Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1381

Neither of them had anything to say in objection to his statement.

Caitlin and Jonathan nodded in unison after a brief moment of hesitation.

"You're right, Mr.Thompson.We should let Joyce make that decision when she wakes up." Jonathan said with a sigh, hunching his back even further.

Maybe Joyce would give up on committing suicide after finding out that she's pregnant...

Since Joyce had attempted to commit suicide in order to resolve the grudge between the Rivers family and the Quinn family, she would surely make another attempt later on.

Jonathan and Caitlin knew that all too well because they were planning on doing the exact same thing.

As such, the discovery of her baby was probably their only hope at saving Joyce's life.

"All right..."

Caitlin sobbed.

Everyone else fell silent after that and simply stared at Joyce, who was still lying motionless on the bed.

After what seemed like forever, Jonathan turned toward Natalie and said, "How about you two head back for now, Nat? I'm sure you must be tired coming all this way to see Joyce today. You can come by again later."

Natalie glanced at Shane and her two kids in response.

Upon noticing how tired her kids looked, she nodded and replied, "All right,

Mr.Rivers.We'll return to the hotel and get some rest.We'll come by again later tonight, okay?"

"Sure thing,"

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Caitlin and Jonathan replied in unison.

Natalie then turned toward Shane as she said, "Let's go, Darling."

Shane nodded, and the four of them walked out the door hand in hand.

After getting into the car, the driver drove straight for the hotel.

"I should've known that Joyce would commit suicide," Natalie said with reddened eyes along the way.

Shane put his phone away and looked at her.

"What do you mean?"

Natalie lowered her gaze as she explained, "Joyce came to see me a few days ago when I was leaving for the airport. She mentioned something about her running out of time. I felt something was off about her, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it, so I didn't give it too much thought afterward. If I had put more effort into picking up the signs, I might've been able to figure out she was suicidal and stop her in time!"

Shane reached out and gently pulled her into his arms.

"This isn't your fault.We are all separate individuals, so we can't control what others do. Even if you did figure out Joyce's intentions and stopped her from committing suicide, how would you be sure that she won't attempt it again in the future?"

Natalie froze upon hearing that and went silent instantly.

Shane flashed her a caring look as he continued, "See? You don't know what to say because you know you can't make sure of it.You can't possibly be around Joyce all the time, can you? Eventually, you two will have to go your separate ways, and she'll be free to do whatever she wants without you stopping her.So,

you see, there's no need for you to hold yourself accountable."

Natalie knew that he was right about everything he said.

"I just feel bad for missing the opportunity to stop her when I clearly had the chance to."

"I know, but you don't have to. Joyce turned out to be fine, didn't she? Now, stop thinking too much about it and get some rest,"

Shane whispered while softly patting her on the head. His voice sounded so calming that Natalie soon drifted off to sleep in his embrace.

Shane gave her a kiss on the forehead and tightened his grip on her shoulder.

They soon arrived at the hotel, and the two kids got out of the car while Shane followed closely behind with Natalie in his arms.

Both Connor and Sharon kept glancing back at them as they made their way toward the elevator.

Upon arriving at the presidential suite, Shane gently laid Natalie on the bed and pulled the blanket over her before turning toward the kids.

"I need you two to behave yourselves and stay quiet so your mommy can rest well"

He knew full well that Natalie had been tensed up and gloomy ever since she found out about Joyce's suicide attempt.

As such, he needed to let her get enough rest or she would surely fall ill.

"Got it, Daddy!"

The two kids nodded obediently in unison.

"All right, go play in that room over there.I'm going to get some sleep with your mommy for a bit," Shane said while pointing at the room in front of his.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1382

The two kids did as told and headed over hand in hand.

Shane then took his shoes off, snuggled up next to Natalie underneath the covers, and hugged her to sleep.

Later that evening, Natalie headed over to the hospital all by herself after dinner.

As Shane had a video conference to attend, he remained in the hotel that night.

Despite having bodyguards with her, there was no telling if Sean would show up all of a sudden.

As such, Natalie decided to leave the kids at the hotel with Shane instead. She knocked on the door of Joyce's ward upon arrival, and Caitlin greeted her with a surprised smile seconds later.

