

KINDA SWEET 391

Chapter 391 Framed

Natalia's head hurt.

It felt like someone had split her skull open with an axe.

She was incredibly tired, too, with a faint, sharp pain coming from the base of her spine.

She grunted painfully under her covers and instinctively laid her hand on the person next to her, eyes

closed as she murmured, "Archie..."

After a while, there was no reply.

Finally sensing that something was wrong, Natalia slowly opened her eyes.

The room was dimly lit, with simple architecture and décor of black and white stripes instead of the

interior she knew.

Where was this?

Her memories from before she'd lost consciousness slowly returned. As she muddled through them,

her gaze fell on a menu logo at the end of the bed, and she trembled, waking up completely in an

instant.

This was the Musi Hotel!

Natalia jolted with shock and stood up. But the moment she moved, she found that there was one other person on the bed than her.

Felix Bissel!

Her face shifted!

Felix was waking up slowly too. He frowned, looked at the woman sitting in front of him, blinked, then smiled slowly.

“Even if you wanted to sleep with me, little Seven, you didn’t have to go so far. Drugging my drink to get me here? My, my. Such a direct method. I like it, though.”

“Shut it!”

Natalia was going insane.

She clutched her head and thought back, then looked sharply to the side. Her bag and phone were still there.

She hurriedly picked up her phone and checked the message that Victoria had sent her.

The message was still there, and the number was definitely hers.

Her face was faintly pale and her fingers trembled over the number before she finally dialed it.

After a while, someone picked up.

“Natalia.”

Victoria’s voice came from the other end, sounding crisp and pleasing.

Natalia’s throat felt a bit dry. She went quiet for a few seconds before she stammered, “Are you okay?”

“Me? Of course I’m okay, why?”

Victoria had a smile in her voice, without a trace of her helpless desperation over the phone earlier.

Hearing Natalia remain silent on the other end, she asked a little curiously, “Did something happen,

Natalia? What’s wrong?”

Natalia forced a chuckle.

“Nothing’s wrong.”

“If nothing’s wrong, why are you asking me if I’m okay?”

“I...” She pursed her lips, swallowed, and said lightly, “I just had a bad dream. If you’re fine, that’s

great. I’ve got something else to work on, so I’m hanging up.”

Hearing that, Victoria laughed cheerily and said a few words comforting her before she hung up.

The room fell into an eerie silence.

Natalia could feel her racing heartbeat as an abyssal panic began to envelop her.

She grasped her phone. A few missed calls were on there, all from Archie.

Up until now, she didn't know what was going on.

But she could predict the end goal.

Someone had set a trap for her and lured her in, trying to ruin her completely!

Victoria's call was fake.

It wasn't anything too smart, either. From Victoria's number to that rather garbled audio, it was possible

to synthesize them with software.

Natalia had spent so much time in the underworld outside the country, she should have known about

such techniques, much less have fallen prey to them.

It was just that she'd left those circles for years, and hadn't expected someone to use such dirty tactics

against her.

Besides, she'd been panicking, which ended up dragging her into the trap.

Thinking of that, she raised her head and glared at Felix at the side.

Seeing that, Felix instantly guessed what she was thinking and hurriedly waved his hands.

“I didn’t.”

Natalia sneered.

Of course she believed he didn’t. With Felix’s wits, if he really wanted to hurt her, he had more elegant ways of doing things without implicating himself like this.

Only...

Her face darkened as she said coldly, “Don’t tell me you’re dumb enough to fall for that!”

Felix cocked an eyebrow, a shallow smile in his gaze.

“Still so confident in your big brother, little Seven.”

He spoke, and got out of bed leisurely. Compared to Natalia’s ruffled state, he was dressed impeccably, so neat there wasn’t a wrinkle on him.

He walked up in front of the closet and opened the door.

The next second, a well-built middle-aged man rolled out of the closet.

Natalia was in shock!

And the person who'd rolled out of the closet was almost in tears seeing her.

There was a rag stuffed into his mouth, and his hands and feet were bound. Because he couldn't speak, he was mumbling indistinctly.

Natalia looked at him in disbelief. "Shawn? It's you!"

Shawn was trying his utmost to get a word out, but he simply couldn't say anything clear.

Natalia frowned and was about to take the gag out of his mouth when a series of hurried footsteps came from outside.

"Are you sure the person inside is Natalia McCarthy?"

"Positive! I saw her go in with a man earlier."

Natalia and Shawn's faces both changed.

Felix, though, standing at the side, had his arms crossed and a grin on his face. He obviously just wanted to be a fly on the wall!

And at a time like this, Natalia was sure that this was the people behind the scenes trying deliberately to get her.

What big news would it be to have the lady of McCarthy Properties meeting her ex-boyfriend in a hotel?

And those people could use this chance to blow the entire topic out of proportion. She didn't even want to think about it!

There was already knocking from outside the door. Natalia didn't have any more time to think. She kicked Shawn back into the closet, then dragged Felix with her to the window and leapt up.

"This is the fifteenth floor, little Seven, I like you, but I'm not going to die with you."

Felix was still there hesitating when Natalia pulled him up.

"Quit with the nonsense! Follow me!"

She said, and took his collar as she dragged him with her towards a balcony next to theirs.

Seeing that, Felix narrowed his eyes, then shook his head.

"Tsk. So uncivilized."

The door was forced open.

Among the people rushing in, besides the reporters, there was also the hotel staff.

But everyone was taken aback at the empty room.

The person who'd leaked the info and gotten people to come with saw the situation, expression

shifting. “That’s impossible! I saw her come in with my own eyes; where is she?”

At that moment, a whimper came from the closet.

Everybody froze, and someone walked over, opening the door.

A bundled-up person rolled out into the room again.

Chapter 392 Won’t See Him Again

In an instant, countless cameras were levelled at him and fired away in a barrage.

Shawn froze there to the spot, and when everyone had taken their photos and stepped back, they riled up instantly upon finding it really was him.

“Mr. Miller, I heard you were meeting your ex-girlfriend Mrs. Natalia McCarthy here, is that true?”

“You’ve been separated for a long time; are you reigniting the flame now?”

“You do know she’s married to Mr. McCarthy now, don’t you? Do you still think it’s possible for you two to be together?”

“How many times have you met up in private until now?”

“...”

Countless sharp questions pressed forward. With everyone soaked in the excitement of tabloid news,

they forgot that Shawn was still tied up and gagged and couldn't speak.

It was until the end before a reporter finally found that something was wrong.

He hurriedly walked up and took the gag out of his mouth.

But the moment he did, Shawn raged, "What are you babbling about? I've been kidnapped! I haven't even seen Natalia at all!"

The reporters were speechless.

The hotel staff members were speechless.

Shawn wasn't stupid, after all. With her status now, Natalia wasn't someone he could make an enemy of.

Besides, the two had long since become past tense. If he admitted he still had a private affair with Natalia, it wouldn't benefit him.

Because of that, Natalia was fine leaving him there.

At this moment, on the other side.

Natalia took Felix with her as she jumped into another room through the balcony, finally escaping the hotel while there was nobody outside.

Considering that she'd been set up like this, the reporters wouldn't just be swarming around outside the room, they ought to be downstairs at the hotel too. So the pair had taken the back door.

But the moment they walked out, a black sedan screeched to a stop in front of the two.

