

KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil)

#Chapter 71 - Read KEY TO HAPPINESS:(My mute devil) Chapter 71

Chapter 71: 71

I brought the power bike to a halt, seeing the huge traffic jam before me. I needed to get to the scientist before he had the opportunity to slip away.

And even if he ended up in jail, I still needed to question him about my mother and her whereabouts. I found it hard to believe that she was gone, especially after seeing all the evidence suggesting otherwise. It had barely been eighty hours since I woke up from a coma, and although I claimed to be fine, deep down, I knew I still needed time to get back on my feet but time itself wasn't on my side.

I gripped the handlebars of the power bike, the engine growling like a caged beast beneath me. The wind clawed at the edges of my gown as I leaned forward, my eyes narrowing, focused solely on the sliver of space between the cars ahead. The traffic was a blur of metal and headlights, but hesitation wasn't an option today.

With a quick flick of the throttle, the bike roared louder, the sound echoing off the surrounding vehicles. I threaded through the narrow gap so tight that my knees almost grazed the side mirrors. The rush of adrenaline was electric, my pulse drumming in sync with the bike's steady thrum.

Every twist of my wrist sent the machine surging forward, weaving through the chaos with a fluid grace that felt both reckless and calculated. Horns blared, tires screeched, but I was untouchable. I was almost at my destination. Just one more detour, and I would be a step closer to the scientist.

Or so I thought.

Until I was sent flying across the room.

"Not again," I cursed, curling into a ball to protect myself. How many times had I escaped death? But this time was different. This time, I was quitting the call

I looked up to find someone wearing a black mask. On a second look, the figure seemed familiar. I sat up, trying to steady my breath.

"Who are you?" I asked, already sensing their intentions from their aura.

"Let me say this quickly I don't hate you, and yes, we both have the same enemy. But I can never forgive you for causing the death of my family, even though you were instructed to."

I looked up to find Ella glaring at me, her eyes void of fear, guilt and regret.

"I still can't forgive you," she repeated, raising the bat she was holding. I braced myself, shutting my eyes, waiting for the pain

But it never came.

I peeked through one eye to see what was delaying her, but she was nowhere to be found.

"Hey, little sis..."

I looked up to find

"Justin," I said, a bit surprised to see him here of all places.

"Thank goodness you still remember me. I thought you'd forget me after you left my island," he said with a smile, offering me a hand.

It had been months since I last saw him, but not a single thing had changed about his appearance. His enigmatic charm remained the same well except his aura.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, pulling me closer and inspecting me, which made me chuckle.

"I'm okay..." I said halfheartedly, searching around for Ella.

"Are you looking for Ella?" I met his gaze as he stared down at me.

"Don't worry, my people already took care of her, and I'm sure Nix has also taken care of the scientist."

"How?" I questioned, since we had made no backup plan for this.

"He suspected this would be the outcome, so he asked me to close every route leading out of the city. He even had some of my men stationed at the airport for the last three days in case the scientist tried to run.." He sighed, signaling a car toward us.

"Zamiel had his suspicions, especially after discovering that you were the one ordered to kill her parents. So, he asked me to keep an eye on her and it turns out he was right."

Justin guided me into the car as if I were a child under his care.

"Take us home," he ordered.

"Home?" I raised an eyebrow, wondering where he was referring to, but he only smiled, patting me on my head before closing his eyes as the car moved forward.

I look outside the window to find medical personals rushing forward and backward as they picked up someone from the ground, the hand of the individual dripping with blood with blood as they raised the person from the ground

"Don't look at such unpleasant scenes" Justin's hand came over my eyes. I took a moment to observe him before looking out back at the window. And I could finally breathe in relief. It has all finally ended, the manipulation, lies and deceit has all ended. My memories may not be a hundred percent back but then I can finally sleep without worrying about someone plotting to have me six feet under.

I closed my eyes resting my head on the head rest as a knowing smile submerged on my lips. It may have all ended but then my journey with Nix is just beginning..

But then, what if he decides to also leave? After all, our wedding was a contract from the beginning.

Will I be able to start fresh? And even if I start fresh, what about the place he had occupied in my heart?

"Carmela wake up" I could hear someone call out of urgency

"Carmela" they called again and I opened my eyes to find strange gun men standing before me. One had a sinister smile which sent strange creeps to my stomach. I could feel the fear that wasn't there in the first place slowly crawling up into my chest and my heart beat speeding rapidly.

As he took a step closer to me I took one back but it only made them laugh more

"Where do you think you're going? Do you think you would survive if you jumped off the cliff?" He questioned and I suddenly turned to my left feeling a heavy gaze on me.

Nathan, the name came to my mind and I felt relieved seeing him although he was hanging over the cliff from the other side. I looked at him pleading for help and although he was in no condition to offer me help I felt reassured he would do something to save me.

"Jump" I read his lip but shook my head "Trust me and jump" he said again and I looked at the gun standing before me. Not like I actually have any choices in the first place and so I did like he instructed.

I could feel gravity pulling me down as the wind slapped against my face, my hair blocking my vision as the whispering sounds of the wind filled my ears. The water's surface glinted like a sheet of molten silver, growing larger and more turbulent with each passing second. My stomach dropped as I pierced the water's surface, the impact sending shockwaves through my body. The world around me dissolved into a chaotic blur of white foam and turquoise depths, as I plunged into the water's icy embrace.

I thrashed against the pull of the water, lungs screaming for air. I'd never mastered swimming and now, with bullets tearing through the surface above, panic clawed at my chest like a wild animal. Every breath was fire. Every sound was muffled chaos.

The water pressed in from all sides, filling every pore, every wound, as if it wanted to swallow me whole. My vision blurred; the world was a swirl of blue and red flashes. My mind screamed, Breathe. Please, breathe.

Then strong arms wrapped around my waist, yanking me toward something solid. I turned, gasping, and found Nathan. His eyes burned with urgency before I could speak, his lips crashed into mine rough, and desperate forcing air into my lungs. The shock of it jolted through me, but life surged back all the same.

He broke the kiss, his breath ragged, and kicked off the water, dragging me with him. Together, we swam through the chaos, the sound of gunfire fading behind us. When we finally reached a cluster of rocks, the water grew shallower. I clung to him anyway, trembling, terrified of letting go.

"Beloved," he whispered, voice low and steady, "you know I'm not going to let you slip away, right?"

I looked up at him that sly smirk on his lips almost mocking the fear still gripping me.

"You know I can't swim," I shot back, breathless, "so why tell me to jump?"

His smile faded. Something in his gaze shifted darker, colder. Before I could react, his hand moved to my throat, pinning me lightly against the wall of rock. His grip wasn't suffocating, but the intent in his eyes made my blood run cold.

"I am the only one permitted to kill you," he said softly, voice edged with menace. "No one else. Remember that, always."

He leaned closer, his lips brushing mine then claiming them completely, fiercely. The kiss was raw, punishing. His teeth grazed my lip, his tongue sought every breath I tried to take. It wasn't love, it was control, desperation, and possession. And when the air finally ran out, my body jerked awake.

I gasped, eyes flying open and met Nix's gaze.

"You're awake," he said with a faint smile.

It took me a second to realize I was in his arms, being carried up the stairs. My hands found his neck on instinct, and I pressed my head against his chest, listening to the steady rhythm of his heartbeat. The sound grounded me, a soft reminder that he was real, and I was safe.

"He was always there," I murmured, more to myself than to him. "The shadow I never knew existed... watching over me, even when I couldn't remember."

Chapter 72: 72

Zamiel paused in the doorway as if the threshold were another kind of stage. The room beyond was a study swallowed by dusk and heavy curtains drawn. A single chandelier casting a low, amber pool over a long mahogany table. Around it sat the elders of the dynasty, faces like weathered maps, each line a ledger of old grudges. Velvet sleeves, and gold rings dulled by time, a scatter of military pins and frayed lapels. Some clutched prayer beads; others held whisky glasses that trembled in steady, practiced hands.

Their gazes, when they finally took him in, were a map of contempt thin-lipped, narrowed, and bored with the very sight of him.

He let the door click shut behind him. The sound was small, but the room took it as punctuation. A corner of Zamiel's mouth lifted; the smile was a scalpel small, clinical. He moved to an empty chair as if he owned the air it displaced. When he sat, the leather exhaled beneath him. Before he reached for the glass before him, he let the quip fall into the silence like a dropped coin.

"So this is what the Bible meant when it said, He will prepare a table in the presence of my enemies," he said, smirking the words soft as silk but edged with steel. A ripple moved around the table, half laughter, half disgust.

"We are not your enemies," said a narrow-shouldered man in a threadbare suit, his voice like a paper cutting. He stared at Zamiel as though trying to read the ink beneath his skin.

"And neither am I your friend," Zamiel returned lightly. "But what you seek, I can provide."

His gaze swept the table slowly, taking inventory: the old man with the scar that never healed; the matriarch whose hands kept folding like a fan; the younger steward with the permanent crease between his brows. Fury flickered across their faces, tight mouths, reddened veins at the temples, eyes that barely blinked. Their resentment became a tangible thing, a low hum in the air.

"They've gotten rid of the scientists, so what's next?" someone asked, his voice steadier than his hands.

"We cannot allow Nathan's son to become the heir, we'll all end up in trouble," another said, the bravado in his tone failing to mask the worry underneath.

The name Nathan tightened Zamiel's jaw for a breath, and for the first time a small sound almost a chuckle escaped him. He had always wondered why the scientist had been made invisible to them. Now he saw it clearly: a mirror, the invisible hand shaping the visible players. Their disappearance had never been absent; it was deliberate concealment, and that, he thought, was an advantage they had underestimated.

"Kill Carmela, and your problem is over," Zamiel suddenly suggested, cutting them off.

He lifted his glass of wine red and slowly and took a measured sip, watching the liquid cling to his lips. His eyes never left the speaker's face.

"Do you think we are mad?" another man barked. "He is possessive of her! Are you here to help us or kill us, you young brat? Which side are you on?"

His palm slammed against the table, the sound cracking the room's brittle patience.

Zamiel's eyes narrowed. The air around him seemed to cool; if fear had a temperature, it slid down the spine. His aura did not roar, it tightened. Shadows lengthened, as if even the light itself leaned away. The small hairs on the arms of the nearest man rose; someone else unconsciously retreated into a single syllable of breath. The chandelier's glow thinned, paling under his silence.

"I'm on no one's side," Zamiel said, voice flat as a blade. "I only gave you a suggestion because you asked for one." He let the words hang, deliberate and slow. "He is possessive of her... now imagine what hell he'll descend into if he loses her."

