

Heiress 461

Chapter 461

Things were chaotic over at the Salvadors'.

Meanwhile, Bella enjoyed basking in the sunlight while swinging at Yara Park.

No one but her would occupy the swing.

Her father, Wyatt, made the swing especially for her mother. It was said that her mother would enjoy a nice swing, her feet bare against the wind. On occasion, she would lie down for a nap under the gentle afternoon sun.

Wyatt would always be there to push Yara on the swing. Their lovely shadows intertwined under the sunlight, yo-yoing back and forth. He would sometimes nestle with her in silence and enjoy the blooming flowers and rolling clouds.

Later, Yara passed away.

Still, Wyatt did not stop telling the household staff to clean the swing every day.

It was as if Yara was away on a holiday and would be back once she had had enough fun.

"Ms. Bella, Ada has expressed tremendous interest in adopting our service again. She wants to invite you to dinner and properly apologize to you."

Steven pushed Bella on the swing. "She couldn't get in touch with you, so she contacted me. She's been bombarding my phone with calls in the last two days."

"It's a good opportunity for you to practice your foreign language." Bella chomped on another bite of the apple.

“You’re making fun of me again.” Steven let out a wry face, his eyes falling on her moving lips.

Her lips were full, luscious, and more tempting than the apple in her hand.

He swallowed hard.

“If it were in the past, you would have accepted her invitation for the interest of the hotel even if you didn’t want to.”

Bella munched on her apple and tapped her toes on the ground. “But I’m her idol now because I’m Alexa. I can’t just accept her invitation right away. My single appearance as Alexa has served its purpose.”

“That’s true. Ada has been rude to you, and if there’s one thing she should take away from, it’s that crossing you comes with consequences.”

“That’s not entirely so. I’m just feeling a little tired lately, so I’m not in the mood to socialize.”

Bella yawned. “Besides, the Mint event was a success, so we can afford to lose the collaboration with Ada.”

Either way, Ada shot herself in the foot for shutting Bella out previously:

Bella’s phone rang.

Although Bella was hesitant to accept a call from an unknown number, she still answered it in the end.

“Hello, is this Ms. Anna Brown?”

Bella was brought back to the past.

It had been a while since she heard the name.

Those words unearthed a dormant memory buried deep inside her.

“Hello there, I’m Anna.”

“Ms. Brown, I’m calling from Mount Jaglee National Forest Park. I’m the new captain of the park rangers and a student of Frank. You can call me Xavier.”

Unbeknownst to the man on the other end of the line, he was talking, to the well-known heiress of the Thompsons.

Mount Jaglee was the national forest park where Bella first met Justin.

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Bella and Justin had met at Mount Jaglee National Forest Park for the first time thirteen years ago.

It was the place where Justin saved Bella’s life.

“Oh? So you’re a student of Frank? Is Frank no longer the captain?” Bella’s eyes lit up at the mention of an old friend.

“Yeah, Frank will be retiring next month. He’ll be performing his last rounds this month. Once he does the final handover, he will be returning to his hometown.”

Xavier sighed. “I saw your name in Frank’s list of contacts, so you must be important to him. He expressed his wish to have a quiet retirement, but I hope you could make time to visit him and give him good farewell. Frank has pancreatic cancer, so we don’t know if we’ll ever get to see him again.”

“What? Frank has...” Bella sat up straight, her heart aching.

“When he received his diagnosis, the pancreatic cancer was already in its advanced stage. You understand. The pancreatic cancer spreads fast.” Xavier choked with sobs.

“I see.”

Bella murmured with a heavy heart, “I’ll make time to visit Frank.”

“Please don’t let him know what I told you. He’s a proud man who doesn’t want to show vulnerability. He doesn’t want to a pity party, so

“I understand. I’ve known Frank for thirteen years. I know him well. Don’t worry about it.”

After the phone call, Bella sat vacantly on the swing. Moments later, her eyes welled up.