"Ah, Nat, you're here!"

"Yeah! I came over right after dinner!" Natalie replied with a nod.

"Did you come here all by yourself? What about Mr. Thompson and the kids?"

Caitlin asked when she saw no one behind her.

Natalie smiled as she explained, "Shane has a video conference to attend, and I figured it'd be inconvenient to bring the two kids out at night, so I had them stay at the hotel."

Caitlin nodded.

"Ah, I see..."

"By the way, you seem to be in a great mood, Mrs.Rivers.Did something good happen?" Natalie asked.

Caitlin broke into a smile as she replied, "Yeah, Joyce is awake!"

Natalie felt overjoyed when she heard that.

"Really? She is?"

"That's right! She only came to a while ago. I thought about giving you a call about it, but you said you'd be coming over tonight, so I figured I'd give you a surprise instead. Why don't you come on in and say hi to Joyce while she's still

awake?" Caitlin said while ushering Natalie into the ward.

Joyce was staring blankly at the ceiling as she lay on the bed, seemingly in deep thought.

Jonathan, on the other hand, was peeling an apple while sitting beside her bed. He broke into a smile when he saw Natalie coming in.

"Hello, Nat! Would you like to have an apple?"

"Don't mind if I do, Mr.Rivers!" Natalie replied with a smile.

Jonathan then began peeling another apple while Natalie sat down beside the bed and glanced at Joyce.

Joyce was still spacing out at the time, so she didn't even notice Natalie there until Natalie gently caressed her cheek.

Having been snapped out of her daze, Joyce turned to look at Natalie and asked in a hoarse voice, "Nat?"

"Yup, that's me!" Natalie nodded.

But, I thought you went back to Baycoast...

"What are you doing here?" Joyce asked in confusion.

Natalie deliberately put on an angry face and rolled her eyes as she said, "I'm surprised you have the cheek to ask me that! I leave you alone for one night,

and this is what you end up doing? I came rushing over as soon as I heard the news!"

Joyce bit down on her lip apologetically as she knew what Natalie was referring to.

"I'm sorry, Nat..."

Unable to bring herself to stay mad at Joyce, Natalie let out a sigh and lightly jabbed her on the forehead.

"Honestly, why would you do such a thing? Do you have any idea how scared I was when I found out about your suicide attempt? Your parents were terrified when they saw you like that! What if something happens to them due to the

extreme shock you put them through, huh?"

Both Caitlin and Jonathan's eyes reddened upon hearing that.

Of course, Joyce knew what she did was wrong.

She was well aware that her parents would be upset about her death, but she figured it wouldn't matter since she couldn't feel the guilt if she was dead.

However, the fact that she survived meant she would have to live with that guilt for the rest of her life.

The weight of it was so heavy that she found herself suffocating from it.

"I'm sorry...I'm really sorry..."

Joyce covered her face and apologized while sobbing. She knew that her actions had terrified her parents to no end, and that they would be absolutely devastated if she were to commit suicide.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1383

Because of that, Joyce was plagued with guilt and self-blame for what she did.

Mom and Dad are old now, and they aren't exactly in great health either. I don't know what they would do if anything were to happen to them because of this... I really regret taking things for granted and acting on a whim... I was so naive to think that my death would be enough to atone for my parents' mistake, and that Stanley would be able to let

go of his hatred toward them! I thought my parents would live happily once they were freed from their guilt, but I ended up

neglecting what they truly wanted. I didn't take into consideration if they would able to accept such an outcome.

If something were to happen to them because of the extreme shock, my sacrifice would not only be in vain, but also the cause for their deaths! The thought of her parents possibly dying because of her terrified Joyce to no end.

Both Caitlin and Jonathan could tell she had truly repented her ways when they saw her crying like that.

As she had attempted to commit suicide in order to atone for their mistake, it was only natural that they forgave her for it.

That was especially the case since Joyce was still lying weakly on the hospital bed.

Caitlin hugged her tightly and patted her on the back as she sobbed,

"Joyce...Oh, my baby...Do you know how scared I was when I found you like that?"

Jonathan stepped forward as well.

"Yeah! I nearly died from the shock!"

"Mom, Dad, I'm sorry...I'm really sorry..."

