

KINDA SWEET 141

Chapter 141 She Was Lying

“Excuse me. Are you the guests of Room 6602?”

All three of them were taken aback. The granny hurriedly said, “I... We have something emergent to deal with upstairs now. If you have something to say, come back to me later. All right?”

After finishing her words, she dragged Natalia and Anne to trot inside.

However, they were stopped by the staff again.

This time, not only the staff in the lobby but also two security guards also stood in front of them.

They all looked quite serious. The staff from the lobby gazed at the granny and said seriously, “Excuse me, Ma’am. You haven’t paid for the room for two days. You said you would pay it today, so we agreed to let you and your granddaughter continue staying here. But since this morning, we have failed to contact you. If you don’t pay today, I’m afraid we can’t let you continue staying here.”

Natalia was startled.

She turned around to look over at the granny.

The granny looked quite embarrassed.

“Well... I planned to pay today, but my wallet was lost when I was having dinner earlier. Could you give

me another two days? After I've found my wallet, I'll pay for sure."

The staff heaved a sigh helplessly.

"But, Ma'am, you've already said the same thing two days ago."

The granny was silent.

Natalia had never expected to encounter such an awkward scene.

Anne walked up to tug that staff's sleeve, shaking slightly.

She raised her cute face and stared at the staff with her jade like eyes, blinking.

"Miss, have my great-grandmother and I brought you any trouble? I'm terribly sorry for that, but we truly

have lost our wallet. If you don't believe it, you can ask Aunt Natalia. She is our witness."

As she spoke, Anne pointed at Natalia behind them.

Natalia was speechless.

She wondered how come suddenly she became the focus.

How should she answer?

Seeing that Natalia was a bit hesitant, the granny immediately winked at her in secret.

Natalia found it literally hilarious.

Right then, she roughly understood what happened. Without looking at the granny again, she asked the staff directly, “How much do they owe you?”

“Three days, that would be seventeen thousand six hundred and sixty-four in total.”

Natalia nodded. Grandview was a high-end resort hotel, so naturally it cost a little more.

Without speaking anything, she pulled out her credit card.

“I’ll pay for them!”

In embarrassment, the granny said, “Uh... I’m so sorry for bothering you.”

Natalia twitched her mouth corners and didn’t expose the granny’s lie. She rubbed Anne’s hair.

“It’s alright. Just take it as a gift that I give to Anne. We are destined to meet but I haven’t given her any gift yet.”

Seeing that, Anna widened her bright eyes. With a delightful smile, she said, “Thank you so much, Aunt Natalia!”

The hotel staff then took over Natalia’s car for the payment.

After it was done, Natalia asked the granny, "What's your plan now? Do you have any place to stay?"

The granny felt quite guilty. She wasn't so talkative as she was when they were having dinner.

Shrinking backward, she stammered, "No... No, we don't."

Natalia paused a bit, feeling quite unhappy about the granny's behaviors.

It was obvious that she was lying about losing her wallet or having a trip.

The granny took Anne with her for free lunches and accommodations, and she had even chosen such

a high-end hotel. Natalia could understand that someone was leading a difficult life, but the granny had

gone too far...

Heaving a sigh, Natalia didn't have the heart to scold her. She bent over and carried Anne in her arms.

"Well, in this case, you can stay in my house overnight. It's quite late now. Let's talk about your plan

tomorrow."

When the granny heard her suggestion, her eyes lit up.

Anne also looked quite excited hearing her words.

Wrapping her arms around Natalia's neck, she started to celebrate. "Yeah! I can sleep with Mommy

again!"

Natalia was speechless.

Anne had just changed the way to address her a few hours ago, but now she called Natalia Mommy again.

Natalia felt quite helpless, but she wasn't in the mood to correct her again. Seeing that the granny agreed, she walked out with Anne in her arms.

The car was driving steadily on the wide avenue.

Natalia called Mrs. Dottie ahead, informing her that she was bringing two guests back home.

Archie had a meeting at night, so Natalia knew probably he would stay in the company till very late as he had called her earlier. Hence, she didn't interrupt him but sent him a message. He should see it after the meeting.

The car was pulled over in front of McCarthy Mansion. Natalia got off the car, opened the door for them, and carried Anne out.

Mrs. Dottie had already got prepared at home after receiving the call. Upon hearing the sound of the engine outside, she knew that Natalia had arrived home, so she hurriedly walked out.

“Ma’am, you are back! Are the guests also he...?”

She hadn’t finished speaking the last word when seeing the granny and the little girl, and she gaped instantly.

The granny cast her a glance, keeping calm.

However, her shrew eyes were full of warnings.

Mrs. Dottie immediately covered her mouth. Anne had been trotting into the house excitedly.

“Yeah! Here I am again! I’ll sleep with Mommy tonight!”

Mrs. Dottie’s widened eyes became more widened.

She noticed how Anne had called Natalia.

‘Has Miss Anne and Mrs. McCarthy met and known each other’s identity already?’

‘What on earth is going on?’ she thought to herself.

Under Mrs. Dottie’s shocking gaze, Natalia walked into the villa while holding the granny’s and Anne’s hands.

“Mrs. Dottie, this is Anne and her great-grandmother, Ariana. Please get me two guestrooms. They’ll stay here tonight.”

Mrs. Dottie swallowed. She truly wanted to speak something, but when she met Ariana's sharp eyes,

Mrs. Dottie swallowed the words back. She turned around to clean the guestrooms.

Ariana turned around and looked at Natalia with a smile. "Miss Dawson, I'm so sorry for troubling you.

Thank you so much for taking us in."

Natalia smiled faintly. "It's alright. Anne is still so little. I can't let her suffer that much."

Anne tugged her hand. Natalia thought that she wanted to say something, so she subconsciously bent over to listen to her.

However, the little girl tiptoed suddenly and pecked on Natalia's cheek.

Natalia was stunned.

Then, the little girl said in a clear tone, "Thank you, Mommy."

Natalia laughed out.

After the guestrooms were ready, Natalia sent them to bed. Anne insisted on sleeping with her, but

Archie would come home tonight, so Natalia dared not to agree with her.

She negotiated with Anne for a long time and promised that she would tell her bedtime stories and

send her to sleep before leaving the room, Anne finally agreed.

Mrs. Dottie watched them get along so intimately, and she felt so complicated.

The last time when Anne came here, Mrs. Dottie was on holiday, so she didn't know it.

Right then, when she saw Natalia was fully obsessed with the little girl, Mrs. Dottie felt quite happy and a bit worried.

She could tell that Miss Anne had admitted Natalia to be her mother, which was supposed to be a good thing.

However, the old Mrs. McCarthy insisted on hiding her true identity from Mrs. McCarthy. Mrs. Dottie wondered how this farce would end finally.

Thinking of that, she couldn't help pitying Natalia.

Chapter 142 So Handsome

Although Mrs. Dottie pitied Natalia a lot, under Ariana's sharp gaze, she dared not to utter any beep.

Shortly after, Archie arrived home.

He had seen Natalia's message but he didn't think anything wrong as he just thought Natalia had invited her friends to stay overnight.

He wasn't interested to know who the guests were.

However, all his thoughts were broken in shock when he entered his house.

In the living room, Ariana and Anne were sitting on the sofa. Since it wasn't bedtime yet and Natalia was taking a shower, the granny was playing some rope game with Anne.

Mrs. Dottie was watching them with a smile while standing aside. On the TV was Anne's favorite cartoon. It was so warm and harmonious.

"You..." Archie said in surprise.

