

KINDA SWEET 351

Chapter 351 Find Out the Murderer

It was reasonable that Mr. Kawn made a big deal out of it.

There were tensions between the four families. Anything could set off a chain reaction.

Although the Kawn family had decided to be connected with the Bissel family through marriage, it did not mean that the Kawn family wanted to offend the McCarthy family openly.

It was the best choice for the Kawn family to remain neutral.

Everyone present knew how serious the matter was, so they raised no opinion.

Some people, who tried to curry favor with the McCarthy family, assisted in the search very enthusiastically.

Half an hour passed.

No remote-controlled toy was found on any of the guests.

Natalia looked on coldly and did not speak.

Though she knew the truth, she couldn't put it blunt herself as it may cause misunderstandings.

It was better to sit back and let nature take its course.

Anyway, since it happened, everyone had been called into the lobby. It was impossible for anyone to

leave or destroy the evidence.

Mr. Kawn said, "Such being the case, it means that the toy can only be found on people who live in this mansion. Wilson, you order your men to search all rooms and make body searches."

Wilson slightly frowned, but did not raise any objection. He agreed and had his men search rooms.

One guest mumbled in dissatisfaction, "The child is fine. Is it necessary to make a fuss?"

As soon as he finished, people besides him glared at him, so he stopped going further.

Not far away, Jessica stood in a corner, with a pale face.

Matthew's face darkened as he looked at her.

"Dad, there are so many rooms. Let me go to help Wilson."

He whispered to Mr. Kawn.

Mr. Kawn nodded.

Matthew turned around and walked toward the room.

Natalia looked at Matthew's back and squinted.

Just then, Anne suddenly tugged at Natalia's sleeve.

"Mommy."

Natalia turned and looked down at her.

"What's the matter?"

Anne looked up, with a pair of dark eyes as clear as crystal. She said in an innocent way, "Mommy, tonight, I heard the dialogue between auntie and uncle in the back garden."

Natalia was stunned

She turned to glance at Jessica, who wrung her handbag strap perhaps because of feeling guilty.

Jessica's expression couldn't be seen clearly, but Natalia could sense that Jessica was uneasy from her movement.

Jessica did not dare to look up at Natalia because of her guilt.

So, Jessica did not know Anne was talking to Natalia.

Natalia turned her gaze and asked softly, "What did you hear?"

Anne frowned, thought for a few seconds and said, "That uncle asked the auntie not to make trouble for you, but that auntie was unhappy and said something else."

It was not easy for Anne that was less than six years old to repeat the dialogue.

Natalia thought for a while and whispered, "My good child. Don't put it in your mind. You're the best child in the world. I'll protect you."

Anne kept her bright eyes wide open and nodded seriously.

After comforting the child, Natalia got up and walked to the room for body search.

Jessica was just called to the room for body search.

However, that toy wasn't found on Jessica's body or her room.

She came out at ease, threw an offending look at Natalia and said with a gentle smile, "Natalia, I'm sorry to let you down. The butterfly is not on me."

Natalia squinted

Jessica leaned away and walked toward Mr. Kawn with a smug look.

Just then, a cry came from the door.

Matthew dragged a young maid, pushed her to the floor and threw one thing.

It was the remote-controlled butterfly shoot by the surveillance camera.

"Dad, she's the criminal!"

"No, not me."

The maid looked alarmed and explained, "Mr. Kawn, I've never seen this toy butterfly before. I did nothing. I don't know why it's in my room."

"Stop it! It was found in your room. I heard that you happened to be absent when the accident happened. Who else could it be?"

The maid failed to argue for her own and almost cried.

Natalia frowned, stepped forward and asked, "What's your name?"

The maid didn't know Natalia, but she could tell that Natalia was not an ordinary person.

She hurriedly replied, "My name is Misty."

"Where were you when it happened?"

"I, I went to Miss Jessica's room to fetch something for her."

"Miss Jessica?"

Natalia slightly tilted her head and looked at Jessica who stood on the side.

Jessica smiled and said, "Well, after I came down, I found that I forgot to take the landscape painting that I wanted to give to grandpa as a gift, so I let Misty get it. Is there a problem?"

Natalia sneered. "What a coincidence. You asked her to go to your room at the very juncture?"

Jessica put on a gentle and generous smile, "Are you suspicious of because of that?"

Mr. Kawn frowned and looked at Natalia.

Natalia stopped looking sullen and said in a deep voice, "No."

She turned her head and looked at Misty, "You said you went to her room. Can anyone prove it?"

Misty looked a little flustered and fumbled for words, "I, no, no one can prove it, because the servants are busy receiving guests in the hall."

Natalia nodded, "So, no one can prove that you weren't present when it happened?"

Misty was more flustered.

"I didn't push Miss Anne into the water. There's no earthly reason for me to do so! It's an odd coincidence.

Mr. Kawn lost his patience and shouted angrily, "Call the police! Drag this bastard out of here! Tell the police that she is guilty of murder."

"Yes."

Someone came forward and dragged Misty.

Misty was so terrified that she struggled desperately.

Chapter 352 Be Wronged

"Miss Jessica, save me! I was wronged! Miss Jessica, save me."

At this point, Misty rushed to Jessica and wanted to ask for help.

However, she had been dragged back before she succeeded.

Jessica saw this, with an embarrassed look on her face.

"Grandpa, the devil made her do it. How about...?"

"Don't plead for her!"

Mr. Kawn interrupted Jessica and said angrily, "She could do such a cruel thing to a six-year-old child.

How evil she is. We will never protect such a vicious woman."

Hearing that, Misty cried in despair.

Jessica sighed.

She persuaded in a soft voice, "Sorry, I cannot help you. May God bless you."

With that, she turned her head apologetically.

A person sneered, "Why do you keep such a vicious woman? Miss Jessica is too kind and even argue

for such a woman."

"Yes, she could do such an evil thing to a child. The child is the daughter of the McCarthy family.

Clearly, she wants to destroy the relationship between the two families. How tricky she is."

"She may not be an ordinary maid. She could do such a thing. Maybe someone asked her to do so."

"How terrible! How could a woman be so vicious?"

"Fortunately, she's found out. Otherwise, it would be so awful to be surrounded by such an evil person.

"

"Miss Jessica is so kind. She even felt sympathetic to such a woman."

Jessica listened to the discussion and curled her lips.

Selena, out of the crowd, clenched her fist and really wanted to rush over.

However, a small figure had suddenly rushed to Misty.

The old Mrs. McCarthy was frightened and cried, "Anne, what are you doing?"

