

Bogus Billionaire by Shining Riviera (Caroline Evans)

Chapter 31

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“Are you willing to?” His voice was low and hoarse, yet his eyes had a strange light in them.

Caroline didn't know whether he was truly drunk or was simply pretending to be drunk. She pressed her lips against his; her entire face was already bright red by now.

Kirk bent over and pressed on her lips too. The scent of alcohol invaded Caroline's senses, making her feel light-headed.

Still, her hands tightened their grip on his shirt. As she let them slide down his shirt, her fingers

brushed on something shaped like a lipstick.

The heat she felt instantly vanished like an extinguished flame. Hastily, she pushed Kirk away. “I

-I'll get you something to sober up,” she said, breathless.

With that, she rushed off into the kitchen and closed the door. She smacked herself on the head a

couple of times and cursed at herself for being clumsy enough to let something like that happen

Kirk was drunk, but she wasn't. She had no idea how she'd face him in the future if something

happened between them.

However, she felt her heart twist a little upon remembering that lipstick. After calming down, she

left the kitchen with a cup of ginger tea.

Kirk was already asleep when she reached the couch. His eyes were shut tightly, and she could

hear his even breath while he slept.

Slowly and silently, she let out the breath she'd been holding and crouched.

Then, she helped him take off his shoes and dragged him into the guest room.

This time, Caroline found that he was rather cooperative; he didn't do anything that he shouldn't do. As she tucked him in, she glanced at him one last time

before leaving and going back to her room.

She slept so well that she slept in and was harshly awakened by a phone call and someone knocking on her door.

“Caroline, open up the door! Open it now!” It was Sarah. Still drowsy, Caroline climbed out of bed to open the door. “Mom, what happened to you?”

“You have the audacity to ask me that?” Sarah was fuming like a volcano that

was about to erupt, and she prodded Caroline in the forehead. “Did you make a bet with Eddy?”

Caroline had barely opened her mouth to speak when Sarah grabbed her by the wrist and ordered, “Come with me to meet Eddy at once and apologize to him in person,”

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Now, it was Caroline’s turn to be angry, She’d spent every ounce of patience she had. Yanking her hand back from Sarah’s grasp, she said adamantly, “I did nothing wrong.”

“Nothing?” Sarah roared. “Listen up, you’re dead if Eddy takes back his investment because of this. Even if you die, it wouldn’t be much of an apology by then! Quick! Hurry up! We’ll go to Eddy’s house together, so you can apologize to him!”

Dodging Sarah’s clutches, Caroline looked at her grimly and said, “I didn’t make the deal on my own. He agreed to it. Besides, I’ve managed to borrow 50 million dollars already. With this money, our company can gradually free itself from Morrison Corp and manage to run on its own. Isn’t that a good thing?”

“You managed to get 50 million dollars already?” Sarah was shocked to hear this, but she frowned. after a moment. “Caroline, what happened to you? Since when did you learn to lie?”

“Who in Osbury would lend you money now? I’m so disappointed in you. Come with me. I’ll make you apologize to him no matter what.”

As she was talking, Sarah pushed Caroline to the door, while the latter started struggling against her mother. Suddenly, both women heard a sound from behind them.

It was the elevator. Its doors were open.

They looked in the direction of the elevator to see Eddy and Layla getting out of it. The scene left both mother and daughter dumbfounded, especially because Layla was sitting in a wheelchair with red, puffy eyes, as though she’d just cried.

Now highly alert, Caroline took a cautious step backward.

A smile immediately surfaced on Sarah’s face when she saw Eddy. “Eddy, you’re here! What a coincidence! I was just about to take Caroline over to your place to apologize to you. I already know about your bet.

“It’s all my fault for not disciplining my daughter well and making her cause so much trouble.

Don’t worry, though, because she knows that she’s wrong now...” she blabbered.

“Caroline!” Sarah whispered harshly in an attempt to scold Caroline. She then pushed Caroline to stand before Eddy.

Seeing Caroline made Eddy acutely conscious of the pain in his nose thanks to the punch he'd suffered last night.

Eddy cleared his throat and started, "I'm here today-"

"I didn't do anything wrong," Caroline said, interrupting him before he could finish his sentence, "so I won't apologize."

Hearing those words, Sarah's face turned pale instantly. She pinched Caroline's arm and chastised.

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behaving like this!"

"Mrs. Evans," Eddy chipped in. "It's true that it wasn't her fault. Layla and I are the ones who

should be apologizing."

His words felt like an electric shock, stunning the mother and daughter. It was an extremely rare

thing to hear Eddy Morrison say sorry to someone else. How bizarre.

"S-sorry..." muttered Layla as she raised her head, still sobbing. "I didn't do it on purpose,

Caroline. I never thought that Kent would do something like that to you!"

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Caroline frowned. The way Layla apologized seemed rather pretentious.

"Kent Pearson?" Sarah cried and looked at Caroline with anxiety written all over her face. "Were you tainted?"