Felix cocked an eyebrow.

"What do you think your husband would do if I told him that the man you were having an affair with was me and not Shawn Miller, little Seven?"

Natalia glared at him impatiently and snapped, "Quit playing around!"

She released his hand and walked towards the car.

The car window rolled down by half, revealing the side of the man's ice-carved face.

He didn't look at them, but his tightly-wound expression and the low pressure in the surroundings already explained everything.

Natalia bit her lip and said, "Archie, I can explain."

Archie didn't speak.

Soon, Natalia pulled open the door and got in, and the car vanished from Felix's sight.

He looked at the direction the car had left and finally curled his lip, laughing self-deprecatingly.

At this moment, in the car.

The atmosphere was so tense it was hard to breathe.

Archie still hadn't spoken. The aura of cold emanating around him was enough to freeze someone solid.

Even Brian, who was sitting in front driving, felt a bit of a chill up his spine, and couldn't suppress a shiver.

Natalia pursed her lips and opened her mouth after a while.

"I've been set up. Someone tricked me with a recording of Victoria's voice. I came here because I thought something had happened to her. Then I was knocked out, and woke to see Felix there, along with Shawn, who'd been tied up. I suspect someone's trying to use Shawn to ruin my reputation, as for the rest, I'm not sure. But I woke up quickly enough and escaped. They shouldn't have gotten what they wanted."

She thought she'd explained it pretty clearly.

But Archie still asked, "So, you mean that this was all a misunderstanding?"

Natalia floundered.

She raised her head and looked at his eyes.

The man's gaze was cold and deep, frosted over, biting to the bone.

Her gut clenched, and she suddenly understood something.

"What have you heard?"

Archie's lips curved up coldly.

He took up his phone, his slender fingertip tapping at the screen. Immediately afterwards, a risqué

recording started to play.

"Felix... not so hard... mmm..."

Natalia's expression changed.

The recording was short, but it was clear to any adult what was going on.

Archie sneered.

"Can you still tell me now that it was all a misunderstanding?"

Natalia trembled, her face going pale.

She looked at him in disbelief. “You don’t believe me?”

Archie didn’t speak.

Natalia found it ironically funny. “Archie, this recording is obviously synthesized. You can tell, can’t you?!”

This time, the man’s expression finally loosened.

He shot her a look and demanded, “So his appearance here today, that’s a coincidence too?”

It was Natalia’s turn to be at a loss for words.

Archie showed his ironic and sneering expression again.

“You say that someone’s trying to set you and Shawn up. I believe you. But what’s this recording about? Someone trying to set you and Shawn up mentioning Felix’s name in the recording – do you think that explanation works?”

Natalia paused, then reacted soon enough.

“What time did you call me?”

Archie didn’t speak.

Natalia didn’t bother going through him and took out her own phone. It was fifteen minutes ago.

It would have taken at least fifteen minutes to get here over from the airport. Meaning that the moment

Archie had got off the plane, he'd called her and heard the recording.

But she'd been knocked out in front of the room over two hours ago.

Considering that, Natalia understood the general flow of things.

She massaged her aching head.

"Sorry. I haven't been considerate enough of this, and I've troubled you. I'm pretty sure Felix put that recording out. He just doesn't want to let us off. Don't fall for his tricks."

Archie smirked.

"Oh? Then he likes you?"

Natalia floundered.

"I always felt that your relationship with him isn't simple, but thinking back, I don't recall you having anything to do with each other before. Now, seems like my feeling wasn't just a feeling, was it?"

Natalia didn't answer. She actually didn't know what to say at the moment.

Archie asked on, "Why didn't you bring Nancy out with you today?"

"I..." she hesitated, then forced a smile. "Sorry, I forgot."

A trace of knowing flashed through Archie's gaze.

"Did you forget or did you leave her deliberately? You've already learned to lie to me, Natalia."

"..."

The man looked at her with such deep, serious eyes, but there was a complicated bit of helplessness

and disappointment in them too.

"You know something? I always thought that, for the two of us to make it to today, it was enough to be

honest with each other, but clearly, you don't think the same. You can keep hiding it from me, Natalia,

but as your husband, I think I have the right to ask you to be faithful to me! So, could you never see this

man again?"

Natalia choked, her throat closing up a little.

"Archie..."

"I won't take no for an answer."

For the first time before her, he showed his hard side.

Chapter 393 Coming Out Clean

The atmosphere solidified like cement.

Natalia opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but not sure exactly what to say.

She knew what Archie didn't like about the whole situation, but sometimes, it wasn't up to her whether they met or not.

As opposed to promising she could and being unable to keep that promise, she might as well tell it like it was.

Considering that, she pursed her lips and murmured, "I'm sorry, Archie. I know you care a lot about it, but I really do have my own troubles. I promise you, though, when this is over, I'll tell you everything.

Can you wait until then?"

Archie frowned.

In his deep gaze, there was icy judgement.

After a long pause, his lips twitched with irony.

"As you please."

...

Ever since that day, Natalia and Archie fell into a cold war.

The two had been married for a year and a half and usually stuck to each other like glue. This was the first time such a huge rift had come between them. Even Mrs. Dottie and Anne could feel something was wrong between the two.

Mrs. Dottie was worried. After all, she'd seen the two get up to this point from the beginning, and knew their feelings and temperament better than anyone.

Unless something huge had happened, it wouldn't have gotten this far.

So Mrs. Dottie had tried to get them to make up in private.

But the two wouldn't tell her their reasons, and as an outsider, there was a limit to how much she could do or say.

Mrs. Dottie could only sigh and pray that the two made up soon before anything bigger happened.

On the other end, Natalia also knew that it wouldn't do to carry on like this.

She knew what kind of personality that man had. With his ability, and with something like this happening, he could have asked investigated himself without asking her opinion.

But he didn't. He'd chosen to respect her, and allow her to choose.

Since he'd done that much, how could Natalia continue to disappoint him?

After considering it for a while, Natalia decided to tell him the truth.

When it came to the Dragon Club and Mr. K, she didn't know what Archie would think after he knew, but it couldn't get any worse than this.

So, Natalia found a chance to come out clean.

The man, though, didn't behave like she'd thought as well.

He didn't act surprised or shocked, only remaining so calm that Natalia thought he didn't understand.

But he clearly did.

A bit of a smile appeared in his eyes as he murmured, "Why did you keep this to yourself before?"

Natalia pursed her lips, hesitated, and said, "I lost a part of my memory. I don't know what happened to me in those few months; what I've been through, who I've met, what I've done. By the time I woke up, I'd already been saved by Felix. For those few years, he taught me to fight, to race. He saved my life, so I can't go back on what I owe. But that's all there is between us. Do you believe me, Archie?"

Archie looked at her deeply and nodded. "I do."

Natalia heaved a sigh of relief.

Archie continued, "The Bissel family is complicated. As a bastard son spending so much time overseas, it's possible his life has been hard. He must have his own reasons for starting the Dragon Club."

Natalia nodded.

"But I don't plan on getting involved. It's just that Mr. K is dead, and the people who killed him are probably the same group who was hunting me in the beginning. I want to find out, Archie. I want to know what I experienced during those few months and why those people are after me. I don't want to live with that mystery all my life. Can you understand that?"

In a place she couldn't see deep in a corner of Archie's eyes, a complicated shadow flickered.

