

The Divorce 391

Chapter 391 Blow a Gasket

Everyone present avoided Atlas's piercing gaze, afraid he might single them out.

I turned to Eloise and said, "Ms. Eloise, as Ms. Harmony's manager, why don't you share your thoughts?"

We're all eager to hear your opinion."

Eloise hesitated. "I think it's quite....down-to-earth?"

"This is pure garbage!" The designer, Steven, chimed in. He was straightforward and didn't care about the consequences. "This kind of decor is terrible. Do you understand it, or are you just making a mess here?"

"Mr. Atlas, are you trying to tarnish ATL Empire's reputation? Who here would buy a house if it was

decorated like this? It's a joke!"

Steven was truly fearless enough to criticize Atlas directly. Everyone secretly glanced at Atlas to see his reaction.

Then, the photographer mustered the courage to speak up. "I'm sorry, but I can't photograph something

like this. I have to be responsible for my work!"

The others maintained a cautious attitude, exchanging glances and not daring to speak.

“Down-to-earth? It looks like a grocery store! What do you take ATL Empire for?” Steven was going all out.

“The Design Division is world-renowned, but you want us to put this in a promotional video? What a joke!”

Harmony’s face turned red, then white the next second. There were glistening beads of sweat on the bridge of her nose.

She gulped, “I—Is this what I asked for? I meant...

Hana interjected, “Ms. Harmony, you signed and confirmed this. Everyone heard and saw you confirm it in

person!”

Harmony glanced at Atlas. She turned to me once she realized Atlas wasn’t even looking at her.

“Chloe, you... you set me up!”

Well, didn’t I say that Harmony lacked brains? How could she accuse me at a time like this?

Nick immediately slammed the table. “Nonsense!

Seeing that the moment had arrived, I couldn’t let the opportunity slip away.

“Ms. Harmony, how do you explain this?” I sat up straight, looking at Harmony. “I rushed here without lunch, all because your team called me for this meeting. How can you say I set you up?”

Eloise suddenly stood up. “Chloe, don’t play dumb. This is all part of your plan. Otherwise, why would you ask us to go to the showroom?”

“What a joke. If we didn’t go to the showroom, would everyone here see clearly what you want to change? Who’s being evasive here?” I stood my ground, refusing to back down.

Carol’s rage surprised me. She said, “If not for Ms. Chloe’s decision to go to the showroom, would you all

have done so well today? Changes like this waste Tanum Corporation’s and the project team’s time. Do

you think these are places where you can do whatever you want?

“We only came up with this after you visited the site. Otherwise, who knew how much longer you would’ve

argued? In the end, you’d push the blame onto us.

“Our furnishings and decor follow international trends. If you are still unhappy, ATL Empire should hire a better designer for Ms. Harmony!”

Carol’s aura was dominant, and her words flowed like a torrent. I saw Atlas’s eyes turn to me again.

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Suddenly, his brows twitched. I looked at him calmly. “Mr. Atlas, the decision is yours. If you want to send us a letter, we’ll cooperate!”

I unapologetically passed the ball to Atlas. Everyone watched the tense atmosphere, too scared to breathe, awaiting Atlas’s stance.

Atlas stared at me as he spoke decisively. “No need!”

Chapter 392 Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

Atlas's response baffled everyone. Was he declining the offer from Tanum Corporation, or was he going against my suggestion?

Harmony was dissatisfied at first, but her expression began to brighten. She seemed to think that Atlas was rejecting me on her behalf.

Then, Atlas turned to Ivanna.

"Ms. Ivanna, please provide Austier Agency with a detailed report. This whole ordeal has disrupted ATL Empire's operations for almost seven hours. I want to issue a warning to all of you. The manager will not participate in ATL Empire's endorsement services again.

Harmony exchanged a quick glance with Eloise, whose face turned white. It seemed she had some inkling of what was going on. Harmony then glanced at Atlas, trying to discern his intentions.