Caroline glanced sideways at Layla, her lips already turning into a sneer. "So, you're the one who

ordered Kent to do that to me last night, aren't you?"

Layla paled at Caroline's words. She bit her lip and tried to explain herself.

"No, that's not true! I've already explained this to Eddy. I called Kent out of the kindness of my heart so that he'd lend you the money. I really didn't know that he'd do something like that."

Caroline took a step forward, not bothering to listen to her excuses. She stared at Layla with

piercing eyes and spat, "So, it was you?"

"No" Layla had barely uttered another word when Caroline gave her a tight slap across the face. It took a moment for Layla to realize what had

happened. Her fingers trembled as they touched

her cheek, which was now burning in pain from the slap.

She stared at Caroline in disbelief. This woman had the guts to slap her in

front of Eddy! How could she let this golden opportunity slip by? Almost instantly, tears started streaming down her face. "Eddy..." she called out. Eddy's heart was filled to the brim with pity for Layla. Now that she'd started crying, his heart was already beginning to shatter into pieces. He turned to Caroline angrily, but once he met her steady gaze, he recalled what she'd experienced the night before and felt guilty about it.

Keeping his voice cool and patient, he said, "Layla only wanted to help you, but it didn't go according to plan. Still, you can't blame everything on her. She apologized to you already, anyway."

Caroline snorted in derision and looked him in the eyes. "Yeah, she apologized, but has it ever crossed your mind that Kent almost got his hands on me?" A wave of disappointment flashed through her eyes.

Eddy lowered his head in silence, no longer able to say anything back. However, Sarah decided to take things into her own hands by tugging Caroline's hand and saying, "Caroline, that's enough. Layla was trying to help you."

"It's clear whether she was trying to be helpful," Caroline said curtly and swept a glance over them three. "I don't care about her apology. Just know that I won't let things go so easily if there's a next time." Even though her tone was casual, it left a strong impression on the other people around her. Awkwardness filled the already tense atmosphere.

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A moment later, Caroline turned away from them and walked back into her room. Eddy's eyes followed her as she left. Then, his eyes fell on a pair of men's shoes on the floor by the entrance. The sight of it gnawed at his heart somehow.

He wasn't the only one who noticed them. Layla saw them and said, "Looks like my brother-in-law's here too."

Only then did Sarah discover the pair of shoes. The expression on her face shifted in an instant, and she rushed forth to put herself between Eddy and the door. "Eddy—"

"Mrs. Evans, there's no need for an explanation." Eddy tore his gaze away from the shoes and said, "Caroline and I will be married in less than half a

month. She saved Layla, so I should be grateful to her. I'll treat her well regardless of the fact that she's been married once before."

He was rarely so soft-spoken toward Caroline, which made Sarah let go of the breath she'd subconsciously been holding. "Eddy, you're much too courteous. It's all my fault for not educating Caroline well enough. She'll be yours to lecture once you two get married."

Layla had been listening all along, and Sarah's words made her feel extremely uneasy and annoyed.

Her initial plan had been to let Kent defile Caroline and render her unfit to marry into the Morrison family. Who knew that he would've been such an idiot to make her plan fail and expose her?

Just then, Caroline walked out to meet them with a card in hand. "Here's 50 million dollars," she said curtly. Her words were like a bomb to them, and all of them were at a loss for words.

"You... there's no way ..." Eddy frowned in confusion and disbelief. "There's no money on this card at all, right?" Just what trick was she trying to play now?

"If you don't believe me, you can go to the bank with me and check it for yourself." Last night,

Caroline had gone downstairs to check the status of the card. There were indeed 50 million dollars in it. She hadn't expected Kent to be this rich.

"Caroline ..." Layla mumbled with uncertainty at Caroline's determined expression. "Where did you get this much money from? Don't tell me that you became a prost

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Layla's voice trailed off, but everyone around knew what she meant.

Caroline replied calmly, "How I got the money is none of your business." She continued, "Besides, according to our agreement, I don't need to get divorced, and you can't withdraw the investment either. You're free to choose whether to stay or leave when Evans Group stabilizes."

"Caroline!" Sarah wailed. "How could you say something like that?"

Eddy took a deep breath. He heard the sarcasm in Caroline's tone. Initially, he'd felt rather guilty toward her, but all of that vanished in an instant when

Layla suggested that Caroline had resorted to prostitution.

Harrumphing, he said, "Fine. I underestimated you. This time, I'm the one who lost." With that said, he pushed Layla's wheelchair and walked away.

Hastily, Sarah followed after them.

Now that peace and quiet had finally been restored, Caroline turned away from the corridor and back into her house. She accidentally stepped on Kirk's shoes. A soft smile hung on her lips when she glanced down to see them and bent over to pick them up.

After placing them on the shoe rack, she went into the kitchen, put on her apron, and started to prepare breakfast.

On the other hand, Eddy had yet to start the car, even though it had already been quite some time since they'd gotten into it.

Puzzled, Layla asked, "Eddy ... are you blaming me?" Her voice was so soft that it was barely a whisper.

