

Mr. Chairman's Devious Wife by Brey Mitchylle

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Chapter 11

For a while, Sofia felt like she floated, drifting into the sea with the waves surrounding her—except, she never fancied swimming, and she disliked the water.

At first, she wondered why she felt this way. Wasn't she going to meet Alexander's aunt? It was not his mother or his father; it was his aunt.

Sofia's heart raced a bit faster as she approached Alexander's aunt's place. The butterflies in her stomach were doing somersaults, and she couldn't shake off the nervousness. She fidgeted with the edge of her scarf, trying to distract herself from the jumble of thoughts in her head.

She should think about her plans with Karina, and focus on making those people suffer. However, for some unknown reason, it seems she had already forgotten the plans they concocted just a few hours ago.

Meeting someone important to Alexander was a big deal for her. She wanted to make a good impression, but uncertainty was like a foggy mist in her mind. What if she said the wrong thing or made a clumsy move? The idea of disappointing Alexander's aunt made her feel like she was tiptoeing on thin ice.

Her racing mind was interrupted when Alexander suddenly held her hand. She turned towards him as he slowly drove the car into the parking lot of a two-story Japanese-style house.

"Calm down... she won't bite."

"I am not nervous," she retorted quickly. "Why would I be?"

"You have been fidgeting since I picked you up..." he smiled.

Sofia immediately frowned and avoided his gaze. By now, the car was already inside the parking lot.

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“She is nice.”

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“I have heard about her,” Sofia said. Jenny Thomas was a well-known Hollywood actress in the ‘90s. Everyone knew her not just because of her beauty but because she was pretty good in the film and received a few awards before she stopped acting to focus on her marriage.

Jenny Thomas was someone that Charlotte liked. Charlotte even had some originals of Jenny’s movies! She had been wanting to meet Jenny, but the latter no longer showed herself in public.

“Come on...” Alexander smiled as he got out of the car and then walked towards her side to open the car door.

“Do you think she will like the gift that I brought her?” Sofia asked for the umpteenth time.

“Of course, she will...” Alexander then took the paper bag from the back of the car and held her hand before he slowly pulled her towards the house.

“My Aunt’s grandmother was from Japan,” Alexander said. “She and my mother first learned Japanese before they even learned English.”

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“Oh...” Sofia nodded. She turned and looked at the modest yet elegant house.

The Japanese-style house looked like something out of those serene postcards. It wasn’t huge, but it had this peaceful vibe that instantly wrapped around Sofia. The garden was like a painting with flowers scattered here and there, painting the scene with **soft** pinks and whites. It was like stepping into a calm oasis, far away from the bustling city.

“I didn’t know that there is a place in Champaign,” Sofia muttered. Champaign, Illinois, is the home of the University of Illinois and always had that vibrant college-town atmosphere.

As they walked towards the entrance, Sofia noticed a little man-made river,

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or maybe a small lake on the side of the parking lot. It was like a secret touch of nature, a quiet addition to the surroundings. The water flowed gently, creating a soothing sound that made the whole place feel even more tranquil.

The house itself was modest yet elegant, standing amidst the greenery with a timeless charm. The sliding doors and wooden accents **gave** it a traditional touch, and Sofia couldn't help but feel a sense of respect for the cultural connection Alexander's family had.

"This place must look magical in winter..." she said.

He nodded. "We can spend a few days when the snow starts falling. The waters are heated so it would keep flowing. It is magical."

Sofia smiled at the thought of experiencing the enchantment of the house in winter. It was currently July; winter would come in just a few months.

The two stood in front of the door, but before Alexander could knock, the door suddenly burst open, revealing a blond woman in a bun.

"What took you **so** long?" Jenny Thomas smiled, her blue eyes crinkling. She looked at Alexander before turning her gaze at Sofia. Then without any warning, she pulled Sofia into a tight hug. "What a waste! You are so beautiful! How could you marry a bloke like my nephew?"

"Aunt..." Alexander said. "I can smell something delicious..."

"Ah, right. Right!" Jenny smiled. Then she suddenly held Sofia's hand and pulled her inside. "I heard that you do not have any allergies, so I prepared a lot. How about desserts? Do you have any preference? I would love for you to try my homemade ice cream. The milk is from an organic farm not far away from here. I am certain you would love it!"

Sofia absorbed every word as Jenny started talking about food, ingredients, and her Montana farm—a **place** where she really liked.

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The notion that the glamorous Jenny Thomas, with her elegant presence in photoshoots and movies, had a soft spot for farms, **cows**, and horses- caught Sofia off guard.

Her gaze shifted to Alexander, a chuckle escaping him. In the end, a smile graced Sofia's face as she immersed herself in Jenny's words, a comforting warmth settling in her chest.

"Aunt, shall I ask Old Trish to prepare the food?" Alexander interrupted their conversation. "We have been driving for more than two hours. I am certain my wife is famished."

Jenny turned to Alexander; she raised an eyebrow then she chuckled. "I never thought that this man would be capable of caring for another

woman..."

"Aunt..."

"Alright. I know... Old Trish already prepared everything. Shall we go to the balcony?" Soon enough, the three of them went to the house's second floor and onto the balcony where Sofia could see the beautiful view of the man-made lake. This, coupled with the good conversation, seemed to enhance Sofia's appetite. In the end, she quickly finished her meal.

"I heard that you are the creative designer of LH Design?" Jenny asked, her blue eyes sparkling with gentleness as she twirled the wine glass in her hand.

"Yes... I have been in the industry for two years now."

"Alexander never mentioned having a girlfriend as accomplished and talented as you. If I had known, I would not have signed some deals with another company. LH Design has been doing very well in the market these days. That's because their clothes are pretty comfortable and fashionable even for older women like me."

"Older woman? How could you call yourself old?" Alexander smiled, his tone light.

"Flattery would not help you," Jenny glared at her nephew. "You think this would make me feel better? You failed to introduce your woman to me before you got married! How could you do this to Sofia?" Jenny looked at Sofia, she then held Sofia's hand and dramatically said. "If this man ever does something insulting or degrading, you must call me. I will personally have a decent conversation with him. You must not let him bully you. Do you hear me?"

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"You do not mind sharing a room with me, do you?" Alexander's playful smirk lingered as he glanced at Sofia. After their late dinner, Jenny insisted. they stay at the house, and a couple of glasses of wine were shared.

between Alexander and Sofia.

Sofia's expression turned complex, but Jenny, thinking they were already married, saw no issue with them sharing a room. "Aren't we practically married?" she quipped, strolling towards the balcony. The chilly August air greeted her, making her shiver.

"Care for another?" Alexander held out a wine glass, and she took it

without a second thought. "First time spending a night in a place that's not my own," she confessed.

"Really?" Alexander said. Well, that calls

for a celebration, don't you. think?" He stood close, both of them gazing at the captivating view ahead, a subtle tension lingering between them in the cool night air.

They clicked glasses, and Sofia downed her wine in **just** one big gulp. "Calm suits you..." Alexander said.

"Pardon?" her green eyes met his calm brown ones. The realization of their close proximity surprised her. Then she was quick to remind herself that they were already married.

"You no longer look like the nervous wreck that you were earlier, and it suits you."

Sofia could not help but smile. "Your aunt is amazing..."

“Isn’t she?”

“I would love for you to meet my mother...” Sofia said. “But she is currently not in that state.” She took in a deep breath as she turned her head away. Jenny was like a breath of fresh air. She was fun, very sassy, and-

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smart. Sofia knew that her mother would like Jenny too. Then she started wondering what her mother would say when she met Alexander.