“Ms. Bella, who is Frank? Uh... What’s wrong?”

Steven got down on one knee and pulled out a clean handkerchief to wipe her tears.

“An old friend.”

It took a lot for Bella to move her lips as her heart bled. “Help me to get in touch with any successful gastroenterologist in Savrow and Hatchbay, Steve. I want to do everything in my power to help my friend.”

“Alright. I’ll get straight to it,” Steven said in a serious tone. He respected Bella’s privacy and dropped the questions when she was not ready to talk.

Another call quickly came in.

This time, it was Bella's adorable apprentice, Roza Walker.

"Roza..."

Bella had just pulled herself together when Roza's loud voice threatened to burst her eardrums. "Ah! You liar! You're Bella

Thompson, heiress of KS Group, and Alexa, the legendary jewelry designer... I can't believe you kept it from me. Sob, sob... I want to call the cops on you. You tricked me!"

"Did you just find out? That's slow."

Bella sneered and grabbed the handkerchief from Steven to blow her nose. "I should play more tricks on you since I'm a trickster, according to you."

After the utter humiliation from Justin, things did not get any better for Shannon when she approached Gregory. In fact, she broke the character of being a devoted, gentle, and loving wife.

Unable to let it go, Shannon took Bethany, who cried her eyes out, to the Hoffmans' residence in the middle of the night.

"You can't get anything right."

Annoyed by Bethany's crying, Shannon poked her head with her red-painted fingernail and drew blood. "Before, you took Rosalind's side because the scheming bitch was going to be your sister-in-law. You thought you could handle her."

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“But you were careless, and Rosalind played you like a fiddle. If I hadn’t acted quickly and come to your rescue, your grandfather and father would have turned you away after what you did at your grandfather’s birthday celebration.”

“I’m Dad’s favorite. How could he abandon me?” Not having it, Bethany talked back.

Smack!

Livid, Shannon slapped Bethany. “I didn’t raise you to be disrespectful. How dare you talk back to me!”

Dumbfounded by the blow, Bethany put her hand over her cheek and curled up into a ball. She hid the resentment in her eyes.

“You hang around Zoe, but the girl has you fooled. What are you good for? Thank goodness you’re not in charge. Otherwise, you would have bankrupted the family business a long time ago.”

Feeling battered by Justin and Gregory, Shannon turned her anger on Bethany. “You should lay low like your sister since you’re not as intelligent as Zoe and Rosalind. Stop trying to get one up on Bella. If your sister weren’t mentally challenged, she would be far more competent than you. If I had a choice, I wouldn’t put all my eggs in one basket. You’re such a loser!”

In other words, Shannon was saying that Bethany was worse than Carrie.

Bethany gnashed her teeth resentfully without saying a word. Tears of humiliation pooled in her bloodshot eyes.

Shannon dragged a crying Bethany to the Hoffmans’ residence.

The household staff was speechless and gave Bethany, who had gone viral online, strange looks.

“Oh, my. What happened to Ms. Bethany? Don’t tell me Young Master Ryan got her pregnant.”

“Ms. Bethany is not pregnant, is she?”

“Impossible. Young Master Ryan might be a playboy, but he wouldn’t bring his personal affairs here.”

“Besides, Young Master Ryan has high standards. I doubt Ms.

Bethany makes the cut. She’s got a bad reputation.”

The chatter drove Bethany to see red.

These people worked for the Hoffmans, so she was not in a position to yell at them. Anger overwhelmed her every being.

“Where’s Mrs. Hoffman? I want to see her now.”

Shannon shouted at the butler. It was clear that she was looking for trouble.

“Mrs. Hoffman isn’t well to see visitors. Please leave, Mrs. Salvador.”

The butler made up an excuse with a dry laugh.

“Cut the bullshit. Her daughter took advantage of mine, and now my daughter is ruined. Do they think they can solve the issue by holing up at home?”

