

My Accidental Husband is a Billionaire !

#Chapter 861 – 869

Read My Accidental Husband is a Billionaire ! Chapter 861

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Keira twitched the corner of her mouth when she heard that.

She recalled a joke she'd once read: someone went undercover in an enemy organization, worked hard for years, and eventually became the second-in-command. They called their people back home, exasperated, saying, "When are you coming to get me? If you wait any longer, I'll end up running the place!"

And now, as absurd as it seemed, she couldn't believe something similar was happening to her.

Keira sighed. "Things seem... pretty casual over there."

"Ha! Casual enough that you're not thinking about coming back, are you?" Erin's voice suddenly cut through, dripping with sarcasm.

Keira turned, confused. "You're still upset? Wasn't all of that just an act?"

"It was an act," Erin snapped. "But then you said some things that really got under my skin. Now? Now I'm actually mad!" Her tone turned sharp, almost tearful. "Keira Olsen, you are just... too much!"

With that, Erin stormed off.

Keira stared after her, baffled. "Is she for real?"

Jenkins, leaning against the wall nearby, smirked. "Oh, she's for real. Didn't you see her? Crying like it's some Shakespearean tragedy."

Keira rubbed her temple. "All I said was... what exactly?"

"Doesn't matter what you said—it's the way you said it," Jenkins replied, shifting into a more relaxed posture. "You know, most jerks? Their downfall's usually about their attitude. Congrats, Keira. You're officially a jerk."

Keira gave her a look. "I don't get it, but sure. Thanks for the input. Anyway, if there's nothing else, I'll hang up now."

"Wait, hold up," Jenkins said, laughing. "You thinking about challenging Eagle? If you pull it off, you'll end up as the top dog. The rest of us might as well pack it up—no contest left."

Keira paused, considering. "They're not that careless. You think they'd really let me get that far?"

Jenkins's grin widened. "As long as you're keeping your guard up, that's all I care about. But let me tell you—Eagle's no joke. She's been scheming since we were kids. At three, she was already pulling strings to get the rest of us to share our snacks. She's like a hawk, watching everything from above. Trust me, we got scammed plenty in daycare."

Keira chuckled faintly. "Noted. Thanks."

After hanging up, Keira turned to Lewis.

He cut straight to the point. "In any organization, people only remember the leader. Nobody cares who's second—or fifth."

Keira nodded thoughtfully. "I get it. I just want a chance to talk to Eagle. Clear the air."

At the very least, she needed to make sure Eagle stayed in her lane while Keira handled the South family. She couldn't afford distractions.

With that in mind, Keira opened her group chat. Eagle's profile picture was—unsurprisingly—a soaring eagle. She hesitated briefly before sending a friend request with a single message: "I'm Rabbit."

Then she waited.

And waited.

No response. No acceptance.

Keira stared at the chat, her mind racing with plans for what might come next. The South family might appear to be living idyllic lives, but behind the facade lay their twisted reality: women reduced to mere tools of reproduction in their matriarchal system. Each woman was expected to have multiple husbands, their worth tied solely to bearing children. It disgusted her.

Hours passed. Still no response.

Frustration simmered as Keira got up and threw herself into work. At least when she was working, time moved faster. One hour went by. Then two. Then four.

Finally, her phone buzzed. She snatched it up to find a notification: Eagle had accepted your request.

Keira quickly opened the chat, ready to make her move—only for Eagle to send the first message: "I'm Eagle. I know who you are."

Keira's heart skipped a beat. The weight of those words hit hard, carrying an unmistakable sense of menace.

Does she know I'm not Keira?

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Keira fell silent for a moment. It didn't seem likely.

There were only a handful of people who knew her true identity.

Keira Olsen had died in the shipwreck off the coast of Oceanion. The person alive now was her sister, Keera.

She quickly regained her composure, eyes fixed on her phone.

The text message on the screen was cold, devoid of warmth.

She pondered for a few seconds, then unlocked her phone and initiated a video call.

If the other person knew who she was, they had to have seen her face before. No point in hiding. If they had the guts to pick up, she'd finally get to see what the infamous Eagle looked like.

The call rang. Keira watched in silence.

It rang for what felt like forever. No answer.

She lowered her gaze, ready to hang up—

Then, suddenly, the call connected.

Keira's pupils contracted slightly in disbelief.

A stranger appeared on the screen—a woman with an unmistakably East Asian face.

She was striking. Deep-set eyes made her eyes look sharp and intense.

She had short hair, neat and stylish, with a confident, androgynous appeal.

Keira frowned. "You're Eagle?"

"That's right." The woman's voice was cold and commanding. She held Keira's gaze through the screen. "I knew you'd be looking for me, so I had Pig go find you first."