He said lowly, "Have you ever thought, Natalia, that some truths don't need to be revealed in their entirety, and that sometimes, ignorance is bliss?"

Natalia blinked.

She looked at him, a little confused.

Archie sighed softly.

He raised his hand and stroked her hair gently, whispering, "Don't tire yourself out."

Natalia smiled.

“Okay.”

“Any help you need, just ask.”

“Yeah.”

Having come clean about it all, Natalia instantly felt better.

To have a good talk with the man this afternoon, Natalia had given Mrs. Dottie and all the other servants the day off.

The two sat there on the sofa, talking quietly.

Sometimes, it was just that miraculous. The truths once so painstakingly buried only needed a small gap to break the dam and rush out.

As if there was no longer a need to hide it.

In the time following, Natalia told him everything about what had happened outside the country.

Archie listened quietly, never once interrupting, only making small noises of acknowledgement when he needed to.

Time trickled by slowly. Natalia tired herself out. Perhaps it was because of how she'd completely relaxed her heart, and how fully she trusted him, but she actually drifted off to sleep right there in his arms.

It was a tranquil, moonlit night.

The woman laid peacefully in his arms as the man lowered his head to look at her resting face.

His eyes dimmed.

Memories whistled like wind, seemingly returning him to that night, that year.

He thought he'd been through enough trials and tribulations over the years. Enough danger and pain to settle his heart. But right now, a storm of emotions was rushing through him.

His slightly coarse palm caressed her slender hand, feeling her soft warmth, his heart seemingly splitting under a chisel.

I'm sorry, Natalia!

She'd come clean to him about where she'd been and what she'd done in the few years he couldn't find her.

But he couldn't do the same. Not about that accident, and those few months' worth of missing

memories.

The man's eyes were deep, reddening.

Considering how she'd walked alone through those years, the redness grew.

He took out his phone and sent a text.

Then he kissed her very lightly on the forehead, picked her up gently, and went into the bedroom.

Natalia slept soundly this time.

It was dusk when she woke. The sunset shone in through the window, dying the whole room a light, rosy gold.

She squinted and stretched.

Maybe because she'd finally relieved herself of her burden, but she'd slept soundly and well. Waking up now, she was bounding with energy, and perfectly relaxed.

But...

Where was Archie?

Natalia rubbed her eyes, flung off her sheets and got out of bed. As she went to the living room, there

was nobody in the house but her.

The light breeze ruffled the pages she'd leafed through on the tea table in her leisure, the rustling

making the surroundings seem empty and lonely.

Chapter 394 Touching the Heart

He wasn't home?

Natalia looked at the time. It was half past five. He couldn't be going to the office again when it was this

late.

Where had he gone?

To be honest, after telling him something that important, Natalia had been feeling uneasy. Waking up to

find that the man wasn't here, she actually felt a bit down.

But she was a logical person. He was probably just busy with something, and could have left for the

emergency.

Thinking of that, she shook her head and chuckled.

Since Mrs. Dottie and all the servants were on break, dinner was up to her.

Natalia headed to the kitchen and got ready to make something.

At that moment, the kitchen door opened.

A man with an apron around his waist, a pan in his hands was standing there, holding a plate of roasted tomatoes and eggs.

“You’re awake? Go wash your hands, it’s time for dinner.”

Natalia was a little taken aback. “You haven’t left?”

Archie cocked an eyebrow at her. “Left? Left where?”

Natalia stood there, gazing at him in his homely shirt and apron. He looked like a househusband. Her eyes moistened.

She threw herself at him and hugged his narrow waist.

Burying her face into his chest, she mumbled, “I thought you were mad.”

The insecurity and sensitivity she’d never admitted to when she was alone bared themselves in their entirety.

The man’s lips lifted slightly, feeling the woman’s new sense of reliance and love. A smile entered his eyes as he murmured, “Didn’t you want to find out how Mr. K died? Go eat. I’ll take a holiday for a few days to help you investigate.”

“Really?” Natalia lifted her face, overjoyed.

“Yeah.”

Archie really wanted to pick her up and kiss her, but he had a pan in one hand and a plate in the other, so he couldn’t.

“Would I get in the way of your work?” Natalia knew that he was busy.

“No. It’s been slow recently.”

“Oh, okay!”

“All right, go wash your hands. I’ll get the soup, and then we can eat.”

“Sure.”

Natalia washed her hands and saw three dishes already on the table. Roasted tomatoes with egg, grilled fish, and a salsa salad. All her favorites.

Archie was still readying the soup in the kitchen. Natalia walked over curiously, asking, “I thought you’d never cooked before? You made all this yourself?”

Archie nodded, then pointed at the recipe book set to the side.

“Found it on the bookshelf this afternoon and picked a few things up. Give it a taste?”

Natalia went out, took up her fork, and tried the tomato.

Sure it wasn't a match for elite chefs, but for someone cooking for the first time, this was perfect.

Natalia had to exclaim, "It's delicious."

She tried the fish.

She was even happier with it.

Then she tried the salad.

Errrrrrr...

"Archie, quit business and go into cooking! You have a talent right here. This flavor is amazing."

The man came out with the soup, smiling, "It's really that good?"

"Really, try it!"

"Okay."

Natalia speared a piece of vegetable and was passing it to him when the man ignored her hand entirely

and bent over, eating the piece out of her mouth directly.

She floundered, but the man had already bit it off and started chewing. He beamed. "Hmm, it really is

delicious.”

Natalia blushed.

She faked a glare at him, but couldn’t keep it up over half a second.

A slight smile curved on her lips, a honeyed feeling building in her chest.

Seeing that, Archie knew that she’d opened herself to him entirely, and his heart softened even more.

He took her into his arms and got a good, long taste of her lips.

It was a gentle kiss, with immeasurable love and longing, passing over her lips, nose, brow, eyes,

forehead, and finally on the soft back of her hand.

“I love you, Natalia.”

Natalia’s heart shook.

Men were supposed to be creatures who failed at communicating and never spoke verbally of love.

The love that they expressed wasn’t true.

But why was she incredibly moved right now?

All because he was the one saying it?

No, it wasn’t that.

It was because he had more depth and discipline than any other man she'd seen, but only when he was facing her did he lose control of his emotions, doing or saying things that he normally wouldn't.

Those three simple words, stripped of all elegant disguise and all additional decoration, were the three words that most touched the heart.

Natalia smiled, but her eyes were moist as she hugged his waist and said sincerely, "Me too."

They didn't know how they finished the meal.

The two doted on each other and the simple dinner took over two hours to finish.

After the meal, Natalia was adamant that she did the dishes instead of Archie.

After all, it couldn't just be one side always making the effort. Even if he was willing and able, she still felt like she should do something to make it fair.

The man didn't stop her, but his gaze on her grew more loving than ever.

At that moment, Natalia's phone rang.

She was too busy to take it, so she called, "Can you pick it up for me?"

Archie walked over to the lobby and took up her phone. Looking at the caller, it was Max.

He raised his eyebrows, a little surprised.

Seeing it was Max, Natalia had Archie take the call and put it on speaker.

“Did you need me for something?”

“Oh, it’s you, Natalia. I’m looking for Archie, is he there?”

Huh?

Natalia blinked, then looked up at Archie.

“Why call me if you’re looking for him?”