When Eddy didn't respond, Layla raised her head to look at him, only to see him staring at the steering wheel as if in a daze. It made Layla fret, and she hastily poked his arm for a response.

Eddy, are you okay?"

Only then did he snap out of it and mumble, "It's nothing ...". In spite of his words, the image of that pair of men's shoes popped into his mind.

Swiftly, he opened the door and climbed out of the car. "I'll call the chauffeur to drive you. You should go back first."

His words and actions made Layla jump up in her seat. Alarmed, she got out of the car too, but

then something crossed her mind, and she sat back down.

Her hands tightly gripped the fabric of her pants. She seethed in anger as she watched Eddy head for Caroline's apartment block once again.

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Last night, when Eddy had confronted Layla about what she'd said to Kent, she'd already started to notice that there was something different about him.

She could sense that he treated Caroline differently than before.

The thought of it made Layla clench her fists, making her fingernails dig into her palms. She swore to herself that she would never let Caroline take Eddy away from her!

Meanwhile, the heavenly smell of food wafting from the kitchen woke Kirk up. "You're awake." Caroline stole a glance at Kirk. He had sleep dust in his eyes, and his hair was tousled from just waking up from bed. Hastily, she tore her

eyes away from him and lowered her head as a blush crept up her cheeks. Kirk had a hand resting against his temple. His mind was blank now, and he asked, "Why am I here?"

Caroline finally raised her eyes to look at him. "You've ... forgotten about it?" Kirk then moved his hand and placed it on his forehead. "I can't remember anything."

Instantly, Caroline's tensed body relaxed. She went to pull a chair out for him and said, "Don't think about it anymore then. I made some soup. Come, sit down, and give it a try."

Kirk obediently sat down on the chair and turned to look at Caroline. "Are you glad that I can't remember what happened?"

His question hit the bullseye, and Caroline immediately avoided his gaze. "N-no..."

"What did I do last night?" Kirk grabbed her by the wrist.

His hand felt warm against her skin, reminding her of last night, and she felt the tips of her ears burn. "N-nothing ..." Her voice was barely a whisper.

Kirk narrowed his eyes at her. Just as he was about to continue questioning her, they heard the doorbell ring.

Immensely relieved, Caroline struggled free from Kirk's grasp and ran over to the door. "Someone's here. I'll get the door."

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Caroline opened the door to see an empty corridor. There was no one there. "Strange. Nobody's here," she mumbled to herself.

Kirk had followed her to the door. He looked to the left and right and saw no one there either. In his hoarse voice, he said, "Maybe a kid tried to prank you. Let's go back and eat."

"Okay." Caroline nodded and closed the door.

When the corridor became quiet again, Eddy walked out from behind the safety exit and stared at the closed door of Caroline's apartment. A gush of disappointment flashed through his eyes. Caroline was now married and living with another man.

All this time, he'd wished that she would stop pestering him. Ironically, he didn't feel as happy as he'd expected himself to be when his wish came true.

It was as though something was stuck in his heart that he couldn't get rid of. He didn't even have the courage to see Caroline and her husband standing together and had to resort to hiding.

In front of a coffee shop, Caroline and Gwen each had a cup of coffee in their hands as they walked along the streets and chatted away.

"Are you sure that you found a lipstick in his pocket?" Gwen muttered after taking a sip from her cup. Caroline nodded. She felt somewhat uneasy at the mention of that lipstick.

"Why didn't you ask him who it belongs to?" Gwen asked.

Caroline explained, "We made a deal not to ask about each other's private matters before we got married."

Bitterly, Gwen bit the edge of her paper cup and said, "Before this, I thought he was a good guy. Who knew that he'd turned out to be a scumbag? I even tried to advise you when you told me that you wouldn't fall in love with anyone anymore. It seems like you were right after all! The world is full of scumbags!"

A gentle smile made its way to Caroline's lips. "To be honest, I don't think he can be considered a scumbag. We agreed that we wouldn't fall for each other, so we haven't broken the deal."

Now, Gwen was concerned. "Carol, have you fallen in love with him already? You're so quick to defend him."

Caroline froze. Love? Her? Loving him? Impossible!

"Stop talking nonsense! I suffered way too much when I was with Eddy. I don't have the courage to

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there too late, we won't be able to get the good things."

Caroline quickened her footsteps, and Gwen followed suit. They drove to the auction site.

Axcelior Auction House was the biggest auction house in Easton. There would always be a small-

scale auction there every Friday. The prices of the items sold weren't uniform, so anyone with a

net worth of one million dollars was admitted to the auction.

Caroline and Gwen hadn't managed to find a suitable present for Jude at the jewelry store last

time. Caroline had gone to several other shops later too, but nothing had caught her eye.

A few days ago, she'd heard that this auction would be focused on paintings,

so she'd invited Gwen to attend it with her.

Jude had always loved paintings. He'd even given paintings as presents to others many times in the past, so giving him one as a gift was naturally a good choice.