With rage consuming her, Shannon left her inhibitions out the window. She was not at the Salvadors’ residence, so she did not have to keep up with appearances anyway. “I’m not leaving until Mrs. Hoffman responds to the issue now.”

“Mrs. Salvador, you’re at the Hoffmans’ residence, not the market. There’s no need to yell at me.”

Mrs. Hoffman held Zoe's arm as they strutted down the swiveling staircase.

She presented herself with grace, outshining Shannon by miles.

Bethany had been weighing her fighting chance while on the way, but she lost the will when the mother-in-law of her dreams faced off with her embarrassing aggressor of a mother.

"No need to yell? Haha. Mrs. Hoffman, you drove me to it."

Shannon looked daggers at Zoe, who clung to her mother in fright.

Your daughter gave my daughter fake Alexa jewelry and signed my daughter's name on the receipt so that my daughter could take the fall. She wasn't even apologetic, and she acted like she wasn't involved. That's underhanded for your family."

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The Hoffmans' household staff gasped and covered their mouths in shock.

Knowing that Gregory would act in her favor, Shannon tried to push the blame on the Hoffmans.

Everybody, including a wide-eyed Mrs. Hoffman, looked at Zoe in unison.

"Is that true, Zoe?"

Zoe played it innocent and refuted Shannon's accusations with furrowed brows. "I would never do such a thing, Mommy. Bethany was the one who came up with the idea to give Ada Wang counterfeit jewelry."

Bethany was furious with Zoe for twisting the facts. She glared at

Zoe and shouted angrily, "You're lying, Zoe! You suggested the idea to help me win Ada over and defeat Bella in the process."

"Bella? Are you talking about Bella Thompson? What does she have to do with anything?" Mrs. Hoffman asked in surprise.

"I-" Speechless, Zoe broke out in a cold sweat.

Bethany, the pea brain, threw Bella's name out. She must be determined to end their friendship.

"Where do you think you are, Mrs. Salvador? This is not a place for you to raise your voice."

A chilling voice echoed through the room, startling Bethany.

Ryan approached from the main entrance with a smirk.

"I don't have a problem with you embarrassing yourselves, but don't drag my family down with you."

"Young Master Ryan!" The butler and other household staff greeted him.

"Ryan!" Zoe's eyes welled up as her hero came to save the day.

Ryan could not stand Bethany to begin with. Since Ryan adored his sister unconditionally, he would definitely take Zoe's side, no questions asked.

"You're great friends with Justin, Ryan. Our families have a long-standing relationship. How can you be disrespectful to me?" Shannon was furious.

“Justin and I are buddies, and that’s between us. What does our friendship have to do with you? You didn’t give birth to or raise Justin.”

Tilting his head, Ryan smiled and added, “You have never been nurturing to Justin, so don’t use that on me now.”

It never occurred to Shannon that Ryan was so two-faced. He was courteous when he was at the Salvadors’ residence, but on his turf, he did not hide his contempt and disgust for her.

That was only because Gregory backed her up. Should one day

Gregory lose interest in her, Shannon would probably become a nobody in her social circle.

Shannon felt chills down her spine.

She had been Mrs. Salvador for over two decades. She seemed like she had it all, but she could not even get the basic respect.

“Bethany went too far. She tried to drag me into her own mess and frame me, Ryan!”

Zoe threw herself into Ryan’s embrace and wrapped her arms around him. “I was wrong, Ryan. You told me to stop hanging out with her, but I didn’t listen. I realize now that I was dumb enough not to take your advice. I will never act on my own again. I’ll stop being stubborn and listen to you for once.”

“Is it true what Bethany said, Zoe?”

Ryan stared at Zoe as if to see through her, his voice strained with emotion. “Did you have the jewelry forged with the intention of harming Ms. Thompson?”

“No! It wasn’t me! It was Bethany’s idea.” With a pale face, Zoe shook her head in a panic.

“Stop talking your way out of it, Zoe!”