Would she tell Sofia how good he looks, or would she ask her how he was treating her? Would she ask her to immediately give her some grandchildren?

The thought of it somehow made her cheeks hot. Sadly, her mother is lying in a hospital bed, unconscious.

“Lawrence had been poisoning my mother along with Dr. Mulach...” she uttered. She has yet to mention this to Alexander. “He is killing her.”

“He would not do that... yet,” Alexander said.

“Yet?”

“He would wait for you to turn twenty-six and have access to your inheritance. Controlling you then would be easier.”

Sofia’s gaze shook. At the end of the day, it was still about her inheritance. Everything in her life seemed to revolve around her billion-dollar inheritance. Wasn’t this comical?

All her life, she thought she had established sincere connections. She had a sister, a boyfriend, and a stepfather who treated her like she was his own. Sofia thought she was lucky to have them.

All this came crumbling down just because of some inheritance.

Sofia chuckled, her gaze turning sharp, a spark dancing in her eyes. “I expected you to start crying,” he mused.

“Do I truly look that helpless?” she retorted, raising an eyebrow.

“Helpless? No.” His gaze remained fixed on her face. “I wouldn’t **call you** that.”

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“Then?”

“I heard stories about the soft Sofia Lockhart. Someone who liked giving her sister what she wanted. I heard about the charities you sponsored. I thought you would be softer.”

So, he expected her to crumble.

She turned her body towards him, a smile playing on her lips. Whether it **was** the alcohol or the charged atmosphere, Sofia didn’t know. Finding newfound confidence, she stood close, their proximity creating undeniable tension. “I’m going to take that as a compliment.”

Amusement flashed in his eyes. “It is...”

She lifted her chin, smiling provocatively. The world seemed to pause for a moment. Then, with playful boldness, she tiptoed and whispered, “You are taking the couch...”

Not waiting for his response, she sauntered back into the room, leaving a soft laughter echoing on the balcony after she departed.

Who would have thought that Sofia would one day hesitate to visit her mother? She stood in front of Tranquil Haven Rehabilitation Center, the healthcare facility where her mother was currently at.

She could not help but think about the reason why she agreed to send her mother to this facility even though they could afford international doctors to take care of her in the mansion. Naturally, it was because Lawrence convinced her to do so.

Sofia no longer lived in their family mansion, and Lawrence was busy taking care of the family business. At first, Sofia wanted to keep her mother in the mansion, but Lawrence assured her that this facility was the one that her mother needed.

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He talked about state-of-the-art facilities and international staff. He convinced her that this would provide her mother with the best chance of recovery. The fool Sofia agreed..

Thinking back, Sofia quickly realized that she was stupid and indeed a bit soft. Alexander's words echoed inside her head. She was soft enough to trust those people. She was not someone who would defend herself when at fault, and this one was completely her fault. It was because she was lacking.

However, now that she was here, she would do everything to save her mother. "Miss Lockhart, I am so glad that you were able to visit," Dr. Mulach's voice interrupted her stupor. "The **staff** told me you were outside. I apologize if you find the interior of the facility lacking."

"Who told you that?" Sofia asked, unable to stop herself. She underestimated her emotions. She thought she would maintain her calm as she faced the one who had been helping Lawrence poison her mother. She was wrong.

"What?"

"Who told you that I dislike the interior of the facility?" Sofia asked.

Sofia

"I—

" Dr. Mulach gave an awkward laugh. The previous Sofia would never point this out. She would have just smiled and nodded, then followed the Doctor inside. "I apologize for the misunderstanding."

"Apologies accepted," Sofia said. "I would really appreciate it if the good doctor would not put words into my mouth. I do not want people to misunderstand."

“I understand,” Dr. Mulach said as he turned his head away. The man was already in his fifties with large eyeglasses and blue eyes. As always, he was wearing white and had a genuine smile on his face. Now that Sofia thought about it, this doctor seemed like the exact copy of Lawrence.

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“Shall I take you to the madam?” Dr. Mulach said, keeping that irritating smile on his face.

Sofia nodded without saying another word. Dr. Mulach then led her to the interior of the facility. Sofia couldn't help but feel a twinge of discomfort as she followed him down the sterile white hallway. The scent of antiseptic, hung in the air, a stark contrast to the warm, comforting aroma Sofia associated with her mother's presence.

As

they walked, Dr. Mulach continued his attempts at small talk, discussing the facility's various features that Sofia had heard before. “Miss Lockhart, we take pride in our state-of-the-art facilities and our diverse, international staff. Your mother is in the hands of highly skilled professionals, each dedicated to providing the best care.”

Sofia nodded her mind elsewhere. Her gaze lingered on the room where patient records were kept before turning her head away. “Your father just left this morning. As always, he spent the night here. I told him to take care of himself, but he seemed adamant about sleeping next to the Madam.” Dr. Mulach said as he opened the door to her mother's room.

Almost immediately, her gaze landed on the patient chart that was on the bedside table. “How is she?” she asked.

“We are seeing progress...”

Sofia was tempted to tell the doctor that this was the same thing that he told her a few weeks ago, but she did not want them to suspect anything.

She stood in front of her mother's bed, her gaze on her mother's aging face. "My birthday is in a few months, Mom..." she uttered, deliberately letting the doctor hear her voice. Then she turned towards Dr. Mulach. "Would you give us some time alone?"

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In the past, Sofia never bothered to check her mother's patient record. She had faith in Lawrence and Dr. Mulach, believing they had everything under control. Now, standing in the room with the door closed, a realization hit her like a ton of bricks—she had been wrong all along.

Her gaze locked onto her mother, lying there in a seemingly peaceful state. She could not help but wonder if she was actually at peace or if she was currently in pain. Sadly, she had no way of knowing this.

A sigh escaped her lips.

Determination then surged within Sofia as she approached the patient record. She knew the possibility of finding lies in those neatly written entries was high, but she couldn't afford to take any chances.

With a racing heart, she grabbed her phone, fingers flying **over** the screen as she snapped pictures of the record. She swiftly sent the images to her personal email, securing a record of the potential falsehoods that had surrounded her mother's care.

Sofia knew this room had no cameras, a detail Lawrence had insisted upon. His nightly presence here had been no cause for concern—she had, after all, trusted him implicitly.

Then, Sofia took a small picture frame featuring a snapshot from their vacation in Bali a couple of years back. The photo was taken on her birthday. Illinois had been too cold then, so they decided to visit Bali for the winter.

Sofia's mood darkened at the contrast between the vibrant memory and her mother's current state. Her mother's kind and beautiful smile seemed frozen in that frame. She immediately wondered if she could see that smile again.

Growing up, her mother had always been a pillar of strength and love.

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How could she let her mother **fall** into this helpless state? She bit her lower lip as she placed the frame carefully on the bedside table, ensuring it was angled toward her mother. The frame was golden, adorned with embossed designs that her mother really liked.

Sofia was certain that no one would suspect this frame, as her mother liked to collect things like this. So, she especially chose this and placed a small, discreet camera on it. She wanted to capture the moments inside these sterile walls.

She made sure to place it next to the frame with her mother and Lawrence's wedding photo.

After a while, Sofia kissed her mother's forehead and decided to leave. However, she was surprised to see Lawrence outside, waiting for her.

"F- Father-

" Sofia almost called the man by her name. This man's appearance immediately ruined her mood.

"I decided to come, and Dr. Mulach told me you are inside. I did not want to disturb your time with her." Lawrence looked lost—just like when they heard her mother's diagnosis when she fainted for the first time. How convincing, she thought inwardly..