Keira pressed her lips together, her brows knitting. "Do you even know why I'm looking for you?"

Eagle nodded without hesitation. "I do. You want to win. You want to save your mother. Isn't that right?"

"Yes."

Keira answered honestly.

Eagle lowered her eyes slightly. "Forget it. I'm not going to lose. And besides, the South family wouldn't allow it."

Keira was caught off guard. "The South family wouldn't allow it?"

"No. They won't." Eagle's voice was like ice, sending a chill through the air. "Because they believe that only those who survive bloodshed are worthy successors. Only the strongest can lead the South family into the future."

Keira asked, "And what kind of future is that?"

"That depends on how you look at it." Eagle's tone was indifferent. "Every generation of successors has possessed absolute strength. We're like aggressive insects—only the king survives. It's just that there are fewer successors now, so we don't fight to the death anymore. But if this were the old days, only one of us would be walking away from this."

Keira let her finish before speaking. "Then why did you contact me? If you're not here to surrender, do you really think I'll join you?"

Eagle chuckled. "Of course not. I'm just giving you an opportunity."

Keira frowned, about to refuse, when Eagle spoke again.

"I'm offering us a temporary truce. You do what you need to do, and I'll be waiting for the right moment."

Keira hesitated. "I don't have anything I need to do."

"No?" Eagle smiled, cold and unreadable. "Then why ask so many questions about the South family? If I had to guess, you're planning to infiltrate them as a drifter. After all, you already have their coordinates, don't you?"

Keira clenched her jaw.

Eagle continued, "I want to know if someone can actually make it out of the South family alive. Give it a shot. I'll give you the chance. If you walk out of there, I'll follow you. If you get caught, well... then you were never meant to win in the first place."

Eagle smirked. "So there's no need to be on guard around me. If you're set on getting yourself killed, I won't stop you."

Keira frowned.

She had indeed considered taking care of Eagle first.

She was worried that if she and Lewis infiltrated the South family as drifters, Eagle would seize the opportunity to make a move—either against them, or against everyone in Clance, swallowing up all her forces in one fell swoop.

She hadn't expected Eagle to see right through her.

Pig's unexpected visit had seemed almost theatrical, but in reality, it had been orchestrated from the very start.

To Eagle, entering the South family was a death sentence.

She was simply waiting for Keira to throw herself into the fire, so she could take over everything afterward.

Keira paused before saying, "Fine. We'll see how this plays out."

Eagle's tone remained casual. "I'll give you one month. If you make it out of the South family alive, I'll pledge my allegiance to you. If you die there, then all your people belong to me."

Keira's expression was neutral. "I don't have 'people'."

Eagle narrowed her eyes. "Don't kid yourself. You think I don't know? Lion, Clownfish, and Fox have all aligned with you."

"No." Keira's voice was steady. "We're allies. They're not subordinates or my underlings. They're my friends."

She had never seen Erin and the others as her followers.

They were all just as strong as she was. They were friends.

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Keira wasn't sure if Eagle's words could be trusted, but she didn't have much time left. Everyone in the South family was shrouded in mystery, and even if she wanted to drag them out into the open, it wouldn't be easy.

So for now, she had no choice but to believe.

The next day, Keira began making arrangements.

This time, it was different.

Last time, there had been a set return date. But now, there wasn't one.

She knew there were only two possible outcomes—either she made it out, or she didn't.

Keira had lunch with Uncle Olsen without saying much. But as she was about to leave, he suddenly looked at her. "You're going to save her, aren't you?"

Keira hesitated for a brief moment.

Uncle Olsen continued, "Keira, can I come with you?"

She shook her head. "No."

Uncle Olsen knew nothing about the South family. Besides, too many people going in would only draw attention. More importantly... he was decisive but impulsive. If he saw Jodie South, he might throw caution to the wind and charge in, which would ruin everything.

But most of all...

Keira looked at him. "Dad, if I don't make it back, and Mom doesn't either, at least someone will still remember us in this world."

Uncle Olsen's eyes reddened. He stared at her for a long moment before giving her a firm pat on the shoulder. "Come back alive."

Something in Keira's heart clenched at those words.

She met his gaze, clenched her fists, and nodded. "I will."

Then she turned and strode out.

Uncle Olsen watched her go, his voice thick with emotion. "Keira, I'll be waiting for you both at home. At least... you have to come back."

If Jodie South didn't make it, he wouldn't mind following her.

But their daughter—she had to survive.

Keira didn't dare look back. Her throat felt tight, her eyes stung. Without turning around, she waved a hand over her shoulder and stepped into the waiting car.