Bethany pointed at Zoe’s face with rage. “The man who forged the jewelry is Alexa’s apprentice, and he’s from Inalia. Even if I wanted to seek an imitation, I would’ve found someone locally on short notice. Why would I get someone from Inalia?”

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Bethany said to Zoe, “You studied abroad in Inalia. Only you would have the resources and connections to pull it off. If you’re going to deny it, why don’t we call Tyler right now and ask him?”

“Ask him?”

Zoe snapped back menacingly, “For you to suggest that, I can assume that you planned this. For all I know, you might have bribed the man. You’re only trying to frame me.”

The women were at each other’s throats.

“Way to kill two birds with one stone, Ms. Hoffman.”

As arguing was not getting them anywhere, Shannon put the focus on Bella. “You used my daughter against Bella. You saw our rivalry with the KS World Hotel as a chance to screw Bella over. If the plan was a success, you would’ve gotten what you wanted. If it failed, you could just push the blame to Bethany and get off unscathed. Haha... Bella turns out to be Alexa. Otherwise, you would have pulled the whole thing off.”

With her heart in her throat, Zoe’s face flushed. “Mrs. Salvador, that’s a huge accusation to make.”

“Were you the one who plotted against Ms. Thompson, Zoe?” Mrs. Hoffman was taken aback.

Mrs. Hoffman was poor in health, and the bombshell dropped left her shaken. She held onto the banister to keep herself from falling.

“Mommy, Ryan, I have nothing against Bella. Why would I have a problem with her?” Zoe stamped her foot exasperatedly, like she would when she was little.

In the past, Ryan would fold to Zoe’s will every time she threw a tantrum.

No matter what she did, Ryan would console her and leave the issue in the past whenever she made a fuss.

However, her heart was racing, and her knees were going weak because of the way Ryan was staring at her now.

“Nothing against Bella? More like you have a huge problem with her.”

Bethany blurted out Zoe’s dark thoughts. “You like Justin, so you’re jealous of Bella, who is his ex-wife. You can’t get over how Justin doesn’t give you any attention but gives the world to Bella. That’s the reason you want to ruin her.”

“But you forgot one thing, Ms. Hoffman.”

Shannon sneered, “Bella is important to Justin and Ryan.

“If I remember correctly, Ryan once pursued Bella. Although he didn’t end up dating her, I doubt he would allow anybody to pick on his crush.”

“Y-You!”

Zoe trembled, her hands clenching. “Don’t believe them, Ryan. It’s true that I have feelings for Justin, but they are divorced. Why would I go after Bella? It’s not like I have nothing better to do.”

Ryan gasped to himself, his expression grimacing.

For some reason, he could not hear a word coming from his sister, despite her screaming.

As tension rose to an all-time high, Ryan's secretary, Yasmin, rushed into the room.

"The cops are here, Young Master Ryan."

While talking, Yasmin glanced at Bethany. "They must have been to the Salvadors' home, but upon learning that Ms. Bethany was here, they came over."

"T-The police?" Bethany went weak in the knees.

Color drained from Shannon's complexion as she clung to her daughter's shaking arms.

"Ms. Bethany Salvador."

The police officers in civilian clothes barged into the house. "We received a tip-off that you are linked to KS World Hotel's classified information being leaked out. We need your cooperation with the investigation. Please come with us."

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Bethany froze.

"Mom! Save me, Mom! Mom!"

As the police took her daughter away, the last thing on Shannon's mind was keeping up with appearances. She went up to stop the law enforcement.

“My daughter was framed. Don’t you know how to do your job? Why are you arresting an innocent civilian?”

Ryan watched coldly as Shannon and Bethany stirred up drama. He hoped the police officers would make the arrest swift before he had to listen to more of their nonsense.

“We can charge you for obstruction of justice if you don’t let go, Mrs. Salvador.” The police officers were indifferent to Shannon.

“Sir, my daughter was framed. Zoe Hoffman set her up!” Shocked and furious, Shannon glared at Zoe.