Sofia immediately wondered if any of his reactions were real.

She immediately made a dramatic sigh. "I missed her."

"Everyone does..." Lawrence said.

“My birthday is coming.”

Lawrence nodded. He said nothing as they walked down the well-lit hallway. Sofia knew that the man was sensitive and very smart. So, she was quick to use her birthday for her emotions. Lawrence already knew that she would always feel emotional around this time. Hopefully, this would be enough to explain the frame that she placed inside her mother's room..

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“Dr. Mulach said he saw some improvements...” Sofia said just as they reached the door that would lead her to the parking lot outside of the building. “Tell him that we are willing to pay for everything... **if** that is not enough...” Sofia let out another sigh. “Perhaps, it is time that we take her

abroad.”

“I already talked to him about it. He already recommended a few hospitals in Europe. I will let you know when the time comes.”

“Thank you...” Sofia said as she held back her tears. These tears are not because of her mother but because of how she had been trying to control herself.

“Don't worry... I am certain she will wake up soon.”

Sofia nodded.

“It seems that **is** almost that time of the year,” Lawrence sighed. Obviously, he was talking about her birthday. “I would encourage you to book another session with your therapist...”

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Sofia froze. The therapist that about was someone. he had recommended to Sofia. This had been her therapist since she **was** in high school! Now that she thought about it, she wondered if that therapist was someone working with Lawrence too.

Was it possible?

Sofia always wondered where Lawrence's confidence came from. If Lawrence knew about Sofia's feelings toward her mother's relationship with him, if he knew about the things that Sofia told her therapist, then... that would explain everything!

"Are you alright?" Lawrence asked, concern laced in his tone.

"I am... thank you for reminding me. I have been very busy with everything else; I have yet to schedule any therapy sessions lately."

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"Hmmm... Charlotte just arrived; you should spend time with your sister too. You know how fragile her mental health is. It would be best if the two of you had a session together too..."

Sofia nodded without saying anything. She and Charlotte had therapy in the past too. This was suggested by Lawrence to further improve their 'sisterly' relationship.

"It was her job," Sofia said with a wry smile. "You knew how stressful the industry is. **If** only she would agree to work under me."

"She has her own ambitions," Lawrence said. "She knew that she was not exactly a Lockhart. She wanted to achieve something using her very own effort."

Sofia nodded. She was tempted to ask him about the film that Lawrence wanted to produce for his daughter. Is that considered... her own effort

too?

However, she held back her tongue and simply smiled at the snake before her.

Sofia did not know how good she was at controlling herself until she had to stop the urge to slap the man that she had been calling father. Oh, how she wanted to wipe that gentle smile off his face. Sadly... this was not the right time.

She quickly bid him goodbye and walked toward her car, where her driver James had been waiting.

“Take me to the office,” she uttered. James is someone that Lawrence recommended. She knew that this man was another mole, another spy who was watching her every move. First, she needed to get rid of the people that he planted around her.

She quickly put her seatbelt on and said... “I have a meeting in five minutes.”

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“Miss, it would take us thirty minutes to-”

“I want to be in the office in ten minutes,” Sofia looked at the man from the rearview mirror.

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“You just fired your driver?” Karina lifted her eyebrow the moment she walked inside Sofia’s office. As always, she was wearing a pristine pencil skirt, this time in pink.

“How did you know that?” Sofia asked.

“Everyone was talking about it outside.”

Sofia nodded.

“Many thought it was because of your upcoming birthday.” Karina lifted her eyebrow. “What are you scheming?”

“Nothing,” Sofia smiled. Slowly, she is going to get rid of the people that Lawrence planted around her. The driver was simply the first of the many. “Sit. Is there anything I can help you with?” She leaned back in her seat and smiled at her friend.

Karina snorted. Then she sat opposite Sofia. “I found something about that Doctor...”

“Tell me more...” Sofia said.

“He has a pattern of taking rich clients in that... We might be looking at fraud here.” Karina quickly pulled her tablet from her bag and handed it to her. “I already sent a copy of these to your email, it’s encrypted. You should know how to open it.”

Sofia nodded without saying a word. She started reading the documents, her face turning uglier and uglier by the minute. Not too long ago, she asked Karina to help her. She was certain that no one would suspect anything as Karina and she had been very close in the past. Right now, Sofia does not know who she could trust so she has been very careful with her moves.

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Of course, she already told Alexander about this matter and the latter assured her that he would ask his people to check out Karina. While a little part of Sofia did not want this to happen, she also understood that it was still better to be safe than be sorry later on.

After a few minutes of uncomfortable silence, Sofia lifted her gaze and stared at her friend. “I think it is best that we should stop seeing each other in public. At least... we limit it.”

Karina’s **face** immediately turned serious. Without waiting for her to respond, Sofia added. “I have a secured phone...” she took a small box from the drawer. “Untraceable.” She pushed it towards her friend.

“You think it is getting too dangerous,” Karina stated. She is a smart woman. She immediately understood why Sofia asked her to do this.

“You see... I do not even know how dangerous this could get.” And Sofia did not want anything to happen to another important person in her life.

Karina pursed her lips. She stared at Sofia and sighed. “I understand.” She took the box and carefully placed it in her bag.

“I think we should start seeing each other after working hours. Perhaps, over some drinks.” Sofia said. They were not experts in espionage, but both of them knew that Lawrence already held a large amount of connections—

thanks to being a Lockhart for a long time. The man must. have already planned everything, planted all the necessary people, prepared all cover stories, and done all preparation in secret. Sofia knew that Lawrence was a very smart man. It would be strange if he did all these things without prior preparations or confidence that he would win.

Again, this was going to be a long game of chess, and Sofia was prepared to gamble everything that she had.

“As for the annual meeting...” Karina smiled. “I already prepared everything.”

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“Including the patents?” Sofia asked. “That was fast.”

“Do not underestimate a strong independent woman who **is** hell-bent on making the ones who betrayed her friend suffer.” Karina sneered.

“Thank you,” Sofia said. If this was a normal day, she would have started teasing Karina. The woman had studied all her life and had long declared herself single for life. It was a silly notion, yet Karina had yet to find someone. She had been on dates but refused to settle down with anyone! Because of this, Karina’s single-since-birth status had become the butt of jokes between them.

“If you really wanted to thank me, then send me that cake... strawberry.”

“I know... I know...” Sofia nodded. “I’ll send you **two**.”

Hearing this, Karina gave a satisfied smirk. “The proof that you gave me was quite helpful.”

“Was it?” Sofia turned her head away. The proof that Karina was talking about was the trail of Lawrence’s scheme given by Alexander. It was not exactly a surprise that Karina found everything was true, and if she would not do something to prevent it then... her name would be ruined in the design industry.

“So you are not going to tell me who is helping you....” Karina gave her a playful smile.

Sofia pursed her lips. She knew that this was coming. After all, Karina was a very smart woman. How could she not figure it all out? "What made you so sure that it was not me?" Sofia asked, smiling.

"Because... you are soft." Karina shrugged. "The moment you heard about the betrayal, I am certain you would have drunk yourself to sleep and cried in your bed. Then call me the very next day."

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'How did she know? Sofia blinked. Was she really that... predictable?

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She sighed inwardly.

"The Annual Shareholders will happen in a week... are you ready?" Karina asked, her expression turning serious. Sofia knew that her friend was only trying to joke around to try and calm Sofia down. She must have wanted to assure her that she was not alone in this matter.

