

Chapter 415 The Past

Wendy stopped. Behind her, she heard Josie's voice again.

"Ryan once said that he'll marry that woman once he finds her. And you know what? I'm sure that woman isn't you!"

Wendy turned around to face her.

The anger on Josie's face had faded away, and she returned to her usual elegant self. With a calm look, she asked Wendy, "Are you interested in hearing the story?"

After hesitating for a while, Wendy turned around and sat back in her seat.

After taking a deep breath, Josie started. "It was fifteen years ago. Oh, wait. It's the New Year now, so that puts it about sixteen years ago. At that time, Ryan was only fifteen years old. And maybe this isn't something you know about Ryan. Actually, Ryan was brought up by his sister-in-law."

Surprised, Wendy asked, "Nellie?"

"Yes! It was Nellie who raised him." Nellie smiled bitterly. "As a matter of fact, I was the one who introduced Nellie to Jaylen."

Hearing this, Wendy was even more surprised.

"Nellie was my best friend. I met Anson first. I'm not sure if you know this, but Anson is twenty years older than me. Meanwhile, I'm older than Jaylen by two years. When I fell in love with Anson, I was just eighteen years old. At that time, Jaylen was only sixteen. After I got married to Anson, Nellie came to visit me often. She was my best friend, after all. Because of that, she and Jaylen saw each other quite often as well. After a while, the two of them fell in love."

Josie paused for a while. "At that time, Jaylen didn't like me as his stepmother, so I thought it was a good thing that he and Nellie got together. Nellie was my good friend, so I thought that it would help smooth my relationship with Jaylen. Not long after they fell in love, they got married. Ryan was born when they got married. Soon after Ryan was born, Nellie got pregnant."

While Josie told her story, Wendy wondered why she was sharing it with her. After all, rich people didn't like sharing their stories. But since Josie was willing to tell her, Wendy decided to listen. She was curious about what Ryan had been through when he was a child.

"At that time, we got along very well. Not long after Ryan was born, Anson told me about his plans to expand the company. Naturally, as his wife, I offered to help him. That was why Nellie offered to help me take care of Ryan and Luke. I was really glad that she offered to help take care of the kids for me. She wasn't just the kids' sister-in-law but also my best friend. Of course, I entrusted her with my two children."

As she told Wendy the story, Josie seemed lost in her memories. "She treated the two children as her own, maybe even better than how she treated her own children, Brian and Bruce. Of course, I was very grateful for that. I was quite relieved that she took care of my two children. At that time, Anson and I were very busy with company affairs. We were always on business trips. Due to our hard work, the company gradually expanded. But there was a price to our absence. We soon found out that Ryan and Luke were growing more and more distant to us. That was until Ryan turned fifteen."

Wendy glanced at Josie, knowing that the crucial part of the story was about to come. She was even a bit anxious.

"Ryan has been very smart since he was a little kid. Anson and I even had his IQ tested once. He is a genius!" Josie was very proud. "Back then, we always envisioned that he would one day run the family business."

"And then?" Wendy asked curiously.

With a dejected look, Josie said, "I appreciated the kindness that Nellie had shown to my children. However, it was all a lie. Ryan was kidnapped when he was 15."

Wendy's heart skipped a beat. "Kidnapped?"

"Yes, kidnapped." Recalling the painful past, Josie closed her eyes. "When Ryan was kidnapped, Anson and I were on a business trip in another city. We received a call from Nellie, and she told us that Ryan had gone missing. In a panic, we headed back home as soon as possible. The kidnappers soon contacted us and asked for a ransom of two billion dollars. They warned us not to call the police, and they only gave us three days to come up with the money. They said that if we didn't come up with the money on time, they would kill Ryan."

Listening to these revelations, Wendy was shocked. Although she knew

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that Ryan survived the ordeal, she couldn't help but feel nervous as she listened to how the events unfolded. "And then?"

"Although the company was doing quite well at that time, there still was no way that we could get two billion just like that. Anson and I were both overwhelmed by fear. During those days, we constantly received photos of Ryan being abused and beaten. Do you have any idea how it feels like for a mother to see her child's life in danger? Do you know the feeling of not being able to do anything to help him? The terror we felt was unimaginable. I wanted to kill the kidnappers with my own hands, even if it would cost me my life."

Wendy remained silent. Deep inside, she knew the feeling very well.

As she spoke those words, Josie's eyes turned red. "In those three days, we tried our very best to come up with as much money as we could. We reached out to everyone we knew and tried to borrow money. But it still was not enough. We only got one billion in total, just half of what the kidnappers demanded. We were left with no choice but to try and negotiate with them. They agreed on one billion dollars, and told us that they would release Ryan."

"And then what?"

"Then?" All of a sudden, Josie clenched her fists. "We transferred the money to a foreign bank account that they provided. We waited anxiously for them to release Ryan, but then we got the news that they killed him."

Wendy's face turned pale.

"I just kept crying and crying nonstop in the days that followed. I really thought that they killed my child. During that time of despair, Nellie was there for me every single day. It was so ridiculous. I was actually grateful to her for being my source of comfort."

"What happened after?"

"We called the police as soon as we got the news that Ryan was killed. Well, the police found something suspicious after investigation. But just as they were about to dig deeper, Ryan came back safe and sound!"

Wendy breathed a sigh of relief.

"It was true that he was kidnapped. But fortunately, he managed to escape before the kidnappers were able to kill him. If you remember, they were no smartphones yet at that time. Phones weren't even all that

common. He somehow borrowed a phone somewhere and called Anson. We then went to pick him up."

Josie paused. "When he was finally with us, he was covered in blood, and he had wounds all over his body. When we were able to talk to him, he revealed a shocking truth to us. Nellie and Jaylen were behind the kidnapping!"

Speaking of this, Josie gritted her teeth, and her eyes welled with tears. Wendy could see how much she hated those two.

"I never once thought that my best friend, my son's sister-in-law, would do such a thing for money! Nellie raised Ryan. She even spent more time with my son than I did! I couldn't understand how she could bear to do such a thing. I couldn't understand how she could be so heartless!"

Wendy finally knew why Nellie and Jaylen were driven out of the Oliver family. She now knew why Anson cut them off.

"But who is the woman you said that Ryan has been looking for?"