatened me with their lives. Was it your idea?"

Layla gave a sly grin. "Is there a problem?"

It had indeed been her idea. She'd persuaded Sarah and Dan to guilt-trip Caroline with their lives, all so that Caroline would marry Eddy.

If Caroline wanted anyone to blame, she could blame Eddy's second uncle for it. He'd said he'd find her a kidney donor abroad. On top of that, he'd asked Sean to oversee this matter—the one man Layla hated to see.

Hence, Layla had taken it upon herself to make Caroline marry Eddy before Sean could find a donor. That way, Caroline could die in the surgery, and her death would put everything to an end.

Caroline pulled Layla's hair so forcefully that her knuckles turned white. Yet the searing pain did nothing to curb Layla's smugness.

“Even if you know it was my idea, it won’t change anything. Can you defy your parents? Will you let your parents die before you? Can you live with that kind of guilt? Ah-”

Caroline pulled even harder, almost tearing Layla’s scalp.

Chapter 57

Caroline’s furious glare sent chills down Layla’s spine. For the very first time, Layla saw so much hatred in someone’s eyes. It was so overwhelming that it could kill someone.

“Caroline, what are you doing?”

Caroline laughed and let go of Layla’s hair slowly. “You want me to marry Eddy, don’t you? All right then. I’ll tell everyone about it now. And I’ll say that you’re my bridesmaid. You’ll bear witness to my becoming Eddy’s rightful spouse.

“All that love, happiness, and blessings will forever be out of your reach. You swore that oath in front of everyone. If you want to marry Eddy, Grandpa would be the first to oppose it.”

Layla’s face turned even paler. Still on the floor, she tried to grab Caroline’s heels. “You bitch! You crazy bitch!”

Caroline ignored Layla’s insult and left. She walked along the corridor until she’d finally reached a quiet spot.

Then, that tough facade of hers cracked. She slumped against the glass wall. The glistening surface reflected a defeated woman. Her eyes were scarlet, and her hair was disheveled. Soon, the image became blurry, like fogged-up glasses. The light turned dim, just like her loveless world.

Her parents **did** not care about her. They only wanted her to be Eddy’s wife. Eddy hated her. Layla wanted her dead.

All of a sudden, one of the doors opened. Light escaped from the gap in the door. Caroline lifted her head out of reflex, and her presence was caught by a pair of captivating eyes.

“You’re crying again.” Kirk noticed the tears at the corner of Caroline’s eyes. This was the second time he saw a teary-faced Caroline today. Caroline wiped her tears away. She didn’t want Kirk to be worried. She wanted him to remember her fondly. “It’s nothing. Dust got into my eyes. Um... Can I tell you something?”

At first, Caroline thought that she’d let Kirk find out about her engagement with Eddy through the news. However, that seemed a bit cruel. And so ...

“Wait.” Kirk decided not to debunk Caroline’s obvious lie. “Before you do anything, can I show you something?”

Kirk had already wanted to give it to her a few days ago, but he hadn’t known how to bring it up.

No one had ever thrown a tantrum at him. No one dared to give him the cold shoulder. Everyone was eager to get on his good side. Kirk also regretted what he said to Sean the other day.

Caroline had already cried twice today, and Kirk just wanted to see her smile again.

“Show me what?” asked Caroline, piqued. Something welled within her.

Kirk grabbed her hands gently and led her back to the lounge. Caroline’s heart was pounding. Her pinkie caressed Kirk’s thumb. “You...” Was Kirk trying to continue their “unfinished business” from earlier?

Kirk pulled Caroline to a couch and retrieved a red bag from a locked drawer.

“This is ...?” Caroline was confused.

“Open it,” Kirk said as he knelt next to Caroline. His eyes glimmered with anticipation.

Chapter 58

Prompted by his words, Caroline opened the bag. Instantly, she saw a property deed inside. When she flipped to the first page, she found her name printed boldly on it.

Excited, she quickly read further.

The deed was for 103 Bishop Street in Hectafleur, the same neighborhood of villas where Caroline's parents lived. This was the very same unit they'd visited the other day.

"Are you mad?" Caroline shot upright. "You actually bought it? How much did you spend? Where did you get that kind of money?"

Kirk grinned. He rubbed circles on the back of Caroline's hand. "Didn't you like the villa?"

Caroline got annoyed by his haughtiness. However, she softened her tone. "Yes. But even if I like it, you can't spend money like it's nothing. Every aspect of marrying and living together costs money."

Kirk laughed. "And you have a married life with me?"

These words sounded great to Kirk. It was completely different from the other day. It had upset him when Caroline had said that they were only contractually married.