Lewis was already there. He noticed her red-rimmed eyes and said, "It's okay. We'll come back."

Keira didn't dare look back. Her throat felt tight, her eyes stung. Without turning around, she waved a hand over her shoulder and stepped into the waiting car.

Lewis was already there. He noticed her red-rimmed eyes and said, "It's okay. We'll come back."

Keira nodded. "I know."

She didn't say goodbye to anyone else. She didn't want them to worry. She left a message at home saying she was on a business trip—anyone who came looking would hear the same story.

She hadn't expected to find Mary and Ellis waiting for her when she got back.

Mary's belly was already quite big—she was nearly seven months along, just a few more months until the baby arrived.

Keira was pleasantly surprised. "What are you doing here?"

Mary walked over and took her hand. "The baby said they missed their godmother, so we came to see you."

Keira smiled, placing a hand gently on her belly. After a moment's thought, she pulled out a card and handed it to Mary. "A gift for the baby."

It was from Keira.

After all, Mary and Keira had once been the best of friends.

Mary hesitated briefly but didn't refuse. Instead, she smiled. "Then I'll accept it on behalf of the baby. But the baby also said... they want to see you at the full-month celebration."

Keira froze for a second.

Ellis chuckled. "You may not say anything, but I know what you're up to. I'm your brother, after all. Whatever it is, I just hope it all goes smoothly."

Keira nodded.

Mary studied her carefully. "Are you doing this for her?"

For her...

Mary had already pieced things together.

Keira knew that Mary and Keera had been close. Even though she had taken over, Mary must have sensed something. She had simply never brought it up before.

This was the first time she had spoken so directly about it.

Keira nodded. "Yes."

Keera had always wanted one thing—to live. To truly live.

So Keira had to survive, and she had to bring her mother back with her.

Mary smiled. "Alright, Keira. I'll be here praying for you."

Keira smiled back. "Thank you."

Mary stood up. "We should get going."

"Okay."

After they left, Keira sank onto the couch and looked at Lewis. She was about to speak when a commotion erupted outside.

"Hey! I was here first!"

"No way, I got here first!"

Keira looked up and saw Rebecca pushing through the door ahead of the others.

Rebecca stormed in, her face still carrying a trace of irritation, as if she'd been interrupted by the person behind her. She shot Ellie Cobb an annoyed look before heading straight for Keira.

Keira blinked in surprise. "What are you guys doing here?"

Rebecca immediately replied, "We came to find you, obviously. What, not happy to see us?"

Ellie caught up and chimed in, "Yeah, are we not welcome?"

Keira let out a wry smile. "No, I am happy to see you. Just... you showed up a little too suddenly."

She hesitated, glancing between the two of them, trying to figure out what was going on. But their faces gave nothing away. Keira decided to cut to the chase. "Alright, spill it. What are you up to?"

"Shopping, dinner, and a movie!" Rebecca announced.

Ellie scoffed. "That's so boring. Only goody-two-shoes do that. I say we hit a bar instead. I've got a good bottle waiting for me."

Rebecca perked up immediately. "Then take me with you! I want a drink too!"

Ellie gave her a skeptical look. "If I take you, is your brother gonna come hunting me down? Everyone knows he's crazy overprotective."

Rebecca turned to glare at her. "Oh, like your brother isn't? Please. You think he doesn't watch over you?"

Ellie huffed. "At least I don't get tricked by men like you do."

Rebecca sneered. "Oh, really? And where's your boyfriend? Last I heard, he and some side chick set you up."

Ellie's face turned red with anger. "You—!"

Keira sighed. "Alright, you two. That's enough."

Rebecca immediately pointed at Ellie. "She started it!"

"That's enough," Keira repeated, looking at them both before suddenly breaking into a smile. "Fine. Since you both want to drink, then let's do it. Tonight, we're drinking till we drop!"

Then she turned to Lewis. "Got anything good at home?"

Lewis nodded. "Plenty. The cellar's stocked. I'll go grab something for you guys."

He left the room, and Keira had just settled into her seat when Amy came running in. "Mommy! Am I going to Grandpa's house now?"

Amy had been staying at the Hortons' for the past few days, but today she was supposed to move back to Uncle Olsen's place.

Keira nodded. "That's right. And remember to be on your best behavior, okay?"

"I know!"

The little girl threw her arms around Keira. "Mommy, don't forget to come pick me up, okay?"

Watching Amy grow more lively, free from the timid, fearful state she'd been in when Keira first brought her back, Keira smiled gently and stroked her hair. "Amy, you have to grow up happy."

Amy tilted her head. "As long as Mommy's here, I'll always be happy! But I know you have things to do, so I'll wait for you!"

Keira's eyes stung when she heard that. She nodded.