Joyce said apologetically while looking at them.

"Don't ever do that again, okay? This is our problem, so we'll figure something out on our own.All we want is for you to be all right, you hear?"

Caitlin glared at her, refusing to let go until she agreed.

Joyce nodded.

"Yeah, I hear you"

While mustering the courage to commit suicide was easy for a person who had lost the will to live, those who survived the first attempt would realize just how painful it could get and refrain from attempting it again.

That was pretty much the case for Joyce over here.

"Good girl. You'd better remember what you said, okay? If you try that again,

your mom and I might actually end up dying along with you! If that happens, our deaths will be on your hands!"

Jonathan shouted angrily while jabbing a finger at her.

Joyce shrunk away a little in response.

"I know, Dad.I won't do it again."

"All right.That's all that matters."

Caitlin gently patted her on the back.

Natalie broke into a smile of admiration and envy when she saw the three of them hugging each other after Joyce gave up on taking her own life.

Man, I really envy how Joyce still has the love of her parents...I lost my dad's love since I was little, and now, I've lost my mom too.

She's the only person I can rant to whenever I feel stressed out, and she's gone forever now...

Joyce is lucky to still have both her parents around, so she had better drop the idea of taking her own life! It would be plain cruel to let her parents suffer losing her like this! Natalie was snapped out of her train of thoughts when Caitlin

asked all of a sudden, "By the way, Joyce...Are you aware that you're pregnant?"

Judging by the look of confusion and shock on Joyce's face, it became obvious that she was still unaware of her pregnancy.

Natalie had assumed that Caitlin told Joyce about her pregnancy the moment she woke up, but that turned out to not be the case here.

"Huh...W-What did you just say? I-I'm pregnant?"

Joyce asked in a shaky voice while rubbing her tummy.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1384

But, how is this possible? Since when did I get pregnant? Caitlin nodded and asked sternly, "That's right. You've been pregnant for a little over a month now. Do you know who this baby belongs to?"

It was the first time Joyce had seen her mother look so serious.

That was when she truly understood that her mother wasn't lying, and that she was pregnant with Stanley's child.

Still, how did this happen? I remember taking the pill when I went home that night, so why am I pregnant?

"Joyce, are you even listening to me?" Caitlin asked with a frown when she saw Joyce lower her head in silence.

"Y-Yes, I'm listening..."

Joyce mumbled after being snapped out of her daze.

"Then tell me, who does this child belong to?"

Caitlin repeated her question while pointing at Joyce's tummy.

Natalie and Jonathan knew that Caitlin wanted Joyce to tell them the truth herself, so they both kept quiet and simply stared at Joyce from the side.

Given Joyce's personality, Natalie figured that it was incredibly unlikely for her to tell the truth as her parents objected to her loving Stanley.

The fact that Joyce was well aware of their feelings made it even more unlikely for her to say it.

After a brief moment of hesitation, Joyce clenched her fists and said, "I...I don't know..."

D*mn, I really was right about her...Natalie shook her head helplessly when she saw that she was right about her.

"You don't know?"

The look on Caitlin's face turned gloomy instantly, making it obvious that she was displeased with Joyce's answer.

Jonathan too, put on a frown as he asked, "How can you not know who you had sex with?"

Joyce lowered her gaze to hide the look of guilty conscience in her eyes.

"I...I really don't know...I was drunk that night, so I have no idea who—"

"Enough!"

Unable to stand it anymore, Caitlin glared coldly at Joyce as she continued,

"Stop lying to us! Your father and I both know that it's Stanley's child!"

Joyce looked up at Caitlin in shock and disbelief upon hearing that.

What? How did they know about that? Her expression alone was more than enough for Caitlin to confirm that Stanley was indeed the father of the child.

"Honestly, what in the world are you trying to do, Joyce? You could just tell us who the child belongs to! Why would you even try to hide it?" she asked helplessly while jabbing a finger at Joyce's forehead.

Jonathan nodded as he added, "Your mom is right. What good would it do you to hide if from us? We would've went to the police if we didn't know who the father is! If that happened, this whole thing would blow out of proportions, and people would start spreading nasty rumors about you! Do you understand?"