He rose without waiting for a response, the chair whispering against the floor. No one moved to stop him. He slipped past the elders like a shadow that chose its own edges, and the door closed softly behind him. The dynasty was left in the residue of his visit unsettled, exposed, and newly aware that the chessboard held pieces they had not yet seen.

Meanwhile, Carmela stood before an ice cream truck, holding Cicilia by one hand. She stared, confused, at the man before her, a stranger with a polite smile fixed on his lips.

"Aunt," Cicilia tugged at her sleeve, "Uncle said we shouldn't leave the house without informing him."

Carmela only rolled her eyes, her attention still caught by the stranger. The air between them hummed faintly too still as though the world itself were holding its breath.

"Are we his prisoners?" Carmela muttered, scoffing as she rolled her eyes. "He promised to spend the next week with me, but he left without a word."

She exhaled and forced a smile for the little girl beside her. "Don't worry, we won't go far. We'll just get ice cream and come right back, okay?"

Cicilia nodded, her small fingers tightening around Carmela's hand.

"Dear, are you ready to place your order?" the elderly man inside the truck asked, drawing Carmela's attention back to him.

"Honestly, I don't know what to order," she admitted. "I've only tried chocolate, but you've run out of it."

He gave a kind smile. "How about I suggest something else? My daughter always trusts my judgment and I'm never wrong."

Carmela tilted her head. "How old is your daughter?"

"She's nineteen," he said proudly.

Carmela's lips curved faintly. Both his daughter and she were about the same age, yet she couldn't remember the last time she trusted her own father's judgment that way.

"How about you try this?" The man held out a cone. "It's mango flavor. My wife used to love it."

Carmela took a tentative bite, then gave a small nod. "I guess I'll have to trust your judgment like your daughter. I'll take one more for her," she said with a smile.

With a nod, he scooped another cone and passed it to her. She reached into her purse, but his next words froze her mid-motion.

"You remind me of my wife," he said softly.

Her gaze narrowed for a second before she managed a polite smile.

"She had the same eyes as yours," he added, still smiling.

"Well, your wife and daughter must be as beautiful as I am then," she teased lightly.

"Of course," he chuckled but as his shoulders rose, his bright expression slowly dimmed, though the smile never left his face.

"What's wrong, sir?" Carmela asked, noticing the sudden change.

"Honestly," he murmured, voice low and distant, "I don't even know what my daughter looks like. She's missing."

"Oh my, I'm so sorry, I.." Her words broke off as she caught sight of a figure approaching from across the street. "I hope you find your daughter. I really have to go nowbbbye!" She hurriedly placed the money on the counter, swept Cicilia into her arms, and bolted.

"Carmela! Didn't Nix ask you not to leave home?" Justin shouted, half running after her.

But Carmela only quickened her steps, panic tightening her chest. Behind them, the ice-cream man let out a soft, knowing chuckle.

"She's truly a replica," he sighed, removing the vendor's cap and apron. Beneath them, his demeanor shifted no longer kindly, but sharp and deliberate.

From the shadows behind the truck, Zamiel sat with one leg crossed, watching.

"I suppose lying and deceit run in your family," he said coolly.

The man ignored the remark, folding the discarded uniform with neat precision before setting it aside.

"Don't you have work to do? You seem to be slacking lately," the man retorted, picking up his phone.

"Thanks to you I've gotten even busier," Zamiel said, stretching as he rose. "The dynasty old men want to get rid of her."

"Did they say that, or did you suggest it to them?" the man asked, narrowing his eyes.

Zamiel only chuckled. "What do you think? She has barely two months left. If she dies from the illness, Nix would be shattered. But if they kill her, the opposite happens everyone dies. After all, she's going to die in the end; I'm only trying to put her death to good use." He sighed and scooped himself another spoonful of ice cream.

"You're trying to collapse the dynasty?" the man asked, his tone calmer than Zamiel expected.

"Not collapse, end it," Zamiel scoffed, popping the spoon into his mouth. "I'm tired of its sinister dealings, and I don't care who drowns with it."

"Do whatever you want. I don't care," the man said, earning a small chuckle from Zamiel.

"You sure you truly don't care?" Zamiel asked, letting the silence stretch. "You've been working tirelessly behind the scenes to protect her... so when are you going to tell her that the daughter you spoke of is her?"

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Cicilia wrapped her small arms tightly around my neck as I quickened my pace toward the gate, my heart thudding as Justin tried to catch up to us.

"Carmela!" he called, his voice sharp with worry, but I didn't respond. Instead, I picked up my pace, hurrying toward the building only to collide with someone. Strong hands caught me before I could stumble backward.

"Uncle!" Cicilia exclaimed excitedly. I looked up, my breath catching, and met Nix's steady, unblinking gaze.

"And where are the both of you coming from?" he asked, his eyes locked on mine.

"We... we went to get ice cream," Cicilia said, holding up her cone. The ice cream had already melted, dripping down her fingers. "Oh no, it's gone!"

"Cicilia, come with me. I'll get you another cone," Justin said gently as he finally reached us. He lifted her from my arms, leaving me alone under Nix's stern, disapproving stare.

"I told you not to leave the house," he said quietly, but his tone was heavy with reprimand.

"No, you didn't tell me, you wrote it down. And imagine if I never saw the message?" I shot back, walking past him.

"But you saw it, didn't you? So why did you?"

"Mr. Dean, I've been wanting to ask you a question." I turned to face him properly, searching his expression, but his face remained unreadable, calm, almost solemn.

"What flavor of ice cream is better than chocolate?" I asked with a faint smile.

That wasn't the question I truly wanted to ask. What I really wanted to know was what comes next, what exactly is the status of our relationship now? Six months are almost up, and with no more obstacles standing in his way of becoming the heir, is there even a reason for us to continue this relationship?

He exhaled deeply before closing the distance between us. Resting his chin gently on my shoulder, he wrapped his arms around my waist.

"Breathe, beloved," he murmured. And as if he held command over my body, I obeyed drawing in a long, shaky breath.

"I won't leave you, no matter what," he whispered. "I promise. I'll always be by your side. Once we resolve the issue with the dynasty, we'll go far away from here and start a new life together."

Hearing those words sent a wave of warmth through my chest, a strange, fleeting comfort that momentarily loosened the tight knot of worry I'd been carrying since I woke up. For a heartbeat, I allowed myself to breathe. But then again... no one can truly control the future, can they? Hope is a fragile thing it burns bright, yet it trembles at the slightest wind of uncertainty.

"The scientist claims to know your mother's whereabouts," he said finally, his voice calm but heavy with unspoken caution.

I froze. The air between us thickened, and my pulse drummed in my ears. My gaze lifted slowly to meet his, searching for even the faintest hint of deception. For years, I had clung to the impossible idea that my mother was still alive somewhere, maybe hidden, and waiting, or maybe even looking for me. Yet each time the topic surfaced, it tore through the fragile walls I'd built around that hope, leaving me raw with longing and fear.

"Really?" The word barely escaped my lips, thin and uncertain, as if my voice itself didn't dare to believe.

"Yes..." He exhaled, his expression tightening before he turned and started back toward the room. His footsteps were measured, and cautious. "He insists he'll only tell you her location and you alone. But then I find it suspicious, and possibly a trap. His supporters are still out there, scattered but dangerous. That's why I told you not to leave the house."

His warning lingered in the air like the echo of a storm. Every instinct in me screamed to run, to find her, to see for myself, yet beneath that urgency was the unmistakable chill of dread. Because if this was a trap... I might not survive it

"You know I can protect myself, right?" I said, arching a brow at him. He nodded immediately, like a loyal puppy responding to its owner's command obedient, but unconvinced.

"I know," he replied softly, his voice barely above a whisper. He reached out, brushing a loose strand of hair from my face with the gentleness of someone afraid I might break. "But you aren't fully recovered yet. Everything that's happened, the plotting, the execution, the sleepless nights and it's taken a toll on you. You need rest, more than anything."

His fingers lingered against my temple before sliding down to my neck, his touch steady and familiar. I sighed and leaned into him, letting the tension in my shoulders melt away. He lay back, and I followed, curling into his warmth. My arms wrapped around him instinctively, and my head found its place on his chest. His heartbeat thrummed beneath my ear calm, unhurried, a steady rhythm that anchored me to the present. For a moment, it drowned out the chaos that had consumed our lives.

It was almost easy to pretend that everything was normal that the walls around us weren't holding secrets, that danger wasn't waiting just beyond the gate.

It's all going to be over soon, I kept telling myself, clinging to that fragile promise like a prayer. I had already given up once, after the accident, when darkness swallowed everything and waking up felt like punishment. Even then, I thought the world I'd return to would be cruel, broken, and beyond repair.

But somehow, against all logic, things had begun to align again quietly, almost miraculously as if fate itself was tired of testing me.

Now, there was only one thing left: to find my mother. And when that was done, when the last thread of this dynasty's curse was severed, I would disappear with him far from the noise, far from the blood, far from everything that had ever hurt us.

Just peace and us.

"Nix?" I whispered.

"Hmm?"

"Since when did Lily get involved?" I asked, tilting my head to look up at him. His gaze was steady but distant, as though he was searching for the right words before speaking.

"About that," he murmured, eyes lowering. "She came on her own after discovering that Damian was involved with her parents."

I hesitated for a moment, my thoughts swirling before a question slipped out almost on its own. "And why did you buy me?"

The air grew still. His hand froze mid-stroke, the warmth between us suddenly turning fragile. A heavy silence hung in the room thick, uncomfortable, almost suffocating. I could hear the faint ticking of the clock on the wall, the sound of our breathing out of sync. My heart pounded in my chest as I waited for him to say something..anything.

When he finally spoke, his voice was calm, almost too calm. "I won't say I had pure intentions when I approached you," he admitted, each word deliberate, low. "I'm not going to lie I did have my own selfish reasons for coming to you, especially since you no longer remembered anything about the dynasty."

There was no defensiveness in his tone only a quiet, painful honesty. And somehow, that made it harder to breathe. I could feel the sincerity behind his words, like an invisible thread tugging at my chest. It hurt, but it also comforted me in a strange way because at least now, I knew he wasn't pretending.

"You always visited me at the orphanage, right?" I asked, my voice barely a whisper as I looked up at him with pleading eyes, silently hoping for a yes

"Yes."

That single word was all I needed to reassure myself a quiet confirmation that no matter what happened, he would always be there. A sense of calm washed over me, fragile but real. I parted my lips to say something maybe to tell him how much that meant but the words never made it out.