“W-What does it have to do with me? Even if I forged a necklace, I could just pay a fine for the violation of copyrights. I didn’t leak any trade secrets. It was your daughter who thought she could take on Bella. She got what she deserved.” It then struck Zoe what she just said, so she covered her mouth.

Oh, shit. She spilled the beans on herself in a desperate attempt to disassociate herself from Bethany.

She felt a piercing gaze on her back.

Turning around, Zoe met Ryan’s eyes. His gaze was filled with anger, shock, dejection, and disappointment.

“Your sister isn’t as innocent as you think she is, Ryan. She’s manipulative. She tricked me and you.”

Bethany’s heart-wrenching cries echoed in the Hoffmans’ residence.”

Zoe, I can’t believe you made me a pawn and a scapegoat! I will make you pay! Just you wait!”

“Come here, Zoe.” Scared by Shannon and Bethany, Mrs. Hoffman nervously beckoned Zoe over.

“Mommy!”

Still reeling in shock, Zoe moved toward her mother when Ryan grabbed her by the wrist.

“R-Ryan.” She shivered.

“Why did you do it, Zoe? Was it to take revenge on Bella?” Ryan asked with bloodshot eyes.

“Bethany made it all up.”

“Don’t play stubborn with me.”

Ryan yelled while gripping his fingers tightly. Zoe whimpered in pain. “Ow... Let go, Ryan. You’re hurting me. Help me, Mommy!”

“Let her go now, Ryan! Are you trying to break your sister’s hand?”

Mrs. Hoffman rushed over in dismay and pried open Ryan’s grasp over her daughter. She pulled Zoe into her arms to shield her. “Just talk it out.”

“Talk it out? I gave her a chance to talk, but what did she do?”

Consumed by rage, Ryan glared at Zoe’s tearful eyes. She looked like an innocent angel.

The heartache coursed through his veins. “She lied many times to cover up the things she did. She colluded with Bethany to set Bella up.

“What did Bella ever do to you? Why must you ruin her? Is it because she is Justin’s ex-wife? Is that a reason to harm her?”

“Enough, Ryan! You grew up with Zoe. You should know better than anyone else that she doesn’t have the heart to harm another soul.

Mrs. Hoffman patted her daughter’s spasming back in comfort. “Even if Zoe went astray, the girl, Bethany, was a bad influence on her. Why are you dragging your sister into this? If word gets out, she might be taken in for questioning.”

“She took the private jet abroad before Bethany and Ada signed a contract. I asked her where she was going, and she said that she wanted to see a fashion show in Feranco. I told Yasmin to look into it, but you never went to Feranco. You went to Inalia. If you had nothing to hide, why did you lie about where you were going?”

Ryan’s voice was hoarse. His veins showed on his forehead. “When Bethany was taken away, you admitted to forging the jewelry. What do you have to say for yourself? Dad is probably rolling in his grave, realizing that his precious daughter has become conniving.”

“Ryan! How could you insult your sister?” Mrs. Hoffman was filled with mixed feelings, thinking about her late husband. Her eyes welled up.

“You’re a bastard, Ryan!”

Zoe was insulted and furious. All the pent-up emotions came to a head as she burst into tears. “Bella kept making me look bad in front of Justin. She embarrassed me in public. What’s wrong with teaching

her a lesson? You are hypocritical to reprimand me when all you’re doing is standing up for Bella. You only have eyes for the slut. I’m dead to you.”

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Zoe said to Ryan, “Even if you suck up to Bella, she will never have eyes for you. You’ll never have her.”

“Zoe Hoffman!”

Ryan hissed Zoe's full name, scaring the latter to hide in her mother's arms.

"Even if Bella doesn't become your sister-in-law, you shouldn't harm and insult her. I believe in Bella's character. While she may not be an angel, she wouldn't harm anyone unless provoked. That means you most likely started it with her."

Zoe was livid.