Joyce lowered her head as she said apologetically, "I...I understand...Mom,

Dad, I didn't mean to keep it a secret. I was just afraid that you two would get mad if I told you the truth, so I—"

"In that case, you should've told us about it sooner instead of trying to shoulder everything on your own! This isn't something you can manage all by yourself,

you know? Were you going to try and hide it from us forever if Nat didn't tell us about it?"

Caitlin scolded her angrily.

Joyce fell silent instantly as that was indeed her intention. She wouldn't have told anyone about her pregnancy if she knew about it sooner.

By not telling her parents about it, she would be able to spare them a great deal of shock and concern.

On top of that, the news of her pregnancy had come so suddenly that it caught her completely off guard, so she wasn't going to tell anyone about it anyway.

Caitlin knew she had hit the nail on the head when she saw Joyce go silent.

"You...You're unbelievable!" she shouted angrily while smacking Joyce on the shoulder.

Fearing that Caitlin would get a stroke from the anger, Jonathan quickly grabbed hold of her and said, "Now, now...Calm down..."

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1385

Caitlin's chest was heaving as she pointed at Joyce and said, "Look at your daughter, Jon! She was actually planning on keeping something this big a secret from us! I question if she even sees us as her parents!"

Joyce pursed her lips and exclaimed in displeasure, "Don't say that, Mom!"

What the heck is Mom saying? Of course I see them as my parents! It's true that I neglected the consequences of my actions when I tried to commit suicide, but I've already realized my mistake!

"That's enough, Honey.What's done has already been done, so there's no point in scolding her for it now.Right now, we should focus on what she plans to do with the baby!" Jonathan said with a sigh.

Natalie nodded in agreement.

"That's right, Mrs.Rivers.Let's ask Joyce what she plans on doing with the baby."

The three of them then shifted their gaze toward Joyce, causing her to instinctively clench her fists above her tummy.

"Tell us the truth, Joyce.What do you plan on doing? Are you going to keep the baby or have an abortion?"

Joyce's eyes went wide the moment she heard the word "abortion".

She instinctively sat bolt upright and shook her head as she said, "No, I can't abort the baby!"

Jonathan frowned.

"You can't abort the baby? So...Are you saying you will keep the baby, then?"

"[..."

Joyce froze.

Keep the baby? Honestly, I haven't actually thought that far ahead...

While I don't want to get an abortion, I'm not sure if keeping this baby is the right thing to do either.

Stanley doesn't love me, nor does he know that I am pregnant with his child.

And even if he does know, what would he do? Knowing his personality and how much he hates me, I bet he'd just ask me to get an abortion! There's no way he'd let me give birth to this child, so getting an abortion would be the most

appropriate option for me.

But...

For some reason, the mere thought of getting an abortion makes me feel really horrible.

Although I didn't wish for this sudden pregnancy, the fact remains that this baby belongs to me and the man I love! I just can't bring myself to get an abortion!

Seeing as Joyce was conflicted on the matter, Natalie gave it some thought and asked, "Joyce, your desire to keep the baby outweighs your desire to get an abortion, right?"

Joyce looked up at her and mumbled softly, "Yeah..."

Caitlin let out a sigh.

"It's because this baby belongs to Stanley, isn't it? That's why you don't want to get an abortion, right?"

She firmly believed that Stanley being the father was definitely the reason Joyce wanted to keep the baby.

Had it been someone else instead, Joyce would surely have agreed to get an abortion.

Joyce made no attempt to hide it and nodded as she knew it was no secret between them.

Caitlin jabbed a finger at her and asked angrily, "You...Do you really love Stanley that much?"

"Joyce, it will be nearly impossible for you to start a new relationship later on if you choose to keep this baby. Very few men out there are able to accept a woman who is with a child. On top of that, getting pregnant before marriage will

ruin your reputation. Are you not afraid of others pointing fingers at you and your child everywhere you go?"

Jonathan asked with a gloomy look on his face.

" "

Joyce tensed up instantly and fell silent after hearing that.

"Also, keep in mind that Stanley doesn't love you, so there's no way he'll love this child. Even if you decide to keep the baby, your child will grow up without the love of a father. Are you sure you still want to go through with this? What will you say if your child asks about his or her father in the future? Will you tell the truth or keep it a secret?"