The security guard led Amy outside. The little girl bounced along, completely unaware of the bittersweet feeling of parting. When she reached the door, she turned back one last time. "Mommy, you have to, have to, have to come get me, okay? I like Grandpa's house and Daddy's house, but I love you the most!"

Keira nodded firmly.

After Amy was gone, Lewis finally returned upstairs, carrying two bottles of red wine. "Enough?"

"Not even close!" a voice called from the doorway.

Keira turned her head and saw Jenkins and Erin walking in.

Erin still looked upset. She scowled at Keira and huffed, "Hmph!"

Keira chuckled. "Still mad?"

"Yeah! Furious, actually! You heartless player!" Erin turned to Lewis. "Bring out the good stuff! We're drinking till we drop!"

Lewis glanced at Keira. Seeing her nod, he went downstairs again and returned shortly after with a few more bottles.

Erin walked over, grabbed one, popped it open, and took a long swig straight from the bottle. When she finally lowered it, she pointed at Keira and said, "I'm seriously pissed at you, you know that? I don't care if it was just an act, but how could you say something straight out of a jerk's playbook? I demand an apology!"

Keira raised an eyebrow. "Okay. How do you want me to apologize?"

Erin smirked. "You're good at cooking, aren't you? I want a full roast dinner. That's your punishment!"

Keira hesitated. "But we don't have any beef."

"That's fine! I'll go buy some! And when you're back, you're making it for me!" Erin stepped forward and clapped a hand on Keira's shoulder. "You better come back and cook for me, got it?"

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Keira froze for a moment at those words.

She turned to Erin and saw the tip of her nose turning red, her shoulders shaking slightly as she struggled to hold back tears.

Then Keira looked at Jenkins, noticing her eyes were a little red as well.

Without a word, Keira reached out and patted her shoulder.

Then she turned to Jenkins with a small smile. "Fox's got a bit of a temper. Cut her some slack."

"I know," Jenkins said calmly. "Don't worry. I know exactly how she is."

Rebecca came bouncing over, interrupting with her usual energy. "Hey! What's with the serious faces? You all look like this is some dramatic farewell scene. Come on, let's drink!"

She grabbed a bottle, took a big gulp straight from it, and then let out a loud hiccup.

Almost instantly, her cheeks flushed red, and her eyes grew hazy. Then, without warning, she threw her arms around Keira and started sobbing. "My lifesaver! Keira, I missed you!"

Rebecca hiccupped between her words. "If it weren't for you, I'd be dead. You saved my life. And when I came back to Clance, I was terrified people would mock me. But you—" she sniffled—"you gave me the courage to stand tall. Do you know that?"

Keira twitched the corner of her mouth in amusement.

Ellie scoffed. "Geez, how's she such a lightweight? One drink and she's down."

Keira chuckled. "She's always been the goody-two-shoes type. Doesn't drink much."

Ellie immediately shot back, "I drink, and I'm still a goody-two-shoes."

Keira smirked. "Sure, sure."

She loosened Rebecca's grip, about to help her onto the couch, but Rebecca suddenly clutched her arm. "Keira, my brother said you've been wrapping things up at work, like you're leaving for good. Are you really not coming back?"

Keira paused.

So that's why Rebecca suddenly showed up tonight.

Just as she was about to answer, Ellie chimed in, "My brother said the same thing."

Keira let out a laugh, half exasperated. These two never had the latest news, but having well-connected brothers sure made up for it.

Before she could say anything, Rebecca slurred, "Keira, I don't care where you're going, and I don't care if you'll keep in touch or not. I just— I just want you to be okay. Promise me you'll be okay, no matter what!"

Ellie turned away at those words, blinking rapidly. Her voice was gruff. "So dramatic. And so damn emotional."

Then, in an awkward tone, she muttered, "Keira, someone like you—someone as capable as you—will be just fine, no matter what happens. I know that. So... I'll be here, in Clance, waiting for you to come back."

"Alright," Keira said softly.

She looked at them—two Clance socialites, one delicate and sentimental, the other tougher on the outside. Yet right now, they both stared at her with eyes full of worry, unable to hide their concern.

Rebecca's eyes were brimming with tears, while Ellie's face was tight with unease.

Keira clenched her fists, then smiled. "It's gonna be okay."

She wasn't the same person she used to be. No longer that forgotten child of the Olsen family, living in the shadows.

That night, they partied hard, letting loose like never before.

Even Keira let herself go a little, drinking more than usual. She drank with Erin, Jenkins, and even Ellie until they were all good and buzzed.

Time flew by. The night deepened, then faded into dawn without them realizing it.