A strange warmth trickled beneath my nose. At first, I thought it was nothing, just a fleeting irritation, but then the metallic scent hit me sharp, unmistakable. My vision wavered slightly as I touched my upper lip, and when I pulled my hand away, my fingertips were smeared red.

"Nix..." I whispered, my voice trembling.

He was already moving before I could say more his calm composure shattered in an instant. "Carmela!" he called, his tone laced with panic as he reached for a handkerchief from the nightstand. The room seemed to tilt as I blinked, the edges of my sight darkening like ink spreading through water.

I tried to stay conscious, to focus on his voice calling my name, but the sounds around me began to blur the rustle of sheets, his hurried footsteps, the faint thud of something falling to the floor. My head felt unbearably heavy, and my heartbeat slowed into a muffled rhythm in my ears.

"Nix..." I tried again, weaker this time, reaching out to where I thought he was but my arm barely lifted before my strength gave out.

The world dimmed around me, the room dissolving into a haze of shadows. The last thing I felt was his hand gripping mine, firm and desperate, before everything went completely dark.

Chapter 74: 74

The soft beeping of a machine pulled me back to consciousness. Slowly, I opened my eyes and found myself in a white room. My gaze wandered, taking in the sterile surroundings, the plain walls, the faint scent of disinfectant, and the steady hum of medical equipment. It didn't take long to realize I was once again in the place I'd grown far too familiar with, the hospital room.

I let out a quiet sigh and turned to my side, only to find Nix sound asleep beside me. His red hair was tousled, falling across his face as he rested his head on the small space left on the bed. One of his hands was wrapped gently around mine as if fearing that I'll slip away.

A smile tugged at my lips as I watched him sleep so peacefully. It had been months since I'd last seen him like this, at ease, and unburdened. The morning sun caught the chain around his wrist, its glint making my smile grow even wider.

"You still have this on" I smiled and that's when I noticed the locket chain he was wearing on his neck. I didn't remember him ever wearing one, or maybe I'd just never paid attention. It was slightly open, and curiosity got the better of me. I sat up a little, hoping to sneak a glance at the picture inside. But before I could, his grip on my hand tightened, and he stirred awake.

"Good morning," I said softly, offering him a small smile. He returned it before leaning in and pressing a gentle kiss to my forehead.

"How are you feeling now?" he asked.

"Better," I replied, watching him nod as he sat back down.

But even with him here, so close, so real something about the moment felt... off. There was a strange unease settling in my chest, like the calm before a storm I couldn't name.. or maybe I could

"You must love your mum a lot," I commented, my eyes lingering on the locket around his neck. Noticing my gaze, he took it off and, without a word, gently placed it around my neck.

"I honestly do," he said softly, "but someone else I love a lot is you and that's why I'm passing this on to you." He rubbed the back of my hand with his palm, his warm gesture bringing an unconscious smile to my face.

"What kind of woman was your first love?" I asked curiously.

As if my question came with some sort of prize for a proper answer, he straightened up, adjusted his shirt, and crossed his right leg over the other. Letting out a deep breath, he began.

"Let's say... kind, but not kind," he said, his tone thoughtful. "You see, as a child, I was naughty. Very naughty," he exaggerated with wide eyes, and I couldn't help but laugh.

"I never liked associating with peas.. I mean, people. So I would always run away from school trips. Dad never found out, but the moment I got home, I'd always be confronted

by Mum. And there was no way I could lie about the trip being cancelled, she always knew everything and anything I wanted to do" He paused, smiling at the memory.

"So I'd just come clean and say, 'Mama, I ran away.' And she wouldn't even scold me. Instead, she'd say she wouldn't tell Dad but that was always a lie. Because the moment I got into my room, she was already dialing his number."

I placed a hand over my mouth, stifling a laugh, my eyes wide with amusement. My shoulders shook as I tried to hold in the giggles, touched by the image of little Nix caught in the act, again and again.

"I knew Dad would want to punish me," he continued, "but Mum always stood in the way. She'd be like, 'He shouldn't be punished.'"

"So your dad was the strict one?" I raised an eyebrow, watching him shake his head.

"No, my mum was," he replied with a chuckle. "I hated beans growing up, but as long as my classmates were away on those school trips, I had to eat beans. And whenever I tried to protest, she'd say, 'If you had gone on that trip, you might've had your choice of food.' So while everyone else enjoyed something different, I sat there... eating beans."

He smiled, clearly lost in nostalgia, and I watched him quietly. Comparing this playful version of him to the hardened, emotionally guarded man I first met felt like looking at two completely different people. I finally understood what the butler meant when he said Nix had changed after his parents passed.

"So... did you ever start going on the trips?" I asked, curious.

"No."

"And what did your Dad do?"

He laughed. "Nothing. He just stood on the sidelines, watching me serve my punishment. And whenever he tried to interfere, he'd get roped in too. Afterward, Mum would take both of us to church on Saturday and ask us to pray for mercy because, according to her, we had sinned and were a pair of lying father and son."

"She sounds... intense," I said, smiling.

"She was. A very religious woman. Kiara definitely got that trait from her," he said with a sigh, leaning back in his chair.

"And you?" I asked.

"I took after my dad. And Xavier... he's just somewhere in between," he replied with a laugh, shaking his head.

The atmosphere between us felt light, like a soft breeze on a warm morning. The weight that had hung in the air earlier had lifted, replaced by gentle laughter and the quiet comfort of shared stories. It was one of those rare, precious moments where the world outside faded, and all that existed was this.. us.

"I'm sorry to interrupt your lovely moment, but I need to check on my patient," a familiar voice said.

I looked up to find Zamiel standing at the door, a small, knowing smile playing on his lips.

"Hello, little bunny," he said with a teasing tone. "Time for your check-up. Mr. Dean, if you don't mind."

His eyes narrowed slightly at Nix, whose entire demeanor had shifted the moment Zamiel entered the room. His warmth vanished, replaced by cold silence. Were they arguing? Or was it something deeper?

"Beloved, I'll be back," Nix said softly, leaning down to press a gentle kiss to my forehead. I nodded, watching as he gave Zamiel one last pointed glance before leaving the room.

Zamiel stepped closer, pulling the stethoscope from around his neck with practiced ease.

"Don't you two make a lovely couple?" he scoffed.

I narrowed my eyes at him and sat up straighter, feeling the tension rise like a tide.

"What's going on between the two of you?"

He smirked, but there was a flicker of something else in his gaze weariness, perhaps. Bitterness.

"Nothing," he said casually. "Just helping his wife keep her little secret."

I froze hearing his words and knowing what he was hinting at

"When are you finally going to tell him the truth?" he continued, voice quieter now, with less mocking. "You know, I almost got killed trying to hide it."

His words struck like cold water, and I felt the shift within me, sharp, sudden, and unwelcome.

The room seemed colder. My fingers curled slightly into the sheets as the memory crept in dark and suffocating. My breath caught in my throat.

That day... the one I tried so hard not to think about. The blood. The chaos. The brief moment I thought, 'this is it' .. the end of my story. My death day wasn't a distant shadow anymore. It loomed far too close. Closer than I'd ever dared admit. The warmth Nix left behind was already fading.

And all I could do was stare ahead, heart pounding, throat tight, as the weight of the secret I carried pressed harder against my chest.

"How many days do I have left?" My voice was barely a whisper, but he still heard me.

"Approximately a month," Zamiel replied quietly.

"He's going to be heartbroken when I leave."

"Heartbroken?" He scoffed softly. "No, little bunny... he'll be shattered."

I looked up, tears clouding my vision, only to meet the calm, unbothered expression on Zamiel's face as he began my checkup.

"I'm a terrible person, aren't I?" I muttered.

"Terrible?" He arched his brow. "That's an understatement, you're worse than that."

The words hit me harder than I expected, and before I knew it, tears were streaming down my cheeks. Wasn't he supposed to make me feel better, not worse?

"What kind of friend are you?" I asked, my voice trembling.

He sighed, then leaned forward and pulled me into a gentle hug.

"I'm the kind who gives you a reality check," he murmured against my hair. "Don't hate me too much, little bunny. If my friends are going to end up in pain, I'd better start preparing myself to be their emotional support.. or even more their enemies"

Chapter 75: 75

"Come on, don't let him catch us like this. Otherwise, it'll be another problem convincing him that you're fine," Zamiel said gently, breaking the hug.

Carmela smiled faintly and wiped away her tears. She knew Zamiel meant well, but deep down, she also knew she didn't have much time left.

"Doctor Zamiel," a nurse called, walking into the room with a metal tray in hand. Zamiel gave her a quick nod, signaling her to proceed with whatever she had come for.

"I'll leave you to her," he said, turning back to Carmela. "Once she's done administering your medication, you can get discharged, okay?"

"Okay."

And just like that, he left the room, his footsteps fading into the hallway.

Carmela exhaled softly, her fingers absentmindedly tracing the locket that hung around her neck, the one Nix had given her. Her chest tightened, and she bit her lower lip, trying to suppress the tears that threatened to spill again.

"His life is finally becoming stable" she thought bitterly. "How could I ruin that by telling him I've been hanging by a thread?"

"Ma'am," the nurse's voice broke her thoughts. "Someone said to pass this on to you."

She pulled a phone from her pocket and handed it over before setting the tray down.

With a raised brow, Carmela accepted the phone. It wasn't locked, strangely. Curiosity flickered through her as she swiped through the screen. The phone was completely empty, except for one file in the gallery, a single video.

Hesitant, she tapped it.

The footage was grainy, like an old recording. Nix's mother appeared on the screen, her movements gentle, almost as if she were trying to calm someone down. But there was no sound just the silent flicker of images, making the scene feel eerily distant.

Then, without warning, Nix's mother clutched her chest and collapsed to the floor, as if struck by an unseen force.

Carmela's breath caught in her throat.

A small girl appeared on-screen cautious, hesitant and walked closer to the fallen woman. She bent slightly, as though to check for signs of life. Then, the girl straightened up and quickly hid a gun behind her jacket.

Carmela froze.

Her pulse pounded in her ears as she paused the video, her trembling fingers pinching the screen to zoom in on the girl's face.

And then her world tilted.

Her blood ran cold. The reflection staring back at her from the frozen frame the little girl in the video.. was her.

"Meet with me in the next thirty minutes at this location."

Carmela read the message silently, her pulse quickening as her eyes darted toward the nurse. The woman was busy arranging the items on the tray, completely unaware.