"Ms. Hana, starting today, ATL Empire will request Tanum Corporation to designate you as ATL Empire's soft furnishing designer."

My expression froze. I looked at Atlas, my mind filled with confusion. Could it be that he meant....

Atlas continued, "Steven, you're now Deputy Director of ATL Empire's Project Department. You'll review design drafts, and your salary will reflect your new position. I am setting an example for all ATL Empire employees—be honest in addressing misconduct, like Steven.

"Mr. Lucas, you are relieved of your duties. Please consider your failure to uphold your principles in

critical situations. How can I trust you to manage my project team?"

Lucas paled. There was no room for explanation, and he admitted that he had been indecisive in handling

this matter.

After all, he was biased toward Harmony, who was currently by Atlas's side. His sense of justice had deviated.

All of ATL Empire's executives looked at Atlas with fear this time. As he looked over his staff, his face turned darker.

Then he looked at the photographer and said, "As of today, this photographer is hired as ATL Empire's dedicated photographer. We can discuss the terms. You can have your own assistant as well."

Then he paused, looking at Harmony beside him. His tone turned even colder.

"After this term of endorsement, Miss Harmony's contract will not be renewed."

Atlas-

Just as she was about to speak, Atlas raised his hand to stop her. Even Ivanna looked a bit surprised.

"Of course, from the company's perspective, Austier Agency suffered a considerable loss this time. Everyone, including me, did not expect this outcome."

Then Atlas paused and turned to me.

“ATL Empire will now officially partner with Tanum Corporation as our interior decorator. Regarding project development publicity, Tanum Corporation will be prominently featured as ATL Empire’s long-term

partner.”

Harmony’s face turned a sickly shade, while Eloise was utterly speechless.

I

turned to Harmony.

“Do you know why I made this decision?” Atlas who was about to reach out and grab

his arm.

“I never play favorites. No one can overrule me on ATL Empire’s territory and give orders. Only those I

designate have privileges here. The rest will be treated equally by me.”

He looked around and said, “I spent an afternoon watching your antics to test my team and partners

problem-solving skills. So, I will administer clear punishments as a deterrent.”

I now understood what Atlas said earlier. He meant there was no need to wait but to give an immediate

answer. I couldn’t help but admire Atlas’s decisiveness and uncompromising nature.

He then turned to me. "Thank you, Ms. Chloe, for your strong support. The proposal for the upcoming promotional video will proceed as originally planned. You've worked hard! Let's conclude the meeting here!*

With that, he stood up and walked out.

Chapter 393 Composed

Atlas's decisive actions left those in the room reeling.

After a while, Nick stood up and announced, "Let's adjourn!"

His words seemed to snap everyone back to reality. I turned to Carol and suggested, "We should leave, too."

Suddenly, a piercing shout cut through the air, "Chloe! This is all your doing... What did I ever do to you?"

How could you conspire against me like this?!"

I turned, startled, to find the source of the rage. It came from Eloise. Her eyes burned with anger, and she

pointed a trembling finger at me, her hatred strong.

"Chloe, I have unfinished business with you. You wretched woman, for..."

"Outrageous! This is not Austier Agency. You can't shout so loudly here. Get out!" Nick looked at her with

a stern face.

It was the first time I saw Nick look so forbidding. Everyone's attention turned to Eloise.

The room was already tense from the previous conflict, and Eloise's shouting only added fuel to the fire. She found herself in an awkward position as her fellow attendees scoffed at her.

"Where do you get the confidence to go berserk at ATL Empire? Get out!" Nick shouted again, cutting Eloise off.

With a pale face, Harmony's assistant tugged at Harmony's sleeve, whispering something. Harmony, embarrassed, stood up and left the conference room.

Seeing that Harmony had already left the room, Eloise didn't pay attention to her. She was even angrier.

Ivanna's face was gloomy, and she didn't acknowledge Eloise. She also got up, intending to leave.

I could completely understand Ivanna's current state of mind. After all, these two people were both from the Austier Agency, and she was their boss. She was embarrassed.