When Caroline and Gwen arrived, they saw lots of journalists crowding the entrance. When they

got in, they saw Brie sitting in the front row, where seats were reserved for VIPS, and immediately understood what was going on.

The Collins had planned to create an entirely new image of themselves, so they kept in contact

with the media and dozens of journalists all the time. They intended to use their influence to

spread positive news about their family.

Brie was probably the one who'd ordered all those journalists to come over.

"Are we really that unfortunate? Why is she here?" Gwen wrinkled her nose, and her face

contorted in disgust at the sight of Brie.

Caroline smiled and told her, "Don't bother.

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"Mhmm." Gwen hummed and nodded. "Have you thought of which painting you're going to give

Mr. Morrison Senior?" she asked.

Caroline opened the auction house's website and skimmed through the items that were being

auctioned today.

"This one," she handed her phone to Gwen and explained, "It's by Zach Zimmer. Although he isn't that popular compared to other artists, his works have a certain flair and character to them that

Grandpa likes. I can afford it too, so it's the best gift I can get for Grandpa."

"I am truly speechless at how far you're willing to go for him." Gwen laughed.

"How much does this cost, then?"

"About a million dollars, I think."

"A million dollars! Where did you get the money from?"

"My savings." Caroline sighed. "Grandpa's always been very kind to me, but I've let him down. I'm not going to be his granddaughter-in-law anymore, so this painting serves as some kind of

compensation too.”

“It’s not your fault-” Gwen exclaimed.

Caroline quickly interrupted her. “Gwen, the auction’s starting soon. I need to go to the restroom before that.”

“Okay.” Gwen stood to make way for Caroline to move.

Following the instructions, Caroline made her way to the restroom. Just as she got out, she was greeted with the sight of Brie touching up her make-up. She was tracing the edge of her lips with the lipstick in her hand.

Caroline took a glance at the lipstick and froze. It looked exactly like the one she saw last night.

Was this the lipstick that Kirk had in his pocket?

Hastily, she shook her head and dismissed the thought.

How could it be? Brie came from an affluent family. Kirk would never have any connection with

her. Besides, this brand of lipstick was very popular these days. There were hundreds and thousands of others who had the same lipstick.

She had no reason to believe that Kirk was connected to all of them in any way. Caroline found it all too confusing.

Seeing Caroline approaching her, Brie harrumphed. “I heard that you’ve been quite the spectacle

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million dollars out of him.”

She then laughed at Caroline and sneered. “You’re so high and mighty now. Who’s the person backing you up, huh?”

This was the first Caroline heard that Kent had left Osbury. Still, she wasn’t interested in him. After washing her hands, she walked past Brie and headed straight for the dryer, completely ignoring her.

This pissed Brie off, and she yanked Caroline’s hair from behind her. “Bit ch, I’m talking to you! Did you hear me?”

Pain shot through Caroline’s head. She suddenly turned and grabbed Brie by her wrist in a swift movement. “Let go,” she spat.

Caroline had used all her strength on Brie’s wrist just now, and the latter yelled in pain. Brie was no match for Caroline, and she immediately let go of Caroline’s hair.

Caroline then flung Brie’s hand away and warned her, “Don’t mess with me!”

Brie looked down at her wrist, which was now red from Caroline’s iron grip, then glared at

Caroline. “We’ll see how long you can brag. When I become Eddy’s second

sister-in-law, the first thing I'll do is end your engagement with him."

"What did you say?" Caroline narrowed her eyes at Brie.

Brie snorted derisively. "Scared now, aren't you? Get down on your knees and beg. Maybe I'll forgive you then."

Caroline smirked and left Brie alone in the restroom without sparing another word.

Furious to see Caroline being all nonchalant despite her taunts, Brie couldn't help but stomp her feet in rage. She glowered at Caroline's retreating silhouette and hollered, "Just you wait, Caroline! I'll make you suffer a fate worse than death when I marry into the Morrison family!"

She was here today, all dressed up, because she knew Kirk would be coming here too. She'd never expected to run into Caroline instead of Kirk.

All Brie wanted was to get back at Caroline for what she'd done to her before.

However, Brie was surprised that Caroline was so aloof and remained unaffected, even after all the things she said. It

fueled her rage even more!

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As Caroline returned to her seat, Gwen immediately noticed that something was off with her friend's expression. When Gwen saw Brie walking out of the restroom not long after that, she guessed what had happened.

"Did Brie mess with you?" she asked Caroline, jumping up from her seat, ready to go and confront

Brie

Caroline quickly pulled her back into her seat. "No."

"Then what's that look on your face?"

Caroline touched her cheeks. "My stomach feels a little weird."

"Do you want to go to the hospital?"

"It's not that bad." Caroline shot Gwen a smile. "Maybe it's because of the coffee we had just now

I'm sure it'll get better after a while."

A concerned frown formed on Gwen's face. "You didn't have a problem like this before. I'll ask the

staff to get you some warm water to drink."