"Yes," Sofia smiled. In fact, she was not supposed to join this meeting, but as the Interim CEO, she had to. She did not tell Karina that Alexander already prepared everything for her so she was not that worried about this meeting. This was because she had yet to analyze Alexander's end goal in this marriage.

Right now, her emotions had been in turmoil, her head was still a bit sluggish and she did not want to think of the man who practically helped her escape her supposed doom.

After a quick discussion, Karina decided to leave and the two agreed to limit their interaction from now on. Sofia did not want to make Lawrence suspect anything.

"Miss, where should I put the flowers that Mr. Beaumont sent?" Miss Amores suddenly interrupted her stupor. Without saying a word, Sofia approached the red roses that were placed in a beautiful vase. She opened the card placed on top of it. On it, was a dinner invitation for tonight.

Sofia almost snorted right then and there. However, she still maintained a smile as she took a picture of the card and sent it to her dear sister. "Dinner?" she asked before sending another message. Daniel invited me and I thought it would be nice if you joined us."

[Alright...] The response came almost immediately.

Sofia smiled. She looked at the roses and said. "Keep it on your table." Then she turned around and went inside her office. Sofia and Daniel will suffer the consequences of their actions very soon.

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"Who told you to drink too much?" Charlotte's voice echoed inside Sofia's flat. "You always know that you cannot handle your alcohol..." Charlotte grunted as she held Sofia's waist. On the other side was Daniel, who was also holding Sofia's other arm.

"Sorry... Hek..." Sofia mumbled. Her eyes were already closed, and a silly smile was painted on her abnormally scarlet face. "Put me down. You can leave now..."

"How could I leave you when you are like this?" Charlotte frowned.

"Calm down..." Daniel spoke, his voice soft.

"Calm down? Her puke's **all** over me!" Charlotte could not help but complain. "This is a new dress!" she added, irritation apparent in her voice.

Daniel only chuckled. "And yet you are here..."

"Do you think I would want you to clean her up?" Charlotte glared at Daniel.

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"Right..." Sofia chuckled. "How could she let you... see... my... hek... body?"

The two let **Sofia** on the bed as Charlotte pushed Daniel out of her room.

"Sister, you know that you cannot drink too much alcohol. How could you

ask-" Seeing Sofia's body fall into the **soft** white king-size bed, Charlotte rolled her eyes. "How could I even talk to a drunk?" she kicked Sofia's feet. "Wake up. You need to take a bath."

When Sofia did not stir away, Charlotte kicked her sister's leg again. "Wake up..."

"Won't..." Sofia mumbled. "Just leave me alone. I need to sleep."

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Charlotte let out a sigh. "I can't carry you to the bathroom. Hey!"

However, no matter how much she tried to kick Sofia's legs, the latter did not open her eyes. Seeing this, Charlotte sneered. Then she opened Sofia's shirt and simply tucked her into bed.

"Done?" Daniel asked her the moment she got out of Sofia's room.

"Why did you let her drink?" Charlotte glared at Daniel. "You always know she's like that when she's drunk!"

"She told me she's not..."

Charlotte snorted. "Take me home."

"What about her?"

"What about her? She's asleep. She's gonna wake up with a bad headache tomorrow. While I have puke and sweat all over me. Take me home."

"Can't you **call** your PA?"

“It’s one in the morning!” Charlotte said. “Besides...” she closed in on him, a coquettish smile on her face. “I missed you.” Her hand rested on his chest as she tilted her head and licked her lower lip. “Don’t you miss me

too?”

“Char...”

“What? It’s just a question.” Charlotte said. “I know you never want to do it here.”

“Char...” There was a hint of warning in his voice.

“Fine.” Charlotte pouted as she took a step back. To keep their relationship a secret, Daniel and her agreed not to do something like this in the very same City where Sofia was. Daniel did not want to take some risks, and Charlotte did not want to cause unnecessary problems.

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So, they limited their interaction outside of Illinois where they would go on vacation together. Still, the fact that Charlotte is a known personality is causing them trouble.

They had to choose a secretive location to see each other. Honestly, Charlotte was tired of this. She wanted the relationship to be open but she could not do it— at least not right now.

“Still, you have to take me home...” Charlotte said.

“Right.” Daniel was about to go to Sofia’s room, but Charlotte held his hand.

“Where are you going?”

“I was **just** gonna check on her.”

“Don’t you trust me?” Charlotte said.

“Of course, I do.”

“Then don’t go inside her room.”

Seeing this, Daniel shook his head and smirked. “Jealous?”

“How could I not?” Charlotte said. “Can you blame me?” Her voice turned soft.

Daniel immediately approached her and held her chin, lifting it up towards him. Without saying another word, he kissed her lips. “Still jealous?”

“Stop it,” Charlotte rolled her eyes.

However, instead of giving her an answer, he kissed her lips again. “Again?”

“I said stop!” Charlotte said. However, she did not push him away. Instead, she giggled. “Not here.”

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“Fine... let’s go. I will take you home.”

“Good.” Charlotte smiled. Her flat was located in another building, and it had very good security. She wanted privacy, away from the media and her fans, and that was why she chose that place.

After a few minutes, the two of them walked out of Sofia’s flat. However, the moment they left, the door of Sofia’s room opened. Sofia slowly walked out, her phone in her hand.

No. She chose not to record the two, but she heard and **saw** everything that they just did. She had other plans. After making sure that her doors were locked, she opened her phone and sent a text to an unknown number.

[They are on their way out. Follow them. Take some good shots.]

Slowly, she made her way into the living room and opened the blackout curtains that revealed the beautiful view of Springfield at night.

Then she got herself some wine and sat on her couch, mulling over the things that happened while they were having their dinner. Charlotte almost always never let Sofia drink too much to the point of slurring her words. Sofia recalled their conversation earlier and snickered.

After enjoying her wine, she went back to her room to take a quick bath before sleeping. However, an unexpected call arrived just before she could change her clothes.

“Alexander?” she asked, surprised.

“Open the door...”

“You-” Sofia did not say another word as she ran out of her room and into the door, completely forgetting the fact that she **was** still wearing her robe and that her hair was still wet from the shower. She opened the door and saw Alexander standing outside.

M

Chapter 15

M

N3 0 6 14:22

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He was wearing his white shirt. His coat must be inside his car. His hair was a little disheveled yet it was not enough to hide how attractive he looked.

“Why are you here?” she moved to the side, giving him access to her flat. She was about to look in the hallway to make sure that no one was around when she heard his voice.

“What’s wrong with a husband visiting his wife?” he asked, chuckling. “Do not worry... I made sure that no one was around.”

Sofia let out a sigh of relief. She closed the door, making sure to lock it from the inside. She quickly realized that he was already inside her living room, enjoying a glass of wine.

“...” For a while, Sofia was at a loss for words.

“Is there something wrong?” he asked.

“I was about to tell you to feel yourself at home, but I can see how unnecessary that **is.**”

“Want some?” he asked.

“No.” She eyed the empty wine glass that she placed on the coffee table earlier. Alexander must have spotted it the moment he walked in.

“I just finished a meeting...” Alexander said. He leaned back on her couch and opened the first two buttons on his white shirt. “You don’t have something stronger?” he asked.

“I don’t usually drink something hard...” Sofia said. Then she pursed her lips, her gaze lingered on his exposed

chest for a few seconds before silently chastising herself for being such a pervert. “Remind Josef to give me the brand that you want so I can keep it here,” she tried to sound as casual as possible. “I am going to dry my hair.”

Chapter 15

M

OOFAN 14:22

She quickly escaped into her room. Alexander had been so natural with his actions yet she was acting like a cat who was caught doing something naughty. A sigh escaped her lips. Aside from Daniel, Sofia never had any other interactions with other men in the past so she was well aware that she can be very awkward around them.