"One more thing. I would advise you to get over Justin. Anyone except

Justin can tell that Bella is the only woman for him." Ryan scoffed.

Being best buddies, Ryan had a subtle way of mocking Justin.

Zoe's face turned flushed.

"You are coming with me to see Bella tomorrow. I expect you to admit your mistake and apologize to her."

Ryan then walked away.

"Are you mad, Ryan? Why should I apologize to Bella? I won't!" Zoe was hysterical.

"I'll send you to Inalia tonight if you won't. You won't be allowed back in Savrow without my permission."

The intensity of Ryan's resolve unnerved Mrs. Hoffman.

Mrs. Hoffman had heard things about her son's behavior, but the boy had never been so tough on his only sister.

Was Ryan hard on Zoe because of Bella, Justin's ex-wife?

"Ryan... Come back, Ryan!"

Zoe cried at the top of her lungs in tears.

Ryan, who always doted on her, never once looked back.

...

That night, Ryan drowned his sorrows in ACE at his private lounge.

His heart broke as his mind wandered back to Bethany's accusation of Zoe. The strong liquor burned down his throat.

The door to the private lounge opened.

"Damn it. I don't need the company of women. Get out now!"

Irritated, Ryan raised the glass and smashed it to smithereens.

"Mr. Hoffman, Mr. Salvador is here for you."

Yasmin let out an awkward smile, as if embarrassed for her bc made her way into the room. "Apologies, Mr. Salvador. Mr. Ho isn't himself tonight. Please try to understand."

"That's fine. I'm used to it." Justin carried a blank face.

“This way, please.”

Justin nodded and stepped into the private lounge.

Yasmin nodded and closed the door before leaving to give them space.

“What has gotten into you now?”

Furrowing his brows, Justin went to Ryan and sat beside him. “So

Bella turned you down. Must you act like your whole world has crumbled?”

“Fuck me. Are you going to make fun of Bella dumping me forever?” Ryan heaved. Since he did not have a glass anymore, he grabbed the alcohol and gulped straight from the bottle.

“Dump? Ha,” Justin sneered.

He fished out a pack of cigarettes and lodged one between his lips. Bella has never accepted you. How could she dump you? You’re the rebound guy, always there but never the first choice.”

“Tsk. At least I’m still in the running while you’re out of the race.”

It suddenly occurred to Ryan that Zoe called Bella a slut. As his chest tightened, he smashed the alcohol bottle with bloodshot eyes.

If Zoe was not his sister, Ryan would have slapped her for the insult to Bella.

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However, the insult came from Ryan's beloved sister. Despite his anger, Ryan did not have the heart to punish Zoe heavily.

The conflict gnawed at Ryan, leaving him lost and fragmented.

"Are you on your period? Why are you worked up?"

Justin flicked away the ashes, his eyes dark. "You're not yourself. What's the matter?"

Ryan sighed heavily. "The forged necklace Bethany gave to Ada was supplied by Zoe."

Hiding his emotions behind his eyes, Justin fell silent.

Ryan asked, "Why don't you seem surprised?"

Justin replied, "I guessed as much."

Ryan felt upset. "Justin, my sister—"

"Since we're talking about this, I should tell you one more thing."

With downcast eyes, Justin took a puff. "Your sister was the one who got the press all over Bella at the last charity event."

Dumbstruck, Ryan turned ashen, and his heart sank.

It took a while before he murmured through his trembling lips sorry, Justin."

"The apology shouldn't come from you, but from your sister. She should apologize to my ex-wife."

It hurt Justin to call Bella his ex-wife.

“Zoe is 22 now. I know I shouldn’t excuse her behavior as being too young to know better-”

Ryan swallowed hard. “But we grew up with Zoe. She can be stubborn and willful. Sometimes, she doesn’t think before she acts. But she means no harm. Bethany was a bad influence on her, and I spoiled her. I should have disciplined her.”