Eloise stomped her foot and left, chasing after Harmony.

smiled faintly at Nick before leaving with Hana and Carol. Once outside, I felt unusually pleasant. It seemed that I had everything I strived for.

Carol looked admiringly at Hana and said, "Ms. Hana, you played a key role today. Well done!"

Hana gave a sly smile. "It was Ms. Chloe's excellent idea!"

Carol laughed. "Yes, Ms. Chloe always remains calm under pressure. This sponsorship deal was won so

brilliantly.”

Then she turned to me and said, “I’m excited! The traffic for this promotional video will be through the roof. She made a big deal out of nothing, and not only did she look bad, but we got a free long-term partnership with ATL Empire. This is a huge win!”

I smiled faintly.

Why did Atlas do this? Was he and Harmony just an act? Otherwise, why would he call off Harmony’s

endorsement?

I thought about what he said to me outside the show unit, and my heart raced. I was not expecting it to be

so easy to get this sponsorship.

Atlas said it would be a long-term partnership. Didn’t he tell me that he wanted to end our business

relationship?

For the ATL Empire, helping a small business like Tanum Corporation was extremely simple. However, we did need this support.

After all, Tanum Corporation was still too young, and the journey had been incredibly challenging. This sponsorship that Atlas casually bestowed upon us was no less than a godsend.

Being able to tie themselves to the ATL Empire was something many companies could only dream of, let alone a tiny company like Tanum Corporation.

“We’re here!” Carol said as I was lost in thought. It was then that I realized I had already arrived home.

I gathered my thoughts and told Carol, “You can drive the car back. Come pick me up tomorrow morning and take Hana home!”

Then I went straight into the house. To my surprise, there were guests at home. Myra was there with her son. This was quite a rare visit, but I knew there had to be a reason for her coming.

Chapter 394 Asking for Help

I warmly greeted Myra and noticed her little son was already exploring the house. I sighed at how quickly

time flies.

Ava was having fun playing with him and acting like a big sister. She made him laugh, and the kids got along well. Ava probably felt lonely.

Myra seemed a bit hesitant. “Chlo, this is my first time at Amethyst Apartments. The environment is incredible. Johnson used to tell me about it, but I never imagined I’d come here. I should have visited sooner!”

I could sense from her tone that Johnson was unaware of Myra’s visit to my house today.

“You should have come earlier. Look at how well the little ones are getting along. In the future, feel free to

bring him over to play whenever you like.”

After signaling for Myra to sit down, I joined her and looked at the two kids.

My mother was busy in the kitchen, and upon seeing me return, she said, "Myra, have dinner here today. Chlo, we'll serve the meal once you're done chatting!"

"Thanks, Ms. Laura. I'll just talk to Chlo for a bit and then leave. I didn't expect you to get off work so late!" Myra stood up suddenly, appearing even more uncertain.

I immediately pulled her back down. "Why so polite? Since you're here, just stay. Let's talk a bit more. My parents love it when there are more people around. It's lively!"

Only then did Myra sit back down, still feeling a bit uneasy.

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"Chlo... I wanted to ask you if there's any way you could let Johnson join your company. He can do anything, even as just a regular employee.

She held onto me urgently, speaking in a rush. "Chlo, I've been thinking about this for a long time. Johnson couldn't bring himself to ask you. He feels bad for troubling you, especially after he left so abruptly with Matthew."

As I had suspected, she was here for Johnson. Seeing that I hadn't responded, tears. She was more embarrassed than anything.

Myra's eyes filled with

know this request might put you in a tough spot, Chlo. Our actions have not been consistent, which makes things hard for you. But I have no choice. Since I had my child, I haven't been working, and Johnson has been the sole breadwinner."

Take your time. I understand," I comforted the somewhat agitated Myra.

She let out a sigh of relief and lowered her head.

“In fact, I’ve struggled for a long time. Johnson didn’t want me to come. He said he couldn’t face you. He acted all high and mighty when he followed Matthew back then, so he couldn’t bring himself to bother you. He said he couldn’t impose on you anymore.”