After chastising herself even more, she turned on some music inside her room and went to her bathroom to dry her hair. She took the hairdryer from the bottom drawer and almost jumped out when she spotted Alexander's reflection in the mirror. He was standing by the door, staring

at her.

"You—"

"I knocked," he said.

"I—"

#

"I was gonna ask if you need any help."

She turned around. "Help with what?" she asked.

"Drying your hair."

"What? Why would I

"I heard you were drinking. Isn't it hard to dry your hair when you have too much alcohol?" He smirked and approached her. Then he took the hairdryer from her hand. "Let me do it," he said.

Chapter 16

Sofia groggily opened her eyes, her head throbbing from a night of little sleep. Sleeping at 3 in the morning was not something she would recommend to anyone.

She held her head. Fortunately, it was the weekend, and she did not have to wake up early for work.

“Eh?” She blinked when **she** noticed she was gazing at someone’s back- shirtless–naked masculine back. Then the memories of last night flooded her brain.

No. She did not engage in anything sexual or cry in his arms again.

Exhaustion had simply led her to sleep, and somehow, he had chosen to share the bed. She shook off the panic as she gingerly untangled herself from his sleeping form, hoping not to disturb him.

Yet, as she made her escape, he stirred and turned to face her. Panic briefly flickered inside her, but it vanished as quickly as it came when she saw that his eyes remained closed.

Carefully slipping out of bed, Sofia thought she had succeeded in her quiet exit. Just as she was about to fully escape, he suddenly grabbed her wrist and effortlessly pulled her back into his arms. A gasp escaped her lips as she found herself back on the bed, her face pressed against his chest.

Almost immediately, his masculine, woody yet somehow sweet smell filled her nose. Her cheeks reddened, her heart racing against her chest:

“Morning...” his voice was a little too husky for someone who just woke up. Hold on... he was awake?

“It’s noon...” she said without knowing the exact time.

“Hmmm...” his arm tightened around her.

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Chapter 16

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OOD2N 0 14:22

She fought the urge to ask him why he chose to stay in her bed. She did not want to sound too conservative, too prudish. They were already married after all. However, **she** was not used to sleeping next to someone - not even to Daniel.

Just as she was about to tell him to let go, she felt his breathing turn calm once again. He was already sleeping! Sofia was speechless!

After making sure that he was indeed sleeping, she slowly made her way out of bed and grabbed her phone from the nightstand before running to the bathroom.

After quickly washing her face to wake herself up, she opened her phone but realized it was dead. So, she quickly plugged it in and went to the kitchen to make something she could eat.

Since she turned nineteen, Sofia has lived on her own. It helped that her grandmother gifted her this flat not too far away from their ancestral house. After she graduated college, she immediately started living in this place full-time and even began to decorate it on her own.

“Have you opened your phone yet?” Alexander’s voice interrupted her stupor. He was wearing her robe that looked too small for his huge frame as he casually walked towards the kitchen.

“It was dead.”

“Probably from the calls...”

“Calls?” Sofia asked **as** she took the eggs from the pan and faced him. She ignored the fact that he already looked at home while eating an apple he had taken from the kitchen island. “What calls?”

Her question immediately received its answer when he slid his phone toward her. She caught it and immediately started reading the most trending news.

UWIN 465 14:23

Chapter 16

[Caroline Locke with Mystery Man]

[Caroline Locke’s Lover]

[Singer Caroline Locke’s Secret Boyfriend]

[Heiress Caroline Locke’s Dating History]

On it were blurry photos of Charlotte and none other than Daniel in a car just last night! Some were photos while they were inside the bar, while some were photos of them walking towards Charlotte's condo building. All of the photos were carefully taken by someone to avoid showing Sofia on the frame.

As if on cue, her doorbell rang. Sofia's eyes immediately widened. If she was right, that should be either Charlotte or Daniel! She immediately looked at Alexander and could only utter one word. "Hide." She looked around the living room that she could see from the kitchen and was immediately relieved when she did not see any of his items behind. "Now?" she added.

She thought she heard him chuckle, but she ignored it as she made her way to the door. Last night, she locked it from the inside, so even if someone knew the password to her security, they would not be able to get

1. in.

"Charry?" Sofia asked when she opened the door. Charlotte was dressed in a large pink hoodie and large eyeglasses that covered most of her face. "What are you?"

"Thank god, you are alright," Charlotte said. She pushed Sofia and immediately walked inside. "I thought something happened," she added.

"Why would something happen?" Sofia asked.

"Have you read the news?"

Chapter 16

"News?" Sofia feigned ignorance.

"Did you just wake up?" Charlotte walked towards the living room.

"Yes. My phone's dead. Were you trying to call me?"

"Some paparazzi took a photo of me and Daniel last night and posted it just an hour ago. Luckily, they were smart enough to blur his face. My manager is already working with the lawyers to take down that fake news." Charlotte calmly said.

“Last night...” Of course, Sofia had to act like she could not remember anything. “Did he drive you home?”

“Last night, you puked all over me. I asked him to take me home,” Charlotte sat on the couch. “I was in the middle of a photo shoot when I saw the news. I immediately tried to call you, but you didn’t answer.

“I think I had too much wine last night.” Sofia calmly to make everything clear to the media-

1. a. If you need me

“There is no need to do that,” Charlotte said. “My team can handle it.”

Sofia nodded without saying a word. In the past, Sofia would immediately try to bury some news about Charlotte. Lawrence refused to involve himself in his daughter’s issues, as he did not want anyone to label him as someone who had helped Charlotte gain her film.

Lawrence never wanted his daughter to pursue her career, but he never directly told Charlotte no. Instead, he would casually talk to Sofia about this and, in response, earn her sympathy. Now that Sofia thought about everything, she realized that those were nothing but manipulation tactics. Lawrence would not directly involve himself in Charlotte’s matters because it was Sofia who would do it for him! In the end, everyone, including the board of directors, saw him as a very fair and honest person.

4/5

Sofia snorted inwardly.

“Are you sure?” Sofia had a worried look on her face. “We can just tell them that Daniel is my boyfriend, and I invited the two of you together.”

Technically, that was not a lie.

“Why would you do that? Some fans can be very toxic. The best course of action is to stay silent and let the news vanish on its own.”

Sofia nodded as she walked towards the kitchen. Charlotte sounded like she was concerned about Sofia’s well-being but the truth is far from this. The previous scandals about Charlotte would

d not just vanish on their **own** because it was Sofia who used her grandmother's connection to clean it all

1. up.

Sadly, today is going to be very different from the past.

"Tell me if you need help," Sofia said, her voice soft and gentle. The moment she turned around, the softness on her face vanished.

She could not wait to see how Charlotte and Daniel would resolve this storm.

Chapter 17

"Is it done?" Miss Alice Johnson, Charlotte's agent and publicist, looked at Charlotte the moment she got into the van. "You don't look too happy."

"She did not say it," Charlotte said. "Coffee?" she looked at Harper, her PA.

"Doubleshots..." Harper said. "But Miss Sofia always does things behind your back; you should probably not worry about it."

"If she did not say a word this time, then we can certainly take advantage of everything," Alice said.

"You do not want me to say anything. How can we take advantage of this issue?"

Alice smirked, her dark brown eyes glinted with mischief. "Your sister has worked with models before. She must know that using this scandal to make people talk about you is good. Negative press is still a kind of press. Sadly, there are things that we cannot cross. Since that man is your sister's man, we cannot create some ambiguity about this issue or make some sort of connections to your upcoming album."