"Oops, you must be Natalia's husband. You are so handsome, young man!"

Suddenly, Ariana stood up from the sofa, looking at Archie with a smile.

Archie choked up and couldn't finish his words at all.

Mrs. Dottie's mouth corners slightly twitched. In a hurry, she walked up to take over the suit jacket from Archie's hands.

"Good evening, Mr. McCarthy. You're back."

Archie took an extremely deep breath to suppress the shock in his heart.

When he was about to say something, he heard Natalia's voice from the stairs.

“Hey, Archie. You’re back.”

She had just finished a shower, wearing a nightgown. Her wet hair was wrapped in a towel. She walked downstairs quickly.

“Let me introduce – this is Anne, and this is her great-grandmother, Ariana. They are my new friends and will stay here tonight. Is that OK?”

Natalia was quite worried that Archie would say no.

After all, this man looked quite easy-going, but he could be quite tough sometimes.

She had found that he didn’t like any outsiders to come into his home.

Last time, when Victoria came over, Archie wasn’t happy.

Archie took another deep breath.

He glanced at Ariana, who kept smiling on her face. However, if anyone knew her well, he would find that her aged eyes were full of warnings and sharpness.

Then he tilted his head to glance at the little girl sitting on the sofa.

With fair skin and a pair of bright eyes, she looked like a priceless and fragile porcelain doll, blinking her expectant eyes at him.

She didn't look guilty at all after everything they had done.

Archie felt quite complicated for a moment.

Seeing that he was silent, Natalia misunderstood that he wasn't happy but he couldn't express it for her sake.

Hence, she approached him closer and tugged his sleeve slightly.

She whispered, "They are quite pitiful. Their family doesn't care about them. They came to town for a trip, but their wallet was stolen. Now they don't have any money and couldn't stay outside..."

Archie sneered.

Tilting his head, he looked over at Natalia. "Quite pitiful? Their family doesn't care about them?"

Natalia nodded seriously.

Archie tries his best to suppress the unhappiness in his heart.

"All right. If they'd like to stay here, just let them be. Come with me."

As he spoke, he walked upstairs directly.

Looking at his darkened face and his fast-receding figure, Natalia felt a migraine. She rubbed her

forehead.

“Natalia, are we disturbing you?” asked Ariana in embarrassment.

Natalia smiled.

“Not really. That’s just how he is. He looks cool but warm-hearted. He didn’t mean anything. Please don’t worry.”

“Okay. That’s good then.”

“Ehn. It’s quite late now. You should go to bed early. I’ll go upstairs.”

“Uh, OK. Good night, Miss Natalia.”

After comforting the granny, Natalia followed Archie upstairs quickly.

In the bedroom, second floor.

Archie undid his tie. When turning around, he saw the woman sneaking in gingerly.

Seeing how she was afraid he would be angry, he instantly found it hilarious.

He sat down on the bed, waiving at her.

“Come over!”

Natalia knew that he wasn’t happy, so she dared not to turn him down at this moment. She answered in

a low voice and walked over.

When she approached him, she felt her wrist was tightly grabbed. He pulled her to sit down on his lap, and she also fell into his arms.

With a slight exclaim, Natalia subconsciously wrapped her arms around his neck. She asked shyly,

“What are you doing?”

Archie looked at her solemnly. “How did you meet them?”

Natalia was a bit taken aback. She didn’t expect that he would ask her such a question. Hence, she told him exactly how she had encountered Anne twice.

Probably it was her illusion. The more she spoke, the more annoyed the man looked.

She just thought that he wasn’t happy because strangers came into their house tonight. However, she truly liked Anne. She couldn’t kick the little girl out so late.

Hence, she held his neck and begged, “Just one night, OK? I promise I’ll help them contact their family tomorrow morning. We won’t trouble you!”

Archie looked at her, chuckling

This woman was way too innocent, and cute.

Finally, he nodded in agreement, pinching her waist gently.

“Okay, how will you bribe me then?”

Natalia blushed.

She knew what he aimed for. Approaching him, she quickly landed a peck on his lips.

When she was about to move back, a big palm pressed on the back of her head. The man pulled her into his arms and the kiss grew wilder.

After the kiss, Natalia opened her eyes, panting.

She saw the man’s handsome and flawless face, on which his deep eyes were full of desire.

“Another half a month.”

Natalia was slightly startled. When she understood what he meant, she bit her bottom lip.

Her white teeth chewed the red bottom lip, making it look like an appetizing red cherry.

Archie’s eyes were deepened, his Adam’s apple bobbing. He suppressed the desire in his heart and said in a deep tone, “You’ve promised me. You can’t go back on your word.”

Natalia slightly nodded.

Half an hour later, Natalia walked out of the bedroom and headed to the guestroom downstairs.

In the room, Anne had already finished taking a bath under the servant's help. She was leaning on the bedhead, waiting for Natalia's bedtime story.

When Natalia entered, she saw the little girl wearing a pink fluffy pajama, which was found by the servant out of nowhere. She looked extremely cute.

It made the girl's snow-white skin more like a cute porcelain doll.

"Aunt Natalia, you finally came!"

The little girl always called her whatever she liked.

Since she knew that the little girl didn't have a mother, Natalia didn't want to correct her anymore. With a smile, she walked to the bed and sat on the edge.

"Yeah, here I am. Anne, what story would you like to listen to?"

"I want to listen to The Snow Queen's story."

"The Snow Queen again?"

Natalia found that the little girl liked Snow Queen a lot. Last time, she also wanted to listen to this story.

Fortunately, she had known it last time. Also, she had checked the story online when she was free.

Hence, this time, she told Anne a more complete story.

The little girl nestled in her arms, listening to Natalia quietly. Soon, she fell asleep.

Chapter 143 Completely Relieved

Looking at the little girl's peaceful and soundly sleeping face, Natalia felt her heart softened.

She gently pulled out her arm and put Anne down. The little girl talked in her sleep. Subconsciously,

she grabbed Natalia's hand and called her gently, "Mommy..."

Natalia was slightly taken aback, feeling a pang in her heart.

She felt sorrier for Anne and liked her more. She decided to stay a bit longer, patting Anne on her back

gently. Until Anne had slept soundly, she withdrew her hand, turned off the light, and left the room.

Outside the door, Ariana was standing at the door. When seeing Natalia come out, she put on a bright

smile immediately.

"Anne has fallen asleep now. Please don't worry. You should go to bed earlier as well."

Ariana nodded. "Miss Dawson, it's so nice of you."

Natalia was stunned and then smiled.

She didn't quite agree with the remark as she didn't think of herself as a nice person.

However, she truly felt close to the kid by nature. Probably it was because Anne was so enthusiastic about her when they first met.

Without overthinking, Natalia said good night to Ariana and went back to her bedroom.

In the master bedroom on the second floor, Archie was sending his grandmother a message.

Archie: "What on earth are you doing?"

Ariana: "Shut up, you brat! If you dare to say a single word, I'll teach you a lesson!"

Archie: "Grandma, if you want to meet Natalia, you can come over and meet her directly. Why would you have to take Anne and tell such a lie? You even taught Anne to lie!"

Ariana: "What do you know? If I weren't worried about your taste in women, would I need to come over to take a look at your wife? Humph! You don't appreciate my kindness at all. Just like your father, neither of you has a conscience!"

Archie was speechless.

He wondered why suddenly his father became the target.

Archie: "You've seen her now. You should rest assured, right?"

Ariana sent him a smiley emoji.