I could empathize with Myra’s feelings. Raising a child can be costly, and family support alone can be overwhelming.

Myra looked worried. “I can’t help it. Johnson works for Matthew but is always pushed around. He’s given all sorts of menial tasks to do, and Melanie... She constantly picks on him, scolding him in front of everyone. She’s even cut his pay several times!”

“They cut his pay?”

That was a bit unexpected. Johnson had been by Matthew’s side for quite a few years, working tirelessly. It didn’t seem fair to reduce his pay without good reason.

“Yes! Matthew doesn’t even care. He’d changed since joining the wealthy Thompsons. He’s even more cruel now, always doing things that help himself at the expense of others. And he forces Johnson to do it. I am afraid something bad will happen at some point.”

“Is that so?”

“Chlo, they even involved Johnson in their project. Melanie always makes Johnson do things against his principles. I’m afraid this will lead to trouble sooner or later.”

“What kind of things?” I asked, concerned,

Chapter 395 Crucial Information

Myra hesitated but then spoke with determination. “Melanie is in charge of the materials. She secretly manipulates things and often sends Johnson in to handle it.”

I understood what Myra said right away. This was my chance. I needed this evidence to catch Melanie and her cohorts in the act.

Johnson’s distress was understandable to me. After all, this was not a small-scale project but a substantial endeavor.

This was one of Celine’s few major city projects. When Liora got it, she secretly handed it to Matthew, using him to open another front for her younger brother. If anything went wrong with this project, all three would be implicated.

My body tensed up. I hadn’t expected it to be so effortless.

While I had plans for these three businesses, I never expected things to work out so well. My scheme hadn’t been this ruthless. Now, I could bring their entire operation to a halt.

Myra became concerned when she saw my dazed expression, fearing she had said something wrong. Chlo, I—I had no choice but to come to you because I trust you. I’m just feeling so uncertain...”

I patted Myra’s hand as I gathered my thoughts. After a brief moment of reflection, I spoke with purpose. Myra, be patient.”

It was almost 7 p.m., and Johnson should be finishing work.

So, I told Myra, “Give Johnson a call, ask him to come over, and we’ll have dinner at my place.”

“No... Chlo, he doesn't even know I'm here! He'll be mad at me... I should head home!” She stood up to get her child.

I quickly pulled her back. “Myra, don't be nervous. Johnson won't blame you. Relax. Since you're here, I'll have Johnson come over for a chat, too! Make the call and ask him where he is. It'll be fine!”

Myra looked at me nervously. It seemed like she didn't want Johnson to know she came to see me.

“We need to resolve this. Since you trust me, I want your full trust. Currently, I want to talk to Johnson!”

Myra gulped and looked at me anxiously. ‘Chlo, Johnson...’

Johnson is actually working for me!” I couldn't hold it in any longer.

Myra was taken aback, and I quickly followed up with an explanation.

“Johnson has always been close to me, so I can trust him. If he's available today, I'll talk to him about

Matthew's company. It's been a while since I've seen him, and he discreetly helped me at the last baby party. I haven't had a chance to thank him yet.”

Myra smiled. “Chlo, are you telling the truth?”

“Yes, Johnson and I have always gotten along well,” I reassured Myra. “I'm hesitant to call him in case

he's with colleagues from the company. It might be awkward.”

“Alright, then I'll give him a call!” Myra said with a smile, pulling out her phone to dial Johnson.

I couldn't miss this opportunity. However, I did have a slight concern.

After all, Liora is married to Atticus. He had helped me with recent incidents, and making a move against

Liora might not sit well with him. It appears that I will need to consult with Lauren on this.

Myra had already called Johnson. He quickly answered, and Myra immediately put the call on speaker.

“Just got off work, and I’m heading out now. Don’t wait for me for dinner. It’s a busy day for me.” I could.

hear the frustration in Johnson’s voice.

“Honey, is it convenient to talk?” Myra cautiously inquired.