“Heh, his phone isn’t connecting.”

Hearing that, Archie looked at his own phone. It had shut down from low power some time ago. He put

the phone to the side and charged it, finally taking the call.

“What is it?”

Max told him.

As it turned out, the Violet Group’s auction that was held every four years was being thrown tomorrow

night at the International Summit. Max was asking Archie if he was coming this year.

The Violet Group auction was different from other auctions. Everything for sale was at the level of a

national treasure, and everything went to the nation in the end. As for the earnings of the auction, a portion went to the Red Cross.

It was nominally an auction, but it might as well have been a charity sale.

And this Violet Group was said to be quite mysterious.

Natalia had heard the name by chance before, and she knew that it was one of the three great families of the world. The family's authority extended across the whole world, with several centuries of history.

And it was said that this family had a lot to do with Ambario. As for what it was, she wasn't sure.

The auction that the Violet Group was holding this time was to be attended by big names on the national level, and obviously, it wasn't a scene that regular people could attend.

Chapter 395 A Mysterious Family

The phone had been on speaker all the time, so Natalia had heard what Max had said as well.

She'd always been interested in this Violet Group. It was just that she'd never had the chance to get in contact before. Now that an opportunity had presented itself, of course she wanted to attend.

Most importantly, according to her understanding, the emblem of the Violet Group was a realistic violet flower. It was possible they were related to Mr. K's death.

She shot Archie a look, and seeing that, he agreed.

The following day, the auction was held as planned at the International Summit.

Since it was an important scene, Natalia was in a deep-colored tuxedo dress, with her hair made up;

she looked positively elfin.

And Archie was in a white suit. The man's hair was short and clean, and he looked straighter than a

board in his suit. Compared to Max's refined look, Archie gave off a feeling of cool purity, someone you

could look on but not touch.

Natalia took his arm and their group arrived at the International Summit right on time.

The doorway was set up with strict security. Only people with an invitation were allowed inside.

Naturally, those of the four families had that right, Archie among them. Passing through security, it was

a broad exhibition hall inside, with plenty of people having already arrived, not just natives of Ambario,

but from other nations as well.

Natalia looked at the faces inside she usually only saw on international news, and was taken aback.

She grew even more curious about this Violet Group now.

It was still early, and the auction hadn't officially started yet.

The three found a spot and sat down.

Natalia couldn't hold in her curiosity and asked, "What's with this Violet Group? They could get together so many bigshots on the international stage."

Max chuckled. "Makes sense that you wouldn't know! Have you heard of the Lafayette family?"

Natalia blinked. "Isn't that the surname of the previous imperial dynasty?"

"That's the previous imperial family, all right."

Natalia froze there.

Archie stroked her hair. "The Violet Group are the descendants of the Lafayettes. After the previous empire fell, the Lafayette family members scattered across the world and established the Violet Group, which leads us to now."

Natalia was dubious. "But doesn't the history books say that the Lafayette family all died along with their empire in the Imperial city?"

The recent history of Ambario was a bloody, war-torn one. At the end of the previous empire, the country grew weak, and foreign nations invaded, directly causing the end of the empire. According to

history, all members of the royal family had died with their empire.

And after the end of that dynasty, there came over half a century of warlords feuding with each other, with champions claiming territory everywhere, dividing up the country.

Later on, with the birth of a hero who led his brothers to end the chaotic fighting, this flourishing, peaceful country had been born.

To think of it now, even though the establishment of the nation had only been for a few decades, the half-century of chaos in the middle put the previous empire at over a hundred years in the past.

Archie explained, “The history books aren’t necessarily real. In truth, at the end of the previous dynasty, its rulers had already sensed the danger the empire was in. They’d tried to think of a way to change, but the house was crumbling, and it wasn’t something that could be reversed by human power. So they sent a small team out to leave with the young emperor and a large collection of national treasures. That team was sent out in secret, so almost nobody knew. Not long afterwards, those in power declared the young emperor dead. During the chaos of the warlords, there were rumors claiming that the young emperor wasn’t dead, and had instead fled out of the country. But in that day and age, rumors in general were flying all over the place, so nobody paid attention. That’s how the bloodline was

preserved.”

Hearing that, Natalia was shaken to the core.

She felt like her whole view of the world had been turned upside down.

“Where did those people flee back then?”

“Nobody knows.” Archie shook his head. “But in a situation like that, wherever it was safe, of course.

Some people speculated that they fled west, but it hadn’t been proven yet. In any case, these people survived, and established the mighty Violet Group. Now their global economic influence is a match for the three top families of the world, and nobody will look down on them ever again.”

Natalia scoffed dissatisfiedly. “The country was in peril, but they fled with all that capital and materiel.

So what if they’re mighty now? To put it bluntly, if that money had gone to resistance fighting during that

time, it’s possible the country wouldn’t have fallen that easily.”

Max couldn’t resist cutting in. “That’s where you’re wrong. In a situation like that, the money would have

gone to waste. As opposed to going down with the ship, why not give yourself a fighting chance? It’s

better to live in disgrace than die with honor. Wouldn't you say, Archie?"

Archie didn't speak, while Natalia rolled her eyes contemptuously at him.

"Someone like you, Max, would probably turn traitor the moment the nation was in peril."

Max floundered, a little upset.

"How's that make any sense? How am I a traitor? Do you know how much GDP I've made for the country..."

Natalia grinned. "On women? I've only heard about the Nixon family GDP being made by the big brother of the family. As the second son, you probably put it all in casinos and brothels!"

Max went red and pointed at Natalia, unable to muster a rebuttal.

Finally, he harrumphed. "I won't argue with a woman."

Natalia made a face at him.

Max growled, "Manage your woman, Archie, I'm about to blow my top."

Archie smirked and laid his broad palm on Natalia's head, patting it softly. "Good work."

As for Max – "..."

Gaaaaaahh! Somebody tell him why he'd brought those two here today?

Was he just a glutton for punishment?

Seeing that he really was mad, Natalia stopped teasing him, and the group waited patiently for the auction to start.

Because there were a lot of international bigshots coming to attend, the seating was all arranged according to status.

Natalia and gang had been sat at the second row, and with everyone seated, soon, the auction began.

Item after item of incredible rarity was exhibited. There was rich cultural heritage, antiques, and all sorts of unique treasures.

Natalia couldn't stop watching, and of course, the starting prices of those items were ridiculously high.

Of course, those items had been priceless to begin with. It was said that this auction every four years was held because those treasures were mostly the ones carried out of Ambario's royal palace back then.

The Lafayettes were history, but the Violet Group still had close ties to the land of Ambario, which was clear from how the auction was always held on Ambario soil.

Natalia was getting a good look when Max suddenly leant over and said, "There's going to be some private accessories on auction later, Natalia. If you take a fancy to any, you can have Archie buy it for you."

Chapter 396 He's Rich

Natalia looked at him and muttered, "If I take a fancy to anything, I can buy it myself."

She wasn't as she'd been before. With Star Entertainment and her own filming, she'd made plenty of money.

No match for a full aristocrat like Archie, but she could still afford to buy things she wanted for herself.

Archie smiled faintly. "That's right. If you want anything, you can get them yourself."

Natalia blinked and looked at him. There was a smile on his brow. She recalled that she basically had all his cards and land rights.

