

Knowing My Ex-Wife After The Divorce Chapter 16

Natalie had never felt more awkward. She crouched under the table, peering up at Tobias.

When he spotted her, he squinted and stepped closer, then bent down too. "What are you doing here?"

Natalie was still trying to think of an answer when he asked, "Do you want to see the manager of this restaurant?"

She hesitated for a moment, thankful that Yara had just clashed off; otherwise, she would have been mortified. She nodded quickly. "Yes, I do,"

Nearby, a group of people whispered in confusion, "Mr. Reese, why are you looking under the table?" They couldn't see Natalie from where they stood.

She really wanted to stay hidden. It wouldn't be a huge problem if they spotted her, but if Yara suddenly came back, the truth about her daughter would definitely come out.

Her reluctance was clear, so Tobias gently tapped her on the head. Just stay put."

Before she could respond, he pulled back the tablecloth. She heard people leaving, but soon, Tobias's footsteps came closer again.

"Come out," he said. Natalie poked her head out and saw no one was around. It seemed everyone had been called away. She crawled out, brushing off nonexistent dirt from her clothes. Thanks, but I need to go now, she said, eager to escape.

But just as she stepped away, he grabbed her hand and pulled her into an embrace. In an instant, she found herself pressed against the wall, with Tobias leaning in so close their lips almost touched, creating an intense moment.

"I draw their attention away

for you, and this is how you thank me?"

Natalie felt a bit speechless. He was exactly the reason she had to hide! But to keep her daughter safe, she had to go along with it. "So how do you want me to repay you? By continuing to save your precious Elle?"

His gaze turned serious, lost in thought. "About that heart surgery you mentioned... can we do it now?"

Natalie realized he was still focused on Elle. "We can try, but I can't guarantee it will work-maybe a twenty percent chance at best."

Tobias's look darkened, his voice icy. "I want it to be a sure thing No complications for her

Natalie gave a slight smile. "I can't promise that at this point. I'm really sorry."

Tobias didn't seem convinced. "Is it really like that?"

"Of course, I never lie. If this had been a man she truly loved, she might have been tempted to fake an accident during surgery to get rid of Elle. But that wasn't the case; the man in front of her was just her ex-husband. She had no feelings for him, so she decided honesty was the best way to go. "Mr. Reese, could you let me go now?" She reminded him that their closeness was a bit too much.

Tobias leaned down and gently kissed her. "If there's a way to save her, you'll let me know right away."

Natalie forced a smirk, too tired to even make a snarky remark. Sure.

After all, Tobias had plenty of money. If she could really help, why not take it? A kiss didn't mean much-they'd shared Tuch more intimate moments in the past. There was no need to feel shy about it, as long as things didn't spiral out like last time. But she hadn't realized how touchy Tobias could be.

His expression was hard to read, but after their eye contact, they both seemed satisfied. "And about that day-I'm sorry for being too quick. I should've given you time to adjust. I'll be more careful and take it slow.

Natalie's heart sank. "So there will be a next time? Mr. Reese, please behave. If Elle knew, it would break her heart," she said, her voice hinting at something more. As she pushed him away and turned to leave, she felt his gaze heavy on her.

Tobias watched her walk away, a complicated look on his face.

Natalie found a private booth and called Yara over. "From now on, whenever you see that guy, stay away, okay?" she said seriously.

Yara blinked, confused. "Why, Mommy? You never made me stay away from other handsome uncles. I really like this one!"

Natalie struggled to find the right words, "Why do you like him? Just because he's the most handsome?" She didn't want to admit it, but Tobias really was the best-looking guy she knew, and he fit her style. It made sense her daughter felt the same.

Yara gave her big eyes, looking sad. "It's not just because he's handsome! I really like him, Mommy, Please let me be with him Natalie stood her ground. "No way."

Yara stomped her foot, glaring at her mother. "Mom, that's so unfair!"

Normally, Natalie might have softened at her daughter's anger, but today was different. "It's not happening"

Feeling defeated. Yara ran off, and Natalie didn't worry. Deep down, the girl understood why her mom was saying no.

For a while, the name "Tobias" felt distant, but the Guzman family kept pushing Natalie to come home. In the end, they used her grandmother's hospitalization to convince her. So, Natalie decided to go back for an afternoon, spend some time with her grandma, and then leave. The Guzman residence hadn't changed much; many places had been renovated.