Caroline's ears turned red at his words. She said incoherently, "I—I didn't mean that. I wasn't saying money on a whim."

...

Oh, anyway, you shouldn't spend

Kirk held Caroline's hand and squeezed slightly. He was overjoyed, but his tone remained calm. "It wasn't a lot of money."

Caroline knew that he had to be lying. He'd bought the villa just to make her happy. She was very thankful, but she knew that this wasn't right.

"Kirk, I'm very glad that you bought me a villa. You even put my name on the deed! But I can't accept this gift.*"

Kirk's expression shifted. His tone was stiff as he said, "Why not?"

"You worked hard to earn this money. I don't know how you put together the deposit. But I know this means you'll have to spend your life

working to pay off the bank loan. I hope you won't waste the rest of your life just to afford a house. This villa is too much of a burden to you."

Kirk looked at her deeply.

Was she

...

concerned for him?

His heart felt filled with some unknown emotion. Even his eyes were smiling.

"What if I told *you* that this money means nothing to me?"

Kirk had no clue

what a deposit was, and he definitely didn't understand this bank loan thing. To him, a villa was just another number on the list of his properties.

"Stop lying to me already. Even if you're a higher-up at Morrison Corporation, it takes a lot of hard work to make enough to buy a villa in Osbury. Besides, you're only middle management."

The only reason Caroline's parents could still stay in Hectafleur after the fall of the Evans family was the Morrison family. They had been helping in secret all this time.

The Evans family couldn't even afford the expensive fees for annual upkeep.

Kirk became impatient. "Alright, it seems I can't keep it from you. Actually, I

Caroline listened intently and looked at Kirk with solemn focus.

"I bought it at a low price. I heard that the villa is haunted. The place is impossible to sell"

Caroline asked, "Really?"

Kirk nodded. He asked back, "You aren't scared?"

1/2

Ghosts had never hurt her, but humans had. They had hurt her so many times. Humans were much scarier than ghosts.

Kirk chuckled. "You're a brave one"

Caroline shrugged.

"So Kirk lowered his head. The mole at the edge of his eye drew Caroline's attention. "Can you accept it now?"

His low voice was seductive and plucked at Caroline's heartstrings.

As she held the property deed, her fingers trembled.

Chapter 59

No!

There was a voice screaming in Caroline's mind. She would have to announce her marriage to Eddy soon. She couldn't accept such an expensive gift now.

But

Caroline ducked her head and looked at the proof of Kirk's sincerity. She looked up again and regarded Kirk's features. Her thoughts were all a mess. Her eyes filled with tears yet again.

"What is it?" Kirk tilted Caroline's head up. His tone was filled with affection but also a slight irritation. "You're such a crybaby."

After saying that, Kirk kissed Caroline lightly on the temple.

The feeling of being treasured made Caroline's heart sing.

"I'm not " Caroline pushed Kirk away and stepped backward. She was trying hard not to be seduced by him. "I should head back. If I stay too long, Grandpa will look for me."

Kirk watched Caroline leave and stared at the discarded property deed. He frowned.

Caroline was unsettled. Her footsteps were so rushed that she nearly crashed into Eddy as he walked over.

Eddy ducked aside. He mocked, "Still trying to throw yourself at me?"

Caroline's emotions were heavy, and she didn't want to get into a fight with Eddy. She emotionlessly circled Eddy and walked **off**.

However, Eddy pulled her to a stop after only a few steps. "Caroline, you have to stop playing hard to get!"

Caroline reacted as if his touch were a snake bite and shook him off immediately.

She glared at him. "Eddy, don't act so arrogantly. I admit that I used to love you, but the person I loved was only an illusion. Wealthy,

educated, and a talented businessman. However, after getting married, I realized that you're nothing compared to my husband."

Although Kirk didn't have much money or business acumen, he was still much better than Eddy!

Even if their marriage was a contractual one, Kirk still did his duty as a husband. He gave her the best of everything. But what about Eddy?

Caroline had cared for him for eight years. It was eight whole years. Eddy had never given her a smile, much less a gift.

"What **did** you say?" Angered, Eddy took hold of Caroline's neck. When he saw her bright eyes, his animal instincts took over.

It was only after a moment that he calmed down. He scoffed. "He's nobody. He doesn't deserve to be mentioned in the same sentence as me. Caroline, you'll really do anything to get a rise out of me. Too bad! I won't fall for it!"

Caroline gave him a forced smile and tried to avoid him again. She **felt** like talking to him was a waste of her precious time.

She stepped forward, but Eddy stopped her again.