Quickly, Carmela locked the phone and slipped it under her pillow, her movements subtle but tense. Her fingers trembled slightly as she did so.

Her heart began to race not from fear alone, but from the swirl of emotions crashing inside her.

After everything that had just happened the video, the revelation she didn't know what to believe anymore. Her mind was a blur, her chest tight with unease. The room suddenly felt smaller, the air heavier, as though every breath was laced with uncertainty.

Who sent the message?

Why now?

And what if... what if it's another trap?

Her palms felt clammy against the sheets. Part of her wanted to ignore it, to stay put and let the world outside burn. But another part, the part that still needed answers urged her to go. She swallowed hard, forcing her breathing to steady, silently counting the seconds until the nurse would leave.

Meanwhile, outside the room, Nix stood near the corridor, his mind occupied with thoughts of Carmela's recovery until a sudden commotion near the ICU caught his attention.

He turned, eyebrows knitting together as he took in the scene unfolding before him. Two women were arguing, their voices sharp, echoing off the sterile hospital walls. One was Mrs. Rena, Ken's mother, her face flushed with fury. The other stood stiffly beside her was Carmela's cousin, Amina.

"You promised to take proper care of her, didn't you?" Mrs. Rena snapped, glaring daggers at the man standing a few feet away. Her voice trembled with rage, the kind that came from long-held resentment.

The man didn't respond. He merely stepped aside, his expression grim, refusing to meet her eyes.

"Being quiet won't solve this!" she barked again, her tone cutting through the hallway. "You know, I was happy when we found your second daughter, but are you planning to let your first die before she even learns her sister exists?"

"Aunt, please," Amina said softly, stepping forward. Her tone was pleading, her eyes darting between the two of them. "Calm down. I was the one who insisted they should come."

"Aunt?" Nix frowned slightly, confusion etching across his face. Aunt? Since when was Mrs. Rena in Paris and since when did Amina start calling her that?

He studied them more closely, his instincts tightening like a coiled spring. There was something about the tension in the air, something unspoken that told him this wasn't just any quarrel.

And then he noticed the third figure standing a few paces away, half-hidden by the corner wall. Silent. Watching.

Nix's eyes narrowed. Who was she?

"I can finally understand why Tamila refused to marry you and chose instead to marry the very man who ruined her life. If you have even an ounce of shame left or any respect for my right over you as your sister, Camillo then you'll bring Carmela back to where she rightfully belongs... by her sister's side," she spat, her voice trembling with fury before she turned sharply and stormed away.

Nix stood frozen where he was, every word echoing in his mind. It took him several long seconds to process what he'd just heard not because he was slow to understand, but because the entire confrontation felt staged, as if he had just witnessed a carefully orchestrated act rather than a genuine outburst.

He slipped a hand into his pocket, feeling the faint buzz of his phone. Without checking the caller ID, he answered.

"Nix, you won't believe what I just found out," came Justin's voice, cold, rushed, and serious.

"What did you find?" Nix asked, his tone flat but his pulse quickening.

"Carmela isn't a Delton."

Nix's brows furrowed. "Meaning?"

"The scientist, he's not Carmela's father. And he's known all along. I was going through his files and found a DNA test result of his and Carmela's."

For a moment, Nix said nothing. The hallway around him blurred as the words sank in. Not his daughter... he knew all along.

No wonder the man had always acted so comfortably around her, with that unnerving sense of entitlement.

Nix's gaze shifted back toward the man standing near the emergency room with a blank, unreadable expression and his jaw tightened. Without waiting for Justin to say anything more, he ended the call and immediately dialed Ken's number.

His mind raced, piecing together fragments of truth that refused to form a full picture.

If Mrs. Rena knew who Carmela really was, why stay silent?

And when did she have a brother?

The line clicked.

"Hello?" Ken's voice came through, slightly breathless.

"Does your mother have a brother?" Nix asked straightaway.

There was silence heavy and stretching before Ken finally exhaled, his tone uncertain.

"She does... but they're not really close. I think it's because of something that happened years ago, something about him mistreating her friend, the woman he was in love with. I heard he tried to make up for it later by opening a company or... something like a child care organization. But Mom was completely against it. I never spent much time with her side of the family, so I don't know all the details."

Nix's thoughts darkened. They weren't even done dealing with one problem, and now another is surfacing.

If Carmela's real father knew about her existence...

Then why had he stayed away all this time?

"Is his name Camillo by any chance?" Nix asked, one eyebrow raised.

"Yes... how did you know?" Ken's voice came back, puzzled.

"Never mind," Nix muttered, ending the call just as he noticed Amina approaching from the far end of the corridor.

"You seem to have your hands full," he scoffed, his tone cold and edged with irritation.

Amina didn't react. Her expression was guarded the kind that carried both guilt and resolve. She stopped a few feet away, lowering her gaze briefly before speaking.

"You must have found out the truth," she said quietly.

Nix crossed his arms and leaned lazily against the wall, his eyes narrowing as he studied her and the man standing behind her, Camillo. The calm in his posture was deceptive; underneath, anger simmered like a storm barely contained.

"Yes, I have," he said evenly, his voice low but cutting. "But I want to hear it from you."

Amina's lips parted, but no words came out at first. Her throat tightened. She glanced back at Camillo as if silently begging for help, but he offered none only a distant, unreadable stare.

"I..." she started, her voice trembling before she steadied it. "He's... Carmela's father. And I know you have a lot of questions, but.." she paused, choosing her words carefully, ".. right now, Carmela's sister needs her help."

"Help?" Nix repeated, his tone dark with suspicion.

Amina nodded hesitantly. "She has bone marrow cancer and.. "

"What makes you think I'll let my wife go through any medical procedure to help a sister who suddenly appears after all these years?" he snapped, pushing off the wall and stepping closer, his voice sharp as glass. "Do you take me for a fool?"

Amina flinched slightly under his glare but stood her ground. "Must you always believe everyone has a hidden motive for approaching her? He's her.."

"Amina, let's go!" Camillo's voice cut through the tension. He had already started walking ahead, his expression stern.

"But, Uncle.."

"I said, let's go!" he barked, this time louder, his tone commanding.

Nix gave a cold smirk, his eyes hardening. "Yes, you should go," he said, his words laced with venom. "After all, running seems to be what you're best at. Just make sure you don't lose another daughter while you're at it."

Amina froze for a second, her lips tightening as if she were holding back tears or fury maybe both. Then she scoffed, shaking her head in disbelief. Without another word, she turned sharply and stormed off, her footsteps echoing down the corridor as Camillo followed behind her.

Nix's gaze followed them until they disappeared around the corner. His jaw clenched. Slowly, he exhaled, trying to steady himself, but the anger bubbling inside refused to fade.

He pulled out his phone and dialed. The call connected almost immediately.

"Tom," he said, his tone cold and clipped. "Get me everything you can on one Camillo his relationship with Mrs. Rena and Amina. Now."

He ended the call and turned toward Carmela's room. The door creaked as he pushed it open only to find the bed empty.

The sheets were slightly rumpled, the pillow misplaced. No sign of her. No sign of the nurse either.

A pulse of dread and fury collided in his chest. His hand tightened around the phone until his knuckles turned white, the device creaking under the pressure. His heartbeat thundered in his ears.

"Zamiel!" he roared, his voice echoing down the corridor, raw with barely contained panic.

Chapter 76: 76

"Zamiel!"

Nix burst into the office without knocking, the door slamming against the wall with a sharp crack. His expression was dark, his voice tight with fury.

Zamiel, who had been giving instructions to a nurse, turned sharply. His brows furrowed as he met Nix's blazing stare. Without a word, he waved a hand, dismissing the nurses from the room. They left hurriedly, shutting the door behind them and leaving a heavy silence in their wake.

"Where is Carmela?" Nix demanded, his voice low but trembling with restrained anger.

Zamiel straightened slowly, stepping closer until they stood nearly face to face. "Lower your voice," he said coldly, his tone a warning. "This is a hospital."

"I don't care!" Nix snapped. "I don't care what you're hiding or why you don't want to tell me but I won't tolerate my wife disappe.."

"Your wife, you say?" Zamiel interrupted with a scoff, a bitter smile curling his lips. His gaze hardened as he crossed his arms. "Seems you've forgotten the deal you signed." Their eyes locked, neither man moving. The air between them felt alive thick with unspoken accusations and barely contained hostility. The hum of the fluorescent lights above seemed to fade, leaving only the sound of their breaths.

It was as if the room itself held its breath, caught in the gravitational pull of their silent clash. Nix's fists clenched at his sides and Zamiel's stare was steady, and calculated,

the kind that could slice through pretense. For a moment, neither spoke yet their gazes waged a brutal, wordless battle: pride against pride, fury against control.

Finally, Zamiel broke the tension, exhaling through his nose before turning his back on Nix and walking around his desk.

"I remember asking you about your feelings for her," he said, his tone quieter now, but laced with meaning. "You brushed it off then... acted indifferent. But now?" He sat down, eyes flicking up to meet Nix's. "Now I'm sure you'd burn the world to ashes if she so much as disappears again."

He opened a drawer, pulled out a thick brown file, and tossed it across the desk. The folder slid to a stop at Nix's hand.

Nix hesitated before picking it up. The papers inside were dense pages of medical data, coded reports, and documents stamped with confidential seals. The handwriting looked rushed, the content chaotic. He flipped through the pages, eyes darting across lines of information that made less and less sense with each turn. His pulse quickened as the words began to blur together, a mix of scientific jargon and symbols that meant nothing to him.

Finally, he slammed the file shut and tossed it back onto the desk.

"What's the meaning of this?" he demanded, his voice sharp, and jaw tight. His patience was thinning, and the cold glint in his eyes said he was only seconds away from snapping.

"Your darling wife is going to die in four weeks."

The words landed like a physical blow. For a moment the office ceased to exist the hum of the lights, the ticking clock, even Zamiel's breathing all receded to a distant, muffled haze. Time slowed; each syllable unspooled on its own, heavy and deliberate. Nix felt the world compress into the narrow space between those six words and the hollow that opened in his chest. His legs went numb as though the floor had been pulled from beneath him.

"Wh... what do you mean by that? She... she's been healthy.." he stammered, hunting Zamiel's face for some sign of cruelty or mistake. His voice came out small and raw.

"Healthy?" Zamiel's laugh was cold and flat. "She's an excellent actor. You let her perform for you so well that you never suspected anything." He leaned forward, voice steady, with his eyes hard. "The nosebleeds. The fainting. Those weren't accidents."