That was equivalent to having all of this man's properties in her hands. If he wanted to buy her anything now, he'd probably have to ask her for money.

Her face burned, and her heart swelled with contentedness.

Max, though, didn't know their situation, and his eyes widened with shock.

"You're not that stingy, are you, Archie! Not even buying your wife a gift."

His eyes darted to Natalia and he beamed, “How about this, Natalia! Introduce a girlfriend to me, and

I’ll buy you anything you like. How’s that?”

Natalia rolled her eyes at him and scoffed, “I’m not so heartless as to push some poor girl into a fire pit.”

Max was outraged. “Just how am I a fire pit? You know how many women up and down the country want to marry me?”

Natalia chuckled. “Wait until you get rid of the playboy title. I’d actually be impressed if that was the case.”

Max was getting an ulcer.

At that moment, an item on auction caught her attention.

It was a hairpin of white jade, snowy pale, introduced as a marriage gift for a noble lady a millennium ago, symbolizing fair fortune.

The hairpin itself, in fact, was called the hairpin of fair fortune.

Natalia wasn’t superstitious, but for some reason, she took a shine to the hairpin.

It started at three hundred thousand.

It was just an accessory, after all, and other than how delicate it was, the noblewoman wasn't anybody important, so the starting price wasn't high.

Archie had been paying attention to her expression in secret, and seeing her stare at the stage, he asked, "You like it?"

Natalia nodded.

The man pressed his buzzer.

"For the hairpin of good fortune, number 32 – one million!"

Natalia jumped. It was just a hairpin for three hundred K. No one had even called it yet, and he'd raised it to one million.

She tugged the man's sleeve, signaling for him not to go so hard.

Archie smiled down at her and murmured, "They'll raise."

Just as he'd said, from the front row, someone raised. "Number 16 – one million and one hundred!"

"Number 32 – two million!"

"Number 16 – two million one!"

“Number 32 – three million!”

“Number 16 – three million one!”

“Number 32 – four million!”

“Number 16 – four million one!”

“Number 32 – five million!”

“Number 16 – five million one!”

Seeing the man was about to raise again, Natalia hurriedly stopped him.

She’d just noticed that the person competing with them at the front row was also a woman.

If someone else liked it, then forget it! There was no need to spend five million on a hairpin. She knew

that Archie was rich, but money wasn’t supposed to be spent this way.

She lowered her voice and hurriedly said, “Forget it, let’s let her have it!”

Archie looked at her. “Don’t you like it? Five million is nothing to me.”

Natalia smiled at him. “I only like it a little. I might take a shine to something else going on. Let’s take

another look?”

Seeing her say that, the man chuckled. “You only like it a little, hmm?”

“Yeah, really, just a little.”

Afraid he wouldn’t believe it, Natalia hurriedly pinched her fingers together to show just how little it was.

The host had started calling it. “Number 16, five million one, going once! Number 16, five million one, going twice! Number 16-”

“Number 32 – eight million!”

At that price, everyone looked towards the second row.

Natalia’s heart jolted, but it was too late to get the buzzer from the man’s hand.

His arm circled behind her and hugged her to him. The people there only saw a young couple, but because their heads were tilted and the woman’s face was hidden by her hair, they couldn’t tell what they looked like.

Archie held her hand and chuckled, “Your husband’s rich, Natalia, so if you like it, just call for it. Don’t worry about anything else, okay?”

Natalia felt a burst of emotion.

She wasn't moved because of how much money he was spending, but how much he wanted to make her happy.

She couldn't help but smile as she berated, "You're making me sound like a wife trying to leech off her husband!"

"A wife trying to leech off her husband is still my wife."

At that, her heart throbbed, and she only just reacted to what she'd said.

Her face blushed red from her cheeks to the roots of her ears. She was stammering for an explanation, but found she didn't know how.

The man had released her, and at this moment, everyone had turned back around. After all, at a scene like this, it was rude to stare.

"Number 32 – eight million, going once! Number 32 – eight million, going twice! Number 32 – eight million..."

"Wait!"

A voice suddenly interrupted the host. It was the lady on the first row.

She stood and asked, "May I have some time to discuss it with that gentleman over there?"

The host looked at her, then at Archie in the second row, and finally nodded.

“Very well. Five-minute break.”

The woman turned around and walked over to Archie’s spot.

It took her fully turning around for Natalia to see her appearance.

She was a radiant beauty.

In her scarlet dress, she was low-key but elegant, her features well-defined, with a voluptuous figure and a smile on her face, she sashayed in front of them.

“Hello. My name is Nadia. I’m the daughter of General Naran of Tacitus. It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

Archie looked up at her.

“Did you need something?”

Nadia blinked, not expecting the cold treatment.

After all, she was confident in her appearance. Even though the man before her was handsome, and she could just tell from his posture and aura that he wasn’t a small fry, but she thought she’d been polite enough not to get talked to so bluntly.

But she didn't quibble over that and simply smiled. "Sir, I really like that hairpin. Could you let me have it?"

Archie said mildly, "Sorry. The highest bidder gets the prize. Most importantly... my wife likes it too."

With that, he took Natalia's hand.

Nadia only then seemed to notice Natalia, and looked her up and down.

Her first impression was one of wonder.

She had to say, the girl before her was incredibly pretty.

In a purple dress, with delicate features, a bit of sensuality mixed in with her purity, she was a catch.

She giggled softly. "This madam doesn't look too old. Would this hairpin really suit her?"

Chapter 397 Public Seduction

Natalia blinked.

Could she say she was just buying it as a collector's piece?

Archie said mildly, "No need for your concern, madam."

Nadia floundered again.

The man was like a statue. Completely unmoving.

Natalia, though, was feeling a bit awkward.

She was about to say something when Nadia sighed and continued, "I'll be honest, sir. This is a hairpin

I'm preparing to give to my sister as a gift. She's been sick for years. Jade is healing, and my sister's

seen a photo of the hairpin. She likes it a lot, which is why I'm asking for your kindness."

Seeing her let her feelings out, Natalia felt a surge of sympathy.

It was just a hairpin, after all. If she bought it for herself, she'd just keep it around without much

practical use.

If her sister was so sick and she liked it that much, she could have it!

Considering that, she tugged the man's sleeve.

"Archie..."

Archie already knew what she meant by that and frowned slightly.

He looked at Nadia with a bit of a mocking glance.

"Since you're saying that, madam, then as you please!"

Finally seeing him relent, Nadia's face registered joy.

"Right, what's your name? I must thank you for your kindness today if I get a chance later on."

Archie didn't answer.

Natalia frowned.

She tugged his sleeve again.

Honestly, they were in public. At least show the lady some respect.

With that money people looking on, it was embarrassing.

Archie's handsome face was a bit dark as he replied, "Archie McCarthy."

At those words, Nadia's eyes lit up.

"You're... Archie McCarthy? The current head of the McCarthy family, first of the four families?"

Archie's frown deepened as he nodded.

"It is a pleasure to meet you. I and my father have always looked up to you. I didn't think I'd meet you here."

Her gaze fell on Natalia beside him. "Your wife is such a beauty. She's a lucky woman."

Archie agreed with that much. "Thank you for your praise, but you're wrong. Having her with me makes me the lucky one."

Nadia floundered a little, the smile on her face growing stiff.

“If that’s the case, I won’t disturb you. Thank you.”