"Okay." Caroline would agree to anything as long as Gwen didn't go to find Brie's trouble. After Gwen left, she leaned in her seat and rubbed her hands together, immersed in her thoughts.

So Eddy's second uncle wanted to marry Brie? Caroline had thought that

someone as smart and intelligent as the second uncle would get himself a kind and gentle wife. She suppressed a laugh at the prospect of him marrying Brie.

Still, he had the freedom to choose who he wanted to marry. Besides, Caroline didn't want to get involved with the Morrisons in any way ever again. Hence, it was none of her business now.

Yet, despite that, she felt like there was something off about it, and it made her uneasy.

In the VIP booth on the second floor, Eddy pushed the curtain of beads aside and pointed in

Caroline's direction. Then he said to Kirk, "Uncle Kirk, look. She's here again."

After he'd left Caroline's apartment that day, Eddy felt like she was a shadow that was impossible to get rid of. Seeing her here strengthened his belief that she still cared about him, making the worry and anxiety he'd felt for the past few days vanish in an instant.

Kirk's eyes followed the direction Eddy's finger was pointing. There was an unfathomable look in his smiling eyes that was barely noticeable.

In truth, he'd noticed her since she entered the auction house. Today, she wore a cool tone midi dress, which made her appear more solemn and dignified, totally different from what she looked

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She sat in her seat, rubbing both her hands together and looking as if she were in a daze.

Kirk narrowed his eyes. Gwen appeared and walked toward Carol with a glass of water.

Furrowing his brow, he gestured for a staff. "Give the lady downstairs a hand warmer." The staff

didn't know who he was but could see that he was almost the same age as Eddy, so she assumed that he was Eddy's friend.

She looked at Eddy, slightly puzzled since Caroline was Eddy's fiancée, and everyone in Osbury

knew that. Wasn't this man crossing his boundaries by saying this?

Eddy froze for a second. Then, it occurred to him that Kirk was probably just being nice to Caroline

since she was his nephew's fiancée. After all, all the elders had always adored her. Eddy shot a

look at the staff and said, "What are you waiting for?"

The staff rushed downstairs to do what she was told. Then, Eddy sent the other staff out and

asked, "Uncle Kirk, why are you here today?"

Usually, people with their status wouldn't bother with a small-scale auction like this. The goods that were auctioned at a small event like this one weren't that good, so it was only a waste of time to come here.

"Your second aunt likes one of the paintings that's going to be auctioned this time." Kirk's voice was as cool and apathetic as ever.

A few days ago, he'd noticed Caroline scrolling through auction paintings online on her phone. It seemed like she'd taken an interest in such paintings, so he'd decided to come over. He hadn't expected her to be here as well.

"So, she likes paintings, eh? Then she'll definitely get along with Grandpa very well: Uncle Kirk, you should stop hiding her. Introduce her to us!"

Eddy finally had the chance to make this request. Needless to say, he didn't want to give it up since he'd looked forward to meeting his second aunt for so long.

Kirk simply took a sip of water from his gla** and said, "We'll see how things go.

Eddy wanted to insist on it, but he noticed the staff member from earlier pointing at them. Now,

-Caroline was looking in their direction too. His back stiffened, and his mind went blank.

Kirk, who'd been standing beside him, had walked away and sat on a chair inside the booth.

"Mr. Eddy is upstairs," the staff told Caroline as she handed her a hand warmer. "Do you want to go upstairs?" she asked.

Caroline could vaguely make out the shadow of a person moving behind the bead curtain. She couldn't see his face clearly, but she said, "No, thanks."

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SATA kantett After she lett, Gwen inched closer to Catone with her eyes glued to the hand warmer and asked, "What's going on? Why did Eddy ask the statt to bring you this?"

"Who knows? Caroline tossed the hand warmer aside. She didn't have the slightest interest in anything he gave her

Don't tell me that he's finally realized that you're an angel and is now trying to make up for all

the crap he's pulled"

Caroline laughed as she looked up to turn her attention to the host walking toward the stage. "A heartless person like him would never do something kind."

The host began to announce the rules of the auction, so Gwen shut her mouth.

The entire process was smooth and fast. In just a couple of minutes, Zach Zimmer's painting was being auctioned

Caroline raised her auction paddle and said, "One million dollars.

She'd just placed her paddle down when they heard someone's husky voice from the second floor

say, "Two million dollars

Startled, Caroline turned to look at the VIP booth on the second floor. The bead curtain moved in

the wind, making her fail to see anything behind it. However, the staff lady had said that Eddy and his friend were on the second floor. The voice didn't belong to Eddy, so it must be his friend's.

"Isn't two million dollars a bit too much?" Gwen whispered.

Caroline clenched her jaw, then raised her voice. "2.5 million dollars."

Laughter erupted from the crowd. The host suppressed a laugh and said, "2.5 million dollars now.

Anyone?"

The crowd's attention was now directed to the one on the second floor, but only silence met them

The host then raised the hammer.