Justin kept to himself for a while before cutting to the chase. “So what are you going to do about what your sister has done? How are you going to make it up to Bella?”

Ryan’s breath hitched.

The man was always relentless and unforgiving, leaving no room for others.

Even though Zoe was Ryan’s sister, Justin would not stand for Zoe hurting his people.

“I’ll take her to apologize to Bella tomorrow.”

“Is that it?”

“Zoe is my sister, Justin. It’s her first offense. Can you let her off the hook for my sake?” Ryan asked earnestly with a sad face.

“I’ll go with you tomorrow,” the man said indifferently.

“You... Why? I hope you don’t think that I’ll take my sister’s side and give Bella problems. I will never do that.”

“No. I’m worried that you might get stabbed.” Justin got up.

Ryan was at a loss for words.

It was a bruise to Ryan’s ego that Justin had learned about Bella putting a knife to his neck.

“I haven’t seen her in a while. I want to see her.”

As his eyes flickered in tenderness, Justin made a beeline to the door.

“You have not answered my question, Justin.”

Ryan stopped him in a hurry. “We have been friends for a long time. Can we just move on from this? I will get Zoe to apologize to Bella. On behalf of the Hoffman Group, I will offer Bella compensation for the loss she suffered due to the violation of her copyright.”

The man stopped for a moment. “Ryan, can you accept the vicious attack on your sister if she was in Bella’s shoes? Will you let the whole thing go?”

Ryan had no words.

“We have been friends for over twenty years, so I will not go after Zoe for what she did.”

Justin clenched his fists, his presence chilling.

“But that’s all the chance she gets.”

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For three days, Bella embraced the cozy confines of home, indulging in food and rest.

Her three stepmothers pulled all the stops to make Bella comfortable at home. Celeste cooked up a storm, feeding Bella with her best recipes.

Bella gained three pounds in just three days.

"I won't lose any weight at this rate." Bella let out her frustration.

"Alright. You can start a new resolution after this meal."

Celeste and Sasha persuaded Bella to join them for lunch.

As Wyatt and Asher were away at an out-of-town business event, Wyatt's three wives and Bella were the only ones at the dinner table.

"Good news, Ms. Bella."

Steven burst through the doors in delight. "Bethany has been apprehended in connection with an alleged business impropriety Shannon is freaking out, and Gregory is trying to get his daughter out of jail."

"Sigh. It took the police three days to take Bethany into custody. police force in Savrow isn't as effective as the law enforcement Hatchbay." Bella was not surprised. She wiped her lips with a napkin gracefully.

"The police probably didn't want to act rashly, seeing that an heiress was involved."

Mila gave Bella another helping of food. "Have some more, Bella. You don't get to enjoy Celeste's cooking every day."

"Uh... I can't eat anymore. Burp!"

Bella shook her head and burped with her hand over her mouth as the three ladies laughed in amusement.

Steven curled his lips at the adorable sight of Bella. Struck by a thought, he leaned forward and patted her back in case she choked on some food.

“Easy there, Ms. Bella. Don’t choke.”

Mila’s keen eyes picked up on Steven’s pining thoughts for Bella. She frowned without a word.

“Although Bethany should face the consequences for showing aggression to Bella multiple times, I think Shannon should be arrested for giving her ideas. I bet Shannon instructed the girl to mess with Bella. The wicked woman is simply vile.”

Sasha left her table manners out the window since her husband was not around. She slammed the table, her tongue loose. “Karma is supposed to clap back by now. When is it Shannon’s turn? Celeste wouldn’t have-”

“Don’t just get caught up in talking, Sasha. You haven’t touched your food.” With her heart skipping a beat, Celeste stuffed bread in Sasha’s mouth and forced a smile.

Bella narrowed her eyes.

It seemed to Bella that Celeste and Shannon had crossed paths.

Bella did not confront Celeste right after lunch. Instead, she went to

Sasha’s room to sound her out.