“Of course. I’m completely relieved. Natalia is a good girl. You can’t bully her. Once I find that you don’t treat her well, I’ll teach you a lesson!”

Archie: “You’d better think how you would explain to her in the future.”

After that, Archie didn’t reply to his grandmother’s message any longer.

On the other side, Ariana put away her phone. Recalling what Archie just said, she felt guilty for some reason.

Natalia was such a kind, considerate, and warm-hearted girl. Ariana wondered if Natalia would blame her.

The more she thought about it, the more unease Ariana felt.

Anne didn’t sleep quite deeply. In a daze, she woke up, only to find that her great-grandmother was standing there uneasily. Anne reached out to her.

“Great-grandma.”

“Anne, why are you awake?”

Anne looked around but failed to find Natalia. Pouting, she asked, “Where is Mommy?”

“Your mommy went to accompany your daddy now. Sleep tight. I’ll be with you.”

Anne blinked.

“Mommy is accompanying Daddy now. Are they going to give birth to my younger brother?”

“Exactly. Soon, you’ll have a younger brother.”

“Okay. For my brother’s sake, I won’t be looking for Mommy now.”

Anne felt relieved and fell asleep again. Ariana finally breathed a sigh of relief. Immediately she picked up her phone and sent Archie another message.

“Remember, you are not young now. You’d better have a child as early as possible. Anne is so lonely.

She needs a company.”

Archie didn’t reply to her at all.

The next day.

In the early morning, Natalia received a call from the company. Something urgent happened to an artist, so she needed to deal with it as soon as possible.

Originally, Natalia had planned to help Anne and her great-grandmother go home, but now she had to

delay it. She needed to deal with the matter of her company first.

When leaving the house, Ariana saw her off with a smile.

“No worries, Miss Dawson. Please go ahead with your work. You can help us after you’re free.”

Although Natalia felt weird hearing what the granny said, she didn’t overthink, just nodding.

Archie delayed his departure today intentionally or unintentionally. When Natalia was gone, his face

finally went darkened. Looking at the elderly and the little girl in front of him, he asked seriously, “Go

back to Equitin yourselves, or I’ll ask someone to send you back. Choose!”

Looking at his cold face, Ariana curled her lips unhappily.

“I have just met my granddaughter-in-law and only stayed here for one night. How could I leave now?”

The little girl also echoed while nodding, “Exactly! I want to stay with Mommy!”

Seeing that, Archie sneered. “Okay. I’ll ask her to come back now and tell her the truth. As for the

wording, you should know how to explain to her.”

As he spoke, he was about to pull out the cell phone. Seeing that, Ariana’s expression changed

dramatically. She hurriedly stopped Archie.

“All right. All right. We’ll leave, OK? You brat!”

She couldn't help but roll her eyes at him.

With an extremely sad look, she complained, "Since your childhood, I doted you so much and I brought you up. Now you are grown up, but you don't even let me stay in your house for a few more days. What an ungrateful grandson! If I had known it earlier, I should have left you on the street."

Archie looked at her, his face darkened.

However, he was not in the mood to argue with her. He turned around and said to Brian, "Send Mrs. McCarthy and Miss Anne to the airport."

Brian nodded while answering. He drove the car over and opened the door for them with a smile.

"Mrs. McCarthy and Miss Anne, please—"

Ariana glared at Archie and humped loudly. Then she took Anne to sit in the car reluctantly.

Right after Natalia had arrived at the company, she received a call from Ariana.

She told Natalia that they had got in touch with their family, and they were on the way to the airport, ready to go home.

Natalia was a bit surprised. However, since Ariana had got in touch with their family, there should be no

problem.

Still she asked them to take care of themselves. On the other end of the line, Anne said she would come to visit Natalia again next time. Then they hung up the phone.

In the airport, Ariana and Anne walked out of a convenience store, only to find two familiar figures not far away.

Anne had a good sight. She called happily, "Grandma Faye!" Then she trotted to the woman excitedly.

Upon hearing the call, Faye McCarthy looked back in surprise, only to find that a little girl dressed in pink rushed to and pounce at her.

Faye was startled. Subconsciously, she reached out to hold the girl. When seeing Anne's face clearly, she gaped at her.

"Anne? Mom? Why are you here?"

Standing aside, Selena slightly smiled and politely greeted them, "Hi, Mrs. McCarthy."

Ariana was also surprised to meet them here, nodding at them. She asked Faye, "Why are you here?"

Didn't you tell me you would go to watch a fashion show overseas? Why are you in Julio?"

Faye stammered and couldn't utter a word, looking quite guilty obviously.

Seeing that, Selena kept calm and said with a smile, "The fashion show's schedule has been changed due to some accident. I heard the landscape in Julio is quite nice. Since we have time, I took auntie here for a trip."

Chapter 144 Considerate

Faye finally returned to her senses. In a hurry, she echoed, "Exactly. That's right. I came here for sightseeing."

Ariana cast a doubtful glance at her. "For real? Why do I feel you are lying?"

Faye kept silent.

After all, Ariana was Faye's mother, so she knew Faye's character. As soon as seeing Faye's reaction,

Ariana knew that she was lying.

With a sneer, Ariana said, "Faye, you went to bother Archie's wife, didn't you?"

Faye was startled. Subconsciously, she wanted to deny it.

However, Ariana suddenly interrupted her, "All right. It's OK if you don't want to tell me the truth. I've met Archie's wife. She's a good girl. I like her a lot. You can't meddle in between them or make any trouble to them. Understand?"

Upon hearing it, Faye became angry.

“Mom, what are you talking about? What do you mean by making trouble? Do you know what kind of person that woman is?”

“Of course I know!”

In Adriana’s opinion, Natalia was a kind-hearted girl.

She wasn’t only a caring person but she also respected the elderly. Adriana had been observing her for the past few days.

“Mom, since you know it, why would you agree to her to be with Archie? Do you know what others say about her? If we allow this kind of woman to marry into the McCarthy family, it’ll be our shame!”

“Enough!”

Adriana suddenly became angry. “Those are just rumors! I don’t care what others say. I only believe what I’ve seen in person. You must go back to Eqitin with me right now! You can’t stay here making trouble any longer. If you’re not willing to go back, you’d better not come here anymore in the future!”

“Mom...”

“Anne, let’s go.”

After finishing her words, Ariana took Anne away in anger.

Looking at their receding figures, Faye was so angry that she almost puked blood.

“Selena, do you think my mother was bewitched by that woman? How could she trust that woman so much?”

Selena slightly looked down, secretly clenching her fingers. After a moment, she smiled.

“Mrs. McCarthy is always kind, so everyone looks kind-hearted to her. That’s normal. Auntie, please calm down.”

Faye rubbed her forehead, feeling a migraine.

“All right. All right. You don’t need to comfort me. I know in my mother’s eyes, just anyone can be more important than me. Such a young girl! She hasn’t married into our family yet and she can delight my mother and make my mother trust her so much. That’s so ridiculous!”

Selena asked tenderly, “What should we do now?”

Faye cast her a glance.

“What else can we do? My mother has given me the order. Of course, we should go back to Eqitin.

Otherwise, I might not be able to enter the door of the McCarthy house anymore.”

Faye then took Selena back to Eqitin.

On the other side, something happened to the Dawson family again.

This time, it happened at midnight.

Right after Jessica had fallen asleep, she suddenly heard a woman weeping outside the window.

The cry, or more precisely, the whimpering, sounded like the cry of some small animal in the dark.

Instantly, Jessica woke up in fear. She widened her eyes, looking in the direction where the window

was in the dark. All her nerves were tensed.