As soon as the staff saw Natalie, they rolled their eyes and kept their distance, pretending not to notice her. Natalie didn't mind. That was just how the Guzman family treated her—all the same as before.

In the living room, Yulisa sat on the couch, looking much thinner than the last time Natalie had seen her. Yulisa fixed her gaze on Natalie like she was an enemy,

Tommy and Lily were sitting across from her. When they noticed Natalie, their faces darkened. Tommy slammed his cane on the floor and shouted, "Ungrateful daughter! Get on your knees!"

Natalie stood tall, looking calmly at them. "Why should I kneel?"

"You caused that mess at the wedding, didn't you? Do you have any idea how much trouble you've brought to our family?" Tommy was furious. Just because he had taken her away at the wedding for appearances didn't mean he accepted the fallout. Because of her actions, there was no chance to bring the Shaw and Guzman families together.

Natalie admitted it plainly. "Yeah, that was me."

"Dad... Yulisa's eyes filled with tears, her red eyes showing she had cried a lot.

Tommy glared at Natalie. "You came here to collect debts, didn't you? Today, I'll make you pay!" He raised his cane to strike her, but it stopped mid-air, just short of hitting her when a cold voice spoke up nearby. "Stop"

The sharp gaze belonged to Tobias, who was now focused on Natalie, shocking everyone nearby.

"Mr. Reese, why are you here?" Tommy and the others asked, confused. "Aren't you and Natalie already divorced?" Although The split had been kept quiet, everyone

involved knew. They were wondering what on earth Tobias was doing showing up at such a crucial moment.

Natalie was equally stunned. She had braced herself to catch that cane-but here he was, showing up so suddenly.

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Tobias glanced calmly at the cane that was meant to hit Natalie. "She's with me."

Tommy's eyes went wide in shock. "But she."

"Natalie, come here. His tone softened a little, but it still held a commanding air.

Natalie didn't want to move closer. She was done with Tobias. Still, he and the rest of the Guzman family kept their eyes on her. The tension in the room grew thick, but she stood her ground. Just as she was about to say something, Tobias's intense gaze kept her quiet. She forced a small smile and stepped toward him, speaking just loud enough for him to hear, "What are you doing here?"

"Your grandma called and told me about this." Tobias replied.

Natalie was shocked that her grandma had Tobias's number, and even more surprised that he actually came. She couldn't wrap her head around what he wanted.

Their quiet conversation seemed like a private joke to the others

Tommy, taken aback, looked at Natalie, while Yulisa couldn't hold in her irritation. She snapped, "Aren't you already divorced? How come-

Lily, who had been quiet until now, gently chimed in, "Natalie, you could've at least told us Tobias was coming"

Yulisa's jaw dropped, shocked that her mother had suddenly switched sides. Her temper flared as she glared at Natalie but fell silent.

Tommy began to rethink his approach to Natalie. "We might've been too hard on you. What you did was for Yulisa's sake; Quinn really isn't the right guy for her."

He looked at Yulisa, who reluctantly replied, "Thanks for ruining that wedding. The last part came out between clenched teeth.

Natalie understood why the Guzman family was suddenly being nice-it was all because of the guy standing next to her. The Guzman family would always pick Tobias over the Shaw family, especially now that there was no chance for a union with them.

After that, Tobias didn't say much, but the Guzman family was clearly enthusiastic. The visit was turning out to be easier than Natalie had expected. Once they finished their meal, she and Tobias got ready to leave together.

"Come by again sometime, Lily said warmly.

Natalie was fed up with this woman. No one could outdo Lily when it came to pretending. As soon as they left the Guzman residence, Natalie instinctively stepped away from Tobias. "So, what do you want?"

Tobias shot her a look. "What do you think I want?"

"Within reason," Natalie added after a short pause. "As long as it's reasonable, I'll consider it."

His gaze dropped to her lips. "Kiss me,"

Natalie blinked in disbelief. 'Did he really just say that? Why is this guy being so bold?'

He looked completely serious, not joking at all.

Natalie was lost for words. "Are you sure Elle wouldn't mind?"