Anne ran to Misty, stopped the two bodyguards that dragged Misty, and put Misty's hand on her back.

Everyone was confused. Even Misty was so surprised that she was at a loss for what to do.

Standing in the crowd, Jessica frowned.

Anne let go of Misty, turned around and looked at Mr. Kawn.

"Mr. Kawn, she's not the one that pushed me down."

The house was in an uproar.

Mr. Kawn frowned and said in displeasure.

"Anne, do you know what you are talking about?"

Anne looked very serious, and said word by word of, "Of course. I mean, she is not the one that pushed me into the swimming pool."

Everyone reacted.

"Who else could it be?"

"We have the evidence. How could it not be her?"

"Yes. Miss Anne did not see the murderer. Even the surveillance camera didn't shoot the murderer.

Why was Miss Anne so sure that Misty didn't do it?"

Another discussion was stirred up.

The old Mr. McCarthy suddenly opened his mouth.

"All right, everybody, quiet down."

He looked at Anne with a gentle look and said softly, "My granddaughter, how did you find that this maid was not the one that pushed you down?"

Anne turned her head, pulled Misty's hand and said earnestly, "The woman that pushed me had very soft hands. Though she used much strength, I could feel her hands soft and slender when she touched shoulder."

"This maid's hands are so big and thick. When her hands were against my shoulder, I felt her hard bones. I was not comfortable at all, so I didn't think she was the one that pushed me."

Once again, there was an uproar.

Misty stood still. After moments, she looked at Anne in disbelief.

As a maid, Misty was rough with hand work. Moreover, she was born with larger bones, so her hands were bigger than other girls.

In addition, Misty was very thin. Therefore, at the first glance, her hands were like a man's, very powerful.

Anne couldn't feel them soft when such hands were against her shoulder.

Hearing Anne's analysis, the old men all frowned.

Misty was so grateful that she almost knelt down.

"Miss Anne is right. I didn't do that. I am a maid. I don't hate Miss Anne. There's no reason for me to harm her. Someone must put that butterfly toy in my room to frame me!"

Misty shouted and the expression on Jessica's face changed.

Jessica sighed and said softly, "But it turns out that other people have no motives and opportunity to do that."

Jessica paused and said, "Misty, I know you're afraid. You might have your own difficulties. Don't worry.

As long as you are willing to tell the truth and admit your faults, my grandpa will forgive you."

Misty shook her head hurriedly.

"No, I didn't do that. Miss Jessica, I beg you to believe me. I didn't harm Miss Anne."

Jessica frowned tightly. A hint of impatience flashed across her eyes.

"I'd like to believe you. Miss Anne is only six years old. Her senses might be wrong. How can you prove that you are not the murderer?"

Misty was stunned.

She did not expect that Jessica would say so.

A wave of despair and panic swept over her. She shook her head and said, "I, I don't know."

Jessica sighed without a word.

Jessica was like a good person that was trying to persuade a prisoner who refused to confess her fault.

Just then, Natalia suddenly spoke.

"It's not hard to find the murderer."

The crowd all looked at Natalia in surprise.

Natalia had taken the butterfly toy.

The pink butterfly was true to life after Natalia twisted it with her delicate and beautiful fingertips. It

could be imagined how Anne took it as a real butterfly in the dim light and chased after it.

Mr. Kawn frowned and asked patiently, "What do you mean?"

Natalia looked up and smiled, "As Anne just said, Misty is not the one that pushed her into the water.

The toy is the evidence."

Everyone was shocked.

They had no idea about what Natalia meant.

Even the old Mr. McCarthy and the old Mrs. McCarthy got puzzled and looked at Natalia in a daze.

Only Archie's eyes darkened as he looked at that toy. He got it instantly.

Chapter 353 Find Out the Evidence

Mr. Kawn said in a deep voice, "Natalia, this toy is found out in her room. Didn't it prove that she was

the murderer? She refused to tell her motives. Never mind. If she suffered and knew it was useless to

plead, she would tell the truth."

Natalia frowned.

She did not expect that Mr. Kawn would be such an arbitrary person.

She shook her head and said in a deep voice, "No, though you found out the toy in Misty's room, it

doesn't mean it belongs to her."

Everyone was suddenly confused.

Matthew sneered, "What do you mean?"

"We can get more detailed evidence from the toy."

Natalia picked up that toy, showed it and said, "Look. This toy is very common. Look at it carefully. You

can find somewhere wet on its wing. I sniffed it and it had a whiff of perfume. I didn't remember what perfume it was, but it occurred to me that it was the one, Giorgio Armani Parfums when someone passed by me.

"As we know, the perfume is very popular as soon as it comes out. It's an expensive brand. Misty is just a maid. She can't afford it even with one year's salary. If the toy was hers, how could it have such a strong smell of perfume? So, I think someone, who was afraid of being found out, threw the toy to Misty's room to frame Misty."

Hearing that, everyone was shocked. No one could think that the truth was so complex.

The expression on Jessica's face slightly changed. A panic flashed across her eyes.

"Who is the murder?" someone asked.

Natalia curled her lips and looked at Jessica with a half-smile, "What a coincident. I happened to smell

it when Miss Jessica passed by. Jessica, can you explain?

Jessica's face changed. Her eyes twinkled and she stammered, "Natalia, I don't know what you are talking about!"

"You don't admit it? It doesn't matter. Its wing is wet. I don't think you gave the wing a spray of perfume.

I think, you may break the perfume bottle or the perfume spilled out. Miss Jessica, can you show me your handbag?"

Jessica was in a panic and wanted to refuse, but the old Mrs. McCarthy had tipped Nancy a wink. The latter immediately came forward and snatched away Jessica's purse.

"What are you doing? Natalia, it wasn't me."

Before Jessica could finish, Natalia had opened the handbag.

Sure enough, inside the bag was something wet, with the strong aroma of the perfume, clearly.

Jessica looked at Natalia with a pale face.

Natalia turned around, handed the bag to Mr. Kawn and said with a sneer, "That's her. Anyone who doesn't believe me can come to have a look and smell to see if I've set her up!"

No one caught on things quickly.

When they came to their senses, they looked at Jessica in disbelief and people's discussions mixed into a rumble.

"How did that happen? Jessica did it!"

"This's too incredible. Just now she pleaded for the servant, I thought she was a good person! I didn't think she was the culprit!"

"She used tactics of a thief crying "stop thief". How tricky!"

"If she hadn't been found out I'd have thought she'd been a good person all along!"

"It's dreadful!"

They soon discussed it in a sarcastic tone.