Keira sat up from the couch, blinking as the golden light of morning spilled in through the windows. Around her, her friends were sprawled out, dead to the world after a night of drinking.

She, however, was completely sober.

Last night, Lewis had quietly swapped out her drinks for water. The others had noticed but said nothing because they all understood—she had something important to do today. She couldn't afford to get caught up in their chaos.

At some point, Lewis had appeared beside her, waiting patiently.

Keira looked at the room full of sleeping friends and spoke gently. "Make sure they get home safely."

Lewis took her hand. "Already arranged. Don't worry about it."

She nodded. "Is it time?"

"Yeah. We need to go."

Keira turned to him. "Lewis, are you ready?"

He raised an eyebrow. "For what?"

She let out a quiet laugh. "To walk through fire with me. Are you ready?"

Lewis grinned. "Always."

They exchanged a glance, and Keira reached out her hand. "Then let's go on this little adventure into the South family."

Lewis clasped her hand firmly.

Together, they turned and walked out.

Behind them, as the door closed, the so-called drunk friends slowly cracked open their eyes, silently watching them leave.

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The sea was sparkling under the sun.

A private yacht cruised on the surface of the sea. Lewis and Keira stood in the cabin. Keira stared at the massive yacht. "Is this yours?" she asked.

"Yeah," Lewis replied.

Keira couldn't help but exclaim, "You're really loaded."

Yachts like this one, capable of venturing into deep seas, were typically huge—far beyond what an ordinary person could afford. The cost of this yacht alone could be in the billions, if not hundreds of billions.

Though the Horton family was powerful, they couldn't just casually buy something like this. Keira couldn't help but ask, "What exactly do you do?"

Back when they were in Country A, there had been that pirate cove Lewis had taken care of. Could it be...?

Before she could finish her thought, Lewis smiled. "Mrs. Horton, asking this now? Isn't it a bit too late? You've already boarded my ship!"

Keira froze for a moment, then chuckled, unable to stop herself.

Lewis suddenly stepped forward, wrapping his arms around her waist from behind. His voice was slow and steady as he spoke. "When I was younger, my brother and father couldn't stand me, so I was kept in the old house. When I got older, my grandmother feared they might secretly harm me, so she sent me abroad. Those years, I didn't exactly follow the rules. Instead, I built up my own power and made some friends. Together, we started a maritime transport fleet. One day, we were robbed by pirates. I couldn't take it, so I hired some mercenaries and led them to the island."

Keira's eyes widened. "You did something that dangerous?"

Lewis chuckled. "I was young and reckless, thought that since no one cared about me, if I died, so be it. But things went better than expected. We ended up taking control of that pirate island. Eventually, we realized that being pirates did bring in quick money, so we kept taking down one island after another."

Keira turned to face him.

The man was tall and imposing, his words tinged with a sense of nostalgia. But Keira couldn't help but feel a pang of sympathy for him.

This man was so strong—strong enough that Keira often forgot his family... didn't love him.

Keira had grown up in a loveless environment, so she understood better than anyone how a life could fall apart without love. But at least she had Jodie South's care.

What about Lewis?

He had only a grandmother who couldn't control her household, and the only help he got was being sent away from that cruel family to a strange place.

If she was being honest, even Keira herself couldn't imagine being as strong as Lewis.

She tightly embraced him. "You have to stay safe from now on, because you have me who loves you. Don't put yourself in dangerous situations again."

"I know," Lewis replied slowly. "I don't need to charge into battle anymore. Most of the territory in the sea has been claimed."

He rested his chin on her shoulder. "Besides, I can't let our child be involved in something like this in the future."

Keira froze. "What child? Don't say random things..."

Her cheeks flushed slightly, and she pushed him away.

Time passed, and the yacht finally reached the deep sea, where they couldn't go any further.

If they went any farther, the South family's radar would detect them.

Lewis said, "Now, I'll take you over in a small boat. Keira, are you scared?"

Out in the vast sea, everything looked dark and intimidating.

The waves were rough, and the small boat looked even more fragile than the one the South family had sent to pick her up. One wave could easily tear it apart.

Keira looked at Lewis. "You've come all this way to risk your life with me. What do I have to be afraid of?"

She took his hand. "Let's go."

They boarded the small boat, and Keira noticed that despite its small size, it was well-equipped.

She was surprised. "This is...?"

Lewis grinned. "It's a small boat, all right. One big wave, and it'd capsize. So I made some modifications. At least this way, we'll be safe on our way to the South family."

Keira smiled. "Got it."

Lewis turned to her. "Then sit tight. We're about to set off."

"Okay!"

The small boat slowly pulled away from the yacht, heading into the dark unknown.