Just as he was about to let it fall, Brie raised her paddle and called out, "Three million dollars." She

then turned to Caroline with mocking eyes.

Gwen gritted her teeth. "She's an idiot. Two million dollars is already considered expensive, yet she's bidding more."

Caroline tucked a strand of hair behind her ear and said, "She's not bidding for the painting. She's

trying to gloat." Right after finishing her sentence, Caroline raised her paddle once again. "Four million dollars."

The crowd stared at Caroline, wide-eyed. Zach Zimmer wasn't that famous, so his work cost two million dollars at most. Besides, the painting being auctioned wasn't too extraordinary. Two

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Not wanting to become the laughing stock, Brie lifted her paddle in the air

again and said, "Five million dollars!"

A smile made its way to Caroline's face as she calmly raised her paddle and said, "Ten million dollars."

The crowd inhaled sharply. Ten million dollars... Was she out of her mind? Or was the rumor true that she'd gotten herself a rich man and was now capable of squ

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Even Gwen couldn't help herself as she tugged Caroline's sleeve and whispered to her, "Carol, have you gone mute? You shouldn't be bidding this much, even if you like this painting."

Where did Caroline get that much money from?

However, Caroline calmly turned to look at Brie, who looked like an angry tomato. She gently patted the back of Gwen's hand and reassured her, "Don't fret. Someone's paying for it."

Gwen was more confused than reassured. She was about to ask Caroline what she meant but heard Brie call, "90 million dollars!"

How, Brie could finally let go of the breath she'd been holding. She glanced sideways at Caroline, her chin jilted upward. She was clearly pleased with herself.

Caroline smiled in response. Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, she placed one hand over her paddle but didn't raise it in the air.

On stage, the host waited for about a minute to make sure that no one was making another bid and then announced, "Going at 20 million dollars!"

"20 million dollars twice!"

"20 million dollars thrice!"

The hammer fell. The bid had been won, and Brie had taken the painting by Zach Zimmer for 20 million dollars.

The crowd stared at her like she was an idiot. Brie was triumphant at first, but when the staff finally brought the painting to her, she realized that she'd taken the bait. She turned to look at Caroline, who shot her a smile.

Brie was so furious that she shot up from her seat, but her friend beside her pulled her back down. All she could do now was glare daggers at Caroline. Still, her glare had absolutely no effect on Caroline.

The sight of it all made Gwen want to laugh out loud. She could hardly stifle her laughter.

"This is hilarious! She spent 20 million dollars for something that costs a million dollars at most! Brie Collins is surely going to become the laughingstock of the town after this!"

Caroline merely smiled and carried on scrolling her phone to look for her next target. She'd never been a calculative person who'd haggle over something, partially because she'd been too preoccupied with Eddy,

Lately, though, she'd realized that the kinder one was, the more they'd get bullied. Besides, it

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Still, this was the only painting by Zach Zimmer that was being auctioned today. The other

paintings weren't to Jude's liking. In the end, Caroline left empty-handed. She sighed. "It seems like I have to come here again next time."

Gwen felt that it was a shame too, so she asked, "What's being auctioned next time?"

"Antiques." Caroline sighed again. "A million-dollar antique surely won't be good enough for Mr.

Morrison Senior."

"He'll like anything you give him." Gwen tried to console her.

Caroline smiled and started to stand when Brie and a few others blocked her path. Upstairs, Eddy saw this, and his interest was immediately piqued. He gestured for Eddy to come over. "Uncle Kirk, a good show is coming up!" he said with enthusiasm.

Lazily, Kirk looked over, only to see Caroline being surrounded by Brie and her cronies. A shadow fell across his eyes. He wanted to head downstairs immediately but suddenly remembered what

Caroline had once said. The frown on his face deepened.

While he hesitated, Brie already had one hand raised in the air, ready to slap Caroline. Fortunately,

Gwen was quick to notice this and blocked the slap with her arm.

"F uck off, Gwen! The bit ch I'm looking for is Caroline!" Brie hollered.

Gwen sneered. "Brie Collins, aren't you afraid of the media taking photos of you being so rude and unruly like this?"

"You-" Brie gritted her teeth in anger.

Her best friend, who was standing beside her, interrupted them and said,

"Brie, the reporters out there are all your people. You're the one who decides what they're going to report. Caroline is simply too much! How dare she make you spend 20 million dollars on something like that?"

Brie sneered. "You're right! Get them, y'all!"

“Carol, run!” Gwen yelled as she raised both her arms into the air like a hen shielding her chicks from danger.

Score 9.9

Chapter 39

“You”

“De quick, and write my name on it.” Caroline paused for a moment and added, “If you don’t, il calll

the jewelry store right now to ask for the surveillance footage!” She enunciated the last few words

slowly for emphasis.

Brie’s grip on the pen tightened, and she stared daggers at Caroline. “Fine Ill do it,” she spar

through gritted teeth.

Seeing that Brie had finally written down her name, Caroline felt the satisfaction she’d

anticipated. She turned to Gwen and said, “Gwen, let’s go.”