The curtain moved, seemingly something lifted a corner of it. It was flying in the mid-air, looking like the

outline of a woman.

The outline flew towards her gradually just like a black sharp paw, which was going to strangle her.

“Ah—!” letting out a horrified scream, Jessica lifted her quilt and trotted outside of her room.

Jessica’s bedroom was on the second floor, next to the bedroom of Aleena and Philip. Upon hearing

her scream, they immediately put on clothes and trotted out to ask, “What’s wrong? What happened?”

They only found that Jessica was wearing only her thin pajamas, her hair messy. With a frightened

look, she glared at the corner of her room, trembling all over in fear.

“She’s here! She’s here!”

“Who?”

Everyone else was confused. The servants who trotted over after hearing the exclaim also looked puzzled when they saw the scene.

“What happened to Miss Jessica?”

“Who’s here?”

Jessica looked extremely pale. Suddenly, she grabbed Aleena’s wrist and said with widened eyes and in a trembling tone, “Mom, she came back! She came back to kill me!”

As soon as Aleena heard it, her expression changed dramatically.

Philip snapped, “What bullshit are you talking about? It’s midnight. Who came back?”

Aleena cast him a sharp glance. All the servants around them looked blankly. Philip suddenly realized something, and his expression also slightly changed.

Right then, they heard a strict and old voice behind them.

“It’s so late at night. What are you arguing about here?”

With someone’s help, Clara walked over. Seeing her, Philip said, “It’s Jessica. There was something abnormal in her room. She ran out in fear just now.”

When seeing Clara, Jessie looked as if a drowning woman had seen a piece of driftwood to save her life. Immediately, she trotted to Clara.

“Grandma, help me! She’s here. She came to kill me!”

With a darkened face, Clara looked around sharply. She snapped in a cold tone, “Who came to kill you? A quiet conscience sleeps in thunder. Let me see who dares to play tricks in my presence today!”

After finishing her words, she led a group of people into Jessica’s room.

The delicately and luxuriously decorated bedroom looked the same as usual. When the light was on, except that the bed was a bit messy that showed Jessica was lying on it earlier, everything looked normal.

“Jessica, where is the woman you mentioned?”

“Near the window!”

Jessica gripped Clara’s arm, trembling all over while pointing at the window.

“Over there! I heard her crying. She also reached out to strangle me. I’ve seen her.”

Clara frowned.

Beside them, Aleena said to two servants, “You two, go take a look.”

“Yes, Mrs. Dawson.”

The servants walked over, pulled the curtain, and checked everywhere carefully, including the balcony outside.

“We’ve checked everywhere. There’s no one around.”

Clara turned to look at Jessica.

The latter was standing there in a daze. She couldn’t believe it at all.

“Impossible. I heard her voice, and I also saw her reaching out her hands to me...”

“Is it because you are too tired so you had an illusion?”

Clara loved this granddaughter a lot and she was even more so recently, since Natalia set her up and made her hide at home to avoid the scandal. Jessica must feel quite stressed about that.

Hence, although Clara was woken up by her at midnight, she didn’t become angry.

Jessica shook her head. "But... but I truly have seen her."

Aleena looked over at the window. Frowning for a moment, she asked the servant to turn off the light.

"Mom, why did you ask them to turn off the light?"

"Jessica, look! Are those the hands you've seen?"

Aleena hinted at her to look over at the window. The next second, Jessica started screaming.

Chapter 145 Strange Gift

"Ah—Don't come over! Don't come over!"

All the lights in the room were turned on.

Jessica huddled up in Clara's arms. Clara patted her gently on the back, heaving a sigh.

"Silly girl, it's nothing serious. Look carefully. That's just the curtain. You didn't close the window when

sleeping, so the wind has blown the sheer curtain. The hands you mentioned were just the sheer

curtain."

As Clara spoke, she asked Jessica to take a look herself.

Jessica looked over carefully for a while, only to find that the ghost that she mistook was truly the sheer

curtain.

She breathed a deep sigh of relief.

“Did I really have an illusion?”

“You must be quite stressful recently.”

In fact, Clare felt quite speechless when she saw how Jessica was frightened by a curtain at the midnight and woke up everyone in the house.

However, looking at Jessica’s pale face, she didn’t have the heart to blame her.

She patted Jessica on her hand. “All right. Stop thinking too much. Nothing is there. Go back to sleep.”

Then, Clara left with a group of people.

Jessica was standing motionlessly. Her lips parted, but she couldn’t utter any word.

Aleena glance at her to calm her down and left.

In the corridor, Clara suddenly paused. She asked Aleena, “Has Jessica been contacting people from

Eqitin? How is it going?”

Aleena answered respectfully, “The test has been done. They haven’t given us the response yet, but that thing has been confirmed as real. I’m sure there will be the feedback soon.”

Clara frowned, obviously unhappy about it.

Hurriedly, Aleena continued, "After all, she's been missing over twenty years. It's normal for them to be cautious. That's a super-rich and powerful family. If they have confirmed that Jessica was their child, they wouldn't ignore her."

Clara snorted loudly.

"This matter is relevant to the whole Dawson family. I can't let anything go wrong. Jessica's future and the future of our family both rely on it. You better be more careful."

Aleena answered immediately, "I know, Mom."

Clara didn't speak anything, walking away with the group of people.

Aleena gazed in the direction where Ariana had gone, exhaling gently.

Philip walked up from the back and sneered.

"It's me who managed to marry that Hawkins woman so that our Dawson family could be rich and powerful now. But what does she do? She wants to give such a huge family and business to that brat.

She doesn't care about me at all. How despicable!"

Aleena curled up her lips slightly.

"What's so important about the Dawson family?" She looked down slightly, curling up her lips into a

scheming smile.

“If this matter succeeded truly, our Jessica would become a rich and powerful girl. By then, not to

mention the Dawson family, even the Kaur family and the Miller family would kneel to us and flatter us.

Philip, you must have a long-term vision. If you always care about the small profits in front of you, you

wouldn't have a good ending.”

Philip listened to her, and his eyes lit up.

“I agree with you. We must make this matter successful. No accident is allowed.”

When they walked back to their bedroom, enormously proud of their success, Aleena suddenly paused

her pace.

“What's this?”

On the nightstand, there was a white delicate gift box, on which there was a bowknot made from a pink

ribbon. Obviously, someone deliberately put it there.

“Philip, is it you?” asked Aleena delightfully.

She thought that it was a gift from her husband, who wanted to give her a surprise.

However, Philip frowned.

“No, it’s not.”

As he spoke, he looked at Aleena in confusion.

The latter’s expression changed.

“Why are you looking at me? You and I were the only ones in this room. Neither of us put it here. Would there be a ghost?”

As soon as she finished her words, they both felt a chill running down their spine.

Their expressions slightly changed, and they started feeling creepy for no reason. In the end, Philip coughed.

“All right. Open it and check what’s in there. Then we may know who has done it. Don’t just think too much.”

Aleena agreed. She walked over and opened the gift box.

There wasn’t any valuable gift in the box. Besides a piece of metal with worn paint, there was a note.

With a frown, Aleena picked up the note.

The next second, her expression changed dramatically.

“Ah—” she let out a short exclaim.

Taking a step back, she violently tossed the note onto the bed.

“What’s wrong? What’s on the note?”

Philip picked it up curiously to read. When he saw the letters on it, his expression dramatically changed as well.

On the sky-blue note, there were letters with pretty handwriting – I’m back!

“It’s her. She came back. Her ghost has come to use for revenge!”