“Why did I blab today? Tsk. I promised Celeste I’d never talk about it to the kids.”

Sasha slapped herself, regretting spilling the beans in the heat of the moment.

“Celeste worked with Shannon at the TS Gem Channel for some time before marrying Wyatt. They were signed on to the same company. At the time, Celeste was the best of the rising stars, while Shannon always played the villain in the shows Celeste starred in.”

Bella fell into contemplation before uttering indifferently, “Shannon is manipulative, dishonest, and jealous. I bet she was jealous of Celeste’s popularity and fan base, so she pulled something.”

“I know, right? She-”

Sasha nearly said too much again. She bit her lip and closed her

“I can’t. I can’t say more. I promised Celeste that I wouldn’t talk.”

Bella panicked. “Aunt Sasha, Shannon hurt Aunt Celeste. You put up with injustice. Surely, you want to avenge Aunt Celeste.”

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Sasha covered her ears. “I can’t hear you. I can’t hear you.”

Bella was speechless.

“Celeste has a feud with Shannon. If it wasn’t for the woman, Celeste wouldn’t have retired from showbiz at the height of her career.”

The sound of Mila’s aloof voice startled Sasha and Bella to scream.

“Jesus Christ, Mila! You don’t make a sound when you walk.” Sasha held her chest.

Sasha never acted cute and coy with Wyatt, but she pouted adorably with Mila.

“Aunt Mila, what are you doing here at this hour? I wasn’t expecting you.” Bella eased her breathing, feeling relieved that it was not Celeste.

“I’ve been here since you started talking. You were so loud.”

Mila glanced outside before shutting the door and approaching them. “No point keeping it a secret now, Sasha. Bella is all grown up. You should just let her know.”

Bella eagerly held Mila’s cold hand, waiting for her to open up.

“Jealous of Celeste’s talent and fame, Shannon kept sabotaging her.

Despite Celeste’s popularity, she was bullied and marginalized on the channel network. In the end, she was drugged and humiliated at a huge event.”

Mila drew a deep breath to keep herself together before revealing the dark past in a flat tone.

Sasha sighed. Despite her talkative nature, she held her tongue.

“D-Drugged?”

Bella felt her throat dry as she asked in a raspy voice, “Was Aunt Celeste-”

“It’s not that type of drug.”

Mila choked with sobs and murmured, “She was drugged with something that disrupts the nervous system. It can no longer be found in Orealm now, but it was all the rage in showbiz back then.

The recreational drug is detrimental to health.”

Bella and Sasha were shocked, their eyes watering.

Mila was an heiress to the Larson pharmaceutical empire, so she knew the medical industry like the back of her hand.

“What happened then?” Bella clutched Mila’s hands.

“Later, she was performing on stage for a channel special when she had an incontinence issue in public.”

Mila teared up.

“Fuck. How did that happen?” Driven by fury, Sasha punched and smashed the vanity mirror.

Bella trembled as she held her breath.

Even though the incident happened twenty years ago, Bella could feel the heartbreaking humiliation and public humiliation for Celeste.

Celeste once had everything.

However, Celeste was left with a haunting trauma on her favorite stage. She might never have the courage to be the charismatic and confident Celeste again.

“How can you be sure that Shannon was behind it, Aunt Mila?” Pulling herself together, Bella asked.

“Wyatt and I found a lot of evidence, but we had nothing concrete to pin on Shannon.”

Mila shook her head in regret. "Shannon kept going after Celeste, and she seemed to be more than friends with the network director.

Celeste had it tough working at TS, but she couldn't get out of the long-term contract. The only thing she could do was put up with it. I later found out that Shannon told her agent to purchase the illegal drug from the black market before the network's special. Even so, I didn't have solid evidence to put her away. The drug was common among celebrities in Savrow at the time."

"It's enough for me."

Bella closed her eyes. By the time she opened them, her eyes were bloodshot. "So long as I believe she's the culprit, that's evidence enough for me."