But the boat didn't hesitate. It steadily moved forward, heading toward the direction they believed was right.

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The boat was ridiculously small—one good wave and it would've rocked like a toy in a bathtub. And yet, somehow, it stayed steady. Keira had no idea what kind of trick Lewis had pulled, but whatever it was, it worked.

She sat on the deck beside him, helping steer.

The moon cast a pale glow over the dark waves, both cool and intense.

"This ocean feels like it could swallow every last person on Earth," Keira murmured.

It was too deep, too dark.

Like staring into a void.

Lewis chuckled. "It's not scary when you're on this boat. But soon, we might have to ditch it."

Keira narrowed her eyes, nodding. "And what's our cover story?"

He glanced at her, grinning. "Runaway lovers. You caught the eye of a crime boss, and I had no choice but to steal you away. Now we're on the run, drifting in the ocean on this little wreck of a boat. But we won't last long—his men are after us. We'll have to abandon ship and swim to shore. And where do we end up? The South family's island, as two drifters with nowhere else to go."

Keira's mouth twitched. "You can't be serious. I was targeted by some crime boss?"

Lewis smirked. "With your looks? Not surprising. And with mine, convincing you to run away with me instead of him isn't exactly a stretch. Besides—"

He pointed at the cruise ship they'd just left behind. "There he is, right on that boat."

Keira let out a long sigh. "You really thought this through, huh? What else did you plan?"

Lewis shrugged. "To make it believable, we need to lighten the boat's load. Once we do, the shift in weight will throw us off balance, and a wave will capsize us. Which means, Keira, you know how to swim, right?"

Keira nodded immediately. "Yeah."

The last time she jumped into the ocean, she nearly drowned. Someone had to drag her out. After returning to Clance, she'd spent the past two weeks training—she needed to be ready to go home.

Lewis nodded. "Good. That just leaves one last touch."

She blinked. "What touch?"

Before she could react, Lewis pulled out a gun and shot himself in the leg.

Keira's eyes widened in horror. "Lewis, what the hell?!"

She lunged toward him, her hands already pressing down on the wound as blood seeped through his jeans. Her throat tightened. "Are you out of your mind?!"

Out here, in the middle of the ocean—if they didn't treat it fast, what was he going to do?

Lewis only smiled. "A crime boss should have a gun, don't you think?"

Keira's eyes burned. Without hesitation, she tore a strip from her shirt and wrapped it tightly around his leg. "That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. We could've come up with another story!"

"My storytelling skills are limited. Only a crime boss would have enough power to chase us into the ocean. Only a crime boss would make us too scared to go home. Otherwise, the South family would just send us right back."

Lewis ruffled her hair. "This is the perfect excuse. I'm fine, Keira. But from now on, we need new names—yours is too obvious."

Keira wiped her eyes and huffed. "Fine. Call me Norma."

Lewis raised an eyebrow. "Then I guess I'm Solomon."

"Norma Olsen."

"Solomon Horton."

They exchanged a glance, then burst out laughing.

Keira groaned. "That sounds awful. Let's drop the last names."

Lewis nodded. "It's like we're reborn."

She leaned into him, eyeing his leg. "Doesn't that hurt? And you're sitting here joking?"

"It's not so bad. I'm used to it."

His voice was light, casual. "Back when I fought pirates, I nearly took a bullet to the heart once. Still made it out."

Keira rested against him.

Then Lewis spoke again. "We're almost there. Keira, I'm taking apart the boat's rigging. The last two miles, we row ourselves in. Think you're up for it?"

"No problem."

At her answer, he pressed a button. Keira immediately felt the boat shift—its weight lifted, making it unstable. The waves crashed harder, the boat rocking wildly atop the water.

She glanced toward the South family's island, just two miles away, and let a smile creep onto her lips.

She was finally home.

That thought had barely formed when a wave hit, and the boat flipped over.

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They were still about a mile from the South family estate, and the surrounding darkness was almost absolute. The moment Keira plunged into the water, a sharp chill cut straight through her, freezing her to the bone.

She immediately started swimming, scanning the surface for any sign of Lewis.

But the water was eerily still. Nothing.

Her heart pounded as she called out, "Lewis! Lewis!"

He'd been injured, and when the boat capsized, he'd pushed her away to keep her from getting crushed—only to be trapped under the wreckage himself.

Keira's pulse spiked.

No. He's fine. He has to be fine.

Just as panic started creeping in, she heard the sound of water shifting behind her. A strong arm suddenly wrapped around her waist from behind, and a familiar voice murmured near her ear, "Worried about me?"

Relief crashed over her.

She twisted around and, in the dim moonlight, saw Lewis drenched from head to toe. She couldn't help but look him over. "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine."