“Yeah! What’s up?” Johnson said, his tone clearly showing his discontent.

“Honey, hold on, Chlo wants to talk to you!” Myra said, passing the phone to me.

I reached out to take it. Johnson, are you done with work?”

“Chlo... Oh!” Johnson realized that calling me by my name might not be wise.

I quickly whispered, “I met Myra and your son outside today, so I brought them to my place. Why don’t you come over too? Let’s have a meal together. We’re looking forward to seeing you!”

I said this on purpose, to ease Myra’s nerves.

“Huh? Alright, I’ll be there soon!” I could tell Johnson was excited. “I’ll hang up now. See you in a bit!”

I could tell he said this intentionally for the benefit of the people around him.

Chapter 396 Her Spy in Ardora Construction

Soon after, Johnson arrived and saw his wife and son with me. His little one's laughter made him smile as he politely greeted, "Chloe, sorry to impose on you."

He then exchanged pleasantries with my parents and even told us he bought snacks for Ava.

The dinner was joyous and harmonious. I knew it had lifted a weight from Myra's shoulders. She played with the children after dinner. My parents realized Johnson and I needed to talk, so they went for a walk.

together.

I—discussed Ardora Construction's current situation with Johnson and understood that the Thompsons

had been active lately. They had snatched several projects from others and pulled in a few significant

shareholders.

It seemed they played a big game and were unafraid to take risks. The mastermind behind everything was

Liora. Even without Johnson's explanation, I knew Keegan was not the one making things happen.

It had always been Liora. She didn't want to lack money because she was married to Atticus. I wondered

why she couldn't stay content.

Another thing puzzled me. Was Liora not afraid of Atticus's retaliation for seizing his resources and connections? From my understanding, Atticus would never tolerate a woman taking advantage of him, even if she was his wife.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have hesitated to remove the Thompsons' influence from his company. I figured Liora's schemes would return to bite her one day.

It seemed I needed to have a word with Atticus beforehand, even though he had hinted that I didn't need to spare Liora any mercy. It indicated plenty of hidden information in this situation, which warranted some thorough investigation on my part.

That was how the upper class functioned. Many things remained unspoken yet understood by everyone. However, that only occurred when one had the power to speak.

Before parting ways, I had to tell Johnson and Myra. "You can't leave Ardora Construction yet. You can rest assured I will always welcome you at my company if you're willing to return. But for now, you must stay at Ardora Construction. Of course, the decision depends on you."

Although I didn't state my intentions, Johnson declared, "Chloe, I'd brave any storm for you if you're willing to accept me later,

Thank you for saying that, Johnson, I know it puts you in a difficult position, but I need this I need you salary.

"You can't do that, Chloe. You've already been too kind to me. I can't take your money," Johnson protested, shaking his head.

Myra agreed, "Absolutely not, Chloe!"

“Don’t refuse so quickly. I understand how tough it is for you two. You can easily move to work at a better

place, but since you’re working for me, I can’t let my employees suffer,” I assured them.

“Plus, your kid is still too young for kindergarten, and Myra won’t be able to work for a while. I know your

pressure is immense, Johnson. So don’t refuse because it’s only fair for me to offer you that. On the

contrary, it’ll put my mind at ease.”

I appealed to him with reason and emotion—it wasn’t an empty statement. After some thought, Johnson

responded, “Okay. Thank you, Chloe. I will do my best for this.”

I knew he was knowledgeable. His ready acceptance also reassured me. The trio stayed at my place until late before leaving. It seemed my plan had a more definite direction. However, I knew this approach would also pose significant risks. I had to be cautious and not act hastily.

On Friday, I went to the hospital to remove my cast. I felt much lighter afterward. While heading downstairs, I picked up some

medication for my dad. I saw a burly man ahead of me when I reached the

payment counter. I couldn’t see how many people were still in line ahead.