Jonathan continued.

"I don't know..."

Joyce shook her head helplessly. She didn't want to abort the baby, but she wasn't sure how she would deal with the consequences of that decision.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1386

"Actually, it's not too hard to avoid all of that and keep the baby at the same time" Natalie said while looking her straight in the eye.

Naturally, everyone shifted their gaze toward her upon hearing that.

"What do you mean by that, Nat?" Joyce asked.

"I'm sure you all are familiar with my situation. Just like Joyce, I got pregnant before marriage. I too, felt conflicted as to whether I should keep or abort my baby. I thought of getting an abortion at first, but I couldn't do so due to my

physical condition. The other reason I kept the baby was because I had lost all hope in love. I wasn't planning on dating and marrying anyone anymore, so I decided I might as well keep the baby."

In order to save Jared, Natalie made a deal with Jasmine.

Natalie had to offer herself up to a judge for a fashion design competition.

In return, Jasmine made the arrangements for Jared's surgery.

Natalie had no idea that Shane was the man who had sex with her that night;

she found it to be so hellish that she wished she were dead.

She had actually thought of committing suicide after that night, but Jared needed someone to look after him, and Yulia was still mentally unstable after being divorced, As such, Natalie couldn't afford to die or there would be no one

to look after them.

Of course, that didn't change the fact that she viewed herself as tainted and unworthy of living.

As such, she planned on taking her life once Jared and Yulia's conditions improved.

However, she suddenly changed her mind about dying when she found out later on that she had gotten pregnant.

The main reason she made that deal with Jasmine was to save Jared and Yulia.

so they wouldn't be able to live with themselves if they found out the reason she committed suicide.

Jared would believe that he only survived because of his sister's sacrifice, and Yulia would hate herself for her incompetence which led to her daughter offering up her body for her son's surgery.

For both of their sake, Natalie chose to put up with her disgust and kept the baby as she carried on living.

Due to her poor physical condition, getting an abortion would put her life at risk too.

That was the primary reason behind her choice to keep the baby.

The second reason was because she had given up on love completely.

Since she was planning on staying single for life, it wouldn't be a bad idea to have her child keep her company.

That was how Connor and Sharon came to be born a few months later.

They were both so adorable that Natalie felt glad she had chosen to keep them instead.

Had she gotten an abortion instead, she would probably regret her decision for the rest of her life.

After taking a moment to recall her past, Natalie regained her composure and said with a smile, "Joyce, what you're about to hear is me speaking from my past experience, so I hope you'll pay close attention to what I have to say."

"Okay." Joyce nodded.

Natalie then sat down beside the bed as she said, "You see, my condition was a little different from yours. I didn't know who the father of my children was at first,

but you do.On top of that, he is someone that you love, so I can understand your desire to keep this baby.Of course, I'm not asking you to get an abortion.I'm only telling you this because having a child isn't a game.Once you've made your decision, there's no regretting it"

Jonathan and Caitlin nodded in unison.

"Yeah, Nat is right"

Natalie smiled as she continued, "This child is fated to never be loved nor accepted by his father, so you will have to play the role of both parents if you choose to keep him. You will also have to give up on a lot of things, including

future romances. Your parents are right about most men being unable to accept a woman who is with a child. On top of that, I'm sure you'll feel anxious about having someone else care for your child, right?"

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1387

"Yeah…"

Joyce mumbled softly with her head low.

Natalie held her hand as she said, "Not only must you give up on this, but you'll also have to endure a lot more than most other people. For example, you'll have to deal with people gossiping about you and judging you. I had a lot of people asking me all sorts of questions while I was pregnant with Connor and Sharon,

and that continued even after I gave birth to them. Stuff like who their father is,

why I got pregnant before marriage...They even badmouthed me behind my back and accused me of getting pregnant because I was sleeping around like a wh*re.Are you able to put up with all of that?"

"lam.If you're able to endure all that yourself, then there's no reason I can't do the same.Besides, you know how stubborn I am.Even if I did make the wrong decision, I'd still march down that path regardless because that's just who I am"

Natalie nodded.