Almost immediately, Charlotte's face turned ugly at the mention of her album. Her manager had been bugging her in the past few weeks, asking about those written songs. However, Sofia does not have them. This was enough to ruin Charlotte's mood.

"So?" Charlotte asked.

“We can release a statement. Ask your fans to value your privacy and tell them that Mr. Beaumont **is** someone **close** to your family.”

“The Beaumont Family would not like that,” Charlotte said. The Beaumont Family is big on privacy. They do not have any of their images on the Internet or social media. They have a private group of friends that do not share anything about them. “I don’t like that.”

Chapter 17

Alice sighed. “Then, we can apologize for the misunderstanding and tell them that the man you were with that night was your sister’s man, but that would easily kill the issue,” Alice said, her gaze cold.

“We need a way to take advantage of this. You promised to release an album this year and many are expecting something.” Alice reminded her. “You need something to keep people talking.”

With an upcoming film and an album, people are bound to talk about Charlotte. However, Alice wanted more attention. She wanted mystery, she wanted more news. Sadly, Charlotte does not want to attract too much attention to the Lockhart Family.

“However, I must warn you... this might offend that sister of yours,” Alice said. According to Charlotte, the heir of the Lockhart Family, Sofia Lockhart, was the one who disliked this kind of attention, especially to LH Group. She did not want Charlotte to use their family name for showbusiness. Despite this, Sofia had always helped Charlotte in the past.

Just one call and Sofia would immediately solve the problem that Charlotte was facing. Alice had been banking on this connection for a while now. So, she had been doing her best to recommend Charlotte to some directors- especially those who lack funding.

Sadly Charlotte’s acting was only mediocre at best, many still refused to let her act in their film. Because of this, Lawrence Lockhart had been secretly using his influence to help his daughter.

Not many in the industry knew this secret. Lawrence was smart enough to hide his support for his daughter, but something like this did not escape Alice’s expert eyes.

“I suggest you release a snippet of what you have written so far. Add something about the expectations of everyone around you, make it dramatic. Surely, this would gather people’s sympathy. Many already knew of your background. They know that you are trying to make a name.

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Chapter 17

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FIN 6% 14:23

for yourself and that your father does not support your career.”

This was the narrative that they created around Charlotte Lockhart’s persona. They changed her screen name to Caroline Locke and intentionally released the fact that her real name is Charlotte Lockhart.

All of this was nothing but a strategy, to make someone more likable. A good pitiful story would always sell.

“You don’t have to issue a statement. Just a little meaningful snippet about it and everyone will dig deeper and perhaps cause another trending...” Alice smiled. In fact, the best approach in this matter is for them to keep

their mouths shut.

Charlotte always had that angelic, nice girl vibe, and Alice wanted to take advantage of that. However, some things must be done for Charlotte’s career.

Hearing this, Charlotte pursed her lips. Alice’s plan would surely work if.... she knew how to write her own songs! She gritted her teeth. “I will think about it.” Slowly, their car moved. Charlotte looked out of the window, her gaze turning colder by the minute.

Then she snorted inwardly.

She could ignore the news but Alice was right. She needed more exposure, to get her name out there. Slowly, the corner of her lips lifted into a smile. Then she opened her phone and sent a text to Daniel.

[I need to see you.]

“She left just like that?” Alexander sounded surprised when he walked out of Sofia’s room.

“She has a job...” Sofia calmly spoke.

DULY 14:23

Chapter 17

He chuckled behind her. “Gullible.”

“I know it was not her job...” Sofia said. It must be Lawrence. Before Charlotte left, she received a call from someone yet she refused to answer it. Sofia knew it must be either her father or... her manager or maybe even Daniel.

Those people must be trying to use this issue to get Charlotte’s name back out there. It was exactly what Sofia expected.

He chuckled in response before sitting on the kitchen island.

“You seemed too relaxed...” she noted. “Don’t you have work to do?”

“It’s the weekend.”

“Are you not the CEO of Beaumont Empire?”

“Do you want me to leave?”

“No. I just-”

“So, you don’t want me to leave. You should have immediately said so earlier.”

“...” Sofia **was** at a loss for words. She only wanted to point out how CEOs are supposed to be always busy. She too, grew up in a family that talks about business all the time. Even Lawrence and her mother were never there during her events because of how busy they were.

Sofia avoided his gaze as she thought of her current situation with Daniel. In fact, she always wanted to marry someone who would spend time with her and their children.

Daniel Beaumont would have been perfect. Yet, here she was, married to Daniel's brother.

"This smells good..." Alexander said.

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Chapter 17

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Sofia eyed the Monte Cristo Sandwich that he was already eating. Earlier, while Charlotte was talking, Sofia spent her time cooking. However, Charlotte did not actually eat something, so now, they have four Monter Cristos.

"Good..." Alexander uttered. "Didn't know you cook too..."

"Not always," Sofia said as she started eating her sandwich. While they have maids in the main house, Sofia has always liked to be as independent as possible. When she moved to this place years ago, she almost immediately started cooking the things that she liked to eat.

Charlotte always told her it was weird how she liked cooking even when she could afford a chef. However, Sofia almost always laughs at her, telling her that having such a nice kitchen would be useless if she left it unused.

In the end, Sofia started cooking more. She was no expert by any means, but she could cook all the food that she liked- like this Monte Cristo.

When he did not say a word, Sofia chose to focus on her food, and the two of them enjoyed a rather awkward yet comfortable breakfast.

"Coffee?" he asked when he saw her coffee machine.

"Sure," Sofia uttered as she placed all their dishes in the dishwashing. Then she watched him start brewing her coffee.

The atmosphere between them slowly turned calm as they talked about various things over coffee. This peace lasted for a few minutes before a doorbell rang.

“That’s Josef. He is here to bring me clothes,” Alexander said. He got up and was about to walk towards the door when he suddenly paused and looked at her. “You do not mind me taking a bath in your bedroom, right?”

“I- I have a guest room,” Sofia answered. “I mean- if you are not comfortable in my bathroom.”

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Alexander lifted an eyebrow, then he smirked and walked towards the door.

Chapter 18

Daniel impatiently waited in front of the elevator, looking at his phone as he once again attempted to dial Sofia’s number. Earlier, he had to meet someone from Southeast Asia and was not checking his phone for any showbusiness news.

However, he was here not because he wanted the scandal to vanish but because he aimed to coax Sofia and spend more time with her.

Of course, this plan changed when he received a **text** from Charlotte. Nonetheless, Daniel had already bought some flowers with him, thinking it would be a waste not to at least give them to his girlfriend.

[DING]

Daniel immediately got inside the elevator; however, his eyes widened just as it was about to close. Josef? Why would Josef come here?

He opened the elevator doors and tried to call Josef, but the man was gone. Was he... hallucinating?

Shaking his head, chuckling, Daniel considered his lack of rest. Last night, he spent the night with Charlotte and woke up early for his meeting. It was the weekend, for crying out loud, yet his brother was giving him more and

more work.

While complaining inwardly, a part of him liked it. He wanted to prove himself to the board and thought working hard **was** the best way to do it.

Quickly, he pressed the floor where Sofia's flat was located. Although he had asked her to move in with him, she refused, as this flat was a cherished gift. So he preferred the quiet space for her work – a seemingly stupid reason, yet completely understandable.

Daniel walked out of the elevator and immediately entered the password on Sofia's door.

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Chapter 18

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"Huh?" Error?