Mr. Kawn held the hand bag and looked at the marks caused by perfume that spilled out. Her face darkened.

Even Wilson frowned in displeasure.

"Jessica, can you explain it?"

"I..."

Jessica was at a loss, as she didn't expect Natalia would be so careful and find out the evidence that she concealed.

Therefore, she was lost for words.

Seeing that Jessica kept silent, "You put this butterfly toy in the bag, looking for an opportunity to do

harm to Anne, but the perfume spilled out by accident and let to fragrance on the toy.

"You're afraid of being found out, so you left the toy in Misty's room to whitewash yourself, but the

evidence had been left.

"What else can you say?"

Jessica's face was pale.

She glanced at Natalia and Mr. Kawn. Then she said in a trembling voice, "Grandpa, I did not harm

Anne. I don't hold a grudge against her, so why did I harm her?"

Her voice trembled and her face turned pale, as she pretended to look poor. Mr. Kawn instantly

frowned and couldn't bear to see it.

The old Mrs. McCarthy knew that Mr. Kawn would be partial.

Therefore, she interrupted, "Why is the toy in your handbag? Why was Anne pushed into the pool?"

Jessica hesitated for a moment, and said in a low voice, "I admit that I did bring this butterfly toy here to

amuse Anne, but I swear that I did not harm Anne!"

Someone sarcastically said, "How can your words be self-contradictory? You admit the toy is yours but deny having harmed Anne?"

Tracy forced a smile and explained, "Maybe Jessica had her own difficulties. I hoped that you could listen to her explanation before drawing a conclusion."

The man stopped going further as Tracy had stood for Jessica.

Jessica continued, "I took the butterfly over there to please Anne and gave it to her as a gift. But I didn't expect Anne would fall into the pool by accident when she chased after the butterfly toy. I was so terrified that I subconsciously reached her to grab, but failed since it was too late.

"Seeing Anne fell into the water, I was surprised and afraid. I wanted to go down to save her, but people outside came over after hearing the noise.

"I was afraid of being wronged by the allegation that I pushed her down on purpose, so I escaped.

Later, I was afraid that you misunderstood or blamed me, so I put the toy in Misty's room.

"I'm sorry. It's my fault. I shouldn't have done it, but I was too afraid. I didn't intend to harm Anne."

Chapter 354 Treat the Same Way

Jessica cried her eyes out.

But no one showed sympathy for her, except Mr. Kawn.

And their gaze at her were full of disdain.

After all, just now, she persuaded Misty to admit the guilt. If Misty did, she would intercede for Misty to gain everybody's favor

If a person like her made it and no one found out the truth, the result would be horrible.

Therefore, everyone expressed contempt for Jessica.

When Natalia came to speak for Misty, Archie had known the truth.

Since Natalia had stood out to nail Jessica's lies, he would only sit back and do nothing.

The old Mr. McCarthy and the old Mrs. McCarthy were astonished and angry about the truth.

They just wanted to dismember Jessica.

Due to a grudge between Jessica and Natalia, they disliked Jessica. They did nothing to punish

Jessica because she was Mr. Kawn's granddaughter.

They never thought she'd be mad enough to deal with a child!

The old Mr. McCarthy said in a deep voice, "Mr. Kawn, she's your granddaughter. I'll just get to the

point. Anne is the only grandchild of the McCarthy family. We're all protective of her. Today she got

frightened. I dislike making a fuss. I just can't stand my granddaughter being bullied. Just tell me what you'll do."

Mr. Kawn didn't look well.

He never thought that it was Jessica's fault.

He couldn't blame Jessica in front of so many people.

After all, he made a lot of efforts to find her granddaughter. Everyone knew that he was about to introduce the identity of Jessica to everyone on his birthday party. If he embarrassed Jessica in public, he would put himself in an awkward situation.

Therefore, Mr. Kawn said with a sullen face, "Jessica did make a mistake. I'll let her apologize to you."

Then he hinted at Jessica.

Jessica hurried forward and cried, "Natalia, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done that to Anne or escaped when she fell into the pool. I'm sorry."

Then she turned her head and said to Anne, "Anne, I didn't mean it. I just wanted to have fun with you. I'm sorry. Can you forgive me?"

When Jessica apologized to a child, it did impress everyone.

At least, someone felt sympathetic to Jessica when she apologized humbly to the mother and daughter.

Soon, some men spoke for her.

"Mrs. McCarthy, Jessica didn't mean it. Anne is alright and you're sisters. Just let it go."

"Yes, she has apologized."

"Today is a happy day. Let's enjoy ourselves and forget about it."

Mr. Kawn looked at Natalia expectantly.

He knew that only Natalia's forgiveness worked since Anne was her daughter.

It must be Archie and Natalia that forgave Natalia.

Natalia sat there, lowered her head and twisted her ring with a faint smile.

"Do you think that an apology can solve the problem?"

Mr. Kawn was annoyed.

Then he showed his discontent.

"What do you want?"

"What do I want? Since the servant wrongly regarded as the murderer needed to be prosecuted for

murder, Jessica can't be exception."

The atmosphere changed in an instant.

Everyone looked at Natalia with a wry look.

What a joke.

That maid was nothing, but Jessica was a noble lady.

If her case was handed over to the court, Mr. Kawn's birthday party would become juicy gossip.

It would embarrass the Kawn family. As was known to all, Mr. Kawn intended to let Jessica get married to the youngest son of the Bissel family.

If the family conflict that couldn't be resolved became the prosecution case, the Bissel family wouldn't consider letting Jessica be the daughter-in-law.

Mr. Kawn was fuming with anger.

The old McCarthys sat aside without a word.

They appreciated Natalia secretly.

Mr. Kawn and they were friends in need, so it was not good for them to embarrass Mr. Kawn.

Moreover, they were much older than Jessica. If they pursued Jessica, it would inevitably make people

feel that they were bullying the young.

But Natalia was different.

She was Anne's mother and the age of Jessica. It was reasonable for her to propose some requirements.

Mr. Kawn glared at her but failed to retort since it was his granddaughter's mistake.

Jessica became flustered.

"Natalia, I didn't mean it. I know you hate me very much because of this thing.

"Today is my grandpa's birthday. Can you forgive me once for the sake of my grandpa?"

Though Natalia had heard lots of deceitful statements from Jessica, she felt disgusted when hearing that.

She sneered, "Jessica, do you have any evidence to prove that you didn't do it on purpose? Do you

have proof that you were trying to pull her instead of pushing her?"

Jessica's face changed!