Nix saw the memory of the last bleed, the warm trickle, the metallic tang, Carmela's bewildered eyes and it hit him with the clarity of a slap. The incidents that had seemed

episodic and explainable now rearranged themselves into a pattern he had been too willing to ignore. Rage flared, but grief was already moving faster, slick and hot.

"Stop trying to shift the blame." Nix's words tore out of him. His hands were fists at his sides; his knuckles were white. "Just tell me.. where is Carmela?" He felt the question as a plea, an animal sound from the deepest place in him.

Zamiel's face was unreadable. "I don't know." He flicked a remote; the monitor on his desk sprang to life. "But the CCTV shows your dearest wife, my patient, jumping from the window."

He turned the screen toward Nix. On it, grainy footage played back: Carmela stumbling to the ledge, a desperate tilt of her body, then the moment she fell. Time in the video was clinical and pitiless. Nix's stomach dropped; the room spun. Without another thought he launched himself toward the door.

Zamiel watched him go, and let out a long, controlled breath not an exhalation of sympathy, not an ounce of guilt and then collapsed into his chair and spun it slowly. "Don't ruin everything, Nix," he muttered, eyes closed. "I finally have all my pawns where I need them." His voice held the bored certainty of a man who'd been planning this for some time.

Outside, the corridor blurred past as Nix ran. In the parking lot the cool air hit his face like a physical shock. He fumbled for his phone with shaking hands and opened the tracking app that had been installed on Carmela's during that night, the night Moreau had died.

His thumb flew over the screen. The app pinged once, twice, last known location: a cluster of GPS coordinates feeding into a map. The blue dot showed movement, a small trail that had started near the hospital and then gone weak. He cross-referenced the timestamps against the CCTV timecode Zamiel had shown him. The trail fuzzed out at a bridge three kilometers away, a faded breadcrumb of signal strength that kicked and died like a sputtering light.

Heart hammering, he zoomed in. The map revealed a narrow lane that ran along the river, a footpath that cut through scrub and old warehouses, places people went when they wanted to vanish. The signal showed a brief pause, a jump; then nothing.

Nix's hands tightened on the phone until the screen dimmed. Anger reared, hot and immediate, but beneath it was something more combustible: terror braided with resolve. He slammed the phone shut and sprinted for his car, each step a vow. Four weeks. Four words. He would not let a calendar sentence become a sentence for his wife.

But could he really do that?

Could he truly save her from the world, from fate, from herself?

The question clawed through his mind as he slammed his foot on the accelerator, the tires screeching against the asphalt. The morning blurred past in streaks of color and light, his heart pounding so violently he could barely hear his own desperate breaths. The steering wheel trembled under his grip, slick with sweat, as he whispered broken prayers into the hum of the engine.

"Carmela... please don't do anything stupid... please," he muttered, voice cracking as the words dissolved into the roar of the wind rushing through the half-open window. He didn't even realize tears had begun to gather in his eyes hot, and blinding until one slipped down his cheek and blurred his vision.

Then, finally, he saw her.

At first, she was just a small silhouette against the fading sky, fragile, and wavering, standing too close to the edge of the cliff. His heart froze.

"Carmela!"

Her name tore out of him, raw and trembling, as he flung the door open before the car even stopped. He sprinted forward, stumbling on the uneven ground. The wind carried the sharp scent of iron, and when she turned, the sight knocked the air out of him.

Her shirt was drenched, heavy and clinging to her body, soaked through with blood that glistened under the dying sun. It wasn't just one wound there were several, each one a dark, spreading bloom. Her face was pale, her lips trembling as she tried to muster a weak smile that only deepened his despair.

"Carmela, no.." he breathed, pushing his legs harder, but it was as if the world had shifted against him. Every step felt dragged through quicksand, every breath labored and sharp. Time itself seemed to distort the air thickened, the distance between them stretching wider and wider even as he ran.

"Please... just hold on," he gasped.

Her eyes met his wide, glassy, and filled with something between sorrow and relief. A faint, trembling whisper left her lips, carried away by the wind before it could reach him. And then, as if the world itself had slowed to a single frame, she stumbled backward.

"No!"

He lunged forward, stretching out his hand, their fingers brushed for the briefest, cruelest moment, the warmth of her skin barely grazing his before she slipped away. The echo of that fleeting touch burned into his palm as he watched her fall, her body disappearing into the fog that rose from the ravine below.

The world went silent.

For a heartbeat, everything stilled the wind, the rustling leaves, even his own breath. Then came the deafening rush of air, the echo of her name tearing from his throat as he fell to his knees at the cliff's edge.

The space between them had never felt wider, nor the world so unbearably cruel.

He had lost her.. forever

Chapter 77: 77

The visitors' room sat behind a thick, reinforced metal door marked AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY. Inside, the air was cold and faintly metallic, the kind of chill that clung to concrete walls and never quite left. The room was narrow, rectangular, and sterile, with pale gray paint that had long lost its gloss. A flickering fluorescent light buzzed above, casting sharp white shadows that made the place look even smaller than it was.

A single table divided the room, its surface scratched and scarred from years of use. Two metal chairs faced each other across it, bolted to the floor to prevent any sudden movement. A small surveillance camera blinked red from one corner of the ceiling, its lens unblinking, while a grimy glass window on the right side allowed the officers outside to observe silently. The faint echo of police radios and muffled footsteps from the hallway occasionally seeped through the walls, blending with the low hum of the air-conditioning vent.

Sitting in one of the chairs was a man with a scarred face. His hands were cuffed together with cold steel, resting heavily on the table before him. Every time he moved, the cuffs clinked with a metallic snap that punctuated the silence.

The scar ran jaggedly from the corner of his left eyebrow down to his cheekbone, and several others ran from his ear down to his lips, a pale, twisted line that stood out against his darker skin. It wasn't a clean mark; it looked like something torn open and badly stitched, the kind that told a story better left unspoken. His jaw was sharp, covered in a shadow of unshaven stubble, and his lips were pressed into a thin, unmoving line.

His eyes, however, were alive, cold, calculating, and weary all at once. They darted occasionally toward the camera, as though he could feel its gaze on him. The harsh light above highlighted the veins in his neck and the faint tremor in his restrained hands. He wore a wrinkled, faded brown shirt that had seen better days, the collar slightly torn, and his boots were dusty, their laces uneven.

Despite his restraints, a wild smile split his face the moment he spotted the figure who took the seat opposite him.

"What a greater privilege it is for you to grace me with your presence..." He let the words hang, the corner of his mouth lifting as he studied the man across the table. "Camillo Sorrentino.. How was your reunion with your daughter? I heard she has barely three weeks left." He scoffed and leaned back, eyes narrowing as Camillo remained impassive, his face a plane of practiced calm.

"I imagine she's torn," the scientist continued, voice syrup-slow, "torn between the hope you gave her, the idea that her mother might still be alive and the cruel truth that the woman she hoped for is gone. Torn between that and learning that you, her father, knew of her existence all along and did nothing. You had the means to save her and chose not to. Tsk, tsk." He laughed at his own cruelty. Camillo raised his right hand and revealed the serpent coiled about his wrist, an odd, deliberate gesture that did nothing to soften the room. "Are you satisfied now?" he asked at last, calmness braided with steel.

The scientist's smile thinned into something harder. "Satisfied? Don't flatter yourself. You ruined my face, Camillo. I spent nights in pain and stitches; it never returned to what it was. Do you really think deceiving the woman you loved and keeping your daughter from you would ease my wounds? That your silence would quiet my anger?"

He paused, the cuffs at his wrists catching the light with a metallic snap. "You're wrong. Maybe if I'd killed your son too.. " His voice dropped into a low, venomous whisper that crawled across the table like poison. "Maybe then you'd feel the same kind of loss I have."

Silence swelled between them, the fluorescent light buzzing overhead like an accusation.

"Do you want to know the problem I have with you, Mr. Scientist?" He stroked the snake's scales as if the reptile were a familiar confidant. "You have a lot to say and no action. And which son are you talking about? If I remember correctly, Tamila delivered two daughters that night." He tipped his head, eyes narrowing. The scientist stiffened as if the remark had landed where it hurt.

"No.. it was a girl and a boy. I remember clearly," the scientist insisted, voice brittle.

Camillo merely shrugged. "Believe whatever you like."

"The sex of your children is none of my business," He said, voice smooth and slow, "but a little bird told me you not only saved that stand-in, you also told Carmela she caused the death of the mother of her beloved husband. Looks like we both agree she shouldn't be entangled with.. " He let the threat dangle.

Camillo's smile wavered. The room chilled.

"I see I didn't handle your informants well enough." Camillo locked eyes with him; a smile curled on his lips, but the smile didn't reach his eyes. Fear slid down the spine of the scientist as the atmosphere tightened like a noose. "Worry less about my daughter and what I plan next, and more about which of your experiments I might choose to test on you. Do you think these four walls make you safe?" He raised an eyebrow, amusement thinly masking something much darker.

"I've been quiet all this while for the sake of my daughter," he said, voice low and coiled. "But now that she's no longer in your clutch, it's time I put you in the hell you deserve. At first I thought you might mend your ways, that's why I let Tamila go with you. Now I blame no one but myself for letting her leave. That doesn't mean you'll be spared." He scoffed, then rose as if to take his leave.

The scientist watched him go, a storm breaking behind his eyes. Rage churned in his gut, confusion furrowed his brow, and fear prickled along his skin like cold sweat. His hands clenched under the table; the handcuffs on his wrist seemed suddenly heavier. For a long moment he sat frozen, drowning in a bitter cocktail of anger and dread as the sound of Camillo's retreating steps faded into the corridor.

"Sir!"

A man hurried toward Camillo the moment he stepped out of the station. His voice was taut with concern, his steps quick.

"Take me to the cemetery," Camillo said simply, his tone void of hesitation. He slid into the back seat of the black sedan, resting his gloved hand on his knee as the door shut with a heavy thud.

It had been two days since the news of Carmela's death broke, and yet the burial had been postponed all because of Nix's stubbornness. Camillo stared blankly out the tinted window, the city blurring past like a fading dream.

"Stubbornness leads nowhere, Nix Dean," he murmured under his breath. "It only deepens the pain that should've ended."

When the car finally stopped, Camillo stepped out onto the damp soil of the cemetery. The air was cold and faintly metallic, the kind of air that carried the scent of wilted flowers and wet grass. Marble headstones stretched across the field like silent witnesses, each one carrying its own grief.