She turned and went back to her own seat.

The hairpin finally ended up with Nadia.

Natalia noticed that the man beside her wore a bit of an ugly expression. Thinking that he was mad

over what had just happened, she murmured, “Are you angry? I don’t see why! It’s just a hairpin.”

The man ignored her.

Natalia blinked.

He was really mad? With her?

The two had been together for so long. This outwardly cold and harsh man had always been soft and

gentle with her. Other than the incident before, he’d never gotten angry with her for any other reason.

But over a hairpin? That didn’t make sense!

He wasn’t this petty!

Natalia was a bit confused and looked for held to Max sitting opposite her.

Max had a hand over his mouth and his body was convulsing with laughter for some reason.

She was a bit irritated.

She felt like those two were hiding something from her, having fun being in the know while she was in the dark.

Her face darkened and she snapped, "Max!"

Max couldn't help it and ended up laughing out loud. Still, they were in public, and he couldn't go too

far. He only reined it in after a while. "Natalia, do you know who that woman was?"

Natalia was befuddled. "Didn't she say her name was Nadia? The daughter of some general in Tacitus?"

"Ha ha ha ha..."

Max clutched his belly.

"..."

Was it that funny?

Max only stopped after a long while. Suppressing his laughter, he explained, "General Naran of Tacitus lost his manhood during a war when he was young. He can't even marry a wife, so where'd he get a daughter from?"

Natalia blinked.

“Well I never! So she was lying to us?”

“No. Even if you can’t have a birth daughter, you can have a lot of adopted daughters, you know.”

Natalia understood.

“Oh, so that’s the case. Then what are you laughing about? She’s General Naran’s adopted daughter;

what’s so funny about that?”

Max replied, “I’m not laughing at her status. It’s how quickly you pushed Archie out there. Careful it

doesn’t come back to bite you someday.”

Archie frowned, mostly understanding what he meant. It didn’t feel right, though.

“Hmph, you think everyone’s like you, snuggling up to the closest beauty? My Archie wouldn’t do that.”

A certain man seemed happy at that, especially the phrase “my Archie”.

He reached out and laid a hand on the back of her neck. “There’s no need for Max to snuggle up to her.

She’ll snuggle up to him herself. That woman is a devious one. Don’t get close to her.”

Natalia blinked. “Why?”

Archie frowned, seemingly not knowing how to explain.

Max couldn't hold it in anymore and interrupted, "You know how many daughters General Naran has adopted?"

Natalia shook her head.

She'd only heard the name Naran today, so how would she know how many daughters the man had?

Max made a gesture. "Twenty-eight."

Natalia gaped.

Sure, adopted daughters weren't flesh and blood, but twenty-eight? That was a bit too much!

Max continued, "Those are his daughters in name, but in reality, all they are is a set of Naran's tools, raised to get people on his side. These girls have been trained since they were small in all the tactics to bend men to their will, and when they come of age, they're released to seduce important figures in the military and business worlds. All these years, countless people have succumbed to that trick and ended up on his side as stepping stones to power. Heh! Trying a trick like this on Archie – still too green!"

Natalia was left speechless.

There were such methods, too?

How low!

But...

She shot a dubious glance at Nadia, then back at Max. "A woman can have that much influence? Why does it sound a bit hokey to me?"

Max snickered. "Don't underestimate women. See how the great Mr. McCarthy has willingly succumbed to a woman's influence? So really, being a playboy is the right move."

Natalia's face darkened as she glared at him.

What kind of poor metaphor was that?

She wasn't a woman who had those sorts of ulterior motives!

Archie muttered, "That's enough! Shut it."

Max made a face, then deliberately clamped his mouth shut and didn't speak.

Natalia pondered the goings of the evening. Since this Nadia woman was this calculating, that story about her sick sister might not be real.

Soon, before she could think about it too much, a pair of earrings modeled after the crescent moon

caught her attention.

Chapter 398 Not Taken In By Her

She quickly flipped open the pamphlet in her hands and looked at the introduction of the crescent moon earrings.

It was a pair of natural sapphire gems just discovered in a new mine down south. A rare and unique fine, it had only gotten to be this way after careful cutting and polishing by a designer.

To be honest, Natalia really wanted it.

Not just her, but every woman there let out a cry of wonder the moment the earrings were revealed.

Clearly everyone was taken in by it.

Nothing could be done about that. Everyone liked pretty things.

And this was just too pretty!

Max wanted it too, but seeing Natalia's enthused gaze, he finally suppressed his own desire.

Never mind. It wouldn't be gentlemanly to fight over it with a woman. And with this many women who wanted the earrings, if he stepped in, he'd be hated.

As expected, soon enough, people started bidding.

From a starting price of ten million, they went up by millions, and soon, they'd reached a price of eighty

million.

Natalia really did want it, but as the price got higher and higher, she hesitated and suppressed her urge.

Eighty million! And it was probably going to keep going up, which was just too much!

She realized that, compared to these earrings, that hairpin for eight million was nothing at all.

“Eighty-five million! The lady in number 26 has raised to eighty-five million! Are there any higher takers?”

“Ninety million!”

A voice suddenly called.

Everyone looked in unison towards the voice. It was that woman from before, Nadia.

She sat at the front row, her lips slightly curved, looking confident in her victory. Her sensual neck was arched, and the white skin of her exposed chest gleamed like marble in the contrast of her red dress and the lighting.

Natalia could hear plenty of men swallowing.

She sneered with a bit of contempt and looked at Archie beside her.

Fortunately, this man didn't seem to notice the attractive view at all and kept his gaze on the stage, his face expressionless.

"Ninety million! All right, number 16 has raised to ninety million! Can anyone up the bid?"

There was a dozen seconds of silence.

As the host got ready to strike the gavel, a cool voice called, "One hundred million!"

What?

One hundred million???

Everyone looked over in disbelief, but when they saw it was Archie, everyone's faces registered understanding.

It was Archie who'd put up one hundred million. Well, that was to be expected.

Everyone looked enviously at Natalia.

And the people who didn't know Archie could only gasp as they saw his face.

What a handsome man!

Rich and handsome, always the most irresistible combination for women. Besides, someone who could

attend a scene like this had to be a person with a special identity too. Money, looks, status – that was

enough to make the majority of women swoon.

Natalia muttered, “What are you doing?”

Archie held her hand and didn’t speak.

“This gentleman in number 32 is going for one hundred million! Can anyone up the bid?”

Nadia looked at Archie with a pleading expression.

That expression seemed to be saying, please have mercy Mr. McCarthy, and budge!

Natalia’s little face went a bit dark.

As opposed to pleading, this was more like a seduction.

Right to her face, too.

Natalia wasn’t okay with it, and considering everything Max had said, she felt even more

uncomfortable.

“One hundred million going once! One hundred million going twice! One hundred million...”

“Ah, wait!”

Nadia spoke again.

Seeing it was her, the host had to chuckle. "Are you going to discuss it with that gentleman again, madam?"

Nadia smiled faintly. "Apologies for the trouble."

"Very well. Five-minute break."

Nadia turned and walked towards them again.

This time, Natalia had learned enough not to speak.

Nadia walked in front of Archie and gently said, "Mr. McCarthy, I really like this pair of earrings. Could you show mercy one more time and let me have it?"