Mr. Kawn suddenly smashed the table.

"Stop it."

He looked at Natalia coldly, "We've never wanted to shift the responsibility of frightening Anne, but it

doesn't mean that others can slander the Kawn family

"No evidence shows that she wanted to save or harm Anne. So, you'd better stop talking nonsense."

Natalia's face darkened.

Archie spoke before she could.

"Whether it is nonsense or not should be judged by the police. I know you're protective of your

granddaughter. It doesn't mean that you can treat my daughter as dirt."

Chapter 355 Force Her to Apologize

"Since you trust her so much and believe that she won't harm my daughter, why not let the police find

out the truth to prove her innocence?"

Mr. Kawn was speechless.

Some guests expected a good show.

The McCarthy family and the Kawn family were in conflict.

Maybe they were in conflict long ago.

Just then, Mr. Kawn's face changed.

He held his chest, gasping for breath and his face turned red as if he could not breathe.

the Kawn family was surprised at that and hurried over.

"Mr. Kawn!"

"Dad!"

"Grandpa!"

"Call a doctor!"

Fortunately, the family doctor was available. When he finished doing a body check for Anne, he didn't

leave but wait outside.

Then, he rushed in, opened the medicine box, and did first aid for Mr. Kawn.

Tracy was so anxious that her eyes were red.

She turned to look at Natalia and begged, "Mrs. McCarthy, I know that you and Jessica are on bad

terms. She has done a lot of bad things to you. She made such a mistake today, so you don't want to

let go of her that easily.

But today's Mr. Kawn's birthday. Can you forgive Jessica for the sake of Mr. Kawn?

If you are not satisfied with Jessica's apology. I'm here to apologize to you. If you continue to pursue this matter, Mr. Kawn couldn't stand such a blow."

Matthew said with a sullen look, "Jessica is our family member. She did something wrong. As her uncle, I should bear the responsibility.

"If you continue to pursue this matter, just blame it on me. She didn't intend to kill Anne, but ran away because she was afraid of being misunderstood.

"If anything happened to Anne, I wouldn't say a word. However, Anne is safe and sound. I hope you can spare her life for Mr. Kawn."

There was an uproar.

Clearly, Natalia was put in a dilemma. If she did care about the relationship between the McCarthy family and the Kawn family, she would have to let go of Jessica.

Natalia did not expect things would go like that.

She looked at Matthew coldly and said in a deep voice, "You've pleaded for her humbly. If I continue to pursue this matter, I would look too heartless."

The old Mrs. McCarthy frowned and looked at the Kawn family disdainfully.

But she didn't go further for the sake of Mr. Kawn

The old Mr. McCarthy had got closer to check out Mr. Kawn's condition.

Fortunately, the doctor was familiar with Mr. Kawn's illness, so it just took him a while to make Mr. Kawn

come to his senses. Mr. Kawn was much better after taking medicine.

"How are you? Wilhelm, can you hold up?"

Mr. Kawn nodded and looked much better.

He looked up at Natalia, with coldness in his clouded eyes.

"That's good. I'm grateful for what you've done. I'll do something in return and won't let Anne feel wronged."

Natalia smiled.

"As long as you're well, that's good. After all, I just want justice instead of death."

Mr. Kawn was stunned.

Clever men all knew what she meant, that was, he was forcing her to make a decision with his life.

He couldn't retort as that was the truth.

Natalia said, "You don't have to do something in return. People that make mistakes can't shift responsibility to others. For your sake, I won't charge Jessica with murder, but she needs to make an earnest apology.

"Jessica didn't mean to make Anne fall into the water with the toy, but it did happen and she even escaped when Anne struggled in the pool.

"She even put the blame on the maid. So, she's the one that mess up the party.

"You should not only apologize to Anne and me, but bow to the maid, Misty, and all guests disturbed by you, right?"

"Natalia, you!"

Jessica almost did not hold back.

However, she finally swallowed her tongue back.

Mr. Kawn looked terrible.

So did Matthew.

They knew Natalia's intention.

Such a scandal about Jessica was not a small matter.

It would be known to the upper class in Egitin very soon.

By then, Jessica would get a bad reputation.

With the support of Mr. Kawn, she was the noble daughter of the Kawn family.

Everyone knew that Mr. Kawn was partial to her, so they wouldn't say anything though they were dissatisfied.

However, if she bowed and apologized to all the guests and the servant in a humble manner, the gossip would be different.

A noble lady bowed and apologized to the guests and the servant who were inferior to her. If word got out about it, it would put the Kawn family to shame.

By then, she would be taunted by everyone.

She would be like a clown. No matter how noble she was, she would be laughed at because she once bowed to a servant.

The upper class couldn't stand it.

"Natalia, do you go too far?"

Wilson asked.

Natalia smiled and said, "Matthew, when we were kids, teachers taught us to admit mistakes and current them. At that time, we would keep them in mind since they were right.

"Why do we forget them after we grew up and got a higher status?

"Moreover, I did it for your sake. The Kawn family is a rich and powerful family in Eqitin. Jessica represents the image of the Kawn family.

"She could escape and let a child struggle in the water because she was afraid. Next time, if she made more serious mistakes, it would be too late to make up for it."

Chapter 356 She Wants Revenge

"So, I only want to act in your place to get her to improve her memory. Knowing that she's done something wrong, she should apologize. If she doesn't want to lower that proud head, then she had better not make such a mistake again. That way, she'll remember it next time. Wouldn't you say?"

Wilson didn't have a reply to that for the moment.

Mulling it over, it actually somewhat made sense.

So he didn't say anything about it.

Natalia smiled at Jessica.

“Then start apologizing now, please!”

Jessica’s face turned an array of different colors. Looking at Natalia’s pleased expression, she wanted to rip her to shreds right then and there.

Biting her lower lip, she looked, humiliated, over at Wilhelm.

The old man, though, wore a severe, tightly wound expression, not even once looking at her.

Jessica’s gut took a blow.

She looked at Matthew, who simply nodded slightly at her, and knew there was no room to budge over this.

No matter how much she didn’t want to, she could only walk up and say to Misty, “I’m sorry.”

Misty had worked at the Kawn family household for two years. She usually had to be perfectly reverent of the masters of the house, and they’d never once apologized to her.

Losing her nerve, she waved it off.

“I-It’s fine.”

Fists clenched, Jessica grit her teeth and walked to another guest, repeating, “I’m sorry.”

The guest took a hurried step back and said it was fine as well.

Jessica proceeded towards the next guest.

It went on for half an hour before she'd finished apologizing to the guests.