Aleena was in a panic. Philip looked solemn. He fiercely rubbed the note into his hand. Then his gaze fell on the piece of aluminum in the box.

It was a piece of aluminum whose paint had been scratched off after severe friction. Even they didn't know too much about vehicles, they could easily see that it should be from a certain vehicle.

“I don’t believe it! Damned ghost! Damned spirit! I’m not afraid of living humans. Why should I fear the dead?”

Upon hearing it, Aleena also calmed down a little.

“But... but why did these things appear?”

“Humph! Someone must have put it here intentionally to scare us!”

As she spoke, he picked up the thing from the box, walking out of the room.

Right then, another sharp and miserable exclaim was heard from a corner of the corridor.

It was from Jessica’s room again.

Their expressions changed, and walked towards her room together.

Before reaching the door, they saw Jessica run out of the room in a panic. This time, she was trembling

all over and her face was covered with tears.

As soon as seeing Aleena and Philip, she pounced at them as if she had seen the life-saving straw.

“Mom!”

Aleena immediately hugged her. Jessica said while weeping, “Mom, I heard that woman’s voice again.

It’s so horrible. This time it’s real. It’s not my illusion. She has truly come back!”

If it were earlier, Aleena might not believe her again.

However, after experiencing such strange things, she believed what Jessica said naturally.

“Don’t be afraid. Let’s go back to check.”

“But...”

Jessica was still scared. Philip snapped, “What are you afraid of? If there was a ghost in your room, with so many people here, would it eat you alive? Follow me.”

As he spoke, he walked into her room in the lead.

The room looked as normal as usual.

The light or the furniture was exactly the same as that when they came out.

Nothing was abnormal except that the bed was messier because of Jessica’s sudden leave.

Looking annoyed, Philip walked to the French window and checked the curtain again carefully.

Chapter 146 Some Light Exercise

There was nothing wrong with the windows, including the balcony outside. Nothing was there other than some plants.

To be sure, Philip even sent someone out over the balcony rails to check outside, and no one was

hiding underneath, either.

From the looks of it, they shouldn’t have seen anything else.

Jessica was in disbelief as well.

“How’s that possible? I heard it. A woman crying, just crying and crying, like someone’s wringing her neck. How – how could there be no one there?”

She walked in a trance over to the balcony, checking front and back in a panic.

But in reality, in a space this small, anyone hidden would have been found already. It was impossible for them to have hidden until now.

“Was it... really a ghost...”

“What do you mean ghost? I don’t believe that nonsense!”

Philip flared up and yanked the curtains down. At that moment, a small black object fell from above.

Followed quickly by the sound of sobbing.

Everyone froze.

Almost petrified.

They stared at the little object on the ground. After a while, they finally understood that the crying had come from this thing.

Aleena stooped over and picked it up. It was a mini recorder.

Someone had recorded the sound in earlier and set it on a timer. That’s why Jessica had heard the

intermittent sobbing.

“Bastard!”

She slammed the device on the ground, her expression turning ugly.

“Who was it? Who put something like this in Jessica’s room?”

The servants who’d followed inside saw what was going on and turned white in a panic.

They hurriedly shook their heads, denying their involvement.

Philip shot a dark look at Jessica.

“Who’s been in your room today?”

Jessica was still dazed. She thought for a long while and shook her head.

“There’s been too many, I don’t remember.”

All throughout the day, servants had come in and out of her room. If not half a dozen, at least three or

four would have come and gone. How were they supposed to tell who the culprit was?

“Oho! Is that so? Then call the police! Have them all interrogated. We’ll find out the truth.”

Some of the servants started begging for mercy right away.

“It really wasn’t me, sir. I’ve never done anything like that.”

“Yeah, we’ve got no grudge with Miss Jessica. Why would we do something like this? It doesn’t benefit us!”

Naturally, Philip didn’t listen.

“Enough, anyway, that’s how we’ll deal with it. Relax. If you really didn’t do it, there’ll be no consequences. But if I find out that we really have a rat in here...”

He glared at them and sneered. “Heh! Don’t blame me for what happens next!”

With that, he had the few servants who’d been in Jessica’s room put in custody, ready to call the police when morning came. Then he left.

At the McCarthy Mansion.

Everything was quiet in the bedroom when the phone at the head of the bed suddenly buzzed twice.

Natalia opened her eyes. Her slender frame was being held tightly in the man’s embrace. A thick, solid arm was wrapped around her. She could smell his fresh scent clearly in the dark.

She lifted his arm lightly off her and leant over for the phone.

It was an anonymous text, its contents simple.

“It’s done. Wire the money.”

Natalia smiled and didn’t reply. She deleted the text and put the phone back.

Behind her, the man grunted. Right afterwards, he reached out with a powerful limb and effortlessly scooped her back up into his arms.

“What is it?”

He didn’t open his eyes, and there was still sleepiness in his voice.

Natalia chuckled quietly. “Nothing. Just a spam message. Woke me up, that’s all.”

In the dark, Archie opened his eyes and looked at the woman before him.

It wasn’t completely dark inside the house. Natalia didn’t like the dark, so she left a small, warm orange floor lamp on a corner of the bedroom, giving a bit of warm light in the darkness.

He looked at the delicate features of the woman in his arms and suddenly smiled.

“If you can’t fall asleep while it’s so late, sounds like you want to do some light exercise?”

Natalia jolted, then realized the intentions of the large hand at her waist, and her body tensed.

“Stop messing around, Archie!”

“You can’t sleep, right? I just have to tire you out.”

“Archie McCarthy! Mhm...”

...

Four days later, Laura’s parts in “The Youth” were completely cleared out.

Natalia had her put in the “Chase the Wind” crew directly.

Hamlin and Nathan were friends. “Chase the Wind” might have been directed by Hamlin, but Nathan’s figure was still behind production and investment.

Natalia had been curious about the relationship between Nathan and Archie, because she’d seen

Nathan in Archie’s office more than once.

If it’d just been business, then that was fine, but they were just chatting.

She knew better than anyone else how precious Archie’s time was, which made her more curious as to what kind of relationship allowed Nathan to just laze around with him.

Until one day, Nathan took a gift up to PR and said he was looking for her.

Natalia went out to meet him, and Nathan said outright, “Sorry, Aunt Natalia. I didn’t realize who you were back then and didn’t know your relationship with my uncle. Forgive me if I’ve offended you.”

Natalia's eyes widened in astonishment.

"What'd you call me?"

"Aunt Natalia!"

Natalia sucked in a deep breath.

Seeing that, Nathan understood that she'd misunderstood and hurriedly explained, "It's like this – I'm also part of the McCarthy family in Egitin, but just one of the branches, and more distantly related, so most people don't know about it. I'm supposed to call Archie uncle, so naturally you're my aunt."

Natalia couldn't feign a normal smile any longer.

"So... that's how it is. You know about our relationship too, then?"

"Yes, yes, I know now."

Nathan put up a cautious and worried face, making Natalia wonder if he'd done something she wouldn't like.

"This is just a casual present, Aunt Natalia. Please take it."

He passed up a box.

Natalia took a step back.

She stared at him dubiously.

“All right, enough with the aunt this and aunt that, it’s awkward. Just call me by my name!”

Nathan didn’t insist. He smiled and agreed.

Natalia pointed at the gift box in his hands. “I didn’t do anything to deserve that, so please take it back!”

She said, striding off.

Nathan hurriedly stood in her way.

“Aun... Natalia, I’m actually here because something’s come up.”

