




## Chapter 178

### Detective Flavian Moreno's POV

We went to the police station after the raid on the ranch, where Johnson was supposedly at. We didn't find him there. From what we gathered, he and his wife had indeed been there, but they left the place about two hours before we arrived.

I was exhausted, but I couldn't stop now. I still had the interrogation of those imbeciles we arrested in Bellwood. After that, I would get on a plane back home. I hadn't had time to talk properly with Patrick, but I would call him as soon as I got some rest. I needed to know who that short woman was that I saw in his office. 

I sat down in the chair across from Detective Bonfim's desk and he offered me a cup of coffee which I took gratefully. I was tired and a coffee would wake me up a little at least.

"Bonfim, I found it very strange that Johnson left the place shortly before we arrived. What do you think?" I asked while taking a sip of the hot drink.

"I don't like it either!" Bonfim said as he sat down with his coffee. "I'm thinking and can only come to the conclusion that he still has an informant in the Miller Group. Someone that probably even his crime accomplices don't know who it is."

"Makes sense. Are you going to alert Alexander about this?"

"Definitely. This case is a very complex web, multiple crimes being committed for a long time and no one had noticed."

"Yeah! Honestly, I don't know if this Johnson is driven by greed, hatred



or envy."

"I think by all three things, Moreno."

"Look, what those two crazy women did to the boy is surreal. He was chained by the little foot to a table. I felt like emptying my gun on them." I said, remembering how I found the boy chained up, dirty, hungry and crying.

"Do you think they'll cooperate?"

"I highly doubt it. They are two unbalanced individuals. And this Caroline is very out of touch with reality." I said, recalling the tantrum she threw on the plane because there was no on-board service. I told Bonfim who laughed until he cried. "I just regret that after the interrogations I have to go back to my town. I would really like to follow this case through to the end." I commented, genuinely upset about not staying until the end.

"Moreno, you already have enough time and experience to take on a specialized role in a bigger city. Why are you still in Bellwood?" Bonfim leaned back in his chair to hear me out.

"You know, I'm not even sure myself," I responded honestly. "I'm from there, I guess I ended up staying out of convenience. Being close to family. But lately, I've been feeling restless. It's a very quiet town and I like the fieldwork, like today's case. I'm totally operational. After this case, I think when I get back to Bellwood, I'll call the detective and see what he has available. I think it's time for a change."

"You could come here. The other detective retired last week, his position is open. I liked your performance in the field, I think you'll be very useful here. I'm not so young anymore to be chasing after suspects, so I think we can help each other out. We got along well, it would be good to have a



partner commanding the other team."

"That would be fantastic, Bonfim. We really did click. But the detective must already have someone to send here. The specialized unit for personal protection is very competitive," I lamented.

Bonfim smiled at me and asked for a minute. He picked up the phone and made a call to the secretary of security. He explained the case to the secretary, how I had found the kidnapped boy and how my help in the search at the stud farm was important. He listened to what the secretary was saying and smiled. He hung up the phone and turned back to face me.

"The secretary is an old friend. Maybe he can help us bring you here," Bonfim explained with a smile.

"That would be great, Bonfim! Who knows... but thanks for the support!" After thanking Detective Bonfim, we started the depositions.

The first to be interrogated would be Johnson's daughter, Caroline Johnson. As the fugitive's daughter, maybe we could squeeze something out of her. She was brought into the room and was handcuffed. The clerk was already seated in front of the computer at a side table and qualified the woman.

"Caroline..." Bonfim began, "...you know you've gotten yourself into big trouble, don't you?"

"I don't know why. I didn't do anything wrong. I was just at that horrible place with the boy because my father sent me there. Besides, it was just a little prank. Of course, I wasn't going to stay with the kid." She spoke in a shrill, extremely high-pitched voice that was painful to the ears.

"You understand that this is kidnapping?" I asked, not believing how

clueless she was. "The penalty for that is pretty steep. Besides, you used the boy to dissuade Mr. Miller from marrying the lady." I looked at Bonfim with a question, making him laugh. "I don't even know if this is extortion by kidnapping or if it's blackmail."

"Alexander is mine!" The crazy woman shouted. "If it weren't for that nobody Catherine getting between us, we would already be married."

"So, you thought kidnapping a little boy would make Alexander marry you?" Bonfim asked.

"He was going to marry me if you hadn't interfered. By now I would have even returned the brat," she stated.

"Why did you chain the boy?" I asked, still annoyed by this.

"Because I wasn't going to run after him and Celeste told me to tie him to the table leg," she responded as if it were the most natural thing in the world. I wanted to strangle her, but Bonfim signaled for me to calm down.