Finally, when the man bent to hand over his prescription, I saw a snake tattoo on his wrist. I instantly recognized this tattoo. I had seen the same tattoo during my kidnapping. It was the burly man who had carried me through the tall grass

Though I hadn't seen the man's face that night, I remembered this tattoo vividly. My heart raced as I stepped aside to get a better look at him.

Chapter 397 The Man Who Wanted to Kill Her

I couldn't resist and stepped closer to the man. He had tanned skin, thick eyebrows, and large eyes. His appearance wasn't bad, but his gaze had an underlying air of menace that sent shivers down my spine.

My sudden movement startled him, and he turned to look at me. I looked away and calmly asked, "Are you done? I'm in a hurry, sorry."

Yet I sensed his gaze intensifying on me. When the nurse handed over his prescription, he snatched the medicine and swiftly walked away. Meanwhile, I gave the nurse my prescription and discreetly watched the man.

I saw him hurriedly heading toward the medicine collection counter. Although I could barely see his face last time, I knew he was one of the kidnapers. Otherwise, he wouldn't have narrowed his eyes at me like that.

When I received my medicine, I looked toward the collection counter but saw no one there. I overlooked collecting my medicine and scanned the corners of the lobby. However, the man had vanished.

It seemed he had recognized me. Otherwise, he wouldn't have disappeared so quickly. Perhaps he was hiding and observing me. The thought sent a shiver down my spine, and I dared not move. After all, I was

in the light, and he was in the shadows.

If memory served right, the man had gotten shot that night. I recalled how he had stabbed his knife fiercely toward me. One of Atlas's men had shot the man, presumably injuring his wrist or arm.

That was how I escaped his clutches.

Atlas had been investigating the matter since then, but I wondered how the man could wander around Foswood like that. I thought Atlas's men had caught the guy last time. Did he escape Atlas's pursuit? After all, some time had passed, and things had calmed down.

I steadied my mind, collected my medicine, and hastily left the hospital. I sat in my car and observed the crowd coming and going from the hospital. However, I didn't see the burly man anywhere.

I started the car and drove away, with the image of the snake tattoo flashing in my mind. The comparison between the two images—the position, pattern, and figure—matched.

No matter how I tried to calm myself, I couldn't stop shaking. After all, someone who had tried to kill me had appeared before me. Also, I couldn't ask Atlas anything.

Leven ran a red light without realizing it. I only noticed it when a traffic officer pulled me over. I accepted the ticket and repeatedly apologized, but I still received a scolding from the officer

salary.

"You can't do that, Chloe. You've already been too kind to me. I can't take your money," Johnson

protested, shaking his head.

Myra agreed, "Absolutely not, Chloe!"

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kid is still too young for kindergarten, and Myra won’t be able to work for a while. I know your pressure is immense, Johnson. So don’t refuse because it’s only fair for me to offer you that. On the contrary, it’ll

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Chapter 398

After work, Ivanna called to inform me that Stella had returned to Foswood. I called Grayson and asked him to watch Stella's movements closely. I had a hunch she wouldn't return without taking some action.

In the evening, Ryan and I arranged a dinner at Al Dente to thank Joyce and her team. When we arrived, I received a call from Ivanna as we entered the elevator. I gestured for Ryan to take our guests upstairs

and stayed in the lobby to answer the call.

After the call, I stepped into the elevator, and a couple entered with me. The man was tall and slender,

with a scholarly look. However, his eyes were mysterious.

The woman was tall and voluptuous, dressed in trendy attire, and had heavy makeup. Her perfume was so

intense that it made me feel suffocated. After all, I seldom used perfume.

The elevator's mirrored interior reflected our figures as I stood before them. They seemed like a well-

matched pair, but their temperaments starkly contrasted. The man appeared refined and gentlemanly,

while the woman had a fierce demeanor.

The more I looked at the man, the more I recognized him. However, I couldn't recall where I had seen him.