Natalia looked at him in surprise. “What?”

Chapter 147 Collecting Information

“So it’s like this. Laura Davies and Victoria Kaur are both splendid choices on your part. Young,

capable, hard-working actors like them are rare nowadays. Especially Victoria – her acting is not

something you would expect from someone at her age.”

Natalia listened quietly without interrupting, waiting for the other shoe to drop.

She basically already understood what he was going to say.

As expected, Nathan continued, “The entire cast of ‘The Youth’ is going to be cleared off over the next

two months. I have a friend who's got a new project to film, but he's a young director without much fame, and it's hardly any big production. But he's taken a liking to Victoria and wanted her to join the film as the female lead. As you're close with Victoria, could you help persuade her?"

Natalia chuckled.

"That's a good thing! Why don't you tell Victoria herself? Don't you meet each other every day on set?

You should have more chances to talk to each other!"

Nathan showed an awkward face.

"That's... I won't lie, I already asked, but she didn't agree."

Natalia blinked, a little surprised.

She knew Victoria. Even though she was part of the upper crust of the media world these days, she wasn't the sort of person who would only go for big projects, nor was she like some snobs that would look down on some up and coming directors.

With the Kaur family at her back, she didn't want for resources, and the team she had with her was well-connected. Essentially, she picked projects by how much she liked them, not the size of the

production.

And now that Nathan was willing to recommend it to her, the script itself should be decent.

It was strange that Victoria didn't agree.

Natalia nodded slightly. "If that's the case, she must have her own considerations! I'm just her friend and I can't make decisions for her, so I'm afraid I might not be of much help with this matter."

Nathan hurriedly said, "I know that much, and I'm not asking you to force her, but I still want to try before throwing in the towel."

He rubbed his hands, looking both awkward and pressured. "To be honest, this friend of mine has his eye set on having her as the female lead. I'm not demanding that you persuade her, but could you please help me find out why she's not taking the project so we could know what to fix?"

Natalia thought about it, felt that it wouldn't affect anything, and considered Nathan's sincere attitude.

She agreed.

Though she still reminded him, "I'll say this first. I'm only going to ask about why she's not taking the job and I don't plan on persuading her for you. If the answer's still no, don't blame me for it."

Nathan assented hurriedly, and with the talk over, he left thanking her profusely.

He left the gift box on the desk as he excused himself.

Slightly exasperated, Natalia gave Archie a call and told him about it.

Unexpectedly, Archie only chuckled. "I told him to bring a gift here. Just take it."

Natalia was at a bit of a loss for words.

But since he'd said that much, she didn't object.

Hanging up, she gave Victoria a call and invited her out for dinner.

Victoria agreed.

At six in the evening, after getting off work, Natalia went ahead and drove to the mall she was meeting

Victoria at.

Victoria had been busy filming with her cast these days and rarely got out. Today was her chance to

relax.

Only, the moment they met, Natalia quickly sensed that Victoria didn't seem to be doing so well. Her

face was pale, and her whole being seemed drowsy.

Concerned, Natalia asked, "What's with you? Is the work too hard, or are you sick?"

She reached out to feel her forehead.

But Victoria leant away slightly, looking a little guilty as she shook her head. "Not much. Just not feeling very well, maybe because we've had night scenes to shoot lately."

Natalia didn't overthink it and nodded her understanding.

Still concerned, though, she added, "You are working so hard! Remember to take care of your body.

Don't you have assistants with you? Have them make you some soup sometime!"

Victoria forced a smile. "I dismissed all my assistants. Other than Nina, there's no one left following me."

Natalia blinked, taken aback.

Before, Victoria had servants at her beck and call wherever she went to film, like a spoiled princess.

After all, with her authority and her resources, no one dared say anything.

But now she only had one Nina besides her, anyone would find that unbelievable!

Looking at her shocked expression, Victoria smiled a sad, self-deprecating smile.

"Surprised? It's nothing. People have to strike out on their own eventually."

Natalia paused, then asked, "What do you mean by that? You've been arguing with your old man?"

Victoria didn't hide it and nodded.

"Why?"

But Victoria only acted like she didn't care to discuss it anymore, shaking her head. "It's nothing, just some messy business. It's a rare chance to relax today, so forget it. Let's go walk around the mall."

Natalia could only nod.

The two strolled about for a while and went to a finely decorated high-end restaurant for dinner.

Seeing that she wasn't feeling well, Natalia ordered some of Victoria's usual favorites.

But the dish had just come up when Victoria frowned.

"What is it? You really don't look well; do you want me to go to the hospital with you?"

Victoria hurriedly waved her hand and forced a laugh. "I'm fine."

Natalia was thoroughly worried, but seeing her determined look, she knew better than to insist.

Not long after, the dishes had all come up.

Victoria had a slim frame and had a cold elegance about her, but in private, she was a thorough carnivore. It was just that she had to keep her figure for the camera, so she didn't allow herself to eat

much meat.

Having grown up together, Natalia knew that very well.

That's why, the moment the dishes arrived, Natalia pushed a beef dish towards her, saying, "You need to look after your body. You might have to keep your figure for your projects, but you can't eat nothing.

Treat it as a holiday today and splurge a little. One big meal's not going to fatten you up that much, so relax!"

Victoria looked at the meat in front of her, her brows furrowing subtly.

But she didn't say anything and brought the meat up to her mouth.

Before she could take a bite, though, just smelling the scent of the meat brought a wave of acid gushing up her stomach.

She set down her utensils and hurriedly said, "Excuse me."

Then she rushed towards the restroom.

Before Natalia could react, she was gone.

She sat there dully staring out to space for several seconds before she realized what had happened.

This – this reaction...

It couldn't be?!!!

Chapter 148 She's Pregnant

In the bathroom, Victoria leant over the toilet, almost vomiting her guts out.

Natalia ran in, looked at her state, and almost confirmed her speculation right then and there. Her heart ached.

She went out and took a glass of water in with a napkin.

Stroking her back, she soothed, "How are you doing? Are you okay?"

Victoria waved it off, shaking her head.

It took her a long while to find her voice. "I'm fine. I'm all right."

Natalia passed her the water. She took a sip, rinsed her mouth, and wiped her mouth off with the napkin before finally saying, "I'm sorry for ruining the evening."

Natalia shook her head hurriedly. "What do you mean? You're already like this, so forget the evening, okay?"

After a while, she got a little mad. "Why didn't you tell me when something this important has happened? What's going on?"

Victoria looked at her and knew she'd already guessed it. She bit her lip.

After a while, she said, "You've probably noticed – I'm pregnant."

Natalia nodded. "With a reaction like that, anyone with a heart could have noticed."

Victoria forced a smile. The smile was full of endless loneliness.

"This is the reason why I argued with my dad."

Natalia frowned. "What do you mean by that? Why'd you argue with your dad? Who's the child's father? Why isn't he taking a stand?"

"The child's father..."

Victoria murmured, then smiled sorrowfully.

"Never mind, forget it. Can you keep this a secret, Natalia?"

Natalia frowned, clearly unhappy with how she was dodging the question about the father.

Still, she knew that Victoria was a grown-up. If she'd decided not to tell anyone, as her friend, she could only respect her choice.

Sighing, she nodded, "Rest easy, I won't tell anybody about this. But what do you plan to do with the kid? Your belly can't lie, and you have to go on camera every day!"

Victoria was in a bit of a daze, helplessness in her eyes.

After a while, she shook her head. "I don't know, either. But there's only two months before we're done with the shooting. I'll try to hide it from everyone. As for what would happen later... we'll see!"