Heartily, Gwen agreed. Before walking past Brie, she said to her, “Thank you, Ms. Collins, for being so magnanimous.” It made Brie so pissed that she flung the pen at the ground.

After leaving the auction house, Gwen hooked an arm around Caroline’s and said, “Cardi, you were so cool just now! I think I’m going to start fangirling over you!”

“You’re exaggerating!” came Caroline’s reply.

“It’s true!” exclaimed Gwen.

“Brie always mocked you in the past. You told me before that the Morrisons and the Collins were close, and you had to bear with her because you didn’t want to make things ugly between them

It’s so satisfying that you finally taught her a lesson!”

Caroline smiled at those words as she glanced up at the sky. Indeed, she’d felt the utmost pleasure in achieving that. She realized that she’d started becoming more relaxed and unrestrained after

leaving Eddy.

“Oh right! Where are we going next?” asked Gwen, curious.

“Let’s buy a necktie,” Caroline answered, looking at the emerald bracelet on her wrist

“Are you thinking of giving Mr. Morrison Senior a necktie?” asked Gwen. Caroline shook her head

in response.

“Then... are you giving it to... that guy?” Gwen voiced her suspicion. “Carol, are you out of your mind? He has another woman out there. Why are you giving him a present?”

Caroline winced inwardly at Gwen’s words, but she managed to put on a calm front. “I’m giving him a necktie because he gave me this bracelet. I don’t want to owe him anything.”

“I really don’t know what to do with you.” Gwen glanced around them and said, “Let’s go to that mall there.”

Caroline and Gwen crossed the road and entered the mall together. Unbeknownst to them, a pitch-

black Land Rover tailed them and came to a stop at the entrance of the mall

Eddy asked in confusion, “Uncle Kirk, why are you following Caroline?”

Kirk had his eyes closed, but he opened them when he heard Eddy’s question. “She’s a part of the

Morrison family Aren't you worried that someone would find fault with her again?"

Eddy was rendered speechless. It took a moment for him to respond. That's not quite right. She

isn't a part of **our** family yet. She hasn't married me yet."

Kirk closed his eyes once again and ignored him, so Eddy assumed that he didn't like discussing matters regarding relationships

Instead of talking about Caroline, Eddy **changed** the topic to the journalists they saw just now. The journalists said they received **a** tip about you attending the auction just now. Where do you think they got the news **from?**

Kirk tapped his fingers on his lap several times before opening his eyes again. This time, they had a rather gloomy light to **them.**

He said "Eddy, you always told me **that** Caroline's a scheming person and that she's not a good choice for you. But **what** I saw today **made** me think the opposite. I think that she's a thoughtful and intelligent person"

Do you like her?"

Kirk's heart skipped a beat, and he tapped one finger against the side of his pants.

Sighing Eddy continued. "I really don't understand why so many of you find her likable. You, Grandpa and my parents—everyone likes **her.** Is it because she has a way of pleasing elders?"

Now, Kirk raised his pointer finger, the gloom in his eyes had vanished. "Since you don't like her, why force yourself to marry her? Is it just because of **the** kidney issue?"

The look on Eddy's face **shifted instantly.** Shocked, he turned to look at Kirk and mumbled, "H- how did you know-

Calmly, Kirk replied "Sean told me. I didn't tell your grandfather about it, though."

Hearing a sigh of relief. Eddy muttered, "You scared me half to death."

I can help you source a kidney”

Eddy replied with much joy, ‘Really?’

“Yes”

“That’s awesome! Eddy exclaimed “To be honest, I know that this method is horrible, but I had no

choice

“Layla is very important to me. I’ve combed through the entire country several times but still couldn’t find a compatible one for her. Since you have better connections overseas, I’m sure you

can help me find a suitable kidney for Layla”

Kirk merely nodded in response. Eddy didn’t know what else to talk about, so he said, “Uncle Kirk, as long as you can get **the** source for a kidney for me, I’ll do whatever you want me to do in the

future.”

Now, the corner of Kirk’s lips lifted into a smile. “Good, I’ll keep that in mind.”

Just then, the driver said, “Mr. Kirk and Mr. Eddy, Ms. Evans and her friend have gotten out of the

mall.”

Both men looked out the window to see Caroline and Gwen coming out of the mall with a bag that

had the Hermès logo on it.

“Follow them,” Kirk instructed the driver.

The car inched forward slowly but stopped abruptly when the two women paused in their tracks.

Gwen took the necktie out of the bag and started blabbering to Caroline, who merely listened

quietly to her and smiled from time to time.

Her smile was like a cool, refreshing breeze that blew right into Kirk's heart, and it made him smile too. He couldn't help but look at the necktie.

Beside him, Eddy sneered, "That woman's doing everything she can to please me. She even came

out to buy a necktie for me."

Something dangerous flashed across Kirk's eyes at Eddy's words, and the temperature in the car

suddenly dropped to freezing point.