Tobias didn't answer. Instead, he leaned down and kissed her directly.

Natalie's eyes widened; she completely forgot to push him away.

Tobias closed his eyes, enjoying the moment like he'd just found a favorite treat he hadn't had in ages.

Suddenly, there was a click nearby, and realization hit Natalie. Tobias sensed it too and pulled back.

The person taking the photo ran away.

"I'll handle it," Tobias said, already signaling for someone nearby to chase after the sneak.

Natalie felt like she was hearing a different language. She didn't really care about her reputation; it mattered way more to Tobias. "I'm leaving," she declared, turning to walk away. But before she could, he grabbed her wrist. She shot him a suspicious look. "Is there something else?"

"Come back with me

“Wait, what?” Natalie’s mind raced, ‘Back? Did this guy have a screw loose? What did he mean?’ Remembering their unfinished business from last time, it clicked. “You want to sleep with me.”

Tobias nodded.

Natalie couldn’t help but roll her eyes. “What about Elle? Why does it have to be me?”

I’m used to it.”

“Used to it? It’s been six years, and you’re saying you haven’t been with anyone else?” Natalie stared at him in disbelief.

This time. Tobias didn’t answer. He just locked his intense gaze on her.

Natalie couldn’t believe Tobias hadn’t touched another woman in six years. But that didn’t seem right-Elle’s kid was proof of that. Plus, Tobias was never one to hold back. “How could he possibly be without a woman? Realizing she had asked a silly question, she said, “I have stuff to do. I’m leaving. This time, she easily shook off his grip and got into her car.

As the car sped away. Tobias stared after it and whispered, This is... really something.”

Even he found it hard to believe. In the six years since they’d been apart, he hadn’t thought much about romance. But the moment he saw her again, those feelings rushed back.

He squinted, remembering how earlier that day, her grandmother had called him about the Guzman family and how that woman had ruined the wedding between the Guzmans and the Shaws. So without a second thought, he was here for her. He didn’t know why

The Guzman family tried to call Natalie several times, saying they wanted to talk business with Tobias, but she turned them down and eventually stopped answering their calls.

One day, she got a call from a random number. Natalie thought about hanging up but decided to pick up. She wanted to clarify things with her family, but instead, she heard Elle’s voice. Is this Natalie? I need to talk to you. Even though Elle’s Joue was soft, it carried an air of arrogance.

Natalie couldn’t help but chuckle. “You want to talk about your health?”

There was a short pause before Elle replied, her voice softening bit, “I think there are some things we women should clear up, especially when it comes to Tobias

There’s nothing to discuss, Natalie replied. “Tin hanging up.

“Wait!” Elle quickly interrupted. “There are things I don’t want to say, but if I don’t, you might get the wrong idea.

Her words were confusing and vague. Natalie laughed, “Just be direct. Do you want me to complicate your surgery?”

The more complicated a surgery was, the riskier it could be. Elle’s face must’ve gone pale hearing that. But still, she needed Natalie.

Taking a deep breath, she said softly, “Natalie, can you please stop messing with Tobias? I saw the photo of you two kissing. but Tobias made them delete it and told them not to share it. Don’t you know what that means? Maybe that kiss was just a moment of weakness, but he doesn’t really like you. Over the years, the only person who’s been publicly by Tobias’s side is me.”

The smile in Natalie’s eyes faded. Deep down, she had always known that.

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Natalie replied casually, “If that’s what you want to talk about, there’s really no point. Now that I’m divorced, I’m not back” going

Elle squeezed her phone tight. “What if you do?”

care

“Ha, what does that have to do with you?” With that, Natalie hung up, too tired to keep arguing with her. She didn’t about Tobias anymore; she just didn’t want to bow to Elle’s demands. She had no right to tell her what to do. Meanwhile, Elle was fuming on the other end when she suddenly noticed the man behind her and jumped in surprise. “Tobias, you’re here! Why didn’t you say anything!

Tobias’s gaze was sharp. “Did you call her?” He had seen the name on her phone and heard everything.

Elle panicked and rushed to explain. “I was just worried about you. That’s why I called her.”

Tobias shot her a cold look. “You need to take care of yourself. Don’t get involved in things that aren’t your business.”