Archie looked mildly at her.

"And you are?"

Nadia's smile froze solid.

Max couldn't hold it back and snorted with laughter.

She'd spent all this time here just a quarter of an hour ago introducing herself to him and now he didn't even remember her.

Even a goldfish wasn't this forgetful!

Nadia could feel how deliberate Archie was being, and forced a smile. "I'm sorry, I know it's bad manners, but I really..."

"Miss Nadia, you're not telling us your other sister's sick and likes these earrings too, are you!"

Max couldn't help but mock.

Nadia had already noticed Max. After all, the second son of the Nixon family was a regular in the tabloids, so of course she'd recognize him.

But her target wasn't this sort of rich but whimsical playboy, but Archie, someone who could be of great help to her father's political and financial power. That was why she hadn't talked to Max at all.

Seeing him speak now, she smiled faintly. "It's not like that, Mr. Nixon. The rest of my sisters are well.

It's just one of my sisters who's sick. I like these earrings personally, which is why I'm asking Mr.

McCarthy to show some mercy."

Natalia looked at her and suddenly said, "But why should he let you have it?"

Nadia blinked, seemingly not expecting her to speak.

She smiled sensually, "That's where you don't understand, little sister. It's gentlemanly for a man not to squabble with a woman. It's fine that you're still young and don't understand. You will when you grow up.

The meaning behind her words stung Natalia.

"Oh? And if we just won't let you have it today?"

Nadia smiled. "That's up to Mr. McCarthy."

She turned her dancing, suggestive gaze on him. "If you would step aside for me, Mr. McCarthy, I would be endlessly grateful. If I have a chance in the future, I will repay you heavily."

Looking at her moist eyes, Natalia scowled.

Max smirked. "Repay him how? With your body?"

Nadia didn't even deny it and giggled, "If Mr. McCarthy is up for it, that's fine too."

Natalia couldn't hold it back anymore. This Nadia woman was saying all this with her right there. Did she really think she was a statue?

She scoffed, "Miss Nadia, I think you should understand that Archie is a married man. Isn't it a bit too much to seduce him right in front of me? Is the Naran family upbringing this slack?"

Her words were very blunt.

If it had been someone else, they would probably have lost their temper at that.

But Nadia simply covered her mouth and smiled, “My, Mrs. McCarthy’s feathers are ruffled. It was just a

joke. Why so serious? Do you not trust Mr. McCarthy, Mrs. McCarthy?”

Chapter 399 Put On the Spot

Natalia was furious.

“If you can joke about such things, I can see what you are like in your personal life, Miss Nadia.”

Nadia’s face didn’t change. She’d probably heard that sort of talk enough not to care.

Her eyes still gazed straight at Archie.

“Consider it, Mr. McCarthy?”

Natalia wanted to pounce on her and claw her face off. She grit her teeth, grabbed Archie’s elbow and

said, “Darling, I like those earrings.”

Archie nodded pamperingly. “Okay. I’ll buy it for you.”

Seeing that, Nadia seemed a bit disappointed.

Archie finally looked at her. His eyes were chilly. “Miss Nadia, I know what you’re planning, but

apologies. I'm not your prey. A woman like you..."

He thought about it until he landed on a more appropriate phrasing. "I'm not interested in a woman I can buy."

Nadia's face changed subtly.

"What do you mean by that, Mr. McCarthy? I..."

Max cut in. "All right, fine, skip the explanation. We all know what the Naran family gets up to. You're coming up to Archie over and over today not for that hairpin or this pair of earrings, aren't you! You just want to attract Archie's attention, because he's already on your list of people to make connections with, isn't he?"

Nadia's expression was quite stiff.

All these years, this was the first time she came up on someone like this. Not only rejecting her advances, but putting her on the spot in front of so many people.

Max seemed to think that wasn't enough and mocked, "Don't worry, lady, Archie's always been a strait-laced guy. A woman even I don't want, he wouldn't take even if she was gift-wrapped."

Natalia smiled and didn't speak.

Nadia's face shifted about, and she maintained a stiff smile at the end.

She replied, "If you like joking around this much, Mr. Nixon, I'll invite you to drink someday, where we can joke around as much as we want. In a scene like this, however, it's best to be cautious. I'm representing the Naran family as I attend the auction today, and I'm not here to trade insults!"

Max grimaced and didn't reply to her.

Nadia finally returned to her seat.

Archie got the earrings in the end.

Later on, Max also bought up a delicate little thing in the form of a red coral bracelet. She asked him why, but he didn't reply, playing up the mystery.

Natalia suddenly remembered that it was Laura's birthday in a few days, and she understood.

But she didn't call Max out to his face.

After all, if they wouldn't say it, he probably didn't want people to know, so Natalia wasn't going to put it

up for discussion.

With the auction over, the three were about to leave when a man walked over.

"It's been a while, Mr. McCarthy."

The three stopped. The man was in his thirties, wearing a silver-grey suit, appearing noble, even royal.

His skin was pale and smooth, and he had a gentle smile that seemed to speak of spring comfort.

Natalia's first impression was that this man must be quite high in status.

He might have had a smile on his face, but his aura of irreproachable power and authority was undeniable.

Archie nodded mildly at him. "It's been a while, Mr. Lafayette. I didn't think you'd be here personally."

Mr. Lafayette smiled. "I haven't been back to Ambario in a hot minute. I was just taking this opportunity to tour the place. I have to say, the nation's changed a lot. I don't recognize a lot of place anymore."

Archie chuckled. "The country has been developing rapidly these few years. If you're interested, Mr.

Lafayette, you could stay Ambario for a while longer."

Mr. Lafayette nodded. "I actually was planning on that. If you're free, Mr. McCarthy, I might disturb your household for a time."

"If you would attend, Mr. Lafayette, it would be an honor."

The two were all smiles as they exchanged a few pleasantries. Someone came over with word, and he finally said, "Excuse me. I'm still busy."

"Of course."

Mr. Lafayette nodded, gave his regards with a smile and a nod to Natalia and Max, and left.

As he left, Max stammered, "Is that the current head of the Violet Group?"

Archie said mildly, "No, he's the fourth son of Tristane Lafayette, Pierre. The current head is the second son Gilbert Lafayette."

Max nodded. "I see."

At that moment, a familiar voice rang out.

"Archie, Max, you're here."

The three looked over. It was Wilhelm and Wilson Kawn.

"Grandpa Kawn, Mr. Kawn."

"Oh, Natalia's here too."

Wilhelm looked gently at Natalia, a warm smile written all over his face.

Natalia felt pampered as she hurriedly replied, "Yes, have you been feeling better, Grandpa Kawn?"

“Much better. These old bones won’t die just yet, don’t worry. But you got hurt last time. Are you better now?”

Natalia hastily answered, “I’ve already recovered. Thank you for your concern, Grandpa Kawn.”

Old man Kawn nodded. “Good, good. You’re a good kid.”

His gaze shifted to the side, at the receding back of the man who’d just left. “Who’s that?”

Archie replied, “He’s from the Violet Group. Pierre Lafayette.”

“Pierre Lafayette?”

Wilhelm’s face shifted.

Natalia frowned dubiously. “What’s wrong?”

“Oh, it’s – it’s nothing.”

The old man’s expression was odd, but he hurriedly covered it up. “Oh, that’s right. I’m holding a banquet in my household tomorrow specifically to apologize to you for what happened before. Would you please attend?”