"I know.But even if you're able to endure all of that, what about the child's questions? A child needs a father figure in life, and he will surely ask you about it.I'm sure you wouldn't want to tell him who his father is, right? After all, he is

only fatherless because his father refused to accept him, and knowing that would upset him greatly"

Joyce bit down on her lip and kept quiet after that.

Natalie is right...

That is indeed the main reason why I don't plan on telling my child who his father is...

"Kids are extremely curious, Joyce.Refusing to tell them about something will only make them want to know about it even more.Connor often asked me about his father's identity, but I didn't know what to tell him.It breaks my heart seeing how much he yearns to know about his father, but I couldn't bring myself to tell him the truth.

It hurts really badly to see your child get disappointed because he can't get the answer he's looking for' Natalie continued while pressing a hand against her chest.

Joyce flashed her a wry smile and took a deep breath before saying, "Actually, I know about everything you just said because I personally witnessed you go through it all.I'm well aware of what's in store for me if I choose to keep this

baby.All I'm trying to say is, I am confident in my ability to provide this child with twice as much love so he won't need a father.I am also mentally prepared to deal with the judgment from others"

Natalie nodded.

"I understand.So, you're sure that you want to keep this baby, right?"

Joyce lowered her gaze.

"Yes, that's right. I was feeling conflicted about it at first, but now I am certain. It may be impossible for Stanley and I to get together, but I can still keep our child. That way, I will be able to conclude my feelings toward him."

Perhaps this child is my final reward for loving Stanley over the past ten years.

With that in mind, Joyce rubbed her tummy and said with a faint smile, "Besides,

something tells me I might regret it for the rest of my life if I don't keep this baby."

"Yeah, that's what I felt too when I thought about aborting Connor and Sharon back then.Regret was the reason I chose not to go through with the abortion.I kept asking myself if it was the right thing to do, and if I would regret my

decision later on in life. Given everything that has happened, I can say with absolute certainty that I would've regretted getting an abortion"

"See? You think so too, and you didn't even know who their father was at the time. Since I do, there's no way I could bring myself to abort this baby! I don't want to live the rest of my life in regret. Keeping this child may make my life

extremely difficult, but at least I won't regret it."

Joyce then turned toward her parents as she continued, "Mom, Dad, please let me keep this baby.I'll be sure to live well for my child's sake! I won't do anything stupid anymore!"

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1388

Noticing how serious she was, Jonathan and Caitlin exchanged glances before letting out helpless sighs in response.

"You can go a head keep the baby since you've made up your mind on the matter.I just hope you'll live up to those words and not end up regretting it in the future,, " Jonathan said.

Joyce nodded confidently.

"I won't regret it!"

I'm an adult now! I know what I'm doing! I didn't just make this decision on a whim.I have thought long and hard before deciding to keep this baby! Caitlin Enter title...

shot her a glance and said, "All right, then. You may keep the child. Just make sure you take good care of him"

"I will! Thanks, Mom! Thanks, Dad!" Joyce replied with tears of joy in her eyes.

Natalie gave her a pat on the head.

"Congratulations, Joyce.You're going to be a mother soon!"

Joyce flashed her a smile.

"Thanks, Nat!"

Natalie then kept her company until it was dark out before Shane came over with the kids to pick her up.On the way back to the hotel, Natalie tugged at Shane's sleeve and said, "Joyce has decided to keep the baby.."

"Just as I had expected"

Shane replied while continuing to swipe at his tablet. Natalie arched an eyebrow at him.

"You anticipated that all along?"

"Kind of.Joyce has loved Stanley for over ten years now, and she never stopped loving him even after he hurt her countless times. Her feelings for him has gone far beyond love. If anything, it's more like an obsession and feelings of

indignance. Her unrequited love and efforts are preventing her from moving on,

but this baby is the key that will set her free,, "Shane said calmly.

Natalie tilted her head in confusion.

"Huh? What do you mean by that?"

"Like I said, Joyce has become hopelessly obsessed with Stanley because he didn't reciprocate her love. Now that Stanley has provided her with a child, Joyce is able to let go of her obsession toward him.."

Shane then put his tablet down as he continued, "This child has allowed her to understand that her efforts over the past ten years weren't in vain. Her love for Stanley may not have blossomed like she wanted, but it did bear fruit.."