Elle’s eyes went wide with shock as she desperately reached for his hand. “But you promised you’d take care of me for life!” Tobias pulled his hand away. “I did promise, but I can’t control what you do.”

Elle forced a smile, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I gave birth to Ryan, Tobias. I really love you. Please don't hold it against me, okay?"

"Stay out of Natalie's business."

Elle knew she had touched a nerve and quickly nodded, trying to act innocent.

Tobias felt no sympathy; he just looked at her tears. Instead, his mind drifted back to the sweet, gentle woman he once knew. He thought, 'D**n it, why am I thinking about her again? Does she still have feelings for me?'

If Natalie were there, she would probably roll her eyes and act like she didn't care,

Meanwhile, at the hospital, the lights in the emergency room dimmed. Natalie had just wrapped up one surgery when she got notice for another. "Dr. Liam, I'm sorry, but this patient's condition is critical. We need to start the surgery right away. Can you come in tomorrow morning?"

The other doctors and nurses exchanged worried glances. "Maybe we should get someone else to handle it. Dr. Liam hasn't had a break in days, and the workload is too heavy."

"Bring me the patient's medical record," Natalie said firmly. She was always focused on patient care; if she could save a life, she'd do her best. Just as she was about to open the file, doubt hit her.

The name on the chart made her heart race: "Howard Reese." Memories rushed back. Only a few people knew about her past with Tobias, and Howard was one of them. He had always looked down on her and made her life miserable when she joined the Kerse family. She skimmed the medical notes and quickly saw that he needed cardiovascular surgery; his heart was in bad shape

Dr. Laam, you're the best at heart surgery. The patient's situation is critical. If you perform the surgery, the chances of success will definitely go up one of the other doctors urged.

Natalie closed the file with determination. "If the patient agrees, I'll do it" She was curious to see if proud Howard would accept her help.

The nearby nurses admired her. "Wow, Dr. Liam is incredible! She agreed right away!"

"Any surgery Dr. Liam takes on will succeed. I've never seen her fail, another nurse added.

Used to the praise, Natalie brushed it off and headed to the lounge to rest and check her phone. Most messages were from Yara and Maddie, both reminding her to take

care of herself. After a long, tiring day, their concern was comforting. A small smile appeared on her face until she reached the end of the messages where Maddie mentioned Tobias.

Maddie: [Big news! Tobias took Elle to a charity auction and bought her a diamond necklace worth 400 million dollars! Can you believe it? 400 million dollars!]

Natalie paused before replying: [That is really something.]

Maddie: [Is that what you took from this?! The real point is how good Tobias is to Elle. Even if he hasn't married her, he treats her like a princess!]

Natalie felt a dull ache; this wasn't news to her. She already knew

Maddie: [Word is. Tobias is all about Elle now, completely ignoring his ex-wife. Ugh, that woman knew when to leave; otherwise, she'd just be treated like an outsider.]

Natalie stared at her phone and sighed, "It is kind of true, but that's not why I left. It had been forever since she last saw Tobias. They hadn't talked at all, and honestly, that was for the best. No chance for awkward moments or emotional mess.

Just then, the screen lit up with an unknown number. She squinted, her heart racing. It was Tobias's number. Without thinking, she hung up.

A few moments later, her phone buzzed again. He was calling again. Quick as a flash, she turned her phone off and closed eyes, hoping to get some rest. She wasn't in the mood for his nonsense,

her

After a long, exhausting day, Natalie finally drifted off to sleep. When she woke up the next morning, she was surprised to find out that the doctor she had been waiting for said the patient had agreed to let her perform the surgery.

The surgery was set for early morning. Natalie hurried through her routine and headed straight to the operating room. Howard, the patient, was in his fifties. He looked like a serious businessman, but Natalie knew better. He had been a pain for Tobias for years, always trying to mess with him. But when he realized how powerful Tobias was, he changed tactics and tried to take advantage of him. Typical People always stick to the strong, and she understood that. But using her to get at Tobias crossed the line.

Still, she knew how to handle someone like Howard. She wouldn't let his attitude ruin her passion for surgery. If he was scared of dying and needed her help, she would take her job seriously. The surgery went smoothly, just as she expected.