He exhaled slowly, his gaze scanning the crowd. As expected, no reporters were present, just a handful of close relatives dressed in black, their faces drawn and pale under the grey afternoon light.

"Camillo," an elderly voice called. It was Old Delton, his wrinkled hands clasped before him. Camillo offered a small nod of acknowledgment but didn't stop; his attention was drawn to the young man standing rigidly before a coffin adorned with white lilies.

Nix stood motionless, his face devoid of emotion, eyes fixed on Carmela's still form as though trying to memorize what remained of her. The silence around him was suffocating.

Camillo stopped a few paces behind the old Delton. His voice, though calm, carried a weight that bent the air.

"I'm sorry," he said quietly. "I couldn't keep my part of the bargain. I... I couldn't ensure the safety of your daughter."

A soft gasp escaped from somewhere behind. Kiara, standing beside Old Delton, narrowed her eyes.

"What does he mean by that?" she whispered sharply.

Before she could step forward, Old Dean reached out and caught her wrist, his grip firm but controlled.

"Don't interfere," he ordered, his voice low yet commanding.

Kiara's expression hardened. "You know something, don't you?" she pressed, trying to pull free, but he didn't budge.

"Yes," he admitted at last, his tone weary. "But he's not a man you should provoke."

"What are you saying?" she demanded, frustration slipping through her voice.

"I'm saying Camillo Sorrentino isn't as ordinary as he appears. He keeps a low profile, yes but he controls things from the shadows. People think Amina's father is the real power in their circle, but that's far from the truth."

Kiara blinked, realization dawning. "So that's why Amina was allowed to attend the Dynasty training sessions?"

"Exactly," he replied grimly. "And that's why you mustn't dig any deeper. This is the reason I was against her marriage to Nix from the beginning." He sighed heavily, glancing toward Carmela's coffin. "I just hope she's truly gone this time and that this isn't another one of her staged disappearances." A heavy silence followed, broken only by the rustle of leaves and the quiet sobs of mourners.

Chapter 78: 78

The sun adorned the sky in all its glory by day, and at night the moon shone as brightly as it could yet neither could cast their light into Nix's darkened world.

Days slipped into weeks, and weeks blurred into a month, but still, not a single word had been heard nor a single glimpse caught of the man whose very name once struck fear into the heart of fear itself.

The dynasty went on with its affairs, rejoicing over the success of their deceitful plots, unbothered by his absence. The business world, however, cried out for him headlines screamed, investors begged for his return but Nix paid no attention. His room had become a reflection of his soul, cold, silent, and drenched in darkness.

He had thought he was finally piecing his life back together. But just as the edges began to fit, everything shattered again.

"Uncle?"

The small, hesitant voice broke through the silence. Cicilia stood at the door, peeking into the pitch-black room. She was the family's last hope, the only anchor strong enough to pull him out of his shell.

Fumbling with the phone she held, she switched on its flashlight. The weak beam cut through the gloom, sweeping across the floor until it found him.

Nix lay sprawled on the ground beside his bed, his head tilted back against the mattress, his hair tousled and his expression empty. The room reeked faintly of stale air and whiskey, and the curtains had been drawn so tightly that not even a sliver of sunlight dared to slip through.

Her small voice trembled as she spoke again. "Uncle... you look like a mess."

She took a cautious step forward, the light shaking slightly in her hand, illuminating the man who had once been untouchable now reduced to a hollow shell of himself.

"Uncle, you look like a mess," Cicilia said softly, walking closer until she was standing right in front of him. Her tiny hands tugged at his arm, urging him to sit up.

Nix blinked, his tired eyes adjusting to the faint light from her phone. Slowly, he pushed himself upright, running a hand through his disheveled hair before reaching for the lamp switch. The sudden glow revealed the shadows that had carved deep lines into his face.

"Cicilia..." he exhaled her name like a sigh. "What are you doing here?"

She pouted slightly, stepping closer with all the bold innocence only a child could have. "Everyone said you're sad because Aunt traveled far away, and you won't come outside. Uncle, are you mad at Aunt Carmela?"

Her question struck deep a blade of innocence piercing straight into his guilt-ridden heart. He forced a weak smile, pulling her gently into his arms as if afraid she'd vanish too.

"No, my little one," he murmured, his voice rough but tender. "I'm not angry at your aunt."

"Then why won't you come out?" she asked, pulling back to look at him with wide, serious eyes. "You know, Aunt Carmela told me she'd be traveling to a faraway place and that I shouldn't cry when I miss her. And I'm not crying, Uncle. So you shouldn't cry either."

He tried to hold it in the tears, the ache but her words broke through the walls he'd built. A single tear escaped, tracing a quiet path down his cheek. Cicilia reached up with her small hand and wiped it away.

"She also told me to show you this video when she finally travels," the little girl continued, her tone turning half-playful, half-scolding. "But you've been hiding in your room for so long. Do you want her to be angry at me?"

She handed him the phone she'd been holding. It was warm from her grasp, the screen faintly smudged by her small fingers. Nix hesitated for a moment before unlocking it the wallpaper was a familiar photo of Carmela smiling at the beach, her hair whipping in the wind. His breath hitched.

There was only one file in the gallery a video titled "For You."

With trembling fingers, he tapped it open. The screen flickered to life, and suddenly, there she was.

Carmela.

The light in the video was soft and golden, almost dreamlike as she sat by the window, sunlight spilling across her face. Her expression was calm, gentle, but her eyes carried that familiar glimmer of sadness that only he could read.

"Hello, Mr. Dean..." Carmela's soft voice filled the room, her face appearing on the screen with that familiar teasing smile. "Or should I say Nix? No... Nathan?"

She paused, scratching the back of her head with a sheepish grin, clearly flustered. "Honestly, I don't even know what to call you anymore. Are you an onion or something? Because every time I peel back a layer, I end up crying."

Nix's lips quivered into a weak smile, the tears already welling in his eyes.

"And let's not forget," she continued, tilting her head with a mock glare, "that demon version of you, the one that made me jump into the sea when you knew I couldn't swim. Really? What kind of man does that to the woman he loves?"

She let out a long breath, shaking her head with that familiar exasperated sigh. "You made me lose my mind, Nix Dean."

Despite himself, Nix chuckled a broken, breathless sound that came out between tears.

Her smile softened. "And come on, Nix Dean... are you a fool? Who tells the woman they love that they only brought her under their care to exploit her, huh? You should've just said you loved me from the start. I might've even married you right then and there."

She scoffed, wiping a stray tear. "Ah, you're such a coward." Her voice cracked slightly before she added, quieter, "Or maybe I'm the coward... for not being able to tell you all this to your face."

Her gaze lifted, eyes shimmering as she tried to blink back the tears. "I'm afraid I won't be able to stay by your side till the end, Nix. I'll have to break my promise to you. I'm leaving to... visit my in-laws." She tried to laugh at her own weak joke but only managed a trembling smile.

A heavy silence filled the room as she took a slow breath, her expression growing more somber.

"Nix... I'm sick," she said at last, her voice barely above a whisper. "Not just sick.. I'm dying. Don't blame Zamiel for not telling you. I made him promise to keep it from you. I thought... maybe I'd get better, or maybe the results were wrong. But I was only fooling myself."

Her eyes darted away from the camera as she admitted softly, "I had to take so many medications every day... it became exhausting. Sometimes, I even flushed them down the toilet just so you wouldn't notice." She let out a shaky laugh, quickly fading. "I'm done pretending, Nix. I'm tired of bottling everything in. Tired of convincing myself I have forever with you, when I barely have two months left."

Nix's hand trembled as he gripped the phone, his heart pounding painfully in his chest. His breath grew shallow every word she spoke was a dagger cutting deeper.

"I don't know when this video will reach you," Carmela continued, wiping her tears with the back of her hand, "but when it does... Please don't hate me too much. Because I love you, Nix Dean."

She smiled faintly through her tears. "And I'll always love you.. even in death."

The screen froze for a second before fading to black.

Nix stared at the phone, his reflection faintly visible on the darkened screen. Then it all crashed at once, the composure, the strength, the walls he'd built to keep the pain at bay. A choked sob tore from his throat as he pressed the phone against his chest and pulled Cicilia into a desperate embrace.

He held her so tightly she could barely breathe, his tears soaking into her hair. "She's gone... she's really gone," he whispered brokenly, his body trembling as if the words themselves shattered him further each time he said them.

Cicilia's small hands gripped his shirt as if trying to hold him together. She didn't fully understand, but she could feel his pain.

The door creaked open, and Tom, Xavier, and Luna stepped in quietly. The sight before them froze them in place, Nix, the unshakable Nix Dean, crumbling in the dark.

Without a word, they joined him. Luna knelt beside him, wrapping her arms around both Nix and Cicilia. Tom's hand rested on Nix's shoulder, and Xavier's usually stern eyes glistened with unshed tears. None of them spoke; there were no words heavy enough to hold the weight of that moment.

For the first time in a long time, silence didn't mean distance, it meant mourning.

After a while, Luna gently stroked Cicilia's hair. "Cicilia, sweetheart, come with Aunt Luna, okay? Uncle Nix and Uncle Tom need to talk."

The little girl hesitated, then looked up at Nix. He managed a faint nod, pressing a trembling kiss to her forehead before letting her go.

"Okay," Cicilia whispered, her voice small and sad. She took Luna's hand, and together they quietly left the room leaving Nix, Xavier and Tom in the dim, heavy silence that followed.

"I... I wanted to know why she left the hospital the way she did and what caused her death, so I investigated. It turns out someone sent her the clip of.. of her killing Aunt.."

"I destroyed that clip myself. I remember it clearly, I destroyed it because I was afraid she would find out the truth." Nix's confession landed like ice. For a long, suspended second Nix did not move. Then the room rewound into slow motion, his fingers unclenched, then tightened a vein stood out at his temple; the color drained from his face until all that was left was bone and shadow. The air around him seemed to thicken. Something small and human grief, and fatigue flickered, then the part of him he had buried for years stirred awake, long-dormant and hungry.

He drew in a breath so slow it felt rehearsed. His eyes, which had been wet moments before, went hard and unreadable. He did not shout. He did not break. Instead his voice came out flat, low, like steel sliding from a sheath. "Someone in the dynasty had the same clip and sent it to her. They requested to meet and... you know."

"Names."

"I've sent the leads to your email." Tom's tone was careful. Nix let out a single, deep exhale a sound that was part surrender and part ignition. He turned his head left and right as if checking the room for witnesses, then rose to his feet. With each measured step, the old world returned to him: the muscle memory of command, the familiar weight of rage folded into purpose.