06 14:24

Her password had always been the combination of his and her birthday. Did she change it? Was it because of the news? Daniel immediately frowned as he tried calling her, but again, it went to voicemail. This time, he pressed the doorbell.

When she did not open the door after a few seconds, he pressed the doorbell again... and again.

Was she not home? No. It was the weekend. She would usually spend time in her house or office, and he had already called her office. She was not in the building. Sofia had always been a homebody, preferring her designs over talking to people.

Just as he was about to press the doorbell again, the door finally opened.

Daniel looked at Sofia.

“Hey...” Sofia smiled **as** she removed her large headphones. She wiped the sweat on her forehead using a towel. “Sorry, I was running.”

“You do not usually exercise in your flat...” he noted, leaning in to kiss her. However, she had already turned around and walked inside. Realizing he was still standing at the door, she stopped and stared at him. “Did something happen?”

“No-

Daniel said. Sofia’s actions were not a surprise, as she was not a very warm person. “For you...”

“Thank you,” Sofia accepted the flowers and walked ahead of him. Daniel frowned, but he still followed behind her. For some reason, he could feel something different about her, but he quickly concluded that it must be the stress of the upcoming meeting.

Charlotte had already explained everything to her. Sofia had been stressing about this meeting, as it would be the first time she would join

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06% 14:24

the board of directors. Because of this, Sofia was not able to write songs for Charlotte.

“Breakfast?” Sofia casually placed the flowers on the kitchen island as she opened a bottle of wine and chugged it down.

“I had one with a client...”

That was when Sofia looked at his clothes. “It’s the weekend.”

“That damnable brother of mine decided to overwork me, make me his slave...” Daniel chuckled. He immediately removed his coat and loosened his tie. “You haven’t been answering my calls...”

“Oh, sorry. It was dead when I woke up **this** morning. **It’s** in my room.”

Daniel nodded. Again, he felt something amiss with Sofia but decided not to ask about it. He approached her, but just before he could hug her, she moved away.

“I’m sweaty...”

“I don’t mind...”

“I do,” Sofia said, her voice cold. For some reason, Daniel thought he saw some disgust in Sofia’s eyes, but it left as quickly as it came. “I do mind... I smell like alcohol and sweat. I woke up with a terrible headache, and I thought... working out would remove whatever hangs over I have.”

“So, you just-

“Worked out,” Sofia walked towards the living room.

“Have you seen the scandal about Caroline Locke?” Daniel asked.

“It was Charlotte who told me about it,” Sofia said. “She just left.”

“Don’t mind her, **she** must be stressed because her management had been

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M.6% 14.24

asking about her songs in the past few weeks. I swear, they did not want her to take some rest. She just wrapped up her taping, and now they wanted her to work with the studio for her songs,” Daniel said.

“How did you know that?” Sofia suddenly asked.

For a short second, Daniel froze. Then he smiled. “She **was** complaining about it last night. You “he shook his head. “You always know that your tolerance is low. You should stop drinking too much.”

Sofia stared at Daniel. “Charlotte never told me about that. I assumed she was doing fine.” Sofia said. Now that she thought about it, Lawrence and Daniel would always seem to pass on news about Charlotte’s ‘sufferings’ while working. Naturally, the gullible Sofia would immediately do something about it.

How pathetic.

“Well... she has always hated that you always helped her. She knew how stressed you were and did not want you to worry.” Daniel said. “You truly have a kind sister.”

“I know.....” Sofia chuckled. “I— I am going to take a bath— “ She tried to walk past him, but he was quick to block her way. Her body immediately tensed, and her heartbeat quickened.

“Are you avoiding me?” he asked, his voice deeper than usual.

“What?” she tried to maintain a calm voice as memories of what she saw in the hotel room resurfaced in her mind. She balled her trembling hands into two tight fists as she smiled at him. “What are you talking about?”

He tilted his head and observed her expression. “Was it because of the annual shareholders’ meeting?”

“I— “

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Chapter 18

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OOFRN 14:24

“How about I help you relax a bit?” his lips lifted into a rather coquettish smile.

Four

“What?” Sofia shivered inwardly as she thought of ways to escape this man, the only thing that she could come up with was kicking his... crotch. However, that would ruin everything that she had so far.

“I need a bath too...” Daniel declared. “Are you not going to ask me to join, you?”

Sofia’s lower lip dropped. She- she did not know what to say. However, just before she could answer his question, Daniel’s phone rang.

Seeing the caller, Daniel immediately sighed. “That damnable brother of mine wanted me to work myself to death...” he immediately took a step back as he answered **his** phone. Seeing his back, it was as if a huge weight was lifted from Sofia’s shoulders.

Chapter 19

“What is this?” Alice Johnson could not hide her irritation the moment she entered Charlotte’s studio, where she was currently recording. She waved the phone in front of Charlotte and asked for the second time, “What the hell did you do?”

“What?” Charlotte glared at Alice. “It was a mere post clarifying everything...”

“You just posted about that man being your sister’s boyfriend and that the two of you were helping her out. People are starting to talk about,” Alice made a deliberate pause as she composed herself. “The netizens are searching for your sister. You told me she dislikes this kind of attention, and yet you-”

“She agreed.”

“Sofia agreed?” Alice asked. “She agreed to reveal her relationship in public?” Alice found that hard to believe.

“Is that the reason why you interrupted my break?” Charlotte rolled her eyes. Sofia never agreed as Charlotte never informed Sofia about her post on her social media.

However, she knew that Sofia would not mind. What was wrong with telling everyone that he was Sofia’s man? It was not like she mentioned her name or last name. She simply said that the man was her sister’s man.

“You should have told me if you wanted to post something like this.”

“I wanted to have more personality,” Charlotte said. “I want them to know that I don’t have a team checking my socials all the time.” She sighed as she start

ed massaging her neck. "Look... I know that you are concerned about this matter because you do not want to drag my father and sister, but I can assure you, they would not do anything."

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Chapter 19

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Alice closed her eyes. "You still do not understand it..."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

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62 14.24

"If you- you simply ended the issue with a statement. I told you to drag the issue until you announce the date of your next release. We need your name out here." Alice could not seem to fathom why Charlotte would suddenly make a post explaining that she was with her sister's boyfriend.

Instead of creating ambiguity, she gave an explanation that would end the issue and therefore, lose the interest of her curious fans.

"You wanted me to be kind and nice. Here I am being kind and nice," Charlotte said. She knew that branding matters all the time. Her agency wanted her to create that nice and gentle persona because of her face.

Explaining everything to her fans was a part of their branding. Moreover, she did this not just because she wanted to clear things up. It **was** because of something else... something that her father promised her.

She smiled at Alice.

"Have you read the comments?" Charlotte asked. "They were **all** good. Isn't that what the company wanted?" A good, nice, and kind girl who seemed bullied by her rich family is what everyone wanted.

Charlotte was confident that Sofia would not say anything about this matter as she was busy with everything else in the company. Charlotte had seen Sofia with her designs and she knew that the woman would spend hours drawing and creating without talking or even eating. She was simply too distracted to focus on the media.

Alice frowned. She opened the comments and sighed. Charlotte was right. The comments were pretty nice. Some of her fans even asked her to have a live stream with her sister.

“I will ask the team to check the comment section of your post and

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immediately report those unpleasant ones,” Alice said. Right now, her primary concern was Sofia Lockhart and Daniel Beaumont. Alice was aware of Sofia’s strong personality and did not want Sofia’s possible actions to affect Charlotte in any way.

“How was your album?” Alice asked.

“I can’t write...”

“What?”