Wiping sweat from her brow, Natalie glanced at the clock-it was already afternoon. After grabbing a quick bite to eat, she picked up Howard's medical file, planning to check on his status. As she reached the door, she hesitated.

Inside, she could hear Howard's weak but obnoxious voice. "Can't even peel an apple! Are you sent by Natalie to humiliate me?"

The nurse, sounding stressed, replied, "I swear, Mr. Reese! I'm just from the hospital, trying my best!"

"Ugh, stop pretending! Howard shouted, his voice full of anger. Natalie heard something heavy crash to the floor. "Get Natalie in here! I want to know why she thinks she can treat me like this! What kind of trash did she send to take care of me?"

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The nurse suddenly panicked "No, please don't tell Dr. Liam! I don't want to get fired. How about I cut you another appl instead?"

"Get lost! Do you really think you're worth it?" Howard sneered. "Even if Natalie herself cut me an apple, I wouldn't eat it. You are all worthless trash."

The hospital room door swung open, and Natalie walked in.

As soon as the nurse saw her, tears started streaming down her face. She rushed to Natalie and said, "Dr. Liam, I really tried my best, but this patient... he's talking about you."

The nurse's voice was low, just for Natalie, but Howard overheard and chuckled. "What can I say about her? Back when she was washing my feet, you hadn't even graduated yet. It's because of her that I'm still alive, trying to keep me from dying."

The nurse turned pale, staring at Natalie. "Dr. Liam, he really..."

"I'm the one she's always trying to please," Howard interrupted c**ly.

The nurse's face dropped, her admiration for her idol crumbling like a house of cards. Dr. Liam was her model and now she knew that her model had to beg for someone else's approval, and they openly admitted it right in front of her; the disappointment was huge.

Natalie didn't deny it. She replied calmly, "You can step outside. I'll handle this."

"But, but... the nurse hesitated. She didn't want to stick around, but leaving felt impossible. "I'm still an intern. If he's not happy, I might not get a job after this..."

She glanced at the middle-aged man in the hospital bed, but he remained unfazed, smirking, "With your skills, you think you can get a job? Dream on."

The nurse burst into tears.

Closing the door, Natalie noticed the neatly peeled apple on the floor. It was definitely the one Howard had tossed aside, just to make life harder for the young nurse. "She's assigned by the hospital, not by me, and she's very dedicated, Natalie said c**y.

Howard, still lying in bed after surgery and unable to move much, wore a mocking grin. "Do you really think I'd believe you? All you can do is pull off these little tricks. If you think you can play games with me, I've got plenty of ways to deal with you."

Natalie couldn't help but laugh at his words. "You really think I'm scared of you?"

Howard was grinning from ear to ear. "Aren't you? I'm close to Tobias. Just look at you, taking my surgery so seriously- aren't you worried I might die? If that happens, you'll never get a chance to get close to him again."

Natalie raised an eyebrow. "Did I ever say I wanted to go back to the Reese family?"

"Seriously? Isn't it obvious? Don't play games with me. You've been following Tobias around like a lost puppy, hoping to become Mrs. Reese. And you actually made it in and then got kicked out, how could you not want to come back?" Howard shot back.

Natalie clapped her hands, mildly impressed by his imagination. "You've got a point there." He was saying things Natalie hadn't even thought of

Her opinion of Tobias just took a hit. The person she used to dislike the most was Howard, but Tobias couldn't stop giving this guy power, which only caused her more trouble. It was better not to dwell on the past; the more she thought about it, the angrier she got. And some people, even after six years and saving him again, still managed to be unbearable.

Howard coughed a few times, looking pale but having mischief in his eyes. "I know all about you, Natalie. Right now, you have no choice but to play nice with me."

"Play nice with you?"

"Since you saved my life, you're in charge of me while I'm here. I feel even a little uncomfortable... well, let's just say you won't want to deal with what happens next," he smirked.

Natalie scoffed, ready to argue, but Howard cut her off. "But look if you play your cards right, I might just connect you

with Tobias and give you a chance. At least you'll have some hope." He looked so proud of himself, like he was doing her a huge favor

Natalie walked over to a small table, picked up an apple, and started fiddling with it. "Still need me to peel this apple?"

"Yes. Get on it. You don't want to find out what happens if it doesn't go well, Howard replied with a cold laugh, enjoying his little power trip.