This time, Caroline didn't manage to get a solid foothold. Her ankle twisted, and pain shot through her leg.

Caroline bit her lip. In pain, she looked up.

Eddy didn't notice this. He frowned. "Stop pretending. This trick won't work on me. Don't you know that? But-"

Eddy folded his arms and approached with a wicked smile. "I see you're good at getting on my family's good side. Why don't you try getting on mine?"

His words stunned Caroline. Her body shook all over.

So all her efforts in the past eight years were nothing to him?

Caroline gritted her teeth tightly. She scoffed. "I always thought I didn't deserve you. After all, you're the heir of the Morrison family. But now, I think you don't deserve me!"

Chapter 57

Eddy's body shuddered violently with anger. He looked at Caroline as she stumbled away. Suddenly, he felt that the distance between them was getting larger. It felt like they were worlds apart.

He felt a strange sense of pani

Caroline to hurry up and announce the wedding soon. Come back once you fix your makeup. Don't miss out, continued Sarah.

"Okay."

Silence fell over the bathroom. Except for the screeching of a wheelchair. Caroline's hands

trembled with fury. She couldn't hold it any longer. She pushed open the cubicle door and saw Layla, whose face turned white.

"Caroline ..."

slap!

Caroline had slapped Layla. Layla's face swelled up almost immediately.

"Caroline, you crazy bitch!" Layla stood up from her wheelchair and waved her arms around hysterically.

Not one to back down easily, Caroline shoved Layla. The force of which was so great that it sent Layla and her wheelchair tumbling.

Lying on the floor, Layla held a hand over the bruise on her forehead. She turned to Caroline, saying, "Caroline, you're *crazy*. Is this how a daughter of the Evans family behaves?"

"I'm crazy because of you." Caroline's eyes turned red. "I tolerated you, but you took it for granted. Tell me—my parents threatened me with their lives. Was it your idea?"

Layla gave a sly grin. "Is there a problem?"

It had indeed been her idea. She'd persuaded Sarah and Dan to guilt-trip Caroline with their lives, all so that Caroline would marry Eddy.

If Caroline wanted anyone to blame, she could blame Eddy's second uncle for it. He'd said he'd find her a kidney donor abroad. On top of that, he'd asked Sean to oversee this matter—the one man Layla hated to see.

Hence, Layla had taken it upon herself to make Caroline marry Eddy before Sean could find a donor. That way, Caroline could die in the surgery, and her death would put everything to an end.

Caroline pulled Layla's hair so forcefully that her knuckles turned white. Yet the searing pain did nothing to curb Layla's smugness.

“Even if you know it was my idea, it won’t change anything. Can you defy your parents? Will you let your parents die before you? Can you live with that kind of guilt? Ah-”

Caroline pulled even harder, almost tearing Layla’s scalp.

Chapter 57

Caroline’s furious glare sent chills down Layla’s spine. For the very first time, Layla saw so much hatred in someone’s eyes. It was so overwhelming that it could kill someone.

“Caroline, what are you doing?”

Caroline laughed and let go of Layla’s hair slowly. “You want me to marry Eddy, don’t you? All right then. I’ll tell everyone about it now. And I’ll say that you’re my bridesmaid. You’ll bear witness to my becoming Eddy’s rightful spouse.

“All that love, happiness, and blessings will forever be out of your reach. You swore that oath in front of everyone. If you want to marry Eddy, Grandpa would be the first to oppose it.”

Layla’s face turned even paler. Still on the floor, she tried to grab Caroline’s heels. “You bitch! You crazy bitch!”

Caroline ignored Layla’s insult and left. She walked along the corridor until she’d finally reached a quiet spot.

Then, that tough facade of hers cracked. She slumped against the glass wall. The glistening surface reflected a defeated woman. Her eyes were scarlet, and her hair was disheveled. Soon, the image became blurry, like fogged-up glasses. The light turned dim, just like her loveless world.

Her parents **did** not care about her. They only wanted her to be Eddy’s wife. Eddy hated her. Layla wanted her dead.

All of a sudden, one of the doors opened. Light escaped from the gap in the door. Caroline lifted her head out of reflex, and her presence was caught by a pair of captivating eyes.

“You’re crying again.” Kirk noticed the tears at the corner of Caroline’s eyes. This was the second time he saw a teary-faced Caroline today. Caroline wiped her tears away. She didn’t want Kirk to be worried. She wanted him to remember her fondly. “It’s nothing. Dust got into my eyes. Um... Can I tell you something?”

At first, Caroline thought that she’d let Kirk find out about her engagement with Eddy through the news. However, that seemed a bit cruel. And so ...