"Rally our men. We will go hunting tomorrow." The order was absolute. He moved to the curtains and pulled them open. Sunlight flooded the room and cut across the dust motes, but it did not lift the darkness that had settled in him; it only lit the lines of resolve on his face. From his window he could see the grounds the places he had not walked for weeks and the black-clad guards who still kept the perimeter. They looked insignificant from above, like chess pieces waiting for his hand.

"About Camillo," Tom continued, forcing Nix back to the file. For a moment Nix had forgotten the name; grief had been a quicker, louder current. Now he listened.

Tom spoke rapidly, laying out the threads "Camillo was the unseen power behind certain moves, the "big boss" who had clashed with the scientist, the same scientist later tied to Carmela. The clash had ended with the scientist's face damaged; Tamila, Carmela's mother, came from an ordinary family but was connected to Rena who, according to sources, was Camillo's sister.

On the night Camillo declared his feelings, the scientist proposed; Tamila accepted. Or at least she married the scientist and Camillo's proposal had been complicated by history, because her family had been massacred one night, and every suspicion pointed to Camillo" Nix let out a short, hollow laugh the story echoed his own, a tragic mirror. "What a tragic love story."

Tom went on "On the night of the bachelorette, Tamila slept with Camillo but later believed it was the scientist or was made to believe so. After the child was born, the scientist sent one of the newborn, the photo of Carmela and a DNA report to Camillo. Camillo attempted to reclaim his daughter, but the scientist had threatened Tamila and the child's lives, forcing Camillo to back off and lie low.."

"And the letters I received from Tamila?" Nix asked, brow raised.

"They weren't from her," Tom said bluntly. "They were from him. He watched the dynasty closely but could do nothing out of fear for his daughter. He controlled the narrative from the shadows.. What's odd and worth noting is the confusion over the

children's sexes." Tom scrolled his phone, eyes narrowing. "Some claim Tamila had a boy and a girl. Others say two girls."

Nix let out a soft scoff and turned to face Tom and Xavier, the corner of his mouth lifting not with humor but with something colder. He folded his arms, the gesture a brief, human pause before action.

"One step at a time, shall we?"

Chapter 79: 79

Nix sat alone on one of the wooden chairs in the church, his posture rigid yet weary, as though the weight of the world had been stitched into his spine. The air was heavy with incense, its faint sweetness mingling with the cool scent of polished wood and candle wax. Around him, silence stretched like a sacred shroud, only the distant hum of the ceiling fan and the occasional creak of the old pews dared to interrupt it.

Before him stood the statue a towering marble figure of Christ, arms outstretched in eternal mercy. The flickering candlelight made the face of the statue seem alive, casting soft, shifting shadows that gave the illusion of movement. The serene expression on its face seemed to pierce right through him, exposing every wound, every regret he thought he had buried deep.

Nix's hands were clasped loosely between his knees, fingers twitching unconsciously. His usually sharp eyes, the ones that once held an untouchable confidence, now looked dim hollowed by grief and exhaustion. He wasn't praying. Not really. He was simply looking, staring at the statue as if waiting for it to move, to speak, to give him the answers he couldn't find anywhere else.

The candles by the altar burned steadily, their flames mirrored in Nix's eyes like tiny, restless spirits fighting against the stillness of the air. Every now and then, his jaw tightened, a faint tremor running through him as though he were restraining something rage, sorrow, or perhaps both.

Time itself seemed suspended within the quiet of the church. Dust motes drifted lazily through the shafts of colored light spilling from the stained-glass windows, painting soft hues of crimson and gold across his face. The air carried the faint scent of old wood, melted wax, and incense that lingered like a prayer left unanswered. Still, Nix didn't move. He sat motionless, elbows resting loosely on his knees, eyes fixed on the statue before the altar unaware of the man who had been watching him from a distance.

"You seem to be grieving," the priest said at last, breaking the silence that wrapped around the sanctuary like a shroud.

Nix turned slightly, his expression unreadable, and gave the priest a brief glance before returning his gaze to the marble figure in front of him.

"How is your wife the one you came to pray for the last time?" the priest asked gently, walking closer and taking a seat beside him. He received no reply. Normally, the priest wasn't one to remember every face that came through the church doors, so many came to pray, to weep, to confess but for some reason, this young man's image had stayed with him. There was something about his stillness, the quiet ache in his eyes, that refused to fade from memory.

"The Lord took her back," Nix said finally, his lips curling into a faint, ironic smile, a painful expression that twisted his face into something tragic.

Understanding now why his presence felt so heavy, the priest placed a comforting hand on his shoulder and sighed softly.

"His ways are not our ways, young man. The Lord is the most compassionate being that ever existed. Do you truly believe He would want to see those He loves in pain? His plans for us are of good and not of evil to give us an expected end. I'm glad you haven't placed the blame on Him. It means your heart is still willing to come back."

Nix exhaled, a sound too tired to be called a sigh. His voice was calm but hollow when he finally spoke. "I have no choice but to come back. And there's no point in trying to blame anyone. I did that when my parents died... and it led me nowhere."

The priest studied him closely. Nix's composure was deceptive. His posture was firm, shoulders squared, back straight but his hands trembled slightly where they rested on his knees. His eyes, shadowed beneath the soft glow of the candles, looked far older than his years. The grief in them wasn't loud; it was quiet, consuming, and endless like a storm that had learned patience. His face was pale, drained of warmth, and yet his gaze held an unwavering depth, as though he were silently conversing with the statue before him, seeking forgiveness that words could not shape.

"Then what are you here for?" the priest asked softly, his voice almost swallowed by the echoing stillness of the church. For a moment, Nix didn't answer. He simply stared at the figure before him, the stone face illuminated by candlelight and a faint, bitter smile ghosted across his lips.

"To give Him names." Nix's eyes darkened suddenly, his voice dropping low and cold. "I've decided to live the life my parents wanted me to and I believe it's for the best that I leave this old one behind. But before I do, I'm here to give Him the names of the people who ruined my life."

He paused, a faint, bitter smile tugging at his lips. "I've heard He gives the wicked a long rope to repent, but I doubt these people need repentance... or forgiveness." He scoffed softly. "Don't get me wrong, Father, I'm not holding any grudges. But that doesn't mean they shouldn't face the consequences of their actions."

The priest let out a deep sigh. He knew that no amount of preaching would reach the man sitting before him. There was a hardness in Nix's tone, a conviction carved by loss and all the priest could do was pray silently that this young man would not stray too far from the light.

"This will be the last time I visit," Nix said after a moment, narrowing his eyes as a faint smirk curved the corner of his mouth. "Unless the Lord has a surprise He's been keeping for a moment like this. But even if there is... I'll never be coming back to Paris."

He turned toward the priest, his gaze steady and strangely calm. "That's why I came to bid you farewell."

The priest's eyes widened slightly as realization dawned on him, and then a warm, nostalgic smile softened his features.

"You're her son," he said slowly, his voice tinged with emotion. "The little boy who was always forced into the confession box." He chuckled softly. "I used to worry about what became of you after your parents' deaths. But now I see the Lord truly does have His way of doing things."

Nix said nothing. His face remained expressionless, his silence carrying the weight of memories too painful to recall.

"One thing I can promise you, young man," the priest continued gently, "you may leave Paris and never see me again, but that doesn't mean the Lord's presence will depart from you. He's always with us. Whatever you went through after your parents' passing... it was to prepare you for a day like this. Trust me He has it all sorted out."

A sharp, repetitive beeping cut through the quiet air. Nix glanced down at his phone. The screen flashed insistently.

"I'll take my leave now," he said quietly, rising to his feet. He gave the priest a small bow more out of habit than reverence and began walking toward the entrance.

The priest watched him go, a prayer forming silently on his lips.

Nix stopped briefly near the doorway, glancing once more at the screen before answering the call.

"President André Dubois," he said flatly.

"Mr. Dean, I have the guest you requested to speak with."

The footsteps on the other end of the line stopped as if someone had been struck. Nix felt heat crawl up from his gut; an animal, furious and precise, warmed his blood. He imagined ripping them apart watching them wither beneath the weight of their own

betrayals yet the fantasy of violence was a mirror he refused to become. To become that thing would be to hand them victory.

"Please put the phone on speaker."

"Done."

A chorus of voices, the clipped confidence of men who'd spent years building a fortress of influence swam into the small room. Nix's mouth curved into something that was not quite a smile. "Hello there, ancient rulers of the dynasty. Or should I call you principalities?" He chuckled, a sound like metal scraped across stone. It held no warmth. It held only the thin, brittle amusement of a man who'd learned how small their power looked when he no longer bowed to it

"God, I would love to see you all die," he said, letting the words hang for a beat. "But I have a flight to catch, and death is too quick a punishment for the damage you caused me. What's a better sentence than death than watching the dynasty you built every alliance, every ledger, every hand you shook crumble into dust while you have to witness it." His tone was conversational, polite almost, as if discussing the weather. That casual cruelty made the room go still.

"Are you threatening us?" one of the men barked, the rage in his voice cracking like old plaster. Nix answered with a humorless laugh that grated against the silence short, dry, and without mirth. It was the laugh of a man who'd rehearsed grief into steel: no sound of joy, only the tight, wet echo of something that had been drained from him. It was a laugh that stripped the bravado from those men and left them naked before him.

"You must think yourself special to assume I'd threaten only you," he said, voice even, each word carved. "But let's end this cat-and-mouse game. The officers will come for you; they will read your charges and take you away. That, however, is not the end. Even behind bars, you must sleep with your eyes open because within the next three months, every single member of your family will be six feet under. Your name will end with you." He paused, letting the promise settle into the bones of the men listening. "This isn't a threat. It's a promise. Start counting the days." He scoffed, and the sound closed the line.

He ended the call with the same composed calm he'd used to make every cruel pronouncement like a surgeon finishing a procedure. He slid the phone back into his pocket; his hands were steady, the skin of his knuckles pale. When he moved toward the car, his steps were measured, each footfall a small metronome keeping time with the plan he'd set into motion.

The driver opened the rear door. Nix paused, fingers lingering on the cold metal of the handle as if grounding himself in reality. He lowered himself into the seat with a controlled economy of motion, no haste, no theatrics, only the quiet efficiency of a man accustomed to making decisions that others could not undo. He tucked his phone away,

smoothed the lapel of his coat, and looked out at the city for the last time, the skyline a blur of indifferent lights.

"We're heading to the airport, sir," the driver said, voice neutral as always.