She let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding.

Lewis glanced toward the shore in the distance. "A mile. Think you can swim it?"

Keira smirked. "You seriously asking me that?"

He raised an eyebrow. "How about a race?"

She blinked. "A race? Now?"

"First one to shore wins."

Keira let out a short laugh. "And the winner gets what?"

Lewis grinned. "Winner gets to be on top."

Keira was dumbfounded.

Even in the freezing water, heat shot to her cheeks. "You—"

Before she could finish, Lewis dove forward, cutting through the water with powerful strokes.

Keira's competitive side flared. No way was she letting him win that easily.

She took a deep breath and launched after him.

They swam, neck and neck, Lewis keeping just a half-body lead ahead of her. Keira pushed harder, gradually closing the gap.

She turned her head, flashing him a grin. "Getting tired?"

Lewis smirked. "Not even close."

Then he surged forward again.

Keira wasn't about to back down. She matched his pace and, inch by inch, overtook him. The shoreline was just ahead. She laughed. "Falling behind, Horton?"

But just as she slowed to glance back, Lewis smiled at her—then his eyes fluttered shut, and his body suddenly went limp, sinking into the water.

Keira's breath hitched.

"Lewis!"

She lunged forward, grabbing his arm. "Lewis, wake up!"

No response.

Fear surged through her, but she didn't hesitate. Using every ounce of strength, she hauled him toward shore. It was an agonizing effort, every stroke burning through her muscles, but she refused to stop.

By the time they reached land, she was exhausted, gasping for breath as she dragged him onto the sand.

Her body ached, but she didn't care. She immediately checked him over—and that's when she saw it.

His leg wound, soaked in seawater, had turned pale and was still bleeding.

Keira pressed her fingers to his nose and exhaled in relief when she felt his faint but steady breath. He was alive.

She shot him an exasperated look. "You're unbelievable. You were on the verge of passing out and still wanted to race?"

Lewis had lost too much blood, but he'd forced himself to swim as close to shore as possible. If he'd passed out any further out at sea, it would've been nearly impossible for her to get him to land.

Without hesitation, Keira tore off the sleeve of her jacket and wrapped it tightly around his wound to slow the bleeding.

But they needed a doctor—fast. If they didn't get help soon, he wouldn't make it.

She stood, scanning the area.

They were on a beach, the sand stretching out in every direction. Not far away, a towering fortress-like wall encircled the entire island. It was an imposing sight, vast and unyielding.

And there was no obvious way in.

Keira frowned, mind racing for options. But before she could act, footsteps sounded from behind. A moment later, a squad of men in tactical gear stormed toward them, rifles raised.

The leader took a step forward, his voice sharp and demanding. "Identify yourselves!"

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Keira tried to sit up and speak, but found herself too weak. Just as she was about to say something, everything started spinning, and she passed out.

She didn't know how much time had passed, but when she woke up again, she was in a hospital.

As her eyes fluttered open, someone spoke, "She's awake!"

Keira looked up to see a nurse and a soldier wearing a face mask, standing nearby with a gun, eyeing her warily.

Keira immediately scanned the room but didn't see Lewis by her side.

"Where's Solomon? Where is he?" she asked, her voice tinged with panic.

The nurse replied, "You mean the man who was with you? He's in the next room. Don't worry, his bleeding has stopped. I just need to ask you a few questions."

Keira glanced at the soldier, recognizing that she wasn't authorized by anyone from the South family's island.

"Go ahead," she said, her voice steady despite the unease creeping in.

Keira wasn't worried. The South family's island was huge, and most people in this city wouldn't recognize her. After all, the heirs to the family were kept secret.

Most of the islanders wouldn't have a clue who she was. Even these soldiers likely didn't know her.

The soldiers who protected them were from the Royal Guard—the elite of the South family's military.

Besides, when Keira first came to the island, she'd learned how special it was. It was one of the only habitable islands in the sea.

People who got stranded in the surrounding waters often ended up on the island, meaning there were always a few hundred drifters washing up every year.

The local population lived comfortably, with wealthy families, but because of that, the island had very little productivity. The South family actually welcomed the drifters with no identities, hiring them to serve the local residents.

If the drifters kept clean, they could be employed like maids and make a life for themselves on the island.

But the South family also watched out for spies, so basic interrogations were standard procedure.

The nurse spoke again. "Can I have your name?"

"Norma."

The nurse continued, "So you and Solomon... are you a couple? How did you end up here?"

Keira lowered her gaze. She and Lewis had already worked out the story on the boat before they arrived. She kept her head down and answered, "We're engaged. But one day, we went on a trip to Country T, and a local crime boss... took an interest in us."