"Oh, I get it now! Joyce would still be stuck in that path of obsession if she didn't get anything out of it.Now that she is pregnant with Stanley's child, she feels like her efforts have been reciprocated in a way, so she is able to let go of him!"

Natalie exclaimed.

Shane nodded.

"Yeah, something like that.."

Natalie let out a sigh.

"I suppose that's for the better.At least this child will be living proof of Joyce's love for Stanleỹ"

Shane shot her a glance as he said, "However, she might have a hard time dealing with Stanley later on"

Of course, Natalie knew what he meant.

"Are you implying that Stanley might ask her to abort the baby if he finds out?"

"That is highly possible.Stanley doesn't love Joyce, so he wouldn't want her to be having his child?"

Shane replied with a nod.

Natalie bit down on her lip.

"Actually, Joyce is aware of that possibility too.But if she has decided to keep the baby, then she probably knows how she'll keep it a secret from him.."

"Is that so? Then I guess we won't have to worry,, "

Shane shifted his gaze back toward his tablet.

Natalie simply nodded and kept quiet after that. He's right. We won't have to worry about her because there's nothing we can do about it anyway.

This counts as a private affair for Joyce, so it wouldn't be appropriate for us to get too involved.

Sure, we can lend her a hand every now and then, but she is the one who has to deal with it.

As they encountered some traffic along the way, it was already midnight by the time they arrived at the hotel.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1389

The two kids had fallen asleep in the car, so Natalie and Shane had to carry them back to the presidential suite.

The next morning, Shane and Natalie returned to J City as they had only come over because of Joyce's suicide attempt.

Since Joyce had dropped the idea of committing suicide after finding out about her pregnancy, they were able to head back without worry.

Of course, Natalie made a trip to the hospital to say goodbye to Joyce before leaving.

Joyce told her that she would return to work at J City after she got discharged,

much to Natalie's relief.

A few hours later, the four of them got out of the car, and the kids sprinted happily toward the villa.

"Yay! We're back home at last, Connor!"

Sharon exclaimed while holding her brother's hand.

Connor nodded.

"Yeah!"

"Come on, let's go back to our room! We haven't finished the puzzle from the day before yesterday!"

Sharon then grabbed Connor by the arm and ran into the house.

"Slow down, you two! Be careful not to trip and fall!"

Natalie called out to them from behind.

"Don't worry! We'll be fine, Mommy!"

Connor shouted back at her from afar.

Natalie shook her head helplessly.

"Honestly, look at those two.."

Shane walked up to her and said with a reassuring chuckle, "Now, now...Connor is very a mature boy, so I'm sure he'll keep Sharon safe.."

Natalie flashed him a smile in response.

"Yeah, I know that.Otherwise, I would've run after them and have them slow down!"

"Come on, let's go.Mrs.Wilson has already made us lunch? Shane said while grabbing her by the hand.

"Okay!"

Natalie nodded, and the two of them entered the villa.

Silas, who had driven them home, could only let out a wry chuckle as he drove off all by himself.

Time soon went by, and five days came to pass in the blink of an eye.

Natalie was editing a blueprint that she received from a designer when the door to her office was opened all of a sudden.

Thinking it was her assistant, she didn't even look up as she said, "Yes? What is it?"

"Joyce Rivers reporting for duty, Ms.Smith!"

Instead of her assistant, it was Joyce's voice that she heard.

Natalie paused and looked up in disbelief, only to see Joyce standing in front of her with a bright smile on her face.

Natalie quickly tossed her pen aside and stepped forward to give her a hug as she exclaimed, "Joyce, you're back!"

"That's right, Nat! I'm back!"

Joyce hugged her back as well.

Natalie jumped up and down a few times before stopping herself as she suddenly remembered something.

"Oh, I almost forgot! You can't be jumping around now that you're pregnant!"

Joyce replied with a chuckle, "I think I'll be fine with a little hop.."

Natalie shook her head.

"No, that won't do.A pregnant woman is very fragile and weak, so we'll stop the jumping here.Turn around and let me have a look at you.."

She then held Joyce by the hand, gently spun her around twice, and eyed her from head to toe before saying, "You've gotten a lot skinnier, and your face is still looking rather pale. It seems you're recovering pretty slowly.."