Natalie grabbed a small knife from the side and started slicing an apple.

The young nurse, feeling trapped, stayed quiet but shot Natalie a disappointed look.

Noticing her expression, Howard laughed even harder. "See how she really is? Clinging to some guy, obediently following orders. Pathetic."

"There's no way, Dr. Liam is not like that at all... The young nurse tried to defend Natalie, but her voice trailed off, losing strength with each word.

As Natalie finished peeling the apple, it looked perfect, with one smooth long strip

"Hey, hand it over!" Howard demanded, looking quite pleased.

"Sure, here you go." Natalie tossed the apple peel right at his face Enjoy! Then she calmly took a bite of the apple herself. It tasted surprisingly good.

Howard's eyes widened in disbelief as the apple peel landed on his face. "Natalie, how dare you! You threw that peel at me! She looked at him as if he were being ridiculous. "Didn't you want to eat the peel? You didn't touch it when the nurse did such a great job, I thought maybe she accidentally messed up. Besides the apple, the peel is the only other option."

Howard fumed, "Don't try to twist this! You did that on purpose! Natalie, you're just asking for trouble!"

She let out a cold laugh. The only one asking for trouble here is you. Six years ago, you bullied me, and I let it go. But that doesn't mean you can keep pushing me around. I saved your life because you're a patient, nothing more. If you want to play games, I've got plenty of ways to make your life miserable."

Howard's face turned red with anger. "Threatening me? With your level? Good luck! Just wait until I tell Tobias about this.

Natalie finished the last bite of her apple and then threw the core right at him. It hit him square in the face, right alongside the sticky apple peel, leaving a small bump. The core hit the floor with a thud.

Natalie smiled at him, completely unfazed, "Say whatever you want; I really don't care. After that, she turned and left the hospital room, taking the stunned nurse with her. Inside, she didn't feel any better. She didn't know why this guy was so full of himself. He really thought she'd let him walk all over her like a doormat. Even without feeling satisfied, she had plenty of ways to deal with someone like Howard.

But as she pushed open the door, she found Tobias waiting right outside. "You..." What a coincidence! She ran into him again?!

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standing there or how much he As they locked eyes, neither of them spoke. Natalie had no idea how long Tobias had been had overheard. But honestly, it didn't really matter- everything they were talking about was just old news.

The young nurse looked upset, tears streaming down her face. Natalie comforted her, "Don't cry. I'll talk to the director later and sort everything out. They won't fire you.

The nurse looked up, choking back her s**bs. T'm sorry, Dr. Liam I can't believe I doubted you earlier. You'll always be my role model.

Natalie gently ruffled her hair, smiling softly. "Go clean yourself up. Otherwise, people might think I'm bullying you."

The nurse nodded, wiping her tears as she walked away to stop

and

Natalie planned to leave too, but the man in front of her had been staring since earlier. She had no choice but to meet his gaze. Is there something you need?" she asked,

Tobias spoke up. Just now, you reminded me of your old self. You played that role pretty well. He meant how Natalie had kindly comforted the nurse.

Natalie couldn't help but chuckle. "With you, it's just acting. But in front of others? That's who I really am."

Tobias frowned, looking troubled.

Not wanting to keep talking. Natalie said. "Howard is out of danger now, You can transfer him to another hospital, but if you leave him here, I can't guarantee he'll walk out in one piece. Just seeing Howard filled her with anger, and she was ready to take action. After saying this, she turned to leave, but he grabbed her wrist.

She scoffed, ready to shake him off, but Tobias spoke first, "I heard everything you said in there."

“Oh So what if he did?”

Tobias glanced at the hospital room door before looking back at Natalie, his eyes full of an unreadable expression. “I didn’t know Howard had given you such a hard time before.”

Natalie replied coolly, “And what does that change?”

Tobias paused for a moment, seeming to think over her words before finally saying, “He’s a direct descendant of the Reese family. My grandfather asked me to take care of him.”

Natalie scoffed, “I get it. Just like how your grandpa made you marry me in the first place, right?” To Tobias, his grandpa’s word was everything. That was how she ended up in the Reese family. Natalie wasn’t sad about it; she was just stating a fact. But the look on Tobias’ face though Tobias had been part of her life for ten years, he felt like just a passing moment. He was fulfilling a family obligation while she was on a mission. Neither of them owed the other anything.