The nurse interrupted, "Country T? So, the crime boss wanted Solomon? I can see why. He's pretty good-looking."

Keira blinked. "Huh?"

She stared at the nurse, suddenly at a loss for words, struggling to keep the story going.

Her acting wasn't great to begin with, and now she had completely lost her train of thought...

Before Keira could regroup, the nurse went on, "So your boyfriend's straight, right? And he wouldn't give in, so the crime boss started hunting you both?"

Keira hesitated, then said, "Well, it wasn't exactly like that."

The nurse grinned. "Poor guy. He's so good-looking. I can't blame the boss for being interested."

Keira's face twitched. "That's... not really it."

At least, that wasn't the version they'd agreed on!

The nurse just kept going, "But you're beautiful too. No wonder he'd run away with you. For someone like you, it's worth it."

Keira sighed, trying to keep her composure. "Can't the crime boss be interested in a woman?"

The nurse looked at her, confused. "In Country T? It's normal for men to like men, right?"

Keira was shocked. "What are they teaching people on this island?"

Where did all these strange ideas come from?

Keira sighed again, clearing her throat. "Well, not exactly."

She had to stick to the story she and Lewis had agreed on. If she didn't, their cover could fall apart.

The nurse blinked in surprise and turned to Keira. "Wait, that crime boss is after you?"

Keira nodded.

The nurse frowned. "That guy is seriously weird."

Keira felt the corner of her mouth twitch. A phrase she'd seen online popped into her head—never feel inferior for being normal when you're surrounded by the abnormal.

She suppressed the urge to roll her eyes and glanced at the nurse, then at the soldier standing behind her.

The soldier might've been standing there quietly, but he was listening. Keira knew that as casual as this conversation seemed, the moment her story didn't match Lewis's, she'd be staring down the barrel of a loaded gun.

She was on high alert.

The nurse gave her another once-over. "Where are you and Solomon from?"

"Crera."

That wasn't something they could fake. Habits, speech patterns—those were ingrained. She and Lewis had agreed: mix in just enough truth to make the lies believable.

The nurse hesitated at the answer, then asked, "Then why didn't you just go home? Crera would've protected you. Everyone knows how tough they are about this kind of thing."

Keira let out a bitter laugh. "We didn't get the chance. We didn't even have time to call for help. They took our phones, everything. The only thing we could do was escape on a tiny boat. Solomon even got shot in the leg. Where is he? How is he doing?"

The nurse sighed. "He lost a lot of blood, but we gave him a transfusion. Oh, by the way, I heard you and him grew up together? Childhood sweethearts?"

Keira froze.

That wasn't part of the story she and Lewis had agreed on. They were supposed to be college friends.

Was the nurse testing her?

Keira shook her head. "We were classmates. I mean, we probably heard of each other growing up—small town, same social circles. Our parents were both teachers at the same school, and teachers love to compare their kids' grades..."

The nurse's face lit up. "Oh, I get that! My mom's a teacher too!"

Keira smiled. "I knew of him. He was the top student among all the teachers' kids. I guess you could say I admired him from afar. Then we ended up at the same college. Since we were from the same hometown, our semesters started and ended at the same time, and..."

She trailed off and lowered her gaze, acting shy.

"Oh, that's so romantic." The nurse sighed dreamily. "You two must really love each other. Otherwise, you wouldn't have gone through all this together."

Keira dropped her eyes, playing along.

Then the nurse casually added, "But Solomon said you two grew up together. He even mentioned sneaking off to see you."

Keira's head snapped up. "What?"

The nurse giggled behind her hand. "Yeah, he said he first heard about you from his parents, then secretly went to see you. He said it was love at first sight. He even picked his college because of you."

Keira was dumbfounded.

Lewis Horton, romanticizing his own backstory?

Why hadn't he warned her?

Was it intentional? Did he want her caught off guard to make her reaction more believable? Or was there another reason?

Being separated was a nightmare. She had no way of knowing if this was another test.

Keira clenched her jaw, tightening her fists before finally replying, "He's messing with you. I don't remember him at all. Besides, in high school, all we did was study. Who had time for romance? We didn't even go to the same school."

The nurse's grin widened. "He didn't even go to your school, but he still noticed you? Wow, that's next-level devotion. Sounds like a love story in the making."

Keira frowned. "That's impossible. Solomon was a total bookworm. And his family's well off—why would he ever pay attention to me?"

The nurse's smile vanished.

"Oh?" she said, voice turning cold. "That's funny, because that's not what he said. So... which one of you is lying?"

Before Keira could react, there was a sharp click—

The soldier had cocked his gun, aiming it straight at her head.

"Talk," he demanded. "Who the hell are you, really?"