"Caroline, where is your father?" Bonfim asked.

"My daddy must be hiring the best lawyer in the world to get me out of here. Soon he'll arrive and will wipe the floor with you for treating me like this." She answered and showed us her handcuffed wrists.

"I think you're mistaken. Your father is a fugitive," Bonfim said.

"A fugitive from whom? You're crazy!" She replied with a short laugh.

"He is a fugitive for various crimes, among them the kidnapping of Miss Catherine Vergara, who has already been found, of course. But your father and mother fled," Bonfim informed. "And apparently left their little girl behind."





"My daddy wouldn't do that," Caroline said, starting to snifle.

"Oh, not only would he, but he did!" I said cynically to her.

Caroline started crying and the volume kept increasing. She cried with her mouth open and from her eyes sprang waterfalls of tears. This woman crying was the vision of the apocalypse! She cried for an uninterrupted half hour, with Bonfim and me as spectators. In the end, I even thought she was dehydrated from crying so much. We continued the interrogation, but with each question asked, she cried a little more.

In the end, she said that the idea of kidnapping Peter was Celeste's and that she assured her it was just a little prank and that they wouldn't harm the boy. But besides that, crying as if she were dying and complaining that she had dyed and cut her hair and he didn't even see it, which I didn't understand, her testimony didn't help us at all.

After listening to Caroline, she was taken back to the cell. Next, Celeste was brought in for interrogation. She was very clever. Celeste had the coldness of a psychopath and exercised her right to remain silent, refusing to answer any of the questions we asked. However, for some questions, like why she kept the boy chained up in those conditions, I couldn't help but notice the glimmer that quickly passed through her eyes and the shadow of a minimal smile on her face, as if she was satisfied with that. 1

But at the end of the interrogation, Bonfim asked a question that took her out of the cold and indifferent posture she had until then.

"Celeste, Mr. Johnson fled with his wife. It would be good for your situation if you gave us some information that would help us find him."

"That imbecile ran away and left me here? And he ran away with that



stupid wife of his?" Celeste was outraged. The expression on her face was one of perplexity. It seemed that she really didn't know that her lover had fled and left her behind.

"That's what it looks like," Bonfim examined her. "Well, but it seems that you can't help us with that. Do you want to add anything to your statement?" Given Celeste's denial, Bonfim continued. "Alright. Your husband is out there and wants to see you."

"But what is that idiot doing here? I don't want to see him! I asked for a divorce last week," Celeste stated.

"Okay. Then, take her back to the cell," Bonfim signaled to the officer in the corner of the room.

The next to be interrogated was this Claude guy. A deplorable little subject. He didn't know much, but he said that he had met Johnson about three years ago, that he sometimes did some small jobs for him, and that he had arranged the farm where they took Peter. He refused to say what kind of work he did for Johnson and repeated several times that Catherine was a slut and that Peter was a bastard. I wanted to punch the bully's face. About Celeste, he said that he met her when he arrived at the farm a few days before and that they "got along" and had been intimately involved since then.

"I don't have a good impression of these 'jobs' that this Claude did for Johnson," I commented to Bonfim while we waited for one of the brothers who were with Catherine to be brought in.

"Me neither. Let's investigate that," Bonfim agreed.

The interrogations of the two security guards, Dennis and Daniel, were just as fruitless as the others, although they answered the questions, it



seemed that they were just pawns doing the grunt work. They said they needed work and couldn't get it because they had a criminal record, they ended up at the Miller Group because their cousin knows Celeste, who was the one who put them there, on the condition that when she needed them they would do what she told them to do. They said that the kidnappings were planned in advance and that Johnson had promised them good money, but they would have to stay with Catherine until they received orders. They said that Johnson kept saying that she was his guarantee. And that they always communicated by cell phone.

After we finished the interrogations, it was time to go home. I picked up my cell phone that was ringing for the fifth time and looked at the screen, immediately answering the chief of police. He informed me that there was an opening in the personal protection police station in Paradise Port and that I would be transferred there. He gave me all the information and asked if I had any objections. With my negative response, he said that I should report to my new police station on Monday. I thanked him and looked at Bonfim with a big smile.

"The secretary is really a great friend of yours." I informed him of my transfer and thanked him for everything. I said goodbye and headed with my officers to the airport. Patrick had left a small jet at our disposal, which was great.

Before leaving for home, I decided to call Patrick and thank him. I told him that I would be transferred and said that when I returned, I would like to see him. I took the opportunity to ask who was the smiling shorty that I had seen at the reception of the Miller Group and he told me her name was Manuela and that she was a friend of their girls. I already had a name. When I moved, I would have time to find out more about that cutie.