0 14:24

“I mean... I just finished taping. Can’t I get a rest?” Charlotte said. “A few weeks should do. I just need to go somewhere and relax, I don’t know. I want to take a break.”

Alice’s face immediately narrowed. Their schedule this year had been booked since last year. “It was your choice to sign the contract with the company.” The contract clearly states that she was supposed to have an album released in the last quarter of the year. It was already August, and by now, the songs should have already been finalized.

However, Charlotte simply kept saying that she could not write while acting. So, the management accepted her excuse and waited for her film to completely wrap up. And now... she wanted a break?

“Look, I know you can easily pay for a breach of contract, but-”
“What about her?” Alice pursed her lips. This time, she chose to work on Charlotte alone even though Charlotte’s acting had always been mediocre.

Alice always wanted to create connections using Charlotte’s family and use them to usher Charlotte’s career. But Charlotte had been very difficult about almost everything. She was the exact opposite of the kind and gentle woman that the agency wanted her to show to her fans.

“I know...” Charlotte said. She looked at Harper, who just arrived with coffee and some snacks. “I know...” she said and leaned back on her chair.

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Chapter 19

D 14:24

Last night had been chaotic, to say the least. She spent the whole night with Daniel and did not have that much sleep. However, it was also Daniel who convinced her to accept her father’s proposal and clear up the misunderstanding as fast as possible.

Daniel told her that he would propose very soon, and he did not want Charlotte’s fans coming after him or Sofia. Charlotte tried to argue, but at the end of the night, she agreed. So she immediately posted about it this morning. Right now, she chose to listen to Daniel as Sofia was about to receive her inheritance.

Right now, they needed to convince her to sign the shares to Daniel as a gift for their wedding. The notion is insane, but Charlotte knew that Sofia loved Daniel. It would not be impossible for her to do that.

Besides, Daniel assured Charlotte that everything was going smoothly. Sofia always had a soft spot for him, and he was taking advantage of everything.

Still, a part of Charlotte could not help but blame Sofia for everything. Without Sofia, she would not need to hide her relationship with Daniel or pretend that she liked acting and singing just so she could create her name in the industry. To Charlotte, Sofia's existence alone was enough to ruin her life.

Charlotte took a sip of her coffee to calm herself down. Then she started reading the comments on her social media. Just as expected, everything is going well.

However, Charlotte was not done. She looked at the time on her phone then she smiled.

All she could do now was wait.

Chapter 20

Who would have thought that Sofia would end up spending the weekend hooked up with Alexander? This time, the man slept in the guest room.

However, she was not prepared for what he did next. He asked to put his clothes in her closet. Sofia smiled before she grabbed the chamomile tea from the table.

"I am going to change houses very soon," Sofia said. She felt that this place **was** too unsafe. There were too many memories surrounding this flat, and she did not like that.

She wanted to move on from that damnable relationship with Daniel and her sister. To do that, she needed to move to a new house. She took a quick sip and let herself immersed in the tea.

"Then what do you think of this?" Alexander suddenly handed her his phone as he rested his elbows on the couch. They were currently sitting in her living room, watching some cringey rom-com series that he insisted on watching.

Perhaps, he thought that Sofia would like those kinds of movies. What he did not know was that she preferred watching something scary instead.

So, when she informed him about this, he quickly stopped the series, and the two started talking about the flat. He removed the popcorn from her lap and pl

ced it on the coffee table before them. Then he leaned closer **as** he, too, stared at his phone.

By now, she had stopped feeling awkward about their close proximity. “What is this?” she asked, scrolling through the pictures of a flat.

“A flat, four bedrooms, gym, and all amenities, both indoor and outdoor pool, heated.”

“This is in Azure building?” she asked.

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“Yes.” Sofia lifted an eyebrow. She tried to get a unit in that place, but it was already sold out when she talked to the realtor. It was one of the best places in Springfield, not just because of the security but because it was located in the center of the city.

“You just bought it?” she immediately noticed the lack of decoration in the place. It was painted white, and there was a large couch in the living room. Aside from that, there was nothing there.

“I have never stayed in that place.”

“Then I will let my lawyer call you so **we** can prepare the ”

“I am not selling it,” he stated. She immediately lifted her eyebrow, her attention snapping back to him.

“Then? Why show it to her?”

“We are already married.”

She did not know what to say to that. “Of course, if you have a problem with living together-”

“No problem....” Sofia interrupted him. She had signed that contract, and it was clearly stated that they were going to act their part. They have to live in one residence. The thought of the contract somehow made her blush.

For some reason, she could not help but think about the clause about consent . She wet her lower lips with her tongue before she turned her attention back to the flat. "Have you hired someone to design, it?" she asked.

"Not yet. You can take care of that."

"You wanted me to-"
" she did not complete her words when she saw him nod. Then she smiled and nodded back. "Alright." Perhaps he did this to make her feel better.

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Right now, Sofia suspected that he was staying with her right now because he did not want her to be alone. He must have known how that betrayal affected her. Sofia appreciated his efforts.

Luckily for her, both Charlotte and Daniel never bothered her for the rest of the weekend. They would send her occasional messages, and she would acknowledge it, telling them that she was busy, and the two would immediately wish her well before they stopped responding.

The annual shareholder's meeting is buying her enough time. However, she did not know if she would be able to avoid them after the meeting.

"How are you planning to reveal the cheating?" Alexander suddenly asked out of nowhere.

"Reveal the cheating?" Sofia looked at his steady gaze. For some reason, this seemed to contain the assurance that she needed- the assurance that

he would be there behind her.

"Are you not planning to do that?" he asked. "I did not see you as someone that... kind."

Sofia chuckled this time. Perhaps, he already knew that it was Sofia herself who let someone release the images that the paparazzi took the other day. This means that he might have already heard about her plan.

“You just have to wait,” Sofia smiled. Earlier today, Sofia already saw Charlotte’s statement; it was the explanation about Sofia and Daniel. While she did not mention names, many of her fans have started digging into Sofia and Charlotte’s family. She was only waiting for someone to start the fire.

To her surprise, the fire that she was waiting for started the very next Monday. Sofia leaned back as she scrolled through the dozens of messages on the social media site, a smile apparent on her face.

“Miss... those words **are** completely false. I have already called our lawyers

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to handle this matter. Do you want me to create something for an official social media post about this matter?” her secretary, Miss Amores, asked, her face cold.

Again, Sofia glanced at the post.

[Caroline’s sister is the heir of LH Group! Yet she did nothing to clear her sister’s name when those images exploded.]

[Sofia Lockhart is an acquaintance of a good friend of mine. Everyone knows that she was a bully.]

[I believe she was the reason why my babe Caroline had to change her name and last name.:/]

[#boycotLHGroup #supportCaroline]

Just a few scrolls and some media outlets already released a summary of Sofia’s life.

[Everything You Need to Know About Sofia Lockhart]

[The Reason Why Caroline Locke was Using a Screen Name]

[Sibling Rivalry Unveiled: Sofia Lockhart Accused of Bullying Actress Sister, Caroline, in Shocking Scandal!"]

[Sofia Lockhart Under Fire for Alleged Mistreatment of Sister Caroline]

[Sofia Lockhart Exposed for Alleged Bullying of Actress Sister, Caroline Fans Demand Answers]

Reading the news and comments, Sofia was not able to stop herself from smiling. The Annual Shareholders meeting was upon them, so she already expected this kind of attack.

“There is no need to waste our time on this matter...” Sofia looked at her secretary.

“But-”

Sofia shrugged and placed her phone down. “You may leave now,” Sofia said, smiling as she started reading the documents that Alexander’s secretary Josef sent.