Natalia's frown deepened.

But she didn't say anything else as she helped her out.

The two returned to their seats, their moods having changed greatly.

Natalia sighed. "To be honest, I was asked by Nathan to persuade you to take part in that project he brought up with you before. Doesn't seem possible now."

Victoria nodded. "He discussed it with me. The script's good and I liked it, but it's clear that I'm in no condition to participate."

Natalia nodded back, her fingers playing listlessly with a spoon on the table as she sank into thought.

The two had evidently lost their appetite. After a while, Natalia asked, "So where do you live now?"

Nina's just a seventeen, eighteen-year-old kid. She doesn't understand a lot of things. Can she take care of you alone?"

Victoria looked out the window. The lights had come on. Outside the window was a wide road. Traffic came and went from the road, making a scene of a bustling city night. But she felt nothing but cold.

Now, it seemed only the sister in front of her could give her a little bit of warmth.

She shook her head. "I don't know. To force me back, my dad froze all the cards under my name. He's taken back all my houses everywhere including the ones on the east coast. I'm living in the hotel arranged for the crew right now."

She paused, then smiled another pale smile. "But it's fine, we'll see where things go! I won't die, at least."

Natalia took her hand, muttering, "None of that nonsense! You still have me!"

She thought for a while and took a bank card and a keyring out of her purse, pressing it into Victoria's hands.

"Take that card. The password is my birthday. It's not a lot of money, but enough for you to spend for now. As for what comes after, we'll take it slow. The key is to the apartment I used to live in. It's not big, so you'll have to get used to it for a while. I'll stop by from time to time to visit."

She pursed her lips and continued, "I don't approve of you giving the cold shoulder to Mr. Kaur. Blood is

thicker than water, no matter what. That won't change. Besides, he's always been good to you. But I believe you've got your own troubles in this situation. If you don't want to say it, I won't ask. That's all the support I can give you. I only want the best for you."

Victoria looked at her, eyes reddening. She couldn't hold the tears back. The droplets rolled down her cheeks.

She bit her lip forcefully and lowered her head. After a long while, she said, voice trembling, "Thank you, Natalia."

Natalia forced a smile herself, her eyes stinging. An eternity later, she wiped the tears off and chuckled,

"All right, quit acting like the world's going to end. That's not the Victoria I know. If you want to keep the child, go ahead and keep it. You child has got me as a godmother! There won't be any trouble. As for the kid's father, if he doesn't want to show up, let him rot!"

Victoria knew she was trying to comfort her. Even though her heart still ached, she loosened up a bit all the same.

Accepting the goodwill, she chuckled herself. The atmosphere lightened by quite a bit.

Finishing the meal, Natalia didn't allow Victoria to keep strolling around with how her body was. She took her back to the cast right away.

After dropping Victoria off, Natalia drove home and phoned Nathan on the way.

She didn't mention the pregnancy, just that Victoria wasn't in the best position to take the job.

Over the phone, Nathan had been prepared, but hearing the answer, he still couldn't hide his disappointment.

Natalia understood. Television was a subjective business.

If the creator had decided for a person to play a role, they often consciously or subconsciously used that person as a template during the creative process.

If they found out that person couldn't participate afterwards, of course they'd be disappointed.

She comforted, "I can't do anything about it at this point. You could have your friend try more actresses.

Though you may not easily find someone like Victoria, but if you look hard enough, I'm sure you can find a suitable candidate to replace her."

Nathan laughed bitterly. "I won't lie, I've got a part in the production. We had our eyes on Victoria Kaur for the role even from before. We just didn't know enough about her to pop the question. After working

with her in 'The Youth', we reaffirmed how much we wanted her for the role. How could we shoot

properly if we scrambled to find a new actress now?"

Chapter 149 Strategies For Cannon Fodder

"Besides, this isn't like 'The Youth', it's just a small production. With actors like they are now, the ones

with even a bit of fame won't take the job, while the ones who would like to take the job just can't act

well enough. Actors like Victoria who don't pay too much attention to the size of the production and only

care about the script are rarer than rare now."

With that, he sighed. Natalia didn't have anything to say.

After a while, Nathan continued, "Actually, Jessica Dawson's been contacting me recently saying she

wants to participate in the project. She's also interested in the female lead, but because of what

happened with her before, I'm not very confident in her. With her image, if we put in the costume work,

she should at least manage to be better than other actresses, but I'm still not sure. If she gets involved

in another scandal halfway through production, it won't end well."

Natalia blinked, a little surprised.

Her eyes darted slightly as she asked, "Jessica wants the role too?"

Nathan replied, “Yeah. To be honest, even though my friend’s new to the field, he’s got good technique, or I wouldn’t be helping him. That’s why there’s still plenty of people who want to take part in the show, we just haven’t found any suitable candidates. If we really can’t manage, Jessica’s a good choice. It’s just that she’s been in too many scandals lately and her image isn’t too good – but that can be a type of publicity as well. If the filming goes well, the overall effect should be positive. It’s just a small production, after all. In the old days, a production this size managing to get someone like her on the cast wouldn’t have been plausible.”

Natalia thought for a while, then smiled.

“All right, got it. If it’s convenient, can you send me a copy of the script? I’ll get back to you tomorrow.”

Nathan jolted, a little surprised. He didn’t know what she meant by that.

But he didn’t ask too many questions. He simply agreed and hung up.

Natalia drove home. The moment she stepped inside, her phone beeped. She had a new email in her mailbox.

As she changed out her shoes, she took a look. Nathan had sent her an electronic copy of the script.

Archie was home already. He'd known she was going out with some of her female friends today, so he didn't disturb her.

The man had already finished his meal at this time and retired to the reading room.

Changing her shoes, Natalia went upstairs and didn't go to Archie but went directly to the bedroom.

Turning her computer on, she looked through the entirety of the script Nathan had sent her.

The script wasn't long. It was just an eighteen-episode-long web series. But because she was paying attention to the details, it took her quite a bit of time.

Archie went out of the reading room and saw her sitting in front of the computer. She looked focused, so he didn't disturb her.

But when he finished his shower, cleaned up and went out, he found her still sitting there, totally concentrated.

He shot a look at the time. It was past twelve at night and he couldn't help but frown.

"What are you looking at?"

Natalia was fully concentrating when the deep voice rang out behind her, and she jumped.

Turning around, she saw that it was Archie and she sighed.

“Oh, nothing, just a script.”

“What script’s so important you’re staying up to read it now?”

The man said, already bending over to look over her shoulder. He circled his arm around her and

clicked the mouse, seeing the script’s name.

“Strategies for Cannon Fodder”

He cocked an eyebrow and Natalia couldn’t help but blushed, stammering an explanation. “It’s just a

temporary name, they’re changing it later, er... that’s, this is the script for a web series. The production

size isn’t big, so I’m just looking through it.”

Archie chuckled. “A script like that is worth staying up until this hour?”

Saying that, he pointed deliberately at his wristwatch.

Only then did Natalia realize it had gotten this late. She made a sound of assent and followed him to

bed.

At the same time.

In the Dawson household.

Jessica was giving Nathan a call.

It was past midnight, but for someone in their line of work, it couldn't be considered late at all. In fact, it was even early.

Naturally, Nathan was no exception. He was a famous night owl. He'd just finished discussing points with a producer when he left the hotel and received Jessica's call.

"Need something, Jessica?"

Jessica clutched her phone nervously, a forced smile on her face.

"It's like this, Mr. McCarthy. I hear you've got a script and you're looking for a female lead?"