"Good," Nix replied. "Make it quick." His voice carried a finality that needed no echo.

As the car glided into motion, the city slipping past like memories in a rearview mirror, Nix felt the old wound settle under his ribs an ache that would not heal. He wasn't simply closing a Chapter; he was carrying away a scar that would mark him for the rest of his life.

Chapter 80: 80

Zamiel stared intensely at the medical reports spread across the desk before him.

The harsh white light from the overhead lamp reflected off the crisp sheets, highlighting the rows of unfamiliar medical terms that twisted together like a riddle he couldn't untangle. His brows furrowed deeply, his fingers hovering above the papers but not touching them as though physical contact might make the confusion sink deeper.

He read the lines again. And again. Each word made less sense than the last. This couldn't be right. The terminology, the results, the timelines.. it all defied logic. His mind raced, trying to connect the impossible conclusions staring back at him.

A faint sound escaped him a breath caught halfway between disbelief and dread. He leaned back in his chair, running a hand through his hair, his pulse steady yet heavy. How could this even happen? The question echoed in his mind, sharp and insistent.

He glanced at the physician's signature at the bottom of the page, then back at the reports. Every number, every note seemed to challenge the boundaries of what he thought was medically possible. For a long moment, Zamiel just sat there, lost in a maze of thoughts, the quiet hum of the room amplifying the chaos in his mind.

This wasn't the first report. He had already requested two more confirmations from different laboratories, yet the results all pointed to the same unsettling truth.

"Doctor Zamiel!"

The sound of hurried footsteps echoed from the other side of the corridor wall. A nurse came running, her voice trembling with panic.

"Doctor Zamiel!"

He finally looked up, his eyes distant a dark pool of confusion, disbelief, and a creeping fear of what those papers might reveal. He blinked at the panting figure of the nurse he had assigned to one of his most delicate patients.

"She... patient 233.."

He didn't wait for her to finish. His heart dropped, and before she could explain, he was already sprinting down the hall toward the patient's room.

A cold dread gripped him. He had brought that particular patient to a

private home clinic precisely to prevent emergencies like this. But who would have thought the one emergency he feared most would actually come to life?

The moment he pushed the door open, a shrill chorus of alarms filled the room. The machines screamed for attention, lights flashing red and amber, while his patient struggled desperately to breathe, chest rising and falling in violent, irregular spasms.

Zamiel rushed to the monitors, his hands moving swiftly yet with surgical precision. His gaze darted from one vital sign to another..

"Get me 2 milliliters of epinephrine and 5 of diazepam, stat!" he barked.

The nurse scrambled to obey, her trembling hands barely managing to draw the injections. Zamiel took them from her, steady and practiced, administering the shots with a deftness that spoke of years of experience.

Moments later, the patient's breathing began to ease. The alarms dulled to a steady hum, and the once-chaotic room fell into fragile silence.

Zamiel exhaled deeply, running a tired hand through his hair. "You're going to be the end of me," he muttered under his breath, slumping into the chair beside the bed.

Only then did he notice the tall figure leaning casually against the doorway. He waved the nurse away without looking up.

Camillo stepped forward, his expression unreadable. "How is she doing?"

Zamiel shot him a sharp glance. "If only you'd listened to me," he said, voice laced with restrained anger. "I told you to let me perform plastic surgery on her face, alter her features then at least we could have had a wider team watching over her without raising suspicion."

Camillo didn't respond. He just stared, his silence infuriating.

"Sometimes I wonder if you're actually insane," Zamiel continued, rising from his seat. "Tell me, why did you make me save Ella, only to push her into Carmela's place? You manipulated those old fools into sending the clip, compelled her to go to that location, and made Ella stab her. Then when Carmela falls off the cliff you open fire on Ella. And let's not forget the lie about your second daughter having cancer. How exactly do you plan to prove that?"

Camillo raised an eyebrow, his tone calm but dangerous. "Meaning?"

"She's pregnant," Zamiel said quietly, almost as if he didn't believe the words himself. "And with the story you've cooked up, it's impossible for someone with her medical history to conceive at the moment "

The room fell into a heavy, deathly silence.

Camillo's expression once calm and composed slowly shifted. His brows furrowed first, disbelief flickering across his face. Then came confusion, followed by something softer and unexpected joy. The corners of his lips trembled into a faint smile as his eyes widened with sudden realization.

"You mean," he said, his voice breaking into an incredulous laugh, "I'm going to be a grandfather?"

Zamiel met his eyes and shook his head. "No. I meant she's pregnant for the man you've been so determined to keep her away from." He took a sharp breath. "Let's even forget about the pregnancy how do you plan on explaining to her everything you've done when she wakes up? All the lies? The manipulation?" Camillo's expression hardened. The moment of warmth vanished, replaced by cold authority.

"Leave the explanations to me," he said flatly. Then, narrowing his eyes, he added, "And make sure you save my daughter. Unless..." his gaze darkened "...you'd rather forget about ever becoming the son-in-law of my family."

He gave a faint, ironic smile the kind that didn't reach his eyes and turned toward the door.

But Zamiel's next words stopped him mid-step.

"Just removing the devices that were implanted in her doesn't mean she'll recover," he said, his tone edged with quiet frustration. "I've treated her before. I've seen how fast she responds when Nix is around. But now, she's refusing every form of medication like she's lost the will to live entirely. The only thing I can suggest at this point is bringing her back to Ni.."

"Don't try to play games with me, young man," Camillo cut in sharply. His tone, once composed, now carried the weight of warning and fury. "I don't hate the boy. In fact, I admit he could give Carmela the kind of life she deserves. But Carmela is dead."

He stepped closer, his words deliberate and ice-cold. "The person lying on that bed is Elisa. The sooner you start calling her by that name, the sooner this new reality will sink into your brain."

He gave a dry scoff and finally left, his footsteps echoing down the hall.

Zamiel remained still for a long moment, then let out a breath that trembled with exhaustion and anger. He raked a hand through his hair and sank into the chair beside the bed. His chest tightened a weight pressing down that no amount of logic or science could lift.

"I've become the villain," he whispered bitterly, "in the love story of two of my closest friends."

He buried his face in his hands, guilt gnawing at him. He had sworn to save lives, but here he was forging medical reports, faking deaths, and breaking hearts. First the false diagnosis he'd given Carmela, and now a staged death that had nearly destroyed Nix.

His eyes flicked to the unconscious woman on the bed pale, fragile, yet still breathing

"Carmela," he murmured, leaning closer. "I know you've lost the will to fight, but please... please hold on. If not for anyone else, then for your child. For Nix's child."

A soft voice broke through the silence behind him.

"Babe?"

Zamiel turned, startled. His fiancée stood at the door, holding a steaming mug of tea. Her eyes were filled with quiet concern, her expression saying everything words couldn't.

For a moment, he simply looked at her, at the woman waiting for him while his own life was tangled in a web of deceit and guilt. His love story had been put on pause, while he unwillingly played the villain in someone else's.

"How is she doing?" Sai asked softly, handing him a mug of black coffee.

Zamiel didn't take a sip. Instead, he set the cup aside and took her hand in his, his fingers cold against her warm skin.

"Let's elope," he said quietly.

Sai blinked, half expecting him to laugh. But when she looked into his eyes, she saw no trace of humor there only weariness, desperation, and a haunting sincerity that made her chest tighten.

She stepped closer, guiding his head gently until it rested against her stomach. His arms wrapped around her waist, clinging to her like she was the only safe place left in the chaos surrounding them.

"We're finally at the last heat of the battle," she said, brushing her fingers through his hair. "Why should we run away now?"

Zamiel let out a faint, humorless laugh. "If we don't, do you think your crazy uncle will ever let us live in peace? Sometimes I try to convince myself he hasn't lost a screw or two since his clash with that deranged scientist but if he hasn't, then tell me, why would any father put his own daughter through this much pain?"

Sai smiled faintly, though her eyes were clouded with thought. "Actually... my uncle isn't a bad person," she said. "I always knew he had a daughter somewhere, but I never knew it was Carmela. I believe every step of his plan no matter how twisted, is his way of trying to give her the happiness she never had. He just doesn't realize he's going about it the wrong way."

Her voice softened as she stroked his hair. "Every daughter of the Sorrento family grows up pampered and adored. From childhood to womanhood, she's handed everything on a silver platter, even after marriage. Carmela... She's different. She fell in love with a complicated life, and Uncle can't understand that, and so he's trying to rewrite her story to fit his version of happiness."

She lifted his face gently and pressed a tender kiss to his lips, smiling as she whispered, "I overheard your conversation with him. And I agree, she needs Nix by her side. It's been three months since the incident, and she still hasn't woken up. Explaining that to him would be useless; you and I can't change his mind. But I know someone who can." A knowing smile curved her lips.

"Who?" Zamiel asked, searching her eyes.

"Liam.. her brother."

"Liam?" he repeated, frowning slightly.

Sai nodded. "I already informed him of her arrival, but he's been delayed by some work overseas. He promised to return this week. Once he's here, we'll let him handle the emotional part. You work on convincing Nix that the woman he'll meet is Elisa not Carmela. Leave the reunion to Liam and me."

Zamiel stared at her, processing the plan. "And what then?"

"If Carmela decides to return to Nix when she regains consciousness," she said, "then we can finally explain everything, the truth, the lies, and the reasons behind it all."

Zamiel leaned back slightly, still holding her hand. "Wait," he said, his tone laced with a tired chuckle. "Give me a second. Is plotting so natural to the Sorrentos? Because at this point, I can't tell if I'm in love with you or terrified of your family."

Sai laughed softly, her eyes glinting with mischief. "Maybe both."

He raised an eyebrow. "And what makes you so sure Liam won't side with his father?"

Sai's smile faded just enough to reveal a flicker of doubt. "Because Liam loves his sister more than he fears his father," she said quietly. "And that's what makes him dangerous and our only hope... Because of his love for his sister," Sai said with a soft laugh that only deepened Zamiel's confusion.

"Babe, they're twins," she added, amusement fading into something quieter, almost melancholic. "And who else can understand the pain of one twin better than the other, the one who's felt the same kind of heartbreak, the same betrayal?"

Zamiel's brows furrowed. "Don't tell me Camillo also separated him from his lover?"

Sai chuckled again, but this time the sound carried a strange heaviness, the kind that didn't quite reach her eyes. She brushed her fingers over his cheek and whispered,

"Welcome to the Sorrento family conflict, babe where every child learns that love is the one thing their father will never let them keep."