After Natalie walked away, Tobias stood there for a moment, while Jack, who was behind him, didn’t dare say a word. Finally, Tobias moved, but instead of going into the hospital room, he walked out.

Jack couldn’t hold back anymore. “Mr. Reese, aren’t you going in to check on Howard?”

Tobias replied flatly, “She said he’s fine now, so there’s no need.”

“Oh..” Jack replied. He thought to himself that his boss truly believed in Natalie. Bobby had insisted that Tobias go check on Howard, but now one word from Natalie had in changing his mind. However, Howard had really crossed the line, and Jack had no idea how much Natalie had suffered before..

Suddenly, Tobias stopped in his tracks, his voice almost a whisper. “Is that why she left?”

Jack blinked in confusion. He quickly understood what Tobias meant and said. “That’s possible. You know how Howard is. he wanted to mess with someone, he wouldn’t hold back. Did you see how he treated her? It was disrespectful. He must have done it before, but back then, she was trying to protect you...” Jack caught himself, realizing he had just said too much.

Tobias looked down, a self-deprecating smile tugging at his lips. I really am not a good husband, am I? I let someone who hurts her get away with it. He must have hurt her deeply.

Jack wanted to comfort him but didn't know what to say. This realization felt strong and undeniable. He thought hard and finally said, "Well, you can't blame it all on yourself, Mr. Reese. Mr. Bobby Reese is also part of it. You were just doing your duty as a grandson. Look at her. She's never complained all these years; she definitely understands."

Tobias let out a cold laugh, more bitter than amused. "Understanding means she won't be disappointed, right?"

Jack didn't dare speak again. It felt like every word he said was a mistake.

Tobias spoke again, his voice steady. "Get those documents and make them public."

Jack was surprised, quickly realizing what Tobias meant. His eyes widened in shock. "But Mr. Reese, if you do that, Mr. Bobby Reese will definitely be angry. You can't-

"I owe her, Tobias said, staring in the direction where Natalie had walked away. "Ten years of her life, and I owe her that much"

Jack swallowed hard, feeling confused. His boss was acting out of character. They had been divorced for a while now, but suddenly feeling protective of Natalie because of her past struggles didn't seem like the usual Mr. Reese. But maybe it wasn't so surprising. Natalie had once been so vulnerable; wanting to stand up for her didn't seem wrong.

Meanwhile, Natalie had left the crowd and was resting in the lounge when she sneezed several times in a row. She checked her pulse and wondered, 'Am I getting sick? But everything felt fine, so she shrugged it off.

There weren't any big surgeries at the hospital the next day, so Natalie decided to rest at her new place. That Maddie stopped by with a bunch of ingredients to cook dinner together evening.

"Natalie, just relax tonight! I've got everything covered, Maddie said cheerfully. She was a great cook and had no sn**ty attitude. As soon as she got into the kitchen, she started moving around, while Yara, the little troublemaker, played with washing the veggies

Natalie yawned but eventually joined in to help. She often did surgeries, so her knife skills were pretty impressive. Maddie looked over and clapped her hands. "Natalie, your hands are gorgeous! You could totally be a hand model! Can I touch them?"

Natalie smiled slightly and held out her hand, "Of course."

Maddie held Natalie's hand and laughed, "I wonder who's lucky enough to marry someone as amazing as you! You should put a ring on that finger-wait, is that a mark 1 see?" She pointed to the spot on Natalie's ring finger.

Natalie paused for a moment. It hit her that the mark was from a ring she'd worn long ago. Tobias had given her a ring that had been too small; it was a style for Elle. After wearing it for so long, her finger had been a bit deformed. Even after six years, the trace still lingered.

Maddie froze, and it was clear to anyone that mark meant she'd worn an ill-fitting ring before. "Natalie, you were married?" "Yeah, but I'm divorced now, Natalie replied softly.

Maddie bit her lip, staring at her with wide eyes. "Why didn't you tell me you got married? I didn't even get to congratulate you."

**

Natalie shook her head. She had no intention of sharing the details about Tobias with Maddie.

Maddie's eyes eyes filled with tears. "You..."

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