

## Chapter 3 Her Father's Ruthlessness

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Although Natalie already knew Garrett's answer, she still wanted to ask him point-blank.

She couldn't believe that her own father would hurt her like this.

Hearing Natalie's pointed question, Garrett looked away due to the guilt.

Over the years, he had come to feel intimidated by his eldest daughter.

When he looked into her pair of clear eyes, he remembered Natalie's mother, which made him feel very uncomfortable.

"How dare you talk to me like this? Am I some sort of convict that needs interrogating? I'm your father!"

Natalie sneered. "Dad, you know you're my father yet you let your wife hurt me. You let Flora marry me into the Braxton family!"

Natalie knew that without Garrett's acquiescence, Flora wouldn't have the guts to do such a vicious thing.

Now that it was out in the air, Flora stopped feigning ignorance and snapped, "The Braxton family wanted one of my daughters to marry into their family, but they didn't pick which one specifically. Moreover, in Bloridge, the Braxton family is powerful and influential. You should thank us for choosing such a good marriage for you!"

"Then why didn't you let Alisha marry into the Braxton family?" Natalie's voice took on a dangerous tone.

She had been to the O'Brien family before she came home. They told her that Rowley and Alisha weren't home.

At that moment, Natalie felt as if her whole world had collapsed.

Rowley had abandoned her.

He already knew that he had been tricked and his bride had been replaced. Why didn't he come to her?

"Enough!" Garrett roared. "Alisha's in poor health. If she married into the Braxton family, she'd only suffer. You're her older sister. So what if you took her place and married into the Braxton family?"

Hearing this, Natalie glowered at Garrett, her heart pricked with bitterness. Over the years, she came to realize that Garrett was partial to Alisha. But this time, he had gone too far.

"Mom passed away years ago. It seems you've forgotten that I'm still your daughter. You didn't support my studies and turned a blind eye to the way Flora treated me."

Garrett scolded reproachfully, "Flora's your mother. How dare you disrespect her like that?"

"My mother died a long time ago."

Natalie's eyes were filled with pain and coldness. Ever since Flora and her daughter moved in, Natalie was never allowed to sit at the same table and share meals with them. Every day, she ate leftovers.

After high school, she had to work her way through college, paying for her tuition with part-time jobs.

Her family was rich, yet she lived a life worse than that of an ordinary girl.

Alisha was known as the pampered girl of the Rivera family. She only wore branded clothing, went to high-end clubs, and partied, whereas Natalie wore cheap clothes and commuted to work.

In all of Bloridge, nobody knew that Alisha had a half-sister.

Natalie thought that she could at least marry the one she loved and leave the Rivera family, but little did she know that her stepmother and sister would set her up.

Flora pretended to try to smooth things over, but her words only added fuel to the fire. "Garrett, don't make a fuss about it with Natalie. She's right. I'm not her biological mother, and I know how she feels about me. It's okay. I don't want you and Natalie to quarrel with each other because of me."

"Look, she still defends you, you ungrateful brat!" Garrett was even more disappointed in Natalie. "The Braxton family just came to call on the engagement, so you don't have to marry Jarvis anymore. This matter is settled. You'd better go back to your room and change your clothes. Quit making a fool of yourself here. There are more pressing matters to deal with in the company, so I have to go now."

After saying that, Garrett left without looking back.

Natalie smiled bitterly. Over a decade had passed, but Garrett never cared for her. She didn't bother to waste her breath on him anymore.

As soon as Garrett left, Flora dropped the kind stepmother act and scowled at Natalie. "You bitch, how dare you escape from the wedding? Where the hell have you been? Are you satisfied with my gift?"

Natalie turned to look at her icily. "Flora, you are so despicable. Aren't you scared of karma?"

Hearing this, Flora smiled complacently. "My daughter's the new Mrs. O'Brien. Who do you think you are? You don't deserve to compete with Alisha. Besides, I wonder if Rowley knows that you gave birth to a baby a few years ago. Do you think you can hide it from the O'Brien family forever?"

Natalie's expression darkened. Her deepest secret had been exposed, and Flora was dangling it in front of her smugly.

"Once again, it was you and Alisha who set me up that time."

Indeed, Natalie did give birth to a child five years ago. But the child died after it was born, and she still didn't know who the father of the child was.

She didn't have the courage to tell Rowley about it. It was a nightmare that she wanted to forget.

Flora sneered, "So what? Even if you tell your father, he won't believe you. Natalie, everything in the Rivera family belongs to my daughter, not you. By the way, there's one more thing. The child you gave birth to didn't die. He's grown up to be a very beautiful boy."

"What? Where's my son?" Natalie was caught off-guard. Thinking of the baby she carried for nine months, her heart ached.

"You'd like to know, wouldn't you?" Flora grinned viciously. "Kneel and beg me. Then I'll tell you."

"Flora Rivera!" Natalie hissed through gritted teeth, "One day, you'll pay for everything you've done."

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In La Lune Bar, Natalie drank glass after glass of wine on an empty stomach. She didn't know how much she had drunk by the time her head started to spin.

Thinking about how her happiness had been stolen away by Flora and her daughter and how Rowley had abandoned her, she felt hopeless.

"Natalie, that's enough." Brinley Lauren snatched the half-empty glass of wine from Natalie. Seeing the sadness on Natalie's face, she felt sorry for her friend. "Only your stepmother and half-sister can do such a terrible thing. Well, at least you were able to escape the Braxton family."

Jarvis Braxton was a mysterious man and very few people had seen his face. There were all kinds of rumors about him in the city.

"Brinley, I feel so sad. My father ignores me and lets Flora and Alisha trample all over me."

How could Natalie not feel sad? To be abandoned and hurt by one's own family was a terrible thing.

Worse still, she hadn't been able to get through to Rowley yet.

"Rowley also abandoned me, Brinley. I have nothing." The sadness was too much to bear. Tears rolled down Natalie's cheeks.

"Don't say that, Natalie. You still have me. Come on now. Don't cry." Brinley rubbed Natalie's back in an effort to comfort her. "Rowley's a bastard. There's plenty of fish in the sea. I can find you a better man—a good man who's rich, handsome, and single..."

A good man...

All of a sudden, the man from last night came to Natalie's mind. Memories of last night flooded her brain, and her cheeks turned red.

But why did she think about that man all of a sudden?

"I'll find you someone right now. I just need to make a call. Wait for me here." Then, Brinley rushed outside to make a phone call.

Having drunk too much, Natalie lay prone over the table, reaching slowly for the wine. Suddenly, she saw a familiar figure in the distance.

It was Rowley.

She immediately sobered up and stumbled to catch up with him.