Nathan narrowed his eyes. He knew what Jessica was calling for, and still made it out to be awkward.

"I do, but I'm not the director, it's one of my friends. He's new in the business and doesn't have much experience..."

"It's fine. So long as the script is good, it doesn't matter who the director is."

Nathan chuckled.

"Is that so. Have you called that friend of mine, then?"

That touched Jessica's nerves.

That up-and-coming director was called Vicente Langes or something. He wasn't very famous, but he had a big temper.

She was one of the top-line actresses in the business. Even with all the scandals, she still had scores of fans.

It was an honor to have her participate in his works, but he actually refused?

That man didn't know what was good for him!

But as things stood now, Jessica didn't have any better choices. From her roles throughout her career, this character suited her all the more.

Knowing that Vicente was Nathan's friend and Nathan was actually going to be on producing, she knew the quality wouldn't be bad.

It was a web series, but web series were getting popular now. This might turn things around.

Considering that, Jessica took a deep breath, suppressed her discontent, and beamed, "I called, but

Director Langes doesn't seem to know me very well, and I'm not too familiar with him. You know me,

Director McCarthy. Last time was just an accident. If you can give me a chance this time around, I'll put

up a good performance. I won't let you down."

To be honest, Nathan was getting swayed.

After all, with Vicente's personality, the whole shooting could be stalled if they didn't find the right candidate.

People who thought they were the most obstinate person in the world probably hadn't met Vicente.

If it hadn't been for how intractable he was, someone that talented wouldn't have found himself in a place like this.

He was middle-aged already, but still a new director.

Thinking of that, Nathan sighed.

He did want to help his friend out, so he said, "I'll discuss it with him, then! If it's all right, I'll call you back."

If he put it like that, he was basically agreeing already.

Jessica heaved a sigh of relief.

Smiling, she said, "Thanks, Director McCarthy."

Nathan grunted, didn't discuss it with her too much, and hung up.

Morning the next day, he went to visit Vicente directly.

Vicente had set up a small workshop. Or rather, a little homemade workspace.

He was so poor he couldn't even afford proper equipment. Everything was rented. He had it

rough.

Chapter 150 Not A Good Fit

Entering the office, Nathan sat down directly on the crinkled sofa opposite the desk.

Sitting behind his desk, Vicente shot him a look and didn't speak.

His fingers were working on whatever had the keyboard clicking and tapping all over the place. Looked

like he was typing something up.

Nathan didn't disturb him. He sat there, legs crossed, lit a cigarette and waited.

After half an hour or so, Vicente stopped, stood, and poured himself a glass of water.

"What are you here for? Out with it!"

The blunt tone sent Nathan reeling, who snapped, "What, I can't just stop by and see you?"

Vicente chuckled. "You wouldn't be here for any reason but business."

Nathan had no words. "..."

They were college classmates and had been friends from that time.

Both talented souls, they'd found things to appreciate about each other as they interacted.

It was just that, compared to Vicente, Nathan was more flexible in his dealings, so he'd made good after his debut. A few of his works had later become blockbusters, and now he was a hotshot director.

Vicente was different. He'd had his chance early on, but his temper had got him in trouble with someone big, and he ended up ostracized.

All these years, even with Nathan helping him, he'd never found a good chance.

Nathan knew what his friend was like, so he wasn't really angry.

He tossed the documents in his hands onto the desk, muttering, "There are some advertisements from the investors. Take a look."

Vicente shot it a look and didn't even flip through it. He just grunted without following up.

Seeing that, Nathan found himself thoroughly annoyed.

"What the hell do you want from me, Langes? I set this up for you personally and you're here looking like you're above this business! There is an investor, so can you rein it in with the attitude? Do you know how hard it is to gather investors for this script of yours?"

Vicente didn't get mad at the scolding.

He picked up the paperwork and leafed through it casually.

Then he tossed it to the side like he was done with his chores.

"I got it. I'll do it."

Nathan was speechless. "..."

He rolled his eyes. "Fine, I can't change your personality. I'm not asking for much. We can't go with

Victoria for the female lead this time. But every other normal person is staying away and the people

who're coming in are all weirdos. I'm giving you a choice here. Keep on waiting or pick Jessica

Dawson. Make it yourself!"

Vicente stirred, his lazy eyelids twitching. Then, very determinedly, he said.

"I'll keep waiting!"

Nathan wanted to pick up the ashtray and throw it at him!

"Wait? You can afford to wait? What if the investors leave? Who're you going to get to invest in you

again?"

Vicente didn't reply.

Nathan's brain was starting to hurt.

He was his friend, but he had to baby this man like a father!

Why did he even bother?

Finally, he sighed and kept trying. "The business is cruel, Vicente. It took you so much trouble to refine the script. You can't be content watching it waste away in your hands, right? With a subject like this, it might be fine for these couple of years, but another couple years later, no one's going to pay attention to it. What then? Think about your dreams; are you willing to stay cooped up here forever? Is making a bit of concession really so difficult?"

Hearing his words, Vicente's rock-carved mask of a face finally twitched a bit.

He lifted his head and gazed straight at Nathan, his razor sharp lips finally parting under his messy mustache after a long while.

"I can switch out the actress, but I don't want Jessica Dawson."

Nathan flung out his hands. "Why?"

"She's not a good fit."

“Then who is?”

“Dunno.”

“You—”

Nathan almost sprang up from the sofa. Rubbing his temples, he shook his head.

“Fine, whatever, You want to keep doing this, then keep doing it. Let’s see what you’re going to do

when the investors all leave!”

With that, he took his clothes and made to leave.

But before he took one step out the door, Vicente’s stubborn voice rang out from behind him.

“Lend me your computer.”

Nathan spun around and yelled in a rage, “No! Don’t you have one? Why do you have to use mine?”

“Mine’s broken.”

He turned the monitor around to face him.

The ancient display showed a black screen with a long line of code.

Nathan realized that the tapping wasn’t him typing words, but code.

He was so pissed he couldn't form coherent sentences.

He pointed at Vicente, fed up.

"What do you want me to say? If you'd only budge a little bit, do you think you'd still be stuck here

without a single work to your name? If you'd just change that temperament of yours, do you think you'd

be troubled to buy something like a computer? You... miserable old coot!"

Vicente smiled and didn't take his words seriously.

He stretched and said mildly, "Have someone bring the computer over. I need it before four o'clock."

Then he just got up and left.

Nathan felt like snapping him in half and throwing him out the window!

But at four in the afternoon, a brand new laptop was still delivered on time to Vicente's office.

Over the phone, Nathan sent him a vicious text. "I had someone build this specifically for me, Langes!

It's expensive! So be goddamned careful when you use it! If you break it or delete something by

accident, I'm going to burn those orchids of yours in their pots!"

Vicente was still smiling. He didn't bother replying, simply taking up the computer and starting his work.

First, he moved a video from the hard drive to his new computer. He clicked on one of the files absent-

mindedly. There was a video in there.

It would take time for the files to load. There was nothing to do while waiting, so he clicked on it.

It was a stage performance.

Looking at the scene and the setup, this should be an audition.

In the picture, a woman in black armor and a red feathered helm stood there, hefting a spear. Her brow was fierce without arching, and there was experienced determination in her eyes. Without making a single motion, she emanated power and authority.

On the stage, a woman in courtly dress sobbed, voice trembling, "You're here, after all!"

The armored lady lifted her chin, imperious gaze sweeping the land. She slammed the butt of her spear against the ground.

"Yes, I am here!"