Caroline came back home to see Kirk standing at the door to her apartment. Bewildered, she

asked, "W— why are you here?" Hastily, she shoved the bag behind her in an attempt to keep it out

of his sight.

However, Kirk noticed her actions, and his face darkened. A moment later, he took out a poster

tube and passed it to her.

"What's this?" Caroline asked.

"Go in and have a look."

"Okay." Caroline opened the door and invited him into the house. She opened the poster tube and

She smiled, delighted. "Where did you get this painting from?" She'd discovered that this painting

was going **to** be auctioned next time.

In truth, Kirk had used Eddy's influence to buy the painting, so getting his hands on it had been a piece of cake.

He'd only placed a bid during the auction today because he'd planned to win the bid and give it to

Caroline as a gift.

However, when she'd bid on it, he'd realized that she wanted to get her hands on it no matter what, so he'd let it go.

"Someone gave this to me," Kirk explained, his heart overflowing with the joy he felt from seeing her overwhelmed with excitement. A smile crept onto his face without him realizing it. "I'm not

an expert in paintings, though. Do **you** like it?"

"Yes! I like it so much!" Caroline yelped and nodded. "I owe you big time! This painting costs about a million dollars. I'll transfer the amount to you right away."

"No. **You** don't need to." He stopped her. "Didn't you buy a necktie not long ago? Just give it to me

and consider this settled." His back stiffened when he recalled what Eddy had said in the car, and

he couldn't help but feel flustered.

Chapter 40

Caroline froze. "How **did** you know that I'd bought **a** necktie?"

Kirk glanced at the bag and laughed. "I guessed it. What? Are you **reluctant to** give it **to** me?"

“No. I bought it because I wanted **to** thank you for giving me this bracelet. But now, you’re giving me this painting, and I... I don’t know what to do to express my gratitude,” Caroline mumbled.

Kirk swallowed, a **tad** touched by her explanation. The **worry** he’d had vanished into thin air. “Help

me tie it then.”

“Huh?” A blush crept up Caroline’s cheeks. Never in her life had she helped a man tie a tie. Besides, tying a tie for someone meant she had to get close to them, and she’d only do it for

someone she was close to.

Yet now Kirk was asking her to do it for him.

“We’re meeting my father next month, yet we seem distant from each other. We don’t look like a newlywed couple at all. Since you’re thinking of a way to thank me, you can get used to being my

wife. My family won’t doubt our relationship, and they’ll finally stop asking me to get married.”

Kirk’s voice was calm when he spoke, just like the look in his eyes.

Caroline lowered her head, somehow disappointed. She’d thought that he ... Anyway, she was

overthinking things.

When she raised her eyes to look at him once again, she said, “This is my first time helping

someone with a tie. I’m not used to this.”

“That’s okay,” Kirk told her as he took off his coat, revealing the white shirt underneath. His

sturdy chest came into view, and Caroline tried to calm down by resting one hand against her

chest.

She took the tie into her hands and walked up to him.

As the distance between them decreased, Caroline could feel her heart beating like crazy. It was

so loud that she thought it would pop out of her chest. She took a deep breath and stood on her

toes.

Kirk was too tall, and she was only five feet and four inches tall. She looked tiny before his

towering figure. Noticing this, Kirk crouched slightly. "Is this better?"

Again, the distance between them was reduced. They were in such close proximity that Caroline

could smell his scent. Her hand trembled slightly, and she muttered almost unintelligibly, "Y—yes

...

I guess..."

Kirk sighed his warm breath tanning **out** at her cheeks.

Before heading out today, Caroline had put on some light make-up, which made her lips stand out. There was always this naive and serene look in her eyes, too.

Kirk stared into her eyes and felt a burning desire to have her all to himself. Still, he said, "Why don't I sit on a chair?" His voice was hoarse, laced with something he didn't even know he had.

Okay, Caroline replied instantly letting go of the breath that she held.

Kirk sat on the chair in the dining area while Caroline picked up the tie once again. Out of the blue, she realized **that this** position made their situation even more awkward than just now.

Being the tall guy he was Kirk's legs were long, and she had to stand between them to put the tie on for him. Besides, she was wearing a midi dress today, so the fabric of his pants brushed against her calves from time to time.

She panicked and tried to tie his tie in a **hurry** to escape this awkward situation, but the faster her fingers moved the worse it got. She couldn't get the tie done even after spending so much time on

It sure looks like this *is* your first time doing this," Kirk said, his voice deep and raspy. He gripped Caroline's hands in his. It's like this. He helped her tie the tie properly.

All this time, Caroline's mind had turned into a blank slate. She didn't hear what he said. The only thing she was focused on was her fingers, which had finally managed to tie the tie with his help.

"And it's done." Kirk didn't let go of her hands. He gazed up to look at her and was met with her dazzling eyes. His grip on her hands tightened subconsciously, and he swallowed.

"Caroline."

She stared with wide eyes as his face drew closer in. Her eyes flickered shut. Some time passed, but everything was still silent.