Joyce let out a chuckle.

"I think it's pretty fast. At least I'm able to walk on my own and come to work now.."

"Fair enough.Oh, by the way, how's your wrist?"

Natalie asked while shifting her gaze toward Joyce's wrist, which was still wrapped in thick bandages.

There was even a faint smell of antibiotic ointment coming from the bandages.

Letting go of Natalie's hands, Joyce pointed at the bandages and reassured her with a smile, "The wound has already closed up, so there's nothing to worry about. I'll be able to get these bandages off pretty soon"

"That's good to hear.."

Natalie nodded and sat down on the couch with her as she continued, "So,

when did you get discharged?"

"Yesterday.." Joyce replied.

"Why didn't you give me a call when you left the hospital? Why return to J City all by yourself like that when you could've stayed at your parents' place a [little while longer?" Natalie asked while pouring her a glass of water.

Feel the Way You Feel, My Love Chapter 1390

"Because I wanted to give you a surprise! Besides, my parents are paranoid about me doing something stupid again, so they're keeping a close eye on me at all times. It felt really uncomfortable, so I figured I'd come over in advance!"

Joyce replied with a chuckle.

"They're just worried about you,," Natalie said.

Joyce let out a sigh.

"I know, but it puts me under a lot of pressure!"

"I suppose that's true. Still, why would they let you come over if they're that worried about you?" Natalie asked curiously.

"Because of you!"

Joyce giggled.

Natalie pointed at herself in confusion.

"Me? What does this have to do with me?"

"My parents are okay with me coming over because you and your husband will look after me. They believe that you'll keep me from doing anything stupid again"

Joyce explained.

Natalie rolled her eyes at her upon hearing that.

"That may be true, but we're not going to be watching over you all the time.You're the one who has to keep yourself from doing anything stupid.."

"Don't worry; I won't do anything stupid again. I need to watch this child of mine grow up, after all!"

Joyce rubbed her tummy with a motherly smile on her face.

Natalie broke into a smile too when she saw that.

"I'm glad to hear that, Joyce.How have you been feeling lately? Are you experiencing any discomfort?"

Joyce nodded profusely.

"Yeah, I've been feeling kind of nauseous.."

"That's normal for pregnant women" Natalie replied.

Joyce grabbed her by the arm as she said, "Yeah, I know that much. I just don't know the details. You have experience with this, so could you tell me what I should pay attention to during pregnancy?"

"Sure thing.Listen carefully, okay?"

Natalie replied as she placed her glass down.

The two of them then spent a long time in the office going over the important stuff to look out for during the early stages of pregnancy.

Joyce was writing down notes and even recorded the whole conversation just in case she missed anything, much to Natalie's amusement.

Their discussion was interrupted when Joyce's phone rang all of a sudden. She quickly made a shushing noise and motioned at Natalie to pause while she checked her phone.

However, the smile on her face vanished when she saw the name on the caller ID.

She seemed conflicted about talking to the person who was Calling her.

"Who is it, Joyce?" Natalie asked.

"It's Justin? Joyce replied. Natalie arched an eyebrow at her.

"Justin?" Joyce nodded.

"Yeah.I'll go take this call and get back to you in a bit"

"Okay.."

Joyce then answered the call and said, "Hello, Justin.."

Natalie narrowed her eyes when she heard how awkward Joyce sounded.

Huh? Did something happen between those two? I remember Joyce being very happy to have him as a friend, so why does she look like she's trying to avoid him now? It's almost as if she doesn't know how to face him...Is this because I

told her about Justin's feelings for her back at the hotel? Is that why she feels awkward around him? Well, that doesn't seem right...

Knowing that he likes her shouldn't make her feel this awkward, so something must happened between them without me knowing!

"Your mother told me that you went back to J City.Is that true?" Justin asked softly.

"Yeah, that's right.l just arrived a while ago,, " Joyce mumbled.

"I see.."

Justin fell silent after that. Not knowing what to say, Joyce kept quiet as well. It got so awkward that even Natalie felt a little uncomfortable watching from the side.

After what seemed like forever, Justin asked, "Joyce, about what I said yesterday...W-What do you think about it?"

There was no escaping the inevitable.