They continued upward as I arrived on the third floor and exited the elevator. Just before the elevator doors closed, I suddenly remembered who the man was.

was Jared. He was the man I had only seen once, the one who had passionately kissed Ivanna in the elevator. So the woman must be his wife, Trinity. No wonder there was an intriguing quality about her. Her

Regarding their outward presence, the two were well-matched. They possessed an intimidating aura that

kept others away.

I instinctively compared Ivanna's delicate figure with Trinity's voluptuous one. In comparison, Ivanna couldn't compete with Trinity regarding appearance.

Indeed, Jared's demeanor complemented Ivanna's, as there was a sense of security in their partnership. However, Ivanna was no match for Trinity's fierceness.

Lauren was right—the woman embodied malevolence. How could Ivanna stand up to someone so ruthless? I couldn't help but shudder as a sense of foreboding arose. Before entering the private room, I called Grayson and asked him to gather detailed information on Jared and Trinity.

However, Grayson informed me of another piece of news during the call.

Chapter 399 Someone's Investigating Hartz Construction

Grayson shared something that left me anxious. His tone was solemn, and I could sense danger, "Chloe, someone's investigating Hartz Construction."

"When did this happen?" I asked.

“Just a moment ago. Someone tried to infiltrate Hartz Construction’s system, but we detected it and reinforced the security. They can’t make any further attempts now. But from this, we can confirm someone wants to investigate the company,” Grayson stated with certainty.

“Can’t we find out who it is?” I asked, wondering who was snooping around Hartz Construction so suddenly.

“They withdrew too quickly, and we couldn’t catch any leads in time,” Grayson regretfully said.

I didn’t know how the person became aware of Hartz Construction. I felt uneasy because only a few knew about it. Excluding them meant that everyone was a potential threat. Moreover, it was not the right time

to reveal that company.

“Oh, I encountered a man when I removed my cast today. If I’m not mistaken, he was involved in my kidnapping.” I explained to Grayson.

He cautioned me, “It seems someone is investigating us. Chloe, be cautious from now on. I’ll have my people look into it and inquire about the results from the last time Dylan and his team were investigating. We must stay on guard when someone lurks in the shadows.”

“Yeah, keep me informed of any updates,” I told Grayson, “As for Hartz Construction, we should maintain secrecy for a while longer. It won’t be long before I execute my plan.”

I thought it wouldn’t matter if the other party found out about Hartz Construction once I had everything in

place.

After ending the call with Grayson, I entered the private room, where Ryan gestured for me to sit. We continued our unfinished discussion from the office during dinner. The experts at the table helped clarify my thoughts with their valuable insights.

There was still a long road ahead to transition successfully, but the increased confidence I gained was immeasurable. Privately, Ryan said the competition for phase two of Avalon Hills had intensified. He suspected Liora was behind this

“Are you suggesting Liora orchestrated the leak?” I asked Ryan.

He nodded, “That’s most likely.”

Is Atticus also in the race?” I asked, remembering what Atticus had said at Vanderberg Palace that day.

“Not just Atticus, Atlas is also competing.” Ryan affirmed.

“Do we still stand a chance?” I felt slightly uncertain and looked at Ryan for reassurance.

“The odds are certainly lower, but we can make a difference,” Ryan comforted me, “There will still be opportunities, and we just have to work twice as hard.”

He swapped my wine for water, gesturing for me to drink more water before continuing, “I want to accelerate our transformation this time. We must at least develop an effective plan that suits us.”

I nodded in understanding. I could grasp Ryan’s determination.

“Joyce is strongly recommending us, so we still have a chance. Even if we don’t get the main construction project, we’ll fight for the interior design. The acknowledgment and naming rights we got from ATL Empire is a great foundation for us.”

Ryan’s words left me with a hint of doubt. Obtaining the naming rights so quickly at this critical moment seemed too smooth.

Yet it was my spontaneous decision to propose the demanding conditions to ATL Empire. I hadn’t expected Atlas to agree to my request so readily. Essentially, it was like Tanum Corporation had received a free publicity opportunity. It

ATL Empire’s Design Division was initially supposed to handle the interior design. However, they withdrew after we secured the cooperation. It allowed us to design and construct it ourselves. Although they still had approval authority, our decision-making power had increased.