Jessica swore she'd never apologized so much in her life. Most people, considering the Kawn family reputation, didn't make too much of it or show any funny faces.

But a few of them still couldn't hold in their laughter.

With an atmosphere like this, the laughs were clearly mocking.

Jessica's face instantly turned ugly, swelling almost purple.

Meanwhile, Wilhelm had seen enough. He had someone push his wheelchair straight into the lounge.

Half an hour later, the "apology party" eventually ended.

And the birthday banquet ended with that comedic scene.

Having seen the show and finished their celebrations, the guests naturally dispersed.

Natalia, pleased with the results, deliberately said goodbye to Wilhelm before she left.

Wilhelm was so angry his brows seemed to merge with his eyes, and he didn't even look at her.

But Natalia didn't mind. She said goodbye with a smile before leaving with Anne.

On the other side, Ein Bissel looked at everything that had happened that night. Even though he didn't say anything, he was already starting to get dissatisfied with Jessica.

He wanted to arm up against the McCarthy family, yes, so even though he'd known about Jessica's past and the grudge she had with Natalia, he didn't care so long as she brought that 15% Kawn family share as her dowry.

But that didn't mean he was willing to let his son marry a moron who was only good for getting in trouble!

In Ein's eyes, whether Jessica had tried to do Anne in was irrelevant.

The important thing was, she didn't have the ability to resolve the trouble she started herself.

A woman who didn't know how to clean up her own mess had no business matching up with his son and entering the Bissel family!

What, were the Bissels supposed to wipe her ass if she got in more trouble outside?

So, before he left, Ein went to Wilhelm, and when old man Kawn brought up the marriage between

Jessica and Ontario again, Ein didn't agree.

He chuckled, "The two young ones are still small. Besides, Ontario's been busy running around lately,

and he's not one for settling down right now. It might be difficult for the lady. So there's no need to rush.

We can talk about it again, when the two young ones get to know each other a little better."

He didn't refuse outright out of respect for Wilhelm.

But old man Kawn obviously understood his meaning.

The talks had gone so well before, but because of this incident tonight, he was going to start stalling

and saying that the two didn't know each other well; to play the long game.

Wasn't it clear that this was because he feared Jessica would get the Bissel family in trouble?

Wilhelm was outraged, but since it was a problem in his camp, he couldn't complain.

Stripped of all disguise, with what Jessica had done tonight, even if the Bissels reneged on their deal,

he couldn't say anything about it.

With the Bissels gone, the rest of the guests were about all gone as well.

Only then did Jessica pick her way cautiously into the lounge.

At that moment, she and Wilhelm were the only two people inside.

The other people were busy cleaning up after the banquet, while the servants and the guards were keeping watch outside the door. None were to enter without the old man's approval.

Timidly, Jessica called, "Grandpa."

Old man Kawn had his back to her as he expressionlessly grunted.

"Know where you went wrong tonight?"

Jessica bit her lip. Because of the humiliation she'd suffered, her face was still swollen red, with tears in her eyes. She cut a pitiful figure.

"I know."

"Speak. Why did you go after the child?"

Jessica fell silent and didn't speak.

She put her hands in front of her and wrung at a corner of her dress, head dipped slightly. Standing under the lamplight, she looked weak and vulnerable.

Frowning, Wilhelm wheeled himself over.

"Still not telling the truth to your grandfather?"

Jessica knew that she couldn't keep it from Wilhelm. After all, the lie she'd made up on the spot wasn't that good.

Even most of the guests didn't believe what she'd said.

They'd just kept quiet about it because it was the Kawn family.

Right here and now, faced with Wilhelm's sharp gaze, she paused for a long while and murmured,

"Because I want revenge."

Wilhelm frowned.

"Revenge for what?"

Jessica's tears fell.

She cried her heart out, tears dropping like pearls off a string, whimpering, "I'm sorry, Grandpa, I didn't want to. I don't know what came over me. I knew the child was innocent, but I wanted her dead."

Wilhelm was getting impatient.

"I asked you a question. Revenge for what?"

Jessica cleared her nose, then said, "Back when I was with my ex-husband, I'd been pregnant once.

The child was almost born when my sister caused me to miscarry. I've always hated her for it. Coming

to Egitin, I found myself all alone, while she gets to have the time of her life with Anne. It reminded me

of my child from before. I lost my composure and wanted to get her to experience what it's like, too, so I

moved on Anne without thinking it through."

Chapter 357 Go Down With Her

She said, already weeping thoroughly.

"I'm sorry, Grandpa, I didn't think it'd end up like this. It's my fault for embarrassing you and making

enemies of the whole McCarthy family. I'm sorry."

Jessica apologized repeatedly. Even though she'd said those three syllables countless times tonight,

she wanted to puke.

But she knew that, before Wilhelm, she had to throw away her pride and finish the performance.

At the very least, she couldn't have the old man completely disappointed in her and abandoning her.

As expected, old man Kawn looked at her and said coldly, "Know what your biggest mistake was

tonight?"

Jessica froze.

She looked at him in a daze and shook her head.

“Your biggest mistake was that you moved without finishing your opponent, giving them time and space to breathe, then to retaliate.”

He sighed, then said lowly, “It was fine today. Only a child. And it was unrelated to family interests. But from now on, if you want to go after a person, remember to go for the jugular. Either stay your hand, or go for the kill. Give no room for your enemy to recover. Otherwise, you won’t just have all your efforts go to waste, you might even lose control of a situation that had gone well initially and have it all backfire. Got it?”

Jessica stood rooted to the spot.

She looked at the old man in disbelief at the words coming out of his mouth.

Wilhelm smiled frigidly.

“No need to be surprised. Since you’re in the Kawn family now, you’ll understand sooner or later. Since time immemorial, no one in power got there with clean hands. You need to get down and dirty to secure your family and your status. Don’t get fooled by how the McCarthy family acts high and mighty, like they have nothing to do with the rest of the world. That grandfather and grandson have just as many skeletons in their closet as your Grandpa’s. And all these years, if Archie McCarthy hadn’t been

ceaselessly expanding his territory and eroding the power of the other few families, why would we try to preserve our security with arranged marriages? It was all forced. I'm old now. If I were to pass on for good one day, the family is in the hands of your two uncles. But as clever as they are, they don't use any of that cleverness on our opponents, instead wasting their energy fighting each other. So I'm giving you these shares to act as a lubricant and an adhesive in between them. I know you can manage it. You're clever, no less than your two uncles. So long as you stay loyal to the Kawn family, I won't care about anything else, got it?"

Jessica, shaken, nodded.

"I've got it, Grandpa."

Wilhelm closed his eyes, fatigued, and waved at her.

"All right. I'm tired. Go. Have the assistants come in."

Jessica respectfully complied and turned around to leave.

Meanwhile, Anne had followed Natalia home. After a bath, she laid in bed and had Natalia tell her a story.

Because the kid had been through a lot today, Natalia decided to stay with her for one night instead of letting her sleep alone.

After finishing one story, Anne suddenly asked, “Mommy, did Auntie Jessica push me into the water because I shouldn’t have heard her talk to uncle Kawn?”

Natalia jolted.

Gently, she said, “Didn’t you say she didn’t talk much with uncle Kawn?”

Anne frowned.

“She didn’t say much, but I feel like their expressions are weird. They look bad.”

Natalia stared.

A children’s instincts were always on point.

Even if she might not understand the meaning behind their words, she could feel if someone was good or evil from their expressions and their aura.

But she didn’t understand. Jessica had been found by Wilson.

It made sense for her to take Wilson’s side in the Kawns.

What was she doing talking in secret with Matthew?

She thought for a while, then comforted. "Maybe, but it's fine. You didn't listen in on purpose, right?"

Anne nodded heavily.

"So no matter what the reason is, she shouldn't have treated you like this. It was her fault. Don't think about it too much, Anne."

Anne made a noise, not showing if she understood or not.

Soon, the child grew tired. Natalia didn't tell her another story and coaxed her into sleep before she turned off the lights and went to sleep herself.

At that moment, in the Kawn household.

Jessica was heading back to her room when she saw a faint coating of lime on the handle of her door.

She paused, looked around, made sure no one was near and headed to the other end of the corridor.

"You're looking for me, Uncle?"

In the dim room, Jessica looked at the man before her and asked gently.

Matthew's expression was ugly.

"How many times have I told you not to provoke the McCarthy family? Then you turned right around

and went after the kid. Do you want to die?”

Faced with Matthew’s wrath, Jessica shrank a little, clearly afraid.

But she still boldened up and explained, “I didn’t deliberately try to kill her, but she saw us talking

together. I was worried she might have heard something, so I...”

“What did you say?”

Matthew froze.

Jessica pursed her lips. “Back then, when you met me in the garden, she heard what we said in the

shadows.”

Matthew’s face changed instantly.

He fell quiet, his eyes darkening.

“You’re sure she heard everything?”

Jessica frowned slightly as well.

“She should have. I only discovered her presence after you left, but she’d run away quickly, and I

couldn’t catch her. That’s why I tried to draw her out with the butterfly toy and silence her. I didn’t think

it’d end up like that.”

Matthew didn't speak for a while.

He recalled in detail everything he'd said to Jessica tonight.

After running it all through in his head and making sure there were no obvious clues, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"Never mind. She's just a kid and probably wouldn't suspect anything. Even if she told Archie and the others, they'd only suspect things at most. We were supposed to be uncle and niece anyway, and talking with each other is normal. You, though – quit making such a fuss about everything, killing people over a bit of mishap. You still think this is a small-time town like Julio? If anything did happen, the entire Kawn family would be going down with you, understand?"

Jessica bent her head and gently said, "I've got it."

Chapter 358 A Birthmark on Her Back

Matthew looked at her with a bit of disgust as he said lowly, "You do know that, because of today, the Bissel family's backing out of the deal. The marriage that had been dead set on going forward is done for."

Jessica trembled.

She looked at him in disbelief, her face changing slightly. "Why?"

Matthew sneered.

"Heh, why else? They don't want the trouble. With what you got up to tonight, what man in the entire

upper crust circle of Egitin would want to marry you?"

"..."

Jessica bit her lip, an unspeakable sense of humiliation rising from her gut as she clenched her fists.

Matthew sighed.

"All right, we'll talk about the arranged marriage later on. It's late. Head back. Remember to take care

that they don't suspect anything."

Jessica nodded, turning to walk outside.

But before she reached the door, Matthew called after her.

"Wait."

She started, turned around, and saw a frowning Matthew handing her a brown paper bag.

"It's from her. Keep it yourself."

Jessica jolted, her face growing pale. It took a few seconds for her to accept it with trembling fingers.

There were a few already baked little cakes inside the bag. Her eyes reddened and she looked up at

Matthew, voice shaking. "How is she?"

Matthew was calm and still. "She's fine."

Pausing, he looked at her, a gleam in his eye. "So long as you stay obediently out of trouble, I can keep

her that way. You understand what you have to do now, don't you?"

Jessica hurriedly nodded.

Matthew waved her off. "Go, then."

At that moment, in another room.

Selena finished her shower and laid down, tossing and turning without falling asleep.

The moment she closed her eyes, her mind swam with the image of that night in the room, with Natalia

changing.

The red butterfly birthmark on her back had almost seemed alive.

She slid out a drawer at the head of her table and retrieved a book.

It was a famous novel, with a yellowed photo stuck in a page in the middle.

Selena took out the photo and examined it under the lamplight.

The photo had been taken a long time ago. The corners were flaking and cracking. The picture showed a baby several months old, sitting with her back to the camera, playing with marbles as she turned around and smiled happily.

And on the baby's back was a red butterfly birthmark.

Selena reached out her hand and stroked the butterfly, thinking of her adoptive mother's words from long ago.

"This is your little sister, Selena. She was born with bad luck and got abducted by human traffickers when she was only a few months old, so we adopted you. But don't worry, you're all Mommy's good girls. Mommy loves you regardless of your blood, so if you have the fortune to find your sister in the future, you have to look after her and help her, okay?"

Those words sounded so far away.

Far away enough that it could have been from another realm, with the voice itself muddying.

But Selena still remembered.

Remembered the regret in her eyes as her mother left, and the gentle smile she'd had when she

looked at her.

Selena had without a doubt been lucky.

Lucky enough to stand out from so many children in the orphanage, being picked by Yvonne to be her child.

For all those years, Yvonne had, just as she said, treated her as her own.

Even though she was a good several years old when she'd been adopted, with the most basic memory and ability to think as a normal child.

But she'd never kept anything from Selena. She'd never thought it was a problem that their relationship was borne of adoption.

It was Yvonne who'd taught her that blood wasn't everything in this world.

Even people who weren't related could become the closest of family.

Selena closed her eyes, recalling her mother's death, and felt a surge of dull pain.

When she opened her eyes, she was perfectly sober.

She looked at the photo, murmuring, "Don't worry, Mom! If it really is her, I'll acknowledge it. I'll do what

you left me with, and I won't let her wander outside forever."

She lowered her head and buried the photo in her chest, only setting it down after a long while.

Once again putting away the photo, she turned off the lights and went soundly to sleep.

...

The following day.

Jessica suddenly received an invitation from Selena, saying that there was a new hot spring resort that

had opened in Egitin and inviting her to have a soak.

Jessica was surprised, but one, she didn't have anything else to do, and two, after last night, most

people in the Kawn family didn't look too kindly upon her.

Such a time was exactly when she needed to garner support from others. So she couldn't refuse

Selena's active invitation.

So, that noon, the two ate lunch and drove together towards the resort.

The hot spring resort was built in the countryside in a good environment. There were a few medicinal

pools that were perfect for bathing in in this season.

The two changed and went into the spring together.

To be honest, because of their awkward status, Jessica and Selena didn't know each other too well.

After all, one was an adopted daughter, while the other was a "granddaughter" who'd been taken back.

They more or less had a competing relationship.

So, even if they met normally, they'd only greet each other without holding a conversation.

Soaking in a hot spring out of nowhere today, the two sat in the pool and didn't quite know what to say for the moment.

But Jessica was good at deduction. She knew that Selena, who mostly ignored her, had to be trying something by inviting her to the hot springs today.

So she found a casual topic and tried to string her along to get it out of her.

But even if Jessica was smart, Selena wasn't dumb.

Forget that she hadn't invited her out today for anything special, just to prove a concept, so she didn't care about getting baited.

And even if Jessica wanted to bait her, with her attention to detail, she couldn't get anything out of her.

So the two went back and forth. The soak went on for a while, but they didn't say anything of

substance.

Both of them were beginning to find it pointless. Jessica looked at the time and suggested going back to ground to rest and have something to eat.

Selena agreed.

Because they'd both been in towels coming out and their bodies weren't visibly, Selena deliberately slowed down on her way out.

Jessica stepped from the terrace to share, her skimpy bikini emphasizing her slender figure. There was absolute no mark or blemish on her snowy white back.

Selena started, frowning.

"I heard you had a birthmark on your back, Jessica? Why couldn't I see it back then?"

Chapter 359 I Won't Have It

Jessica jolted and turned around.

Selena smiled to hide her deliberate intent.

Jessica raised her eyebrows, a glint of understanding passing through her eyes as she explained, "You mean the butterfly birthmark on my back? I had it when I was a child, but when I grew up, it slowly

faded.”

She answered casually, with not a trace of nervousness or doubt, as if she was describing something perfectly normal.

Selena pursed her lips.

“Is that so? What a magical thing, a disappearing birthmark.”

Jessica chuckled, “You don’t say? But it’s not unheard of. After all, it’s just pigmentation in the body. It’s common medically.”

Selena nodded.

“I see, so that’s what it is.”

The two didn’t click with their conversation. After eating, they didn’t go back to soak, and returned home after sitting around for a while.

Old man Kawn heard they’d gone out that afternoon and frowned right away realizing it couldn’t be anything good.

He was a man, but he knew how those girls thought and felt.

Ever since Jessica had come back, Selena had been cold to her.

With that incident happening last night, Selena had even more reason to ignore her or even mock her.

But she didn't do either and invited her out after lunch?

Wilhelm could smell that something wasn't wrong, so he called Selena to him in secret after the two of them got back.

"You're looking for me, Grandpa?"

Selena walked inside the room, asking respectfully.

Wilhelm was seated on a rocking chair, eyes slightly closed.

Hearing her voice, he opened his eyes and motioned for her to close the door.

Only then did Selena turn around, close the door, and walk over to him.

"Did you need something, Grandpa?"

Wilhelm stared at her, rumbling, "Where'd you take Jessica just then?"

Selena jolted and pursed her lips.

Lowering her head, she said softly, "Nowhere, really. We went to soak in the new hot springs resort."

Wilhelm looked at her dubiously. "Really?"

Selena chuckled self-deprecatingly.

“If you don’t believe me, Grandpa, you can ask Jessica. Or are you still worried I’m bullying her?”

Wilhelm’s brow furrowed.

After a while, he said, “You don’t need to provoke me with that sort of language. She might be back now, but you have an equal place to her in my heart. I raised you from when you were young and never once treated you like you were an adopted granddaughter.”

Selena stood there in silence.

Pausing for a few seconds, Wilhelm suddenly asked, “Have you heard that the Bissels refused the union with Jessica?”

Selena nodded. “I have.”

“What do you think about that?”

Selena started.

She looked at the old man in a bit of confusion.

“I... I don’t have too many thoughts.”

What thoughts could someone who had nothing to do with it have over Jessica and Ontario?

But the old man didn't seem satisfied with the answer.

He frowned, looked at her, and seemed a bit upset with her passiveness.

"Then what do you think about Ontario Bissel?"

Selena froze there in a daze for a few seconds, then seemed to understand something as disbelief

flashed through her eyes.

"What do you mean by asking me that, Grandpa?"

Wilhelm scoffed. "What else could I mean? Jessica messed up at keeping such a good man, but

someone else from the Kawn family could. Selena, I raised you from when you were small and

watched you grow up. You're not like her. You're a real noble lady. If you married into them, the Bissels

wouldn't have anything to say about it, and you could help out the Kawn family in the future. What do

you think?"

Selena shook harshly.

She'd never thought the old man would make such a request of her.

Her face sank as she looked at him disbelievingly. "Grandpa, now that Jessica couldn't get in the Bissel

family, you're turning your sights on me? Giving me a man she's not having?"

The old man's brow arched and he raged, "Nonsense! What do you mean a man she's not having?"

Ontario might be the youngest of the Bissels, but he's always done things properly and his ability is acknowledged. Most importantly, he's handsome. Besides, the family had only tried to pair them, and they haven't really been together. How is she a man she's not having, then?"

Selena didn't even think about it as she rejected angrily, "I won't have it!"

Wilhelm's expression wasn't pretty.

"Why?"

"I'm your granddaughter, Grandpa, not a tool to be used for barter. I know you want to unite with the Bissels to preserve the family legacy. But I think that should be with our own ability, not a union of the younger generation! If we can't manage on our own, even if we climb up with the Bissel family, we'll be subject to their every whim in the future. How is that any different from begging?"

Old man Kawn's expression darkened instantly as he spat, "What are you yammering about? How is our family inferior to theirs? How are we begging? How do you think your fancy clothes and high end food came to be? Do you really think that one can achieve power and wealth with personal ability?"

Eqitin is a mire with more a web of relationships and conflicting interests more complicated than you can even begin to understand. Our union with the Bissels is an alliance in preparation. Otherwise, the moment I die, what do you think your two uncles are going to manage? You still think you're going to stay a noble lady of the Kawn house at that point?"

Selena shook her head.

"Even if I'm not a noble lady, it's better than marrying someone I feel nothing for."

"Tomfoolery! You're still young and you think that love and freedom trump everything. But when you grow old, you'll come to understand that those are all meaningless beliefs, held up by people who have nothing. True freedom is achieved when you stand at the highest point of power, understand?"

Selena found it ridiculous.

She'd always known that her grandfather was a power-hungry man.

And it wasn't that he hadn't tried to use her and to achieve his goals through marrying her off.

But he'd given up on it all, and she'd thought he wouldn't bring it up again.

Now he was trying to marry her off to Ontario?!

Selena chuckled helplessly.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying, Grandpa. I also don’t care about the heights of power. As for the family legacy, you can have me do anything, Grandpa, but please don’t use my marriage as a pawn to the ends of your own glory! I can’t do it, and I can’t possibly agree to it!”

Chapter 360 She’s the Real One

Hearing that, Wilhelm flew into a rage.

“What did you say? Say that again!”

Selena stood her ground and got mad as well. “I said, I won’t do it!”

“You!”

He clutched at his chest, his face turning beet-red. Seeing that, Selena’s gut wrenched, and she hurriedly passed him his medicine.

“Grandpa, what’s wrong? Quick, your medicine!”

Wilhelm waved her off, snarling, “What business do you have caring about me at this point? Would it be just right for you if I died? So no one would hold you back from then on?”

Selena’s heart ached, but she didn’t dare argue with the way he looked.

She simply said sorrowfully, “I don’t like Ontario, Grandpa, and I don’t want to marry him. I was just

speaking my mind. Is the happiness of your children and grandchildren worth less than your lofty power and wealth?"

Wilhelm glared at her without speaking.

Seeing that, Selena knew that he wouldn't listen to her words, and her heart sank.

Thankfully, the old man had only lost his temper and found it hard to breath. He was much better after a brief rest.

Selena stood, wiped off her tears, and looked at him calmly.

"Grandpa, you also know that Jessica isn't the child that Mom lost back then, don't you?"

Wilhelm trembled slightly.

His face changed.

Glaring at Selena, he growled, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Selena chuckled sadly.

"You don't need to play dumb. You're not the only one who knows about it. Everyone in the family

knows, but you went along with the show and pulled her into the family because you thought she was

someone with ambition you could also manipulate. She's just like you. Someone who'll do anything to get ahead. If she became your granddaughter, she'll be tied to the same ship as the Kawn family. At that point, she'll do her best to get into the Bissel family even if it's for her own sake. Besides, she's enemies with Natalia, which means that if the Kawns and the McCarthys really come to oppose each other, she has to stick with the Kawns, while the Kawns can use her to stand with the Bissels. It's a win-win."

She pursed her lips, paused for a couple of seconds, then continued, "But what if I told you, Grandpa, that Mom's child was still alive, and has lived beside us all along? Could you still make the decision you're making now?"

Wilhelm's entire frame shook!

He looked at Selena in disbelief, his aged lips quivering, stammering after a good while, "W-What did you just say?"

Selena looked at him calmly and repeated word for word, "I said she's still alive, and has lived beside us all along."

Wilhelm froze completely.

His ancient eyes were full of shock.

Selena continued, "I saw her in person. She had that butterfly birthmark on her back. Mom told me when she was alive that the birthmark was special, without another one like it in the world. She'd even joked that she was a fairy reborn because of it. So when I saw it, I knew it was her."

She crouched down before the old man, taking his hand sincerely. "We've found her long ago, Grandpa. She was always there. But we were too blind to recognize her, and instead pushed her further and further away, causing this situation now."

Wilhelm recovered somewhat from his shock and took her hand, babbling, "Where'd you see her?"

Selena replied, "The day of your birthday feast. I took her to change and saw the birthmark on her back."

Wilhelm's entire frame shook again!

The day of the birthday feast... changing?

Wasn't that...

His pupils widened, and he stared forward in disbelief.

Selena smiled sadly. "It's a surprise, isn't it? I hadn't thought of it too. Maybe it's just a coincidence.

Nobody can do anything about fate's twists and turns. We couldn't have imaged that what we were searching for was right in front of us all the time. Everyone outside thinks that I'd be afraid of her return, of her taking my status, of her robbing me of everything I have now. But only I know that I've never been afraid. Because I've never thought of her as a competitor. Mom saved me and brought me out of the orphanage, treating me all those years as her own. I couldn't possibly hate her child. That's why I'm actually happy we found her. But I hesitated to tell you, too. Looking in from outside, we shine with gold, but I know this family is just a gilded cage, with everyone inside as your pet birds. Like a pawn to be moved around at your whim, becoming a cog in the machine of the Kawn family. I'm grateful for you raising me and teaching me, giving me a good education and social status. But that doesn't mean I'm willing to be that pet bird, that marionette spending my life under someone else's control. I think that she'd unwilling too. That's why I hesitated, but I've still decided to tell you the truth. Because I've found that she's not like me. It should be said that she's not like any of us. She has her own opinions, her own ability, and a person who loves her, protects her, respects her. She won't become your pet bird. She won't be led around by family interests. To be honest, I envy her. It's a shame I don't have her

fortune. But if that's the case, just let me acknowledge her, if only to repay the debt I owe Mom for raising me all these years. Her spirit would be happy and at peace, too, if she knew."

Selena bit her lip and said, "As for the Bissel family, I won't marry into them. If you want to force me, please expel me from the family. I'll take all the punishment you mete out."

With that, she finished her speech.

Struggling slightly, she pried her hand from the old man's grip and got up, walking away without even a look back.

The broad space in the room was left occupied by Wilhelm alone.

He sat on his chair, looking blankly forward, seemingly not recovered yet from the massive shock.

An eternity passed before his ancient features split open into an expression that was neither smile nor sob.

His lips curved up, while boiling hot tears leaked from his eyes.

He raised his hands and covered his face, weeping aloud for the first time in his life.

...

The following day, Natalia suddenly received a call.

Apparently, after thinking about it, Wilhelm felt like he owed Anne an apology for what happened the night before yesterday, so he invited her to the Kawn household for a meal and for him to apologize in person.

Natalia was surprised, even finding it strange.