“Wait.” Kirk decided not to debunk Caroline’s obvious lie. “Before you do anything, can I show you something?”

Kirk had already wanted to give it to her a few days ago, but he hadn’t known how to bring it up.

No one had ever thrown a tantrum at him. No one dared to give him the cold shoulder. Everyone was eager to get on his good side. Kirk also regretted what he said to Sean the other day.

Caroline had already cried twice today, and Kirk just wanted to see her smile again.

“Show me what?” asked Caroline, piqued. Something welled within her.

Kirk grabbed her hands gently and led her back to the lounge. Caroline’s heart was pounding. Her pinkie caressed Kirk’s thumb. “You...” Was Kirk trying to continue their “unfinished business” from earlier?

Kirk pulled Caroline to a couch and retrieved a red bag from a locked drawer.

“This is ...?” Caroline was confused.

“Open it,” Kirk said as he knelt next to Caroline. His eyes glimmered with anticipation.

. Instinctively, he wanted to run after her.

“Eddy—

“Layla’s voice made him stop. She rushed to push her wheelchair forward from where she’d hidden and listened to them.

Eddy turned around. He saw Layla's swollen left cheek. It was then that he remembered he'd wanted to get back at Caroline for it.

"Sorry, I

Layla cut him off. It seemed like she was trying to hide something. "Eddy, can I Can I ask you for a favor?"

Eddy was feeling guilty for forgetting about getting justice for Layla. When he heard this, he nodded quickly. "Tell me."

"Caroline said she wants to announce your marriage at the birthday banquet. She said it was a surprise for Grandpa."

Eddy frowned. "What does she mean by that?"

Layla shook her head. There were tears in her eyes. "Most people won't understand what she's thinking. Maybe she finally sees how bad I have it."

Thinking of Caroline saying that he didn't deserve her, Eddy couldn't agree with Layla,

Layla was pressing her nails into her flesh to force more tears down her face.

"So I hope you and Caroline can get married. I've already sworn that I'll never marry you. Since my health is getting worse, I don't think I will be able to live much longer. I only want to see you happy before I die."

"Stop taking nonsense. I'll never marry Caroline Evans!"

Layla finally relaxed when she saw the same hatred in Eddy's eyes that she'd seen before. She said weakly. "No, you have to marry her. I'll only rest in peace knowing that you and Caroline are together."

"I won't let you die" Eddy clutched Layla's hand in his. After some struggling, he finally made a painful decision. "Okay, I'll marry Caroline. But after we marry, I'll arrange your surgery immediately! I won't wait for Uncle Kirk. I need you to live a healthy life!"

When Layla heard this, she finally relaxed completely. She smiled in satisfaction.

Caroline was dead for sure now!

In the banquet hall, Caroline had just taken a seat when Sarah came over.

Then, she dragged Caroline into a corner. There, she lamented, "Where did you go? I was looking all over for you!"

Caroline leaned on her good foot and supported herself on a chair. Pushing down the pain, she said, "I went out for some air."

"It's almost time. You have to go onstage and announce your marriage with Eddy soon!"

Caroline took a sharp look at Sarah. "And if I don't?"

Sarah's expression changed. "Care, you promised us. If you don't do it, we'll be done for."

Caroline didn't get upset. Instead, she laughed. When she smiled, the glittering lights made her makeup look stunningly beautiful. "Did Layla teach you to threaten me?"

Sarah was enraged by Caroline's stare. "What threat? As your parents, we only want what's best for you!"

Again with what was best for her. Caroline didn't want to say anything more. She turned around and stumbled back over to her seat.

It was then that Sarah noticed Caroline's injured foot. Yet since the announcement was coming soon, she went back to her seat too. She didn't want more trouble. Instead, she waited excitedly for Caroline's announcement.

Caroline sat next to Jude.

1/2

so long?"

All that had happened tonight flashed in Caroline's mind like a reel. She was exhausted.

"Grandpa, do you remember when you asked me what reward I wanted?"

Jude answered. "Of course I do."

Caroline smiled wider. She pushed herself up from her seat. “Grandpa, I want you to give your blessing.”

As she said this, Eddy was pushing Layla back into the room.

Jude’s gaze fell on Eddy. He frowned slightly but still smiled. He said, “Sure. What do you want me to give my blessing for?”

Score 9.9

Chapter 60

Eddy’s body shuddered violently with anger. He looked at Caroline as she stumbled away. Suddenly, he felt that the distance between them was getting larger. It felt like they were worlds apart.

He felt a strange sense of panic. Instinctively, he wanted to run after her.

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