Archie looked at Natalia.

Natalia pondered it for a while and still explained, "No need, Grandpa Kawn, I already understand. It's been so long that I've stopped minding. So let's skip the banquet."

Wilhelm hurriedly added, "It's not just to apologize. There's some things I... need to tell you to your face."

Natalia looked at him. "What things? You could say them now."

"That's..."

Wilhelm explained, "Natalia, some things can't be talked about here. Please come tomorrow night, if only for me."

Natalia was a bit conflicted.

To be honest, she really didn't want to go to the Kawn household.

Not just because of what happened with Jessica and Matthew. She always felt like the Kawn family had a strange attitude, and was on guard towards them.

Archie said lowly, "Natalia's not free these few days, so let's wait a while for your business!"

Seeing that, Wilhelm and Wilson were both heavily disappointed.

But Archie had said this much, so they couldn't very much force the matter.

Wilhelm looked at Natalia, a longing expression in his eyes.

“All right! If you’re saying that, Archie, I won’t press. But Natalia, remember to tell me if you come up on any trouble in Egitin. With me here, no one will hurt you.”

Chapter 400 Requesting An Audience

Natalia was taken aback and looked quite awkward.

She couldn’t fathom why Wilhelm’s attitude towards her had suddenly gotten this way.

Max was similarly confused at the side, and didn’t react to what was going on until Wilson and Wilhelm left.

He turned to look at Archie. “What’s this all about, Archie? I keep feeling like old man Kawn is being strange towards Natalia.”

Natalia didn’t speak. It wasn’t just Max. She felt that way too.

Archie’s gaze dimmed slightly.

But he didn’t take over the topic and just muttered, “All right, it’s getting late. We should go.”

With that, he took Natalia with him and left.

On the way back home, Natalia wondered, “What could Grandpa Kawn and Wilhelm want to talk to me

about?”

Archie looked down at her. “Want to know?”

Natalia nodded.

“You’ll know if you go over tomorrow.”

“Oh?” Natalia showed a disappointed expression. “I thought you knew. If I have to go to the Kawn

family to learn it, I’d rather stay in the dark.”

Seeing how let down she was, the man smiled, his gaze coloring.

“Natalia, can you tell me why you’re so set against the Kawn family?”

Natalia blinked. “Set against them? Am I?”

“You are.”

The man’s reply was very firm.

Natalia hummed. “Maybe because we’re just not meant to be together. I keep feeling like the Kawn

family are strange, but I can’t put my finger on it. I just don’t like them that much.”

Archie murmured, “Do you think you might be biased against them because of Matthew and Jessica?”

Natalia frowned and looked dubiously at him.

“Why are you standing up for them repeatedly like this? Are you keeping something from me?”

The man’s expression flickered, and he hurriedly said, “No.”

Natalia stared at him. “Really?”

He nodded. “Really, I swear.”

He wasn’t sure what he thought, either, but he just thought of the problem seeing Wilhelm and Wilson’s attitudes.

“To be honest, I like Wilson well enough. He’s a good person, and I have nothing against him. Grandpa Kawn, though... well, I just feel like he’s always got something up his sleeve. I’m reserved about him.”

Archie chuckled. “If you saw through him that much, looks like Grandpa Kawn’s several decades of hard work still haven’t got him there yet.”

Having him praise her, Natalia was a little flustered.

“All right, let’s not talk about them behind their backs.”

“Yeah, okay.”

The two didn’t continue on the subject.

Natalia, naturally, didn't go over the second day. Wilhelm had been disappointed, but there was nothing he could do about that. He'd wanted to come out regardless and say it, but Wilson had stopped him.

As Wilson meant it, Natalia had already developed some opinions about the Kawn family because of what happened before. If the truth came out at a time like this, she might not accept that identity, nor accept him as a grandfather.

After all, with this time they had to get to know each other, he'd seen through a bit of Natalia's personality.

Her likes and dislikes were clearly defined, and she didn't like to step on other people to get to a higher place. Besides, she was a McCarthy lady now, and might not consider the Kawn granddaughter that high of a position.

Wilhelm wasn't too pleased with Wilson's assessment, but the truth had told him that it might just be like that, and that Natalia didn't care to use the Kawn family as a stepping stone.

That much was clear just from her declining today's banquet invitation.

If any other girl had received that invitation, they'd probably have been overjoyed, but she didn't even care, and was even a bit against it.

The old man had to admit that she really didn't like the Kawn family.

Now what, then?

The afternoon sunlight streamed in through the window. The old man looked at the bushes outside and fell deep into thought.

At that moment, a voice intruded upon his thoughts.

"Sir, a gentleman by the name of Lafayette is requesting an audience."

Wilhelm snapped back to reality and turned to look at the butler. "What did you say? Who wants an audience?"

"Mr. Lafayette. Here is his card."

The butler respectfully passed up a white, gold-trimmed business card. The card was simple. A purple violet logo, and a name – Pierre Lafayette.

The old man shook, his face changing slightly.

"Where is he?"

"The downstairs living room."

Wilhelm's face was tightly strained and his gaze darkened as he said coldly, "Bring me down there."

The old man's sickness was flaring up today and his knees were hurting, so he could only sit on the wheelchair.

As the butler pushed him into the living room, he could clearly feel the old man's body tremble slightly.

The man in the living room stood.

Wilhelm waved his hand and sent the butler and servants away. There was only the two of them left in the broad space of the living room.

"It's been a long time, Mr. Lafayette."

The old man's voice was icy.

Pierre looked at him, his face as cool and collected as ever. "Have you been well these years, old Mr.

Kawn?"

Wilhelm sneered. "No thanks to you!"

Pierre smiled slightly. "Seems like you still haven't let go of your grudge against me."

Wilhelm's eyes exploded into flame as he raged, "You've got the nerve to speak about letting go of grudges? It wasn't your daughter who died, so of course you can talk so casually about it! I'm telling

you, Pierre Lafayette! I'll always hold a grudge against you Lafayettes!"

The old man had spoken too quickly and his emotions were roiling, so after he finished his spiel, he fell back into his wheelchair, face red as he panted.

Pierre looked at him mildly and urged, "Your body is not in a good condition. I suggest you keep calm."

The old man scoffed and didn't speak.

But he did try slowly to smooth over his temper.

Pierre suddenly said, "You're hung up over your daughter's death, but you seem to forget, I lost my big brother too. If we really were to split hairs, neither of us got off the worse!"

The old man bit down hard on the inside of his cheeks and glared at him.

"That was karma! He deserved it! My daughter only ended up the way she did because he fooled her into it!"

Pierre didn't seem like he wanted to debate the matter. After all, it'd been over a decade. The dead couldn't return to life, and fighting over it was pointless.

He said lowly, "What happened between them is not for us to judge. I've only come back to the nation

to ask you one thing. Where is the child?"

Wilhelm's face changed.

"What child? I don't know what you're talking about!"

"The child that Miss Kawn gave birth to. My big brother's daughter. Over twenty years ago, you told me

the child had been lost. For these two decades, we've always been searching without turning up any

clues. A while back, I heard that the granddaughter of the Kawn family had been retrieved, and felt like

I had to come back and see no matter what. Old Mr. Kawn, please produce the child!"