As I pondered if Atlas intended this, I shook my head. He had no reason to support me in such a way. My optimism might’ve been too much, but everything went too smoothly.

After all, the naming rights from ATL Empire effectively tied us to them, binding Tanum Corporation as their subsidiary. We would either rise or fall together. Why would he do this for me?

I quickly dispelled these thoughts, reminding myself not to overanalyze the situation. The road ahead was still my own to pave.

Chapter 400 Visiting Ivanna

Neither ATL Empire nor Echelon Group was within my sphere of influence.

No matter which company won the bid, I suspected either of these two might deliver the interior design project to me.

Firstly, ATL Empire had made us responsible for interior design, meaning we would automatically secure the development rights.

As for Echelon Group, Atticus might also entrust me with this responsibility. After all, we had an excellent

work relationship. I believed we had already established an unspoken understanding. If I had no chance in

development, I could pursue the next big thing by establishing an interior design company.

With designers like Hana on our team, building upon her foundation and recruiting a few renowned designers would be our winning formula.

My thoughts gave me a direction. I proposed this idea to the business planners, which surprisingly helped

us clarify many issues. Our qualifications, experience, and funds would become more convincing.

I received praise from Joyce, who wholeheartedly endorsed it, "I support Chloe's idea. Focusing on

Interior design first is more suitable regarding qualifications, experience, or capital. Once you establish the brand, you can expand into development."

Her light brown eyes looked into mine, "It's a process, not a one-step journey. Your qualifications are a bit

stretched, Ryan. That's why I've been withholding this opinion from you."

Seeing Joyce and I agree, Ryan devised an alternative proposal with the planners. After our integration, it

felt like we had a more accessible entry point. After all, Tanum Corporation's strength in interior design

and building materials gave us a unique advantage.

It made it easier to implement our plans. It was more convincing as well.

The discussion continued until late at night before we concluded the dinner. We escorted our guests to

their hotels under Ryan's arrangement, and I drove home alone on the bustling night. I felt a little lost.

after the excitement wore off. Instead, I felt a sense of loneliness.

Suddenly, my thoughts turned to Ivanna. While driving to Amethyst Apartments, I called my mom and told her I'd visit Ivanna's place before coming home.

Ivanna opened the door in her silk pajamas, seemingly ready for bed. She looked surprised to see me so late. "Why are you here so late?"

I entered, saying "I saw Jared at Al Dente. Trinity was there, too."

Ivanna said hushedly. "They went to Al Dente, too?"

"Have you met Trinity?" I asked Ivanna.

"I have," she said, surprising me with her casual response.

"What do you think of her?" I asked. I couldn't believe someone as astute as Ivanna couldn't discern the disparity between the two.

"Understand what you mean," Ivanna approached the liquor cabinet and poured two glasses of red wine. Although I hadn't drunk during dinner, I had to take the glass now. Since Ivanna wanted to drink, I had to join her.

"Chlo, what do you do when love comes knocking? I know that woman, and Jared understands this too, so he's quite careful," Ivanna said, finishing her glass and pouring another before sitting on the couch.

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She continued, "I never understood your relationship with Atlas. I always thought you were a moth to a flame. But now, I'm in the same scenario and can't stop it."

I didn't know how to feel about Ivanna's words. I wondered what she meant by 'he's quite careful.' It seemed like Ivanna was genuinely developing feelings, even accepting such flimsy reasons.

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"I'm different from you. I thought Lauren was exaggerating before, but I realized she was right when I saw Trinity today." I didn't need to beat around the bush while talking to Ivanna. "If you confront her, the one who will end up dead is you."

Ivanna smiled bitterly, her face slightly pale, indicating she understood her danger.

"I've been waiting for the love of my life to appear. I didn't expect it to be like this when he did," Ivanna said, then leaned into the couch in resignation.

I glanced at her and couldn't help but make a cutting